THE READABILITY OF ENGLISH TEXTBOOK FOR THE TENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMK NEGERI I BINJAI

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ARTIKEL

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ABSTRACT

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This research was aimed to find out whether the English reading texts are appropriate or not in terms of the readability level for the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai. This study focuses on the readability level of English reading texts for grade X students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai majoring in Banking class in the academic year 2015/2016. This study is categorized as descriptive quantitative research. The data of the study was seven reading texts from an English textbook entitled Bahasa Inggris published by Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan in 2014 with various length and genres as the source of data tested to 30 students as the research sample. The instruments of the research were Flesch-Kincaid Grade level and Cloze Procedure Test. For the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Formula, the researcher counts the words, syllables, sentences, the average number of words per sentence and the average number of syllables per words of the reading text to determine the level of readability of the English texts in students' textbook. The cloze test was used to assess the difficulty in terms of a reader's understanding and response to the structure of the language of a text. The results of the study show that based on the cloze test result, the researcher gets the average score of 7 reading texts is 57.39% and based on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Formula the average score is 6 so it can be concluded that reading texts of Bahasa Inggris published by Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan in 2014 are in the *Independent level* because the reading texts are readable and understandable to the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai, and the texts are predicted to be quite easy. Therefore, the researcher takes a conclusion that this textbook is not appropriate to be used by the students at the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai because they can read them by their own.

Keywords : *Readability, English Textbook, Students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai.*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Reading is a vital medium of communication. It plays an important role in developing students' English mastery. In our society, as knowledge rapidly accumulates and is committed to print, greater demands are continually being made on the ability of people to read (Anderson, Berry and Millicent 2006:3). In addition, Alyousef (2006:64) also states that reading can be seen as an "interactive" process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the text as she/he tries to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used.

Reading is used by the readers to obtain information, the ideas would be conveyed by the author through the written language. Budiantari et al (2013:4) state that reading can be said as a skill that plays a very important role on teaching learning activity. By reading people will be able to get many kinds of information. We can get many information or knowledge from magazine, newspaper, and book. Hermida (2009:23) states that reading an academic text does not simply involve finding information on the text itself. Rather, it is a process of working with the text. When reading an academic text, the reader recreates the meaning of the text, together with the author.

In teaching English, a textbook takes an important role in facilitating teaching learning activities especially in improving the reading skill. Rahmawati and Lestari (2012:1) state that textbook is a kind of teaching and learning media

that most commonly used in every teaching and learning process although many innovated media have been developed to help the educators to teach in new ways. Selecting a textbook with good quality content can help the students to improve their learning outcomes. Textbooks are generally sensitive to the students' needs, it should be well-designed and well-written so it can be used effectively in the teaching learning process. A good English textbook is readable, understandable and comprehensible for students. They are easy to read and understand. It will motivate them to learn English. If they face difficulty in understanding the textbook, they usually get bored and it will make them frustated in learning English. Furthermore, Davison (1986:5) also states his opinion as follows:

> "A text that is too difficult wastes the efforts of the students without giving them any information or arousing their interest. The same is true of a textbook which is too easy, offering no incentive to learn something new and depriving the subject matter of interest. Furthermore, a textbook which is too easy or too difficult can not offer its student readers enough opportunity to learn vocabulary and complex constructions or more about the conventions of written language."

Most of students complain about the choice of textbook because the texts in the book are difficult to read and to understand. It is because the content and the grammar are difficult and presents the unfamiliar ideas to the students. Peng (2015:37) states that though many factors can lead students to not read the textbook, one of the endogenous variables that instructors can control is the readability of the textbook. Furthermore, Dubay (2004:3) states that readability is what makes some texts easier to read than others. It is often confused with legibility, which concerns typeface and layout. All the stated reasons give strong

argument why the high quality of textbook is really important to the students because it plays very crucial parts in teaching and learning processes.

Based on the preliminary observation of the English teacher of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai the existence of those unfamiliar words and grammar makes students difficult in translating and understanding the words. The failure of students to grasp the meaning of some vocabularies listed in a text will then cause to students' failure to understand and comprehend the real meaning of a text. If that happens, students will find it hard to improve their reading comprehension ability due to the appearance of the low frequency words which they do not understand.

