

ARTICLE

**THE READABILITY IN *ENGLISH ZONE* TEXTBOOK FOR THE
TENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMA N 2 BANDAR**

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ABSTRACT

Nababan, Lilis Uliartha Nababan. Registration Number: 2123121027. The Readability in English Zone Textbook for the Tenth Grade Students of SMA N 2 Bandar. A Thesis. English Educational Program, State University of Medan, 2017.

This study was carried out to find out the readability level of the reading texts in *English Zone* textbook by using *Flesch Reading Ease Formula* and *Cloze Test* at the tenth grade students of SMA N 2 Bandar. The population of this research was the tenth grade students of SMA N 2 Bandar in the academic year 2015/2016. The textbook consists of 181 pages with 29 reading texts in it. The researcher took 5 reading texts from the English textbook entitled *English Zone* published by Penerbit Erlangga and the tenth grade students of 30 students as the sample. The method used in this study was descriptive analysis using quantitative data. The instruments of the research were *Flesch Reading Ease Formula* and *Cloze Test*. The data were analyzed using *Flesch Reading Ease Formula* which is focused on the average number of the syllables per words. The result of the analysis by using *Flesch Reading Ease Formula* is grouped into three levels which are Very Easy, Easy, and Fairly Easy. The average readability score for all texts is 82.6 which implies that the text are in Fairly Easy Level. The result of the analysis by using *Cloze Test*, the average readability score of the five texts is 51.20% (*Independent Level*), the text are predicted to be of appropriate difficulty. It could be concluded that the reading texts were in the *English Zone* textbook were not suitable to be used by the students at the tenth grade students of SMA N 2 Bandar.

***Keywords* : Readability, Textbook, Fesch Reading Ease Formula**

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

English is a commonly used language among foreign language speakers. Many countries use English as their national language. People usually speak English when they want to interact with other people with different nationalities. English is used as a means of communication and it plays an important role in people's life, either in written or oral forms. Written forms include: textbooks, newspapers, articles (in newspapers, journalism, magazines), letters, notices, signs, etc., while, oral forms include: dialogue, news in the television or radio, conversation, speech, etc.

In Indonesia, English is the first foreign language that must be learnt as a compulsory subject from junior and senior high school, as an optional subject for university, and a local-content subject for elementary school. The students have to understand the language covering the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, different learners will have different priority in which one should be mastered the most. It also depends on the needs of the language learners.

Reading has become a very important skill for people in this modern era. It has been known that many books, articles, journals, and manuals are published in English. If someone wants to read books and articles without waiting for translated versions in their native language for a long time, they have to be able to read them in English. It takes times to translate them and when they are translated, the knowledge will not be so new anymore.

In the teaching and learning process, both the teacher and the students need some mediums of instruction to facilitate them. One of the mediums of instruction which is used prominently in every level of students in the schools is a textbook. A textbook has an important role in facilitating students studying the language, especially in senior high school.

Michael W. Apple et al (1998) state that 75 percent of time in classroom is used with the text materials. Therefore, the materials that are mostly used in the classroom are textbooks. This becomes an important task for schools that they have to provide good textbooks as one of the English material sources.

A good English textbook is readable, understandable and comprehensible for students. The text is easy to be read and understood by the students so that it will encourage them to learn English. If they have difficulties in understanding the textbook, they usually get bored and it will make them frustrated in learning English.

Roger Bowers and Christopher Brumfit (1991) define that selecting textbooks carefully is important because textbooks have a dominant role in the success of foreign language teaching and learning. Textbooks are used as a guideline by teachers to meet students' need, especially in reading comprehension. Therefore, the effect of choosing unsuitable textbook can cause students' low achievement in reading comprehension because there is no unsuitability between the textbook and the students' reading level.

To support the selection of suitable textbook, teachers need to see if the texts in the textbook are readable and suitable with the students' reading level. Nutall (1982) states that there are three points of view in selecting text for reading material. They are readability, suitability of content, and exploitability. Thus,

readability becomes one of the points that make the selection of reading materials is important. This also deals with the statement that in English language teaching and learning, teacher have a role as the ones who provide materials, not the ones who create them. Therefore, teachers have an important role in textbook selection.

