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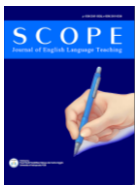

Article

The Assessment of The Readability of English Junior High School Textbooks by Implementing Cloze Procedure

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A B S T R A C T

Textbooks which are too difficult to read will decrease students' motivation in learning. Whereas textbooks which are too easy to read will make students less interested in reading them. Therefore, readability analysis needs to be done so that the textbooks used as the learning media are suitable for the students who become the target readers of the books. This research analyzes the texts in Junior High School English textbooks entitled "English in Focus" which are compiled for grades VII, VIII, and IX students of English and published by the Book Center of the Department of National Education by using cloze procedure. The assessment was conducted at SMPN 1 Gunungputri and SMP Sejahtera 2 Cileungsi, involving students in grades VII, VIII, and IX. The texts tested were adapted to their grade levels. The tests were made in the form of 100 words which were then omitted at every 5th word. The readability results state that not all texts in "English in Focus" books are suitable for students who use them. If considered suitable as teaching material, these books need some further changes because there are 6 texts from the total of 24 texts that are too difficult for the students.

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are ones of many important teaching materials and are widely used in the classrooms, even though there are many other sophisticated teaching aids available in this information technology era. Books are still considered as the easiest media to be used as student learning materials because of their availability and variability in amounts and types. Teachers often assume that students have not learned yet if they have not recommended some textbooks for their students to be read on their own as independent learning assignments. As one source of learning, it is very important for students to be able to understand the reading texts contained in textbooks.

In the field of language learning, textbooks that are difficult to read will relatively inhibit students' success in learning because they decrease students' motivation. But, for students who have high motivation in learning, assigning them to read texts that are too easy or less challenging will cause them to be demotivated to learn and decrease their interest in reading the books. Therefore, textbooks must be chosen carefully to suit students' abilities, thereby those textbooks can motivate them to

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succeed academically (Kodom and Pearl, 2019). In addition, reading materials greatly contribute to students' reading skills so they can understand information from the content being read. This explains the fact that the level of difficulty can be determined based on the level of reader's understanding. Unfortunately, some results of previous studies state that some textbooks are not appropriate for students who are targeted by readers of the books.

A research conducted by Ernawati (2013) analyzes the text readability in "Passport to the World 2" textbook for Public Junior Secondary School (SMPN) 3 Tangerang Selatan students. The analyzed texts consist of 15 reading texts which were then assessed by using a content test to the selected texts. The average scores of reading texts were 71.11% which can be concluded as easy texts for students. This means that the textbook is not suitable for SMPN 3 Tangerang Selatan students because they can easily understand the text without the help of their teacher.

Other researcher, the research carried out by Khairil and Junus (2016) about the readability of the Indonesian textbook discourse entitled "Self and Academic Reflection"/"Ekspresi Diri dan Akademik" Second Edition Using Cloze Test. This research examined on the basis of preliminary observation which states that students in SMAN 1 Makassar are not interested in reading texts that contained in the book. There were 8 texts that selected as the samples of the cloze test with 30 students of X class as participants of this research. The result showed that 6 texts were at independent level, 1 text was in instructional level, and the rest were at the frustration level. As a teaching material, this book is not good enough because 68% of the text are too easy for students.

Moreover, Sjahrony, Lubis and Baharudin (2018) did the research about the readability of Arabic textbooks among university students in Malaysia based on the cloze test. This research is based on the assumption that student achievement in learning Arabic is still very low, whereas Arabic is a foreign language that is often used among Malaysians. Therefore, a readability study of Arabic textbooks at the Faculty of Islamic Studies involved 162 respondents from one of the universities in Malaysia. This research examines 3 texts with 250 words and eliminates every 7th words. The cloze test was carried out in the form of multiple choices with 3 choices of vocabulary for the gap. The results showed that 74% of respondents answered that the texts were at the frustration level. This shows that the book is not suitable for teaching material.

Readability is usually associated with the ability to successfully understand the difficult texts. Readability also refers to the ease with which a text can be read and understood. The basis of readability research is word. If there are many unknown words in a text, it becomes difficult to understand the text (Brown, et. al., 2019; Cardak, Dikmenli and Guven, 2016; Ulu Kalın, 2017). Dale and Chall in Rawian (2019) said that the concept of readability was initially defined as the interaction of understanding words, phrases and ideas in the text with understanding that affects the reader's interest, comprehension, and reading speed.

