

THE CORRELATIONS AMONG READABILITY LEVEL OF TEXTS, READING HABIT, AND READING ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF MTS AL-QUR'AN HARSALLAKUM BENGKULU

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Abstract: The low reading performance of Indonesian students is caused by some factors, namely, the degree of difficulty of the texts or readability level, reading habit, and reading achievement. This study was conducted using correlational research design to know the correlation among readability level of the texts, reading habit, and reading achievement of the eight grade students of MTs Al-Quran Harsallakum Bengkulu. This study involved the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Quran Harsallakum Bengkulu (112 students) in academic year 2014/2015. The sample of this study was 60 students. Test of readability level of the texts, reading habit questionnaire, and reading achievement test were used in order to collect the data for this study. The findings of this study showed that there was a positive significant correlation ($r=0.925$) between readability level of the texts and reading achievement. There was also a positive significant correlation ($r=0.890$) between reading habit and reading achievement and there was a positive significant correlation ($r=0.992$) between readability level of the texts and reading habit. This study also showed that readability level of the texts gave the contribution to reading achievement (R-Square=0.855) and reading habit gave the contribution to reading achievement (R-Square=0.792).

Keywords: *correlations, readability level of the texts, reading habit, reading achievement.*

Fernquest (2012), the writer of online news of *Learning from News*, states that English, as one of the international languages, has an urgent role in the preparation of AEC 2015 since it can be used as a means of communication with other ASEAN countries. This means that Indonesian people have to have a good communication in English in order to maintain a connection with other ASEAN countries that are involved in AEC. This is in line with what Lauder (2008, p. 10) states that English, as a foreign language, is the important

means to establish good communication with people from other countries especially in this global era.

Most of people in the world use English in their global communication. Moreover, Lauder (2008, p. 10) states that the students who have good ability in English, will be able to communicate well and get much information. By having good proficiency in English, the students are able to expand the relationship with other people from foreign countries. Lauder (2008, p. 11) also

explains that by learning English, students can add the knowledge of science and technology easily because most of the sources are written in English.

As a member of ASEAN, Indonesia must face The ASEAN Economic Community or AEC in 2015. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is a trade bloc agreement by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations that is enhancing competitiveness for economic growth and development through closer economic integration, characterized by single market and production base, equitable economic development and global integration in all ASEAN countries. This situation forces Indonesian people to get involved so that they can compete with other ASEAN countries. In relation to this, having a good communication in English, Indonesia people can compete with other people from ASEAN countries that come to Indonesia.

In learning English, there are four skills that must be learnt by students: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading is one of the keys that improves learning outcomes in many fields of study. Yilmaz (2012) explain, "reading is often characterized as a receptive skill in which one looks at and attempts to understand what has been written" (p. 823).

The importance of reading in English is highlighted by Hamra and Syatriana (2010, p. 28) who state, "reading is an inseparable part of any English course". It means that reading is needed in every subject. Reading also has relationship with students' achievement. According to Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990, as cited in Law, 2012, p. 7), reading is highly

related to academic learning and hence useful as an index of general academic achievement.

Reading, both in English and Bahasa Indonesia, is important. However, some issues related to Indonesian students' reading happen. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2011 showed that the average reading achievement score in Bahasa Indonesia of the fourth grade students in Indonesia was 428. This score was significantly lower than the benchmark of the PIRLS scale that was 500 (IEA, 2012). Furthermore, based on the result of Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) study in 2012, it shows that the rank of Indonesian students' reading quality was at rank 64 out of 65 countries with the score 396. This score was below than the OECD average score that was 496 (OECD, 2013, p. 5).

The low reading performance of Indonesian students can be caused by some factors. One of them may be related to the degree of difficulty of the texts or readability level. Readability is an attempt to match the reading level of written material to the reading with understanding level of the reader. Pikulski (2002, p.1) states, "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".

The concept of readability by Dale and Chall (1949, p. 19) include the concept of interest and the ease or difficulty with which the textbook may be understood. DuBay (2007, p. 6) explains, "readability is the ease of reading created by the choice of content, style, design, and organization that fit the prior

knowledge, reading skill, interest, and motivation of the audience”.