Schulz (1982) states that there are three ways in measuring the readability level of the reading texts those are, by using the instructor's judgment, comprehension testing by cloze procedure, and the last by using statistical readability formulas based on some types of tally of linguistic elements. From this statement, it means that to evaluate readability of the material will be given to the students is let them to read the material, and question them about the author's message. The second technique is cloze readability procedure, which the teacher prepares a cloze passage taken from the material slated, then pupils fill in the deleted words. Another way is by using a readability formula involving use of average sentence length, vocabulary list, and syllable length to estimate reading difficulty level.

English textbook selection aims at choosing the appropriate textbook to be used by students according to their educational levels. One way to know whether an English textbook is appropriate for students is readability analysis. It is used to analyze the readability level of texts in a textbook. Readability test, as the tool for analyzing, is needed to know whether English texts provided in English textbook is difficult, plain or easy for students. The English textbook which the tenth grade students use is *English Zone* published by Penerbit Erlangga.

This textbook is chosen because the students think that the reading texts in the textbook are difficult to understand, the researcher also asked the teacher about the text in that books whether they are readable for students or not. The teacher

said that some of the students still get difficulty to understand the reading texts in the textbook.

In addition, based on the researcher's experience in teaching practice, the researcher found that there were many students who achieved the low score in reading. It was caused by their low understanding of the reading texts. From some classes, the researcher found that there were some students who understood the reading texts while others did not. Thus, students' low score caused by their low understanding of the reading texts.

Some problems about readability of reading text are recognized by the researcher from the reading text titled "Nyai Lara Kidul" in page 101 of the textbook. Students get difficulty to understand the text, because the reading text is difficult to understand, there are also unfamiliar words in the reading text, the length of the sentence is too long, and the use of grammar is quite difficult to understand. From this problem, the researcher would like to know the readability level of the reading texts of that textbook by using Flesch Reading Ease Formula and Cloze Test.

In relation to the students' understanding of texts, Parekeme and Abgor (2012) state that one of the factors determining students' understanding of a text is text readability. Thus, this becomes the reason that the researcher decides to conduct this study on analyzing the readability level of selected reading texts in the *English Zone* textbook for the tenth grade of senior high school students by Penerbit Erlangga to see their readability level. The researcher also chooses this textbook because this is claimed to allow students to practice the four-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to help them to develop their discourse competence.

This study is aimed at knowing the readability level of reading texts in *English Zone* textbook for the tenth grade of Senior High School students published by Penerbit Erlangga.

Based on the background of the study elaborated above, the problem of the study is formulated as follows: “How is the readability level of reading texts in *English Zone* textbook for the tenth grade of Senior High School Students?”

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Definition of Textbook

Textbook is considered as the primary instructional resource in schools. It plays an important role in educational programs. It is still used dominantly in teaching learning process. Textbook is used both by the teachers and the students to determine the activities in the classroom. By using textbook, the teachers can decide what and how to teach the materials based on curriculum and syllabus.

Ornstein in Reed (1998) states “ The textbook has had the longest and most obvious influence on curriculum, to the extent of, in effect, standardize the teaching and instructional practices. Thus, textbook is used to standardize the teaching and the instructional practices and finally to influence on it.

While Van Es, et.al (1984:298) stated that the textbook plays an important role because it dictates to a considerable extent the content and the form of teaching.

From the description above, the researcher concludes that a textbook is one of the primary instructional medium which is providing teaching materials and facilitate teachers and students about what and how to teach in the classroom.

Readability

Readability is one of the most important aspects that should be considered in selecting a good passage for students. Readability describes the ease with which a document can be read. Pikulski Jhon J (2002:1) stated readability is the level of ease or difficulty with which text material can be understood by a particular reader who is reading that text for a specific purpose.

Readability is a measure of the style of a piece of writing. The wise teachers will certainly take readability into account when ordering new books to their students. Readability is one of the most important aspects that should be considered in selecting a good passage for students.

While, van Els *et. Al* (1991:305) the readability of texts was investigated to obtain a standard for the relative degree of difficulty of the textbooks of which one would eventually have to be selected.

It can be synthesized that readability is concern with the ease and difficulty level of the reader in reading and understanding a text. A good text has a high readability level if the text is easy to be understood by the readers.

RESEARCH METHOD AND FINDINGS

Method

The objective of the study is to find out the readability level of the reading texts in *English Zone* textbook for tenth grade of senior high school students published *Penerbit Erlangga*..This research is categorized as descriptive quantitative research. The researcher would observe, describe, elaborate, and analyze the readability level of reading texts.