From seven reading texts provided in the textbook, the students admitted that a text entitled B.J. HABIBIE has the most difficult words, especially in the sixth paragraph written as follows:

In 1974, Suharto requested Habibie to return to Indonesia as part of Suharto's drive to develop the country. Habibie initially served as a special assistant to Ibnu Sutowo, the CEO of the state oil company Pertamina. Two years later, in 1976, Habibi was made Chief Executive Officer of the new state-owned enterprise Industri Pesawat Terbang Nusantara (IPTN). In 1978, he was appointed as Minister of Research and Technology. Habibie was elected vice president in March 1998. On 21 May 1998, Suharto publicly announced his resignation and Habibie was immediately sworn in as president. Habibie's government stabilized the economy in the face of the Asian financial crisis and the chaos of the last few months of Suharto's presidency.

From the paragraph above, the students noticed some difficult words in the paragraph such as *initially* 'awalnya', *enterprise* 'perusahaan', *elected* 'dipilih', *resignation* 'pengunduran diri', *sworn* 'bersumpah', *chaos* 'kekacauan'. They explained that they find the words very seldom and even never heard the words in the daily conversation. The unfamiliar words make students difficult in translating

and in understanding the words. The students cannot grasp the meaning of some vocabularies and the grammar listed in a text can make the students fail to understand and comprehend the real meaning of a text. That is the reason why it is hard for the students to improve their reading comprehension ability due to the appearance of the low frequency words which they do not understand.

Ren (2010:232) indicates that it is necessary to make an effective investigation of genre in order to get a better understanding of its realization form the text. He, furthermore, points out that the mastery of a particular genre could improve a student's capability to get a thorough comprehension of a text realizing that genre or to compose a good passage.

For that reason, it is basically important to introduce students to the genre of texts in order to ease them to grasp the ideas of a text. There are about 13 genres of text which are generally taught in academic field, specifically in Vocational High School. They are basically differed by the purposes and the rhetorical structure of each genre.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Definition of Textbook

The textbook is an important resource for teachers in assisting students learn. It is considered as the primary instructional resource in school and it plays an important role in educational programs. Brown (2000:136) states that the most obvious and most common form of material support for language instruction

comes through textbooks. Textbook is a set of teaching and learning guideline and used both of teacher and students to determine the activities in the classroom.

Moreover, the textbook is intended for students to meet their needs. Mohammad and Kumari (2007:2) state that curricula and the textbooks should be more meaningful and relevant for the life experiences of the students and should prepare them for real life. By using textbook, the teacher can decide what and how materials which are determined by curriculum and syllabus. Because of that, it is important for teachers to be able to choose the good textbook as guidance in handling learning situations.

A good textbook should fit with the curriculum, students and teacher. Nuttall (1989:170) states that a good textbook should fulfil some criteria such as suitability of content, exploitability and readability.

Understanding of Reading

Reading has very important social role in our life. Reading is used by the readers to obtain information, this would be submitted by the author through the written language. Moreover, reading is a language skill that related to the other skills. The main purpose in reading activity is to find and to get information and also to understand the meaning of the passage.

By reading people will be able to get information about many kinds of information. Budiantari et al (2013:4) state that it is necessary to exploit reading in language learning process. By providing students a good reading material, teachers can automatically support the students to do optimum reading. There are

central ideas in behind reading such as the idea of meaning, the transfer of meaning from one mind to another, the transfer of a message from the author to reader, how we get meaning by reading, and how the reader, the author and the text all contribute to the process.

Based on the statement above, the researcher conclude that reading is a meaningful interpretation of printed or written verbal symbols. It means that reading is a process of constructing the meaning through printed words messages; get the meaning of some words from text. Therefore, reading can involve perceiving, achieving meaning and reading the ideas that is intended by the author.

Readability

There are several definitions of readability proposed by linguists. Pikulski (2002) states that 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. Peng (2015:37) states that readability refers to the general difficulty level of written material which can affect readers' comprehension. Those definitions point out that readability has been associated with interest and difficulty level of a text. It can be concluded that if a certain text is written as attractive and simple as possible, and easy to be understood, the readers will receive either information or message easily. On the other hand, a text with high level of readability will be easier to understand than with a low readability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

Methodology

This research is categorized as descriptive quantitative research. Williams (2007:70) states that the quantitative method provides an objective measure of reality. Quantitative research is the research that relies primarily on the collection of quantitative data. Quantitative data take the form of numbers. Quantitative data can be produced by a variety of research methods such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, documents, etc. 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-Kincaid Grade Level. Second is by cloze procedure.