Armbruster (1988, p. 3) claims that sometimes students learn textbooks that are difficult to read, understand, and learn. Armbruster (1988, p. 3) further states that even if students are reading a textbook with a reported readability level appropriate for their grade, it is no guarantee that the textbook will be easy for them to read, understand, and learn. Every text has its own challenge. Teachers' achievement to determine readability levels of the textbook is crucial for effective teaching and learning (Kasule, 2011, p. 64). As one of the resources in teaching, texts should be selected with certain criteria so that they are appropriate to the students' level.

The second factor that causes the students' low achievement in reading is related to students' reading habits. Reading is a very important issue which is not only about enjoyment but also about a necessity. According to Hassan, Olaneni, and Mathew (2012, p. 239), reading habit refers to how often, how much, and what students read. Sangkaeo (1999, p. 3) defines reading habit as “the behavior which expresses the likeness of reading and tastes of reading”. Students enjoy reading if they possess reading habit. It means that students should like reading and see reading as a source for pleasure in getting knowledge.

Reading habit is very important for students. Diem (2011, p. 5) states that students' reading habit could be developed by living around many books because they can choose books that they want to read. Furthermore, Tella and Akande (2007, p. 118) believe that reading habit has very essential role to students in getting

knowledge. By having reading habit, they can acquire the knowledge and get the success which is the primary reason for reading. According to Joseph (2013) “every child must desire to read not only for information and recreation but also for social and personal needs which reading can do much to develop” (p.354).

Based on the explanation above, the writer was interested to find out whether there was a significant correlation among readability level of the texts, reading habit, and reading achievement or not.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a correlational study. Creswell (2005, p. 325) points out that the objectives of the correlation study are to find out whether or not there is a relationship among the variables, to calculate the strength of the relationship, and to determine the significance of relationship.

In line with this, the writer investigated the correlations among readability level of the text, reading habit, and reading achievement of the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu.

There were two independent variables and one dependent variable in this study. Independent variables were the readability level of the text and reading habit of the students, while dependent variable was the reading achievement of the students.

The population of this study was the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu in academic year 2014/2015. They were 112 students consisting of 52 males and 60 females. In this study, the writer used population-sampling technique. Therefore, all members of the population were involved as the

sample of the study.

The data in this study were quantitative data. There were three kinds of technique for collecting the data. The first was documentation. It was used to get information of the readability level of the text. The second was questionnaire. It was used to measure students' reading habit. The last was by the test. It was used to measure reading achievement. The documentation in this study consisted of the texts used by the teacher and the students. The writer used all the texts from the textbook and counted them. There were 11 texts in the English textbook used by the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu. The writer used

Flesch Reading Ease formula to measure the readability level of the text. Crossley, Allen, and McNamara (2011, p. 90) explained the Flesch Reading Ease readability formula in their article. The formula was based on the number of words per sentence (sentence length) and the number of syllables per word (word length).

The writer used a ready-made questionnaire to measure students' reading habit. The questionnaire was developed by Janthong and Sripethpun (2010). It consisted of 20 items measuring reading habit of the students. The last instrument was reading achievement test. After counting the readability level of the textbook that was used by the English teacher, the level of students' reading was known. Next, the writer gave the reading test and the texts in the reading test were appropriate to the students' level.

The data were analyzed by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation whether it was positive or negative correlation, significant or not. The

value of the correlation coefficient was obtained or calculated by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 19.0 versions. The writer also analyzed the data using multiple regression analysis which was used to find out whether readability level of the text and reading habit were good predictor to reading achievement or not.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There were 11 texts in the English textbook used by the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu (see Table 1).

Table 1
Readability Scores and Levels of 11 Texts

No	Titles of Passages	Scores	Levels
1	The Life of Endangered Animals	54.2	Fairly Difficult
2	All about Flowers	75	Fairly Easy
3	Soccer	81.6	Easy
4	Transporter: Save time and Energy Earth	75.6	Fairly Easy
5	Altering Accidents: Love Canal	61.4	Fairly Difficult
6	Healthy Eating	88.2	Easy Level
7	What Do We Eat?	72.9	Fairly Easy
8	The History of Hamburger	49.8	Difficult
9	You Are What You Drink	60.8	Fairly difficult
10	The Golden Compass	69.2	Fairly easy
11	Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom	67.2	Standard

The writer used Flesch Reading Ease formula which is available online to measure the readability level of the texts. Crossley, Allen, and McNamara (2011, p. 90) explain that Flesch Reading Ease readability formula based on the number of words per sentence (sentence length) and the number of syllables per word (word length).