This research tried to describe the readability level of English reading texts by two approaches. First is by readability formulas, in this case are only by Flesch Reading Ease Formula. Second is by cloze procedure.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The techniques of analyzing the data will be presented as follows:

1. Counting the number of words, syllables and sentences. Then, find the average sentence length by dividing the number of words to the number of sentences. After that, count the average number of syllables per word by dividing the number of syllables to the number of words.

Dubay (2004:22) states the formula of Flesch Reading Ease is as follows:

$$\text{Score} = 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$$

Where:

Score = position on a scale of 0 (difficult) to 100 (easy), with

30 = very difficult and 70 = suitable for adult audiences

ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentence).

ASW = average number of syllable per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words).

2. Scoring the student's answer sheets to get the percentage of Cloze Test result. The correct answer was given score 1, while the wrong answer was given score 0.
3. Scoring the Cloze Test, the result summed up to get the total score of each Cloze Test.
4. Finding the percentage of the Cloze Test by using the following

formula:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100 \%$$

P = Percentage
 f = Frequency of the right
N = Number of item

5. Summarizing all the students' scores of the Cloze Test to find the average of the score and interpret them into three levels as follows:
 - a. The average score is between 50-60% = Independent Level
 - b. The average score is between 35-50% = Instructional Level
 - c. The average score is below 35% = Frustration Level

6. Predicting the students' scores into the following four groups as follows :
 - a. 60 percent or above correct – text is predicted to be quite easy.
 - b. 35-59 percent correct - text is predicted to be of appropriate difficulty.
 - c. 20-34 percent correct - text is predicted to be very difficult.
 - d. 0-19 percent correct - text is predicted to be inappropriate, far too difficult, Allington and Strange (1980:107).

Findings

After analyzing the texts, the findings of this study could be seen below:

1. The first entitled *Dear Diary* gains the cloze test score 60%. The text is in Independent Level. The text is predicted to be quite easy. Students get the high score because the text is a short text. The topic of the text is familiar in their daily life so they can understand the text easily.

2. The second entitled *Gatot Kaca* gains the cloze test score 49.90%. The text is in Instructional Level. The text is predicted to be of appropriate difficulty. It consists of 420 numbers of words. The text is quite long and the vocabularies are unfamiliar to them. They need teacher to instruct them in understanding the text.

3. The third entitled *Hercules* gains the cloze test score 54.67%. The text is in Independent Level. The text is predicted to be appropriate difficulty. It consists of 640 numbers of words. The text is quite long and the vocabularies are unfamiliar to them. They need teacher to instruct them in understanding the text.
4. The fourth entitled *Nyai Lara Kidul* gains the cloze test score 32.64%. The text is in Frustration Level. The text is predicted to be very difficult. It consists of 889 numbers of words. The text is very long and the vocabularies are unfamiliar to them. They need teacher to instruct them in understanding the text.
5. The fifth entitled *Romeo and Juliet* gains the cloze test score 58.75%. The text is in Independent Level. The text is predicted to be appropriate difficulty. The text is quite long and the vocabularies are unfamiliar to them. They need teacher to instruct them in understanding the text.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Based on the research finding, the researcher concludes that reading texts of English Zone Textbook published by Penerbit Erlangga in 2010 are in the *Independent level* and the text are predicted to be of appropriate difficulty, it means that the students may need some continuing assistance with the texts to the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar, and based on the Flesch Reading Ease Formula the readability level are in the *Easy Level*, this score shows that the texts are easy to be understood. Therefore, the researcher takes a conclusion that this textbook is not appropriate to be used by the students at the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri 2 Bandar.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, there are some suggestions which can be recommended. The suggestions are intended to principals, to English teachers, to the publishers and authors, and to other researchers.

1. To principals

The principals must be careful in dealing with publishers to the textbooks offered by publishers. The principal has to make sure that the textbook have a good quality before they are distributed to the students to be used in the instructional activities.

2. To English teachers

The English teachers should not depend only on one textbook in using instructional materials. The English teachers should prepare and select teaching materials well, not only from one textbook, but also from other sources. The teachers have to select a suitable textbook for their students which are readable, understandable, and interesting.

3. To Publishers and authors

The publishers and the authors are expected to pay attention in producing the better textbooks which match with the level of the students' ability as the good textbook can help both the teacher and the students to reach the goal of teaching and learning English.

4. To Other Researchers

There are still so many textbooks offered by other publishers. The other researchers can use them as the subject of the research. For those interested in studying about the readability, there are still many readability formulas which can be used by researchers to analyze the readability of particular textbook.

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