Each technique used to measure readability usually focuses on indicators of text difficulty such as the number of words, sentences, and word lengths which are then arranged according to a continuum indicating the level of difficulty of the text. General text characteristics that have been chosen as indicators of readability usually include vocabulary and structural complexity (Dennis, 2018). A large number of formulas have been developed to analyze the level of text readability. All of these formulas are based on simple steps like word length and sentence length. Some formulas that are often used are Flesch formula, Fog Index, Fry index, Flesch - Kincaid formula, and Gunning Index. The readability formula began to develop between 1921 and 1934 where vocabulary was the main basis for predicting readability (Brown, et. al., 2019; Khodadady and Mehrazmay, 2017; Rawian, 2019). Because it is only based on the vocabulary in the text, there are many criticisms of these readability formulas.

Then, in 1953, Wilson Taylor published the cloze procedure as another form of text readability test. Taylor stated that the number of vocabularies is not the right tool in determining the readability of the text, but the interrelationship between the vocabularies in the text is more important to note. The cloze test is based on the theory that readers can fill the gap on the text demonstrate their ability to read the text. Testing the content of the gap is considered relevant because it does not only measure the difficulty of all written texts but also the difficulty of individual words, phrases and clauses (Rawian, 2019).

The cloze test is defined as the procedure of removing part of the text or discourse and asking the reader or student to fill in the missing elements (Dennis, 2018). Cloze score can be seen from how much the reader or the student can fill in the omitted words. The lower the score, the more difficult the text. Text readability measures how difficult a text is being read based on the average sentence length and the number of complex words. Cloze tests can provide more actual results about the actual understanding of the reader (Cantos Gómez & Sánchez Lafuente, 2019).

METHOD

This research carried out descriptive method in describing the level of text readability. The research data was the reading texts contained in the Junior High School English textbook entitled "English in Focus" Grade VII, VIII, XI published by the Center of Book Archieve of the Department of National Education. The texts analyzed in this study were the texts contained in the reading chapters. The data was taken from 6 texts in "English in Focus"

grade VII, 8 texts in "English in Focus" grade VIII, and 10 texts in "English in Focus" grade IX.

Data analysis was performed by carrying out the cloze procedure. The cloze tests were carried out in SMP N 1 Gunungputri and SMP Sejahtera 2 Cileungsi, involving students in grades VII, VIII, and IX. The texts tested were adapted to their grade levels and were given randomly. The tests were made in the form of a 100 words text fragment which was then omitted at every fifth word. These cloze tests were conducted at the beginning of the new semester with the consideration that students have never read the texts before.

In determining the level of readability of the text, the results of the cloze test scores are presented with the following formula, the number of words filled in correctly divided by the number of words deleted in the test which are then multiplied by one hundred percent. A score of between 40% - 60% indicates that students might need guidance in reading. Scores above 60% indicate that the book is easy for students in the target group. Scores below 40% indicate that the book might be difficult for students (Ulu Kalın, 2017). The following table becomes a reference for the results of the cloze test score.

Table 1 Cloze Test Score Analysis

Purpose	Cloze
Unassisted reading	>60 %
Instructional, assisted reading	40-60%
Frustration level	Below 40%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the cloze test of the sample texts in "English in Focus" Grade VII book are as follows:

Table 2 Cloze Test Score of "English in Focus" Grade VII

Text	Page	Cloze Test Score	Reading Level
1	12	89%	Unassisted reading
2	30	65%	Unassisted reading
3	51	67%	Unassisted reading
4	94	62%	Unassisted reading
5	113	28%	Frustration level
6	132	29%	Frustration level

There are 4 texts that have an "unassisted reading" text readability with a percentage level of students over 60%. This means that students can easily understand the text. While the other 2 texts are considered very difficult (frustration level) because the percentage of students' scores is below 40%.

The analysis of the content of the cloze test conducted on the text samples of "English in Focus" Grade VIII shows that there are 2 texts that are easy to understand with a percentage of 60% and 72%, 4 texts are considered as "need assistance when reading" and 2 texts are considered difficult with a percentage of 22% and 25 %. The results of the cloze test scores show that the results of the analysis of the readability of the texts in "English in Focus" grade VIII book are not all in accordance with the students' abilities. The following is a table of readability scores for "English in Focus" grade VIII.

Table 3 Cloze Test Score of "English in Focus" Grade VIII

Text	Page	Cloze Test Score	Reading Level
1	16	60%	Unassisted reading
2	39	40%	Instructional, assisted reading
3	40	22%	Frustration level
4	60	25%	Frustration level
5	62	50%	Instructional, assisted reading
6	92	49%	Instructional, assisted reading
7	115	53%	Instructional, assisted reading
8	135	72%	Unassisted reading

The following is a table of scores on the content of the cloze test in "English in Focus" Grade IX.