The texts that were used on the reading achievement test were "Healthy Eating" which had score

88.2 and classified as easy level, “What Do We Eat?” which had score 72.9 and classified as fairly easy level, “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom” which had score 67.2 and classified as standard level, “You Are What You Drink” which had score 60.8 and classified as fairly difficult level, and “The History of Hamburger” which had score 49.8 and classified as difficult level.

The Results of Reading Habit Questionnaire

The students were given the reading habit questionnaire and were directed by the writer to fill in the questionnaire one by one from number one until number 20. The results of the questionnaire are as follows.

Table 2
The Results of Reading Habit Questionnaire (N=60)

No	The Level of Reading Habit	The Number of	Mean Score
1.	Very Poor	2 (3.33 %)	58
2	Poor	5 (8.33 %)	67.2
3	Average	17 (28.33 %)	72.77
4	Good	16 (26.7 %)	77.88
5	Very Good	20 (33.33 %)	85.90

The results showed that two students (3.33%) had very poor reading habit with 58 as the mean score, five students (8.33%) had poor reading habit with 67.2 as the mean score, 17 students (28.33%) had average reading habit with 72.77 as the mean score, 16 students (26.7%) had good reading habit, with mean score 77.88, and 20 students (33.33%) had very good reading habit, with 85.90 as the mean score.

The Results of Reading Achievement Test

After the students did the questionnaire, they did the reading

achievement test. The test consisted of 20 items and they had to do the test in one hour. The reading achievement test was in the form of essay test that consisted of five texts which had five readability levels which covers easy, fairly easy, standard, fairly difficult, and difficult. The results of reading achievement test are as follow.

Table 3
The Results of Reading Achievement Test (N=60)

No	The Level of Reading Achievement	The Number of Students	Mean Score
1	Very Poor	6 (10 %)	34.17
2	Poor	8 (13.33 %)	50.63
3	Average	22 (36.67 %)	64.55
4	Good	21 (35 %)	78.10
5	Excellent	3 (5 %)	95

The results showed that there were six students (10%) with mean score 34.17 which were categorized as very poor, eight students (13.33%) with mean score 50.63 which were categorized as poor, 22 students (36.67%) with mean score 64.55 which were categorized as average, 21 students (35%) with mean score 78.10 which were categorized as good, and three students (5%) with mean score 95, which were categorized as excellent.

The Results of Correlation Statistical Analysis

In order to find out whether or not there was a significant correlation between readability level of the texts and reading achievement, reading habit and reading achievement, and readability level of the texts and reading habit, Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula was applied.

The first analysis was whether or not there was a significant correlation between readability level of the texts

and reading achievement of the students. Before the data were analyzed by using correlation statistical analysis, the results of reading achievement tests were classified into five based on the levels of readability of the text. The classifications are as follows.

Table 4
The Results of Reading Achievement based on Readability Level of the Texts (N=60)

Texts	Readability Levels (Scores)	No. Items	Mean Scores of the Achieveme
Healthy Eating	Easy Level (88.2)	1-4	3.43
What Do We Eat??"	Fairly Easy Level (72.9)	5-8	2.63
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom	Standard Level (67.2)	9-12	2.43
You Are What You Drink	Fairly Difficult Level (60.8)	13-16	2.68
The History of Hamburger	Difficult Level (49.8)	17-20	2.00

The text consisted of five levels of readability and the writer found out the mean score of the achievement of each level. The mean score was correlated to the score of each readability level. T

The data were analyzed by using Pearson Product Moment correlation statistical analysis. Table 5 shows the results of correlation statistical analysis between readability level of the texts and reading achievement test.

The results of correlation statistical analysis showed that there was a positive correlation between readability levels of the texts (five levels) and reading achievement test. The r-value was 0.925. The r-obtained was higher than r-table, i.e. 0.805 and p value i.e. 0.012 was lower than 0.05. It meant that there was a significant

correlation between readability level of the texts and the students' reading achievement.

Table 5
Correlation Analysis between Readability Level of the Texts and Reading Achievement (N=60)

Variables	r-Value	Sig.(1-tailed)
Readability Level of the Texts	0.925	0.012
Reading Achievement		

The second analysis was whether or not there was a significant correlation between reading habit and reading achievement of the students. Table 6 shows the results of correlation statistical analysis between reading habit and reading achievement test.

