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Readability of Reading Texts in Student's Handbook at The Ninth Grade of SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam

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ABSTRACT

Readability is an indicator that used to describe whether a text more or less available to the reader level. This study attempts to find out the appropriateness of the English reading texts in terms of the readability level for the target students. This study is designed by using descriptive qualitative method. The main data used is student's handbook. The texts were consists of 7 descriptive texts and 1 narrative text and then those data were collected by using documentary technique. In calculating readability level, the researcher employed the Flesch readability formula. The results show that the average readability level of eight reading texts was at level seven grade student by showing the average of the percentage score was 72, 96%. Then, from the eight reading texts were categorized into four levels, namely: there are 2 texts of Easy level, Fairly Easy as many as 3 texts, Standard for 1 texts, and Fairly Difficult for 2 texts. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that those texts were disagree for the target students. Thus, for teachers, English Teacher particularly, should be wise in choosing a textbook as material for teaching students must be match with their capabilities level.

ARTICLE INFO

I. INTRODUCTION

As known that English Language has been a common language or an international language in this world, even many countries use it as their national language i.e. Singapore and Indian. This evidence indicates that English language could not be denied as a means to connect each people who are different in nationality from each other. The adoption of English language by many countries is something usual, particularly in Indonesia has brought about a tremendous change in the educational policies of the country. Consequently, some pedagogy relating to English language teaching, namely the methodology, curriculum, and evaluation is been given substantial attention so as to improve the competency of its usage in the country. It means that English is the foreign language that have to be learned in Indonesia after national language, Bahasa Indonesia. The government has made a regulation that English must be taught in school. In fact, English has been taught to Indonesian's students starting from the elementary school, junior high school and college.

Furthermore, in English commonly recognized there are four skills that should be mastered by students, that is: speaking, listening, writing and reading. However, from the four skill in English, reading as one of skills is a difficult activity to do, because there are not many students enjoying this activity. (Maryansyah, 2016) stated most of the students

of MTsN 2 Kota Bengkulu frequently failed to reach the expected reading comprehension achievement. In which, many student rarely read books or articles in their spare time. Next, Björnsson in (Larsson, 2006) defined readability as the sum of linguistic properties in a text that makes the text more or less available to the reader. In other words, it concerned for the effectiveness communication of ideas and information or the readability is the unit of discourse analysis which try to determine the level of the reading text in student's handbook. Besides that, according to (Klare, 1963) readability is a method of estimating the probable success a reader will have in reading and understanding a piece of writing.

Relating to readability, it is important to consider the complexity of the text. Readability of a text can be influenced by many factors. As revealed by Gray and Leary in (Dubay, 2004) list factors that affect influence readability, namely content, style, format and features of organizations. The content with a slight margin over style, is most important, next is format and almost equal to it, and the features of organization refer to the chapters, sections, headings, and paragraphs. Moreover, (Richards & Schmidt, 2010) asserted readability is influenced by some factors including: (a) the average length of sentences in a passage, (b) the number of new words a passage contains, and (c) the grammatical complexity of the language used.

The level of readability will be used as the reference to decide the level of a text in the true level of the reading text. (Bailin & Grafstein, 2016) mentioned that the higher the score (on a scale of 0 to 100) a piece of writing receives, the more readable it is. A passage with a score of 0 is "practically unreadable," while a score of 100 is "easy for any literate person". The score ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 corresponding to the highest reading difficulty and 100 corresponding to the lowest reading difficulty. It means that, the level of readability can determine how the text level that ranges from the *college* (very difficult, the reading ease result 0-30), *sixth grade* (standard, the reading ease result is 60-70), and *third grade* (very easy, the reading ease result is 90-100)

In line with statement above, the focus of this study is not primarily for the process of communication, nor even more specifically the process of communication as it relates to the reading of written texts. The study of readability are those properties of written texts that aid or hinder the effective communication of ideas and information by using the

readability formula of Rudolf Flesch which is readability formula is going to determine the level of ease or difficulty a textbook can be understood by a particular reader who is read the text for a specific purpose. Based on the preliminary research on 17 October 2018, when the researcher conducted the Integrated Field Experience Practice (*PPLT*) at the *SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam*, researcher found that there many students that get failed in understanding their reading texts. It was proved by the low score of students in reading comprehension. They commonly get difficulties in answering questions based on the text correctly such as the questions about main idea, details, and moral value of the text. Besides that, in fact, the main problem comes from the reading material in the textbook which is not suitable with students' level. However, selecting appropriate texts become very essential for them whereas the information about the students' ability is limited. Therefore, the reading texts in the textbook are less appropriate for the students on their level.