Techniques of Analyzing the Data

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

1. Scoring the cloze test to get the percentage of cloze test result. In scoring the test, the researcher will count the correct answer and then divided by the number of items and multiplied by 100%.

$$P = \frac{fx}{N} \ x \ 100\%$$

Where:

P   = percentage

Fx = frequency of the correct answer

N   = the number of items

2. Scoring the whole cloze tests to find the mean in order to show the readability level of a text.

$$Cs = \frac{P1 + P2 + P3 + \cdots Pn}{n}$$

Where:

Cs = total cloze score

P1 = percentage of cloze test from the first close test's score

n = the total of whole cloze test

3. Counting the number of words 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.

The formula of Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level is written below:

FKRS = (O.39 X ASL) + (11.8 X ASW) − 15.59

Where:

FKRS = Flesch-Kincaid Readability Score

ASL = Average sentence length in words or average number of words in sentence (number of words divided by the number of sentences).

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

4. Summing up the result of the research to find the average of the score and interpret them into three levels as follows:

The average score is over 53%   = Independent Level.

The average score is between 44% - 53%   = Instructional Level.

The average score is below 44%   = Frustration Level.

5.   Predict the students' scores into the following four groups as follows:

- 6 0 percent or above correct − text is predicted to be quite easy.

- 3 5 -59 percent correct - text is predicted to be of appropriate difficulty.

- 2 0 -34 percent correct - text is predicted to be very difficult.

- 0 -19 percent correct - text is predicted to be inappropriate, far too difficult.

Findings

The finding is the description of the readability of the textbook *Bahasa Inggris* published by Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan in 2014 used by the students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai. After analyzing the texts, the findings of this study could be seen below:

The first entitled *Meeting My Idol* gains the cloze test 55.77%. The text is in *independent level.* The text is predicted to be quite easy. Students get the high score because the topic of the text is familiar in their daily life.

The second entitled *Didi's diary* gains the cloze test 45.93%. The text is in *instructional level.* The text is predicted to be appropriate difficulty. The text is

quite long and vocabularies are unfamiliar to them. They need teacher to instruct them in understanding the text.

The third text entitled *B.J. Habibie* gains the cloze test 41.88%. The text is in *instructional level.* The text is predicted to be appropriate difficulty. The text is quite long and vocabularies are unfamiliar to them. They need teacher to instruct them in understanding the text.

The fourth text entitled *Cut Nyak Dhien* gains the cloze test 37.95%. The text is in *instructional level.* The text is predicted to be appropriate difficulty. The uses of vocabularies are quite difficult that they are rarely used. They need teacher to instruct them in understanding the text.

The fifth text entitled *Issumbhosi* gains the cloze test 76.45%. The text is in *independent level.* The text is predicted to be quite easy. Students get the high score because the topic of the text is familiar in their daily life. They often listen to the text before because it is a fairy tale.

The text entitled *The Legend of Malin Kundang* gains the cloze test 71.55%. The text is in *independent level.* The text is predicted to be quite easy. Students get the high score because the topic of the text is familiar in their daily life. They often listen to the text before because it is a fairy tale.

The text entitled *Interview with the Wright Brothers* gains the cloze test 72.22%. 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. It is 344 numbers of

words and only 12 deleted words. Furthermore, the vocabularies on the texts are familiar in their daily life so they can understand the text easily.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the research finding, the researcher concludes that reading texts of Bahasa Inggris published by Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan in 2014 are in the *Independent level* because the reading texts are readable and understandable to the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai, and the texts are predicted to be quite easy. Therefore, the researcher takes a conclusion that this textbook is not appropriate to be used by the students at the tenth grade students of SMK Negeri 1 Binjai because they can read them by their own.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the researcher proposes some suggestions for the betterment of the English teaching and learning process. The suggestions are described as follows:

1. For the English teachers

   a. The teachers should give more guidance in the reading by developing readiness, helping with the new concept and unfamiliar vocabulary, and providing reading purposes to aid comprehension.

   b. While the teachers have authority in choosing textbooks, the teachers should consider the suitability between students reading ability with textbook readability level.

2. For the students

   a. The students are required to improve their vocabulary and grammar mastery to support them in exploring their understanding toward textbooks written in English.

   b. They also have to be more active asking the teachers' guidance in reading this textbook for their academic success.

3. For the publishers and the authors

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

4. For the researcher

   a. The researcher should apply her knowledge about the readability investigation to help teachers of the other subjects in choosing the readable textbook written in English for students.

   b. It is suggested for the other researchers to do research related to readability because nowadays, there are many books written in English for various subject matters.

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