Table 6
Correlation Analysis between Reading Habit and Reading Achievement (N=60)

Variables	r-Value	sig. (1-tailed)
Reading Habit	0.890	0.022
Reading Achievement Test		

The results of correlation statistical analysis showed that there was a positive significant correlation between reading habit and reading achievement test (60 students). The r-value was 0.890 with significant level 0.022. The r-obtained was greater than r-table, i.e. 0.805 and p value i.e. 0.022 was lower than 0.05. It means that there was a significant correlation between reading habit and the students' reading achievement.

The last analysis was whether or not there was a significant correlation between readability level of the texts and reading habit of the students. Before the data were analyzed by using correlation statistical analysis, the texts were classified into five based on the categories of readability level (Table 7).

Table 7
Readability Level of the Texts (N=60)

Texts	Readability Levels (Scores)	No. Items	Mean Scores of
Healthy Eating	Easy Level (88.2)	1-4	3.43
What Do We Eat?"	Fairly Easy Level (72.9)	5-8	2.63
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom	Standard Level (67.2)	9-12	2.43
You Are What You Drink	Fairly Difficult Level (60.8)	13-16	2.68
The History of Hamburger	Difficult Level (49.8)	17-20	2.00

The higher the score indicated the easier the text. The easiest text was “Healthy Eating” with score 88.2 and the most difficult text was “The History of Hamburger” with score 49.8. Table 8 shows the results of students’ reading habit after they were given a questionnaire.

Table 8
The Results of Students’ Reading Habit (N=60)

No	The Level of Reading Habit	The Number of Students (Percentages)	Mean Scores
1.	Very Poor	2 Students (3.33)	58
2.	Poor	5 Students (8.33)	67.2
3.	Average	17 Students (28.33)	72.77
4.	Good	16 Students (26.7)	77.88
5.	Very Good	20 Students (33.33 %)	85.90

The results showed that there were two students (3.33%) with mean score 58 had very poor reading habit, five students (8.33%) had poor reading habit, 17 students (28.33%) mean score 72.77 had average reading habit, 16 students (26.7%) with mean score 77.88 had good reading habit, and 20 students (33.33%) with mean score 85.90 had very good reading habit.

Table 9 shows the results of correlation statistical analysis between readability level of the texts

and reading habit of the students.

Table 9
Correlation Analysis between Readability Level of the Texts and Reading Habit (N=60)

Variables	r-Value	Sig. (1-tailed)
Readability Level of the Texts	0.992	0.000
Reading Habit		

The results of correlation statistical analysis showed that there was a positive significant correlation between readability levels of the texts and reading habit (60 students). The r-value was 0.992 with significant level 0.000. The r- obtained was higher than r-table, i.e. 0.805. It means that there was a positive significant correlation between readability level of the texts and reading habit. It can be inferred that the easier the text (the higher score of readability), the higher the students’ reading habit.

The Results of Linier Regression Statistical Analysis

It was interesting to see whether readability level of the text and reading habit are a good predictor for reading achievement. Table 11 shows summary statistics of linier regression statistical analysis.

Table 11
Summary Statistics of Linier Regression Statistical Analysis

Predictor Variables	R Square	F	Sig. (1-tailed)
Readability Level	0.855	17.664	0.025
Reading Habit	0.792	11.412	0.043

The results of linier regression statistical analysis showed that readability level of the texts is a good predictor to reading achievement. The coefficient of R Square was 0.855. It means that readability level gives the contribution to reading achievement (85.5%). In this case, Ha4 was accepted and H04 was rejected

because F -obtained (17.664) was greater than F -table (10.128).

For reading habit, the coefficient of R Square was 0.792. It means that reading habit gives the contribution to reading achievement (79.2%). In this case, H_{a5} was accepted and H_{05} was rejected because F -obtained (11.412) was greater than F -table (10.128).

INTERPRETATIONS

The findings of this study are interpreted as follows. First, this study found that there was a positive significant correlation ($r=0.925$) between readability level of the texts and reading achievement. The finding was in line with the study done by Payani (2002, p. 64) including 72 students of the state high schools in Palembang focusing on the readability levels of the EFL texts and the reading comprehension levels. Payani's study showed that there was a relationship between the readability level of the EFL materials and the level of students' comprehension.

