App	***Readable English Series***
Creator	Playlingo Ltd. 74/1 Temple Park Crescent, Edinburgh, EH11 1HZ hello@playlingo.co / info@readable.app
Target audience	Learners and teachers of English
Target language	English
Cost	Free
Reviewer	*Ibrahim Halil Topal* *Gazi University*

Overview

In today's rapidly changing world, sparing time for language learning might be tough. However, immersion in engaging stories in English and thus enhancing language proficiency and relishing literature might be possible with the right app. *Readable* is one such app that offers manifold stories from A1 to B2 levels. Concisely expressed, *Readable* is for English language learners who wish to improve their language skills through reading and listening to fiction and non-fiction stories. All the content is categorized into genres (e.g., classics and general fiction) and proficiency levels (e.g., A1 and B2).

The app embraces the principles of personalized learning of mobile-assisted language learning (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2013) and input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985). Users can pre-set their English level to be exposed to stories at the preferred level alone. Also, they can get the word translations in the 16 specified languages, including Turkish, Bahasa Indonesia, German, and Spanish. They can further select the genres in the news (e.g., science and health) and stories (e.g., crime and funny stories) they would like to read or hear.

Description

The app comes in two versions: free and plus. The pros of the plus version are only unlimited hearts, no ads, and training high-frequency words. This means users can do pretty well with the free version. The app has a user-friendly interface that allows users to navigate the app to search for stories, a clean layout and straightforward menus (i.e., newsfeed, stories, my library, and word trainer). *Newsfeed* enables users to read and listen to stories in A1-B2 levels of diverse genres, from life and nature to architecture. The news stories are also accompanied by visuals, such as images and videos, which might facilitate their comprehension. Simply put, the audiovisual and textual language input caters to learners with different learning styles. *Stories* presents approximately 200 stories in eight genres (i.e., scary tales, crime-mystery-

thriller, classics, funny stories, fairy-folk tales, general fiction, chat stories, and non-fiction). Once users click on a story, a synopsis with a cover image appears, which might hint at its content. They can then opt to begin the story in reading or listening mode. The audio speed (from x0.5 to x1.5) in listening mode and the vocabulary check frequency (from low to high) can be customized by users. *My Library* lists the stories that users have begun. *Word Trainer* displays the statistics about the total number of learned and practiced words.
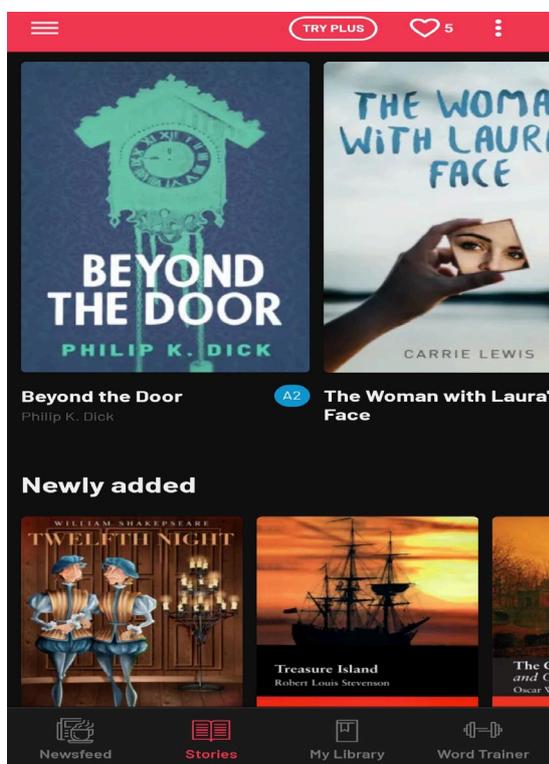

**Figure 1.** Menus and stories page

Figure 2. Cover page of a story

Evaluation

One of *Readable*'s great strengths is level-appropriateness. Despite the vast amount of language content online, those providing level-appropriate materials are scarce. In this respect, the various stories from A1 (beginner) to B2 (upper intermediate) levels on *Readable* are a great opportunity for both learners and teachers. Content variety is the app's other strength, allowing users to read and listen to stories across multiple genres. Regarding this, users can enjoy reading or listening to captivating stories of their taste, which might increase their motivation. *Readable* also allows users to practice the words in stories by enabling them to check the vocabulary at specific intervals. This comprises multiple-choice tests that ask users to match the target word with the meanings or pictures that best describe it. The tests are timed, and users lose hearts if they do not answer in time, which provides a competitive learning environment. Additionally, users are offered a built-in dictionary, allowing them to look up unfamiliar words encountered in stories. The dictionary shows the definition, pronunciation, translation in native language, usage frequency, and part of speech. Users can add these words to their lists of training. Combined, these two features (i.e., dictionary and word training) might, in fact, assists users in monitoring their progress. A further strength is the availability of two

popular mainstream English varieties (i.e., American English and British English) in audio stories.