Table 4 Cloze Test Score of "English in Fokus" Grade IX

Text	Page	Cloze Test Score	Reading Level
1	14	91%	Unassisted reading
2	35	81%	Unassisted reading
3	39	73%	Unassisted reading
4	42	72%	Unassisted reading
5	58	54%	Instructional, assisted reading
6	60	64%	Unassisted reading
7	88	53%	Instructional, assisted reading
8	91	40%	Instructional, assisted reading
9	114	25%	Frustration level
10	117	7%	Frustration level

The results of the cloze test stated that the results of the reading of 5 texts in "English in Focus" grade IX were considered easy to read, 3 texts were considered as "need assistance" and 2 texts were considered very difficult and one of them reached 7%, which meant that almost all students answered incorrectly on the test.

The expected readability test results range from 40-60% which means that the reading text is in the level of "Instructional, assisted reading". This is because these teaching materials are used for teaching. If the text is considered difficult, then students become unmotivated to learn, while text that is too easy will cause students not interested in learning it. Of the total 6 texts analyzed in "English in Focus" Grade VII, none of them is fit into the

seventh grade of junior high school students' standards because the 4 texts were considered too easy, and 2 texts were considered too difficult. The results of the analysis of the readability of the text in "English in Focus" Grade VIII are as follows: only 4 texts that are suitable for students of class VIII. While the results of the readability analysis of "English in Focus" grade IX stated that only 5 texts were appropriate for grade IX students out of 10 texts analyzed. However, if "English in Focus" book is expected to be a book for independent learning, then "English in Focus" Grade VII can be used easily by students, because only 2 texts are considered difficult. For "English in Focus" Grade VIII, this book is considered inappropriate because there are only 2 texts that can be read independently by students, the rest are considered as "need assistance" and difficult for students to understand. While "English in Focus" Grade IX only 50% of the texts can be used as independent reading material. If it will be considered as a textbook for students, "English in Focus" needs some changes because there are 6 texts out of a total of 24 texts that are considered too difficult for students. Therefore, the results of the text readability test for the three levels of "English in Focus" books stated that not all texts in the book are suitable for students who use it.

At school, a good textbook should not only be in accordance with the curriculum, but must also have a high level of readability. If the reading level of teaching materials is suitable with students' abilities, it will support the learning process (Handayani, 2014). The purpose of textbooks, especially English textbooks for second languages, is to help students improve their English competency. This goal will not be achieved if the text given to students cannot be read by students. In learning languages, the right material is needed. The reason is that students in one class have varied backgrounds, abilities and intelligence (Nababan, Marpaung, and Simangunsong, 2019). Text books that are difficult to read relatively inhibit students academically because those texts exceed students' lexical abilities and make students easily frustrated and unmotivated (Kodom and Pearl, 2019).

Nuttal in Miftahurrahmi, Syarif and Fitrawati (2017) states that there are three things to consider when choosing text for students: First, the suitability of text content with students'need so that the text is interesting and challenging for them. Second, it can be exploited, texts must be able to be exploited during students' independent assignments and can be combined with various teaching techniques and other types of language skills. Third, readability. Texts with lexical and structural difficulties will challenge students without overwhelming them. Readability is one of the points that makes reading material selection important. In teaching English, the teacher has the role of providing material, instead of making it (Nababan, et. al., 2019). Therefore, Hidayatillah and Zainil (2020) suggest one way to use textbooks that have a difficult level of readability: by providing some notes on the pages of the book before using them in the language class. This prevents students from misunderstanding the contents that may lead them into confusion.

CONCLUSION

Teachers as textbook users must understand and realize that the results of the analysis of the readability of textbooks are measured by certain formulas that have limitations. This legibility score can be used to get a quick picture of the difficulty of words and sentences but not directly applied as an indicator of students' level of understanding. The score shows only one of many factors that can affect the ease of a text to read (Rawian, 2019). It is the teachers who really understand the needs of students so that they can wisely choose textbooks that can improve their students' reading comprehension.

This research is certainly not perfect because it merely evaluates the readability of the texts from students' perspective as book users. The research sample is also limited to students of SMPN 1 Gunungputri and SMP Sejahtera 2 Cileungsi. To get a more valid readability analysis, further triangulation of data sources and more thorough data analysis are needed. It is recommended that the results of the cloze test are also compared with other readability analyses such as the Flesch formula, Fog Index, Fry index, Flesch-Kincaid formula, or Gunning Index. In addition, other supporting data can also be taken into consideration, such as: analysis of the book contents, observation of students' understanding about the text and interview with students or teachers as book users. Those methods can be suggested as further research to obtain the results of a more complex and legible readability analysis.

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