There are several preceding studies about analysis of readability level of English reading texts that had been carried out. The first study is conducted by (Mulyadi, 2015) about the level of readability of reading materials in the subject of the study of the English text stain pamekasan (the readability level of reading material in lecture of analysis a English text Stain Pamekasan). The result of the study indicated that there are some of the reading material are inappropriate with the student readability level. The second study was done by (Langeborg, 2010) studied about English Textbooks for Swedish School Years 7-9. The results show that readability level of English textbook is too easy for eleventh grade students of senior high school. The third study was conducted by (Sutianah, 2014) about the readability level of reading texts on advanced Learning English. The results show that there are some texts are not appropriate level for each grade of Junior high School.

Those three studies above are relevant to this study because all of them investigate the readability level of reading materials intended for students. The difference of those three studies from this study are the subject of the study and the methods used to measure the readability level of the reading materials. Based on the background above, this recent study aims to analyze the readability level of the reading texts of an English textbook for junior high school entitled "Think Globally Act Locally" in curriculum 2013 that published by

Kemendikbud (kementerian pendidikan dan kebudayaan) in 2015.

II. METHOD

Research Design

This study was conducted by using qualitative approach through content analysis technique. According to (Krisppendorff, 2004), content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. As a technique, it involves specialized procedures. It is learnable and divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher.

Source of Data

The source of the data used were taken from student's handbook of curriculum 2013 entitled "*Think Globally Act Locally*" that consist of three narratives text. But, the researcher took eight texts were 7 descriptive texts and 1 narrative texts. Flesch (1949:213) argued that if you are using a samples, take each sample and count each word in it up to 100. Furthermore, each texts more or less have to consist of 100 words.

Technique of Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, there were several steps related to the technique of data analysis by using content analysis as the earlier technique to the Readability Ease. According to (Krisppendorff, 2004) there were five ways of defining units (sentence and word) were physical, syntactical, categorical, propositional, and thematic distinctions. More detail explanation as the following.

a. *Physical distinctions*; arises in the use of mechanisms to sever a physical medium, like the length and size of the text.

b. *Syntactical distinctions*; is "natural" relative to the grammar of the medium of the data. Which identified a words, sentences, and paragraphs syntactic.

c. *Categorical distinctions*; defines units by their membership in a class or category by their having something in common. A common reference is typical: any character string that refers to a particular object, event, person, act, country, or idea.

d. *Propositional distinctions*; delineates units according to particular constructions, such as those that have a particular propositional form or exhibit certain semantic relations between conceptual components. For example, with defines clauses as sentences that include an inflected verb and, optionally, a subject, object, and related modifiers.

e. *Thematic distinctions*. Thematic connotes the analysis of story like verbal material, and the use of relatively comprehensive units of analysis such as thema. According to Smith in (Krisppendorff, 2004)

Then, (Renkema, 2005) argued that this formula contains two variables, word length and sentence length, and is therefore relatively easy to apply. Count the number of syllables. Determine the average sentence length in words. The result would be two numbers: one for length (wl), the total number of syllables in a hundred words, and one for the average sentence length (sl). There are some steps of analyzing data, those are described below:

a. Firstly, counted the total of words and sentences of the text. Then determine ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences) and ASW = average number of syllables per words (the number of syllables divided by the number of words).

b. Secondly, researcher measured the data by using the formula of Readability Ease (R.E): Reading Ease Score = *206.835 – (1.015 x average sentence length) – (84.6 x average number of syllable per word)*

Finally, the result of the reading ease was interpreted in the Flesch's table formula to describe the readability level of the text in the education level. The description of the Flesh's table formula is provided in the table 1

Table 1.
The Flesh Formula Interpretation (Flesch, 1949)

Reading Ease Score	Style Description	Estimated Reading Grade
0 to 30	Very Difficult	College graduate
30 to 50	Difficult	13th to 16th grade
50 to 60	Fairly Difficult	10th to 12th grade
60 to 70	Standard	8th to 9th grade
70 to 80	Fairly Easy	7th grade
80 to 90	Easy	6th grade
90 to 100	Very Easy	5th grade

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Description

The textbook consists of 209 pages and 11 chapters that focusing on four-skills namely

reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Furthermore, this textbook also takes a concern in grammar and pronunciation. The whole units have a topic base on the text such as narrative, descriptive, exposition, procedural, conversation, and advertisement. The whole data were taken from the English textbook used by the students at the ninth grade in *SMP Negeri I Telukdalam*, and the scores of the readability test administered using Flesch Readability Ease. Then, the data was analyzed qualitatively based on perspective of Rudolf Flesch theory. Where, in analyzing the data, there were three steps of data analysis by Renkema was applied.