On the other hand, the ads that pop up might be distracting. Users also need hearts to continue reading and vocabulary check, which might be discouraging and encouraging simultaneously. It might be encouraging because it allows users to earn bonus hearts if ten correct answers are given in a row in the vocabulary check. Another weakness might be the limited stories and genres. However, new stories are added regularly, which eliminate this downside. In addition, a high-frequency vocabulary check is only available for *Readable Plus* users. Last, some audio narrations, especially in the *chat stories* genre, sound robot-like since they are articulated by artificial human voices.
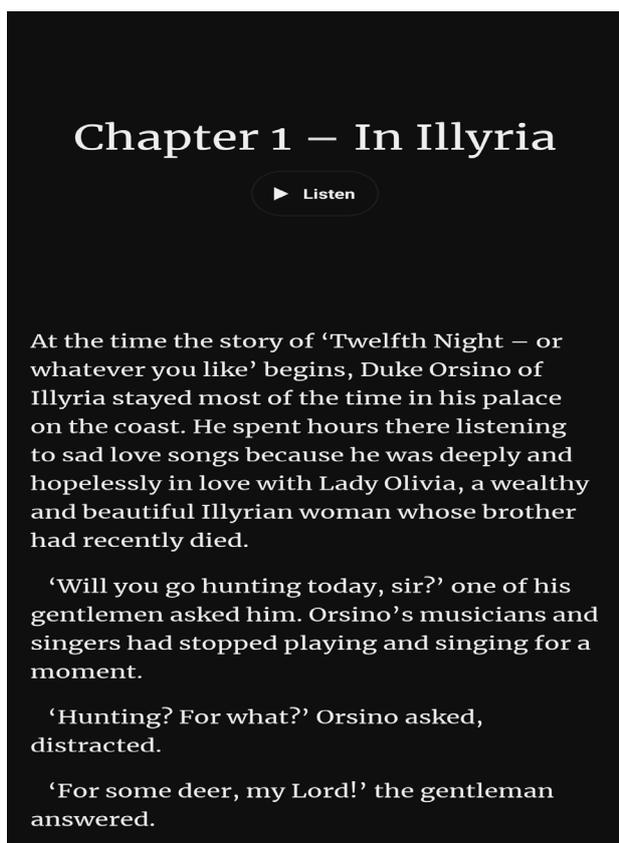
Figure 3. An example of a story
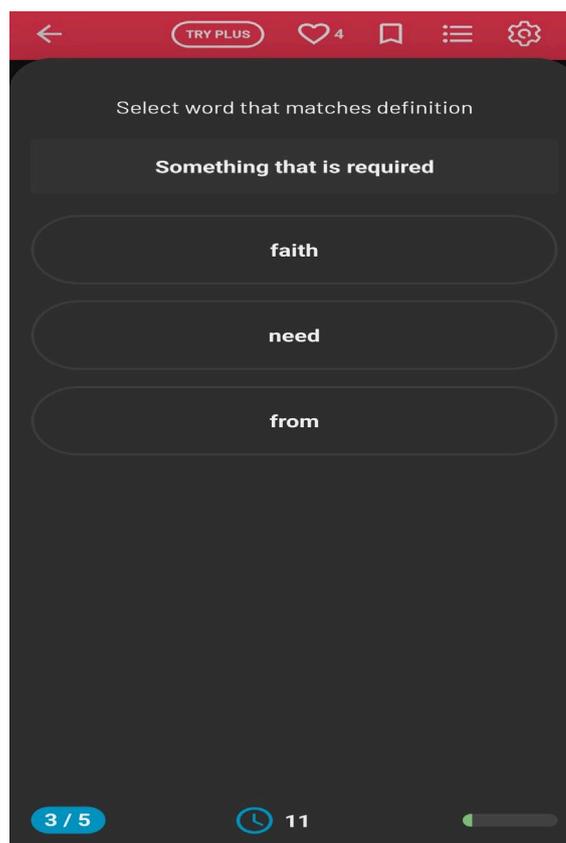
Figure 4. Vocabulary check

Summary

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, *Readable* offers a great opportunity for reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, and pronunciation in a relatively engaging personalized learning environment. Authentic language input supported with audios and images might foster learning. Additionally, learning is scaffolded with a built-in dictionary. The in-text and individual assessment features might assist users to track their learning. Ultimately, the level-appropriate and content-rich stories might provide a conducive and engaging learning environment. Users can benefit from almost all features with only the free version and without registration.

References

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Harlow: Longman.

Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Traxler, J. (2013). Design principles for mobile learning. In H. Beetham, & R. Sharpe (Eds.), *Rethinking pedagogy for a digital age: Designing for 21st century learning* (2nd ed., pp. 244-257). Abingdon: Routledge.

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