This finding was supported by McLaughlin (1969, p. 640) who found that the readability level of a text is one of the factors that determine the understanding of a subject by the students. A positive significant result indicated that the lower level of the text (the higher score of the readability level of the texts), the higher students' reading achievement. Therefore, the English teacher at MTs Al-Quran Harsallakum Bengkulu can take this finding as a consideration in teaching English. The English teacher should know whether or not the level of readability level of the texts that they used in the classroom is appropriate for the students.

Second, this study found that there was a significant correlation

($r=0.890$) between reading habit and reading achievement. This finding was in line with the study conducted by Gaona and Gonzalez (2011, p. 66) who found that there was a close relationship between reading habit and achievement of psychology students. Royce's study (1995, p. 1) also proved that students could improve their reading skill when they enjoy reading.

The results of this study showed that there was a correlation between reading habit and students' achievement. In addition, the finding of this present study was also supported by Palani (2012, p. 91) who state, "effective reading is important avenue of effective learning and reading is interrelated with the total educational process and hence, educational success requires successful reading habit".

The result of this finding indicated that the higher reading habit of the students, the higher reading achievement of the students. The finding implicated that the students at MTs Al-Quran Harsallakum have good reading habit and good achievement in reading. Therefore, there should be a reading program for all students of MTs Al-Quran Harsallakum Bengkulu to make them have good reading habit. There should be sustainable reading activity at MTs Al-Quran Harsallakum Bengkulu that makes the students know how to enjoy reading as a pleasure activity.

Third, this study found that there was a significant correlation ($r=0.992$) between readability level of the texts and reading habit. It means that there was a positive significant correlation between readability level of the texts and reading habit. This finding was supported by Handayani's study

(2014, p. 18) focusing on the readability of science textbook used in a secondary school in the town of Surakarta. This study showed that reading habit is also one of the factors of the low readability of the students who do not like reading English text. From this finding, the higher readability level of the texts (the easier the texts), the higher students' reading habit. Therefore, it can be interpreted that to make the students have good reading habit, they should be given the easier text first to make them enjoy in reading before they learn how to love reading.

It was also interesting to see the result of the fourth and the fifth findings. The results explained not only the association of the variables, but also whether the variables gave the contribution to the other variables. The fourth finding was: readability level of the text gave the contribution to reading achievement. The coefficient of R Square was 0.855. It means that readability level gave the contribution to reading achievement (85.5%). This finding indicated that the English teacher can predict their students reading achievement by looking at the readability of the textbook used in the classroom. If the textbook is too difficult for the students, the students reading achievement will low. A proper textbook that contains proper reading text is needed by the students to help them in learning reading comprehension in the classroom.

Lastly, this study found that reading habit gave the contribution to reading achievement. The coefficient of R Square was 0.792. It means that reading habit gave the contribution to reading achievement (79.2%). The finding implicated that the teacher should know their students' reading

habit before the English class started. By knowing the students' reading habit, the teacher can know who will be success and who will be fail in reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

There were five conclusions based on the findings of this study. First, the result of the statistical analysis showed that there was a positive significant correlation between readability level of the texts and reading achievement of the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu (r -value=0.925). Second, there was a positive significant correlation between reading habit and reading achievement of the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu (r -value=0.890). Third, there was a positive significant correlation between readability level of the texts and reading habit of the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu (r -value=0.992). Fourth, readability level of the texts gave the contribution to reading achievement of the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu (R Square 0.855). Lastly, reading habit gave the contribution to reading achievement of the eighth grade students of MTs Al-Qur'an Harsallakum Bengkulu (R Square 0.792).

SUGGESTIONS

For further study, there are two suggestions. Firstly, it is suggested to whom who are interested in this study to have more size sample to get better result and generalization. Secondly, it is suggested to use more items in reading texts which are consisted of more various level of readability.

There are two suggestions for the

English teacher at MTs Al-Quran Harsallakum Bengkulu. Firstly, it is suggested for her to make reading program that can create a good reading habit of the students. Secondly, it is highly recommended for the English teacher to not use inappropriate English texts that readability level of the texts is too difficult or too easy for the students in daily activity in the classroom.

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