Table 2.
Description of Sentence, Word, and Syllable
Calculations of Reading Texts

Texts	Number of sentences	Number of words	Number of syllables
Text 1	11	121	165
Text 2	12	125	174
Text 3	14	142	203
Text 4	11	123	171
Text 5	10	109	182
Text 6	8	118	172
Text 7	9	128	201
Text 8	41	535	68

Description of the Analysis of Each texts

Text 1

This text have 121 words that consist of 11 sentences. So, the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of words divided with the total of sentences – 121/11 = 11.

The total of syllable was 151. So the ASW (Average Syllable per word) – the total of syllable divided with the total of words – 165/121 = 1.36.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 11 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1. 36.

Then this score input in Flesch's readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 × ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 11) - (84. 6 × 1, 36)

= 206. 835 – 11, 165 – 115, 056

= 80, 614

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 80, 614 at 80 – 90. So the readability level of this text was **easy** (sixth grade).

Text 2

This text have 125 words that consist of 12 sentences. So, the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of words divided with the total of sentences – 125/12 = 10, 41. The total of syllable is 174. So the ASW (Average Syllable per word) – the total of syllable divided with the total of words – 174/125 = 1,392.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 10, 41 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1, 392.

Then this score input in Flesch's readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 × ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 10, 41) - (84. 6 × 1, 392)

= 206. 835 - 10, 56 – 117, 76

= 78, 515

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 78, 505 at 70 – 80. So the readability level of this text was **fairly easy** (seventh grade).

Text 3

This text have 142 words that consist of 14 sentences. So, the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of words divided with the total of sentences – 142/14 = 10, 14. The total of syllable is 203. So the ASW (Average Syllable per word) – the total of syllable divided with the total of words – 203/142 = 1.42.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 10, 14 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1. 42.

Then this score input in Flesch's

readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 × ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 10, 14) - (84. 6 × 1. 42)

= 206. 835 – 10, 29 – 120, 132

= 76,413

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 76,413 at the 70 – 80. So the readability level of this text was **fairly easy** (seventh grade).

Text 4

This text have 123 words that consist of 11 sentences. So, the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of words divided with the total of sentences – 123/11 = 11, 18. The total of syllable is 171. So the ASW (Average Syllable per word) – the total of syllable divided with the total of words – 171/123 = 1.39.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 11, 18 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1. 39

Then this score input in Flesch's readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 × ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 11, 18) - (84. 6 × 1. 39)

= 206. 835 – 11, 34 – 117, 594

= 77, 901

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 77, 901 at 70 – 80. So the readability level of this text was **Fairly Easy** (seventh grade).

Text 5

This text have 109 words that consist of 10 sentences. So, the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of words divided with the total of sentences – 109/10 = 10, 9. The total of syllable is 182. So the ASW (Average Syllable per word) – the total of syllable divided with the total of words – 182/109 = 1, 66.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 10, 9 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1. 66

Then this score input in Flesch's readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 × ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 10, 9) - (84. 6 × 1. 66)

= 206. 835 - 11, 06 – 140, 436

= 55, 339

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 55, 339 at the 50 – 60. So the readability level of this text was **fairly difficult** (senior high school).

Text 6

This text have 118 words that consist of 8 sentences. So, the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of words I vided with the total of sentences – 118/8 = 14, 75. The total of syllable is 172. So the ASW (Average Syllable per word) – the total of syllable divided with the total of words – 172/118 = 1.45.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 14, 75 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1, 45

Then this score input in Flesch's readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 × ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 14, 75) - (84. 6 × 1, 45)

= 206. 835 – 14, 97 – 122, 67

= 69, 195

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 69, 195 at the 60 – 70. So the readability level of this text was **Standard** (eighth to ninth grade).

Text 7

This text have 128 words that consist of 9 sentences. So, the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of words divided with the total of sentences – 128/9 = 14, 22. The total of syllable is 201. So the ASW (Average Syllable per- word) – the total of syllable divided with the total of words – 201/128 = 1, 57.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 14, 22 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1. 57

Then this score input in Flesch's readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 ×

ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 14, 22) - (84. 6 × 1. 57)

= 206. 835 - 14, 43 – 132, 822

= 59, 583

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 59, 583 at the 50 – 60. So the readability level of this text was **fairly difficult** (senior high school).

Text 8

This text have 535 words that consist of 41 sentences. So this text give the ASL (Average Sentence Length) – total of word divided with the total of sentences – 535/41 = 13, 04. The total of syllable is 681. So the ASW (Average Syllable per word) – The total of syllable divided with the total of words – 681/535 = 1, 27.

Thus, Average Sentence Length (ASL) = 13, 04 and Average Syllable per- word (ASW) = 1, 27

Then this score input in Flesch's readability formula:

Readability Ease = 206. 835 - (1. 015 × ASL) - (84. 6 × ASW)

= 206. 835 - (1. 015 × 13, 04) - (84. 6 × 1, 27)

= 206. 835 – 13, 23 – 107, 442

= 86, 163

When this result consulted in Flesch's formula interpretation, the score of 86, 163 at the 80 – 90. So the readability level of this text was **easy** (sixth grade). The calculation then be put in the table 2

Table 2
The Readability Score of Reading Texts Base on the Reading Ease Scale
of the Flesch's Formula

Text	Readability Score	Difficult Level	Reading Grade
1	80, 614	Easy	Sixth Grade
2	78, 515	Fairly Easy	Seventh Grade
3	76, 413	Fairly Easy	Seventh Grade
4	77, 901	Fairly Easy	Seventh Grade
5	55, 339	Fairly Difficult	Senior High School
6	69, 195	Standard	Eighth to ninth grade
7	59, 583	Fairly Difficult	Senior High School
8	86, 163	Easy	Six Grade
Average Score	72. 96	Fairly Easy	Seventh Grade

Interpretation

After getting the result of the data analysis from the Flesch Ease Reading Formula, then, the eight reading texts from the textbook *Think Globally Act Locally* are classified into four levels of reading:

a. Easy, there were 2 reading texts in this level. The readability score was 80 - 90.

b. Fairly easy, there were 3 reading texts in this level. The readability score was 70 - 80.

c. Standard, there were 1 reading texts in this level. The readability score was 60 - 70.

d. Fairly difficult, there were 2 reading texts in this level. The readability score was 50 - 60.

It can be interpreted that if the readability score of a text was higher than other texts, it would be easier to be understood by the students. However, if the readability score of a text was lower than other texts, it would made the text difficult to be understood. Furthermore, the researcher continuous to percentage the data as in the table 3.

Table 3
Average the Data in Percentage (%)

No	Level	Number of text	Percentage
1	Very easy	0	0 %
2	Easy	2	25 %
3	Fairly easy	3	37.5 %
4	Standard	1	12. 5 %
5	Fairly difficult	2	25 %
6	Difficult	0	0%
7	Very difficult	0	0%

In average, the texts in the textbooks entitled Think Globally Act the reading level of the textbook were in the Standard Level (72.

96). It was found that according to the theory of Flesch Reading Ease by Rudolf Flesch, the texts were inappropriate level for the ninth grade students. Therefore base on the researcher's belief the low score of the ninth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam in reading comprehension was affected by the text itself with qualified by some aspect that provided in the text are the average sentence length, the average syllable per word, the number of sentences and the number of word which too long and too difficult.

In this part the researcher explained the result of analyzing the readability level of reading text by using Flesch readability formula. There were some steps in analyzing the data first, analyzing and counting the sentences, words and syllables in each text of the reading text. Second, measured the readability of each text based on the Flesch readability formula (Reading Ease formula).

And the last, determined the grades of each chapters of reading texts by compared the results of the scores to the other criteria as shown in the readability table, which ones were relevant to Junior High School level. The result

of analyzing reading texts can be described as follows:

Base on the result above, finding of the study indicates that; 8 texts were in Standard classification. It means that 88% of 8 texts were inappropriate for ninth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Telukdalam. In which, there were two texts in Fairly Difficult classification, three text in Fairly Easy level, and two text in Easy level.

However, there were those factors in text that influence the process of understanding a texts were from aspects of content, text types, text organization, sentence structure. Thus, the average sentence length was 10, 9 which indicated the structure of the sentence was complex and too long that possible the information of the text was difficult to be understood by the students. And the average syllable per-word is 1.66 that indicated the word in text was too long. Therefore, the texts were too difficult and too boring to understand by the students. The result finding consulted in the Flesch Reading Ease to interpret whether the texts were appropriate or inappropriate for the students' level of ninth grade junior high school:

Table 4
Categorized the Readability Text with the Students' Level

Text	Readability Score	Reading Grade	Appropriate/Inappropriate with the students'level
1	80, 614	Sixth Grade	Inappropriate
2	78, 505	Seventh Grade	Inappropriate
3	76, 413	Seventh Grade	Inappropriate
4	77, 901	Seventh Grade	Inappropriate
5	55, 339	Senior High School	Inappropriate
6	69, 195	Eighth to ninth grade	Appropriate
7	59, 583	Senior High School	Inappropriate
8	86, 163	Six Grade	Inappropriate

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research result, it can be concluded that from 8 reading texts, which were categorized into four levels, namely: there are 2 texts of Easy level, Fairly Easy as many as 3 texts, Standard for 1 texts, and Fairly Difficult for 2 texts. In Average, the texts are in Seventh grade level. It means that according to the theory of Flesch Reading Ease by Rudolf Flesch, the texts are disagree with the level for ninth grade students of Junior High School. Furthermore, the text includes some factors that prove the texts is inappropriate with the level of the students' grade. With qualified by some aspects are the average sentence length, the average syllable per word, the number of sentences and the number of word which agree

with the student's level.

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