

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

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Abstract

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. 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 texts 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 texts are predicted to be of appropriate difficulty. Thus, 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, Flesch Reading Ease Formula

1. Introduction

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 in Reed et al. (1998) states 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.

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?"

2. Literature Review

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, standardizes 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 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 (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, 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.

3. Research 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.

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.

The formula of Flesch Reading Ease is written below:

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

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% = Frustrational 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 difficult, Allington and Strange (1980: 107).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

1. Flesch Reading Ease

As stated before, the researcher uses Flesch Reading Ease Formula to gain the readability score of the five reading texts of the textbook.

The readability score is gained by counting the characters, syllables, words, sentences, and paragraphs. Furthermore, the researcher counts the number of characters, syllables, words, sentences, and paragraphs of each text by using count word. The procedure in counting them is by typing the text in the column in the website. Then, the number characters, syllables, words, sentences, and paragraphs are automatically detected. Finally, the researcher finds the calculation result as follows:

Table 5. The number of characters, syllables, words, sentences, and paragraphs of the five texts

No	Components	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5
1	Characters	1046	2010	2812	4076	2726
2	Syllables	342	687	918	1297	863
3	Words	248	420	640	889	597
4	Sentences	27	33	88	77	29
5	Paragraphs	5	7	5	27	8

The table above shows that Text 4 entitled "Nyai Lara Kidul" is the longest text which consists of 4076 characters, 1297 syllables, 889 words, 77 sentences, and 27 paragraphs.

Then, the researcher counts the number of Average Sentence Length (ASL) or the number of syllables per words and the number of words per sentence (ASW). ASL is result from the number of words divided by the number of sentences. While ASW is result from the number of syllables divide by the number of words.

- a. Text 1

$$\text{ASL} = \frac{\text{The Number of Words}}{\text{The Number of Sentences}} = \frac{248}{27}$$

$$\text{ASW} = \frac{\text{The Number of Syllables}}{\text{The Number of Words}} = \frac{342}{248}$$

$$= 9.19$$

$$= 1.38$$

b. Text 2

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASL} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Words}}{\text{The Number of Sentences}} \\ &= \frac{420}{33} \\ &= 12.72 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASW} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Syllables}}{\text{The Number of Words}} \\ &= \frac{687}{420} \\ &= 1.63 \end{aligned}$$

c. Text 3

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASL} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Words}}{\text{The Number of Sentences}} \\ &= \frac{640}{88} \\ &= 7.28 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASW} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Syllables}}{\text{The Number of Words}} \\ &= \frac{918}{640} \\ &= 1.43 \end{aligned}$$

d. Text 4

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASL} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Words}}{\text{The Number of Sentences}} \\ &= \frac{889}{77} \\ &= 11.54 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASW} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Syllables}}{\text{The Number of Words}} \\ &= \frac{1297}{889} \\ &= 1.45 \end{aligned}$$

e. Text 5

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASL} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Words}}{\text{The Number of Sentences}} \\ &= \frac{597}{29} \\ &= 20.59 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ASW} &= \frac{\text{The Number of Syllables}}{\text{The Number of Words}} \\ &= \frac{863}{597} \\ &= 1.44 \end{aligned}$$

To make it easier, the researcher presents the result of ASL and ASW calculations of the texts in the following table:

Table 6. The result of asl and asw calculation of texts

Text	Average Sentence Length	Average Syllable per Word
Text 1	9.19	1.38
Text 2	12.72	1.63
Text 3	7.28	1.43
Text 4	11.54	1.45
Text 5	20.59	1.44

Furthermore, after counting the ASL and ASW, the researcher tries to find out the readability score of each text by using Flesch Reading Ease Formula.

Text 1

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score} &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW}) \\ &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times 9.19) - (84.6 \times 1.38) \\ &= 206.835 - (9.32) - (116.75) \\ &= 80.765 \\ &= 81 \end{aligned}$$

Text 2

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score} &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW}) \\ &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times 12.72) - (84.6 \times 1.63) \\ &= 206.835 - (12.91) - (137.90) \\ &= 56.025 \\ &= 56 \end{aligned}$$

Text 3

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score} &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW}) \\ &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times 7.28) - (84.6 \times 1.43) \\ &= 206.835 - (7.39) - (120.98) \\ &= 78.465 \\ &= 78 \end{aligned}$$

Text 4

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score} &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW}) \\ &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times 11.54) - (84.6 \times 1.45) \\ &= 206.835 - (11.71) - (122.67) \\ &= 72.455 \\ &= 72 \end{aligned}$$

Text 5

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Score} &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW}) \\ &= 206.835 - (1.015 \times 20.59) - (84.6 \times 1.44) \\ &= 206.835 - (20.90) - (121.82) \\ &= 64.115 \\ &= 64 \end{aligned}$$

After elaborating the calculation of each reading texts, to make the presentation of the calculation result easier, the researcher provides in the following table:

Table 7. the readability score of the 5 reading texts

Text	Readability Score	Difficulty Level	Reading Grade
Text 1	81	Easy	6th grade
Text 2	56	Fairly-Difficult	10th and 12th grade
Text 3	78	Fairly Easy	7th grade
Text 4	72	Fairly Easy	7th grade
Text 5	64	Standard	8th and 9th grade

2. Cloze Test

The number of words and the deleted words of each text is presented in table below:

Table 8. The number of deleted words of the texts

Text	The Number of Words	Deleted Words
Text 1	248	21
Text 2	420	32
Text 3	640	45
Text 4	889	58
Text 5	597	48

The percentage of deleted words of each text is described as follows:

- a. The first text entitled "Dear Diary". It consists of 248 words and the deleted words are 21; it means that the percentage of the deleted number is about 8.45%.
- b. The second text entitled "Gatot Kaca". It consists of 420 words and the deleted words are 32; it means the percentage of the deleted number is about 7.61%.

- c. The third text entitled “Hercules”. It consists of 640 words and the deleted words are 45; it means the percentage of the deleted number is about 7.03%.
 - d. The fourth text entitled “Nyai Lara Kidul”. It consists of 889 words and the deleted words are 58; it means the percentage of the deleted number is about 6.52%.
 - e. The fifth text entitled “Romeo and Juliet”. It consists of 597 words and the deleted words are 48; it means the percentage of the deleted number is about 8.04%.
- The following presents the table of the percentage of the number of the 5 reading texts:

Table 9. The percentage of data analysis of deleted words

Text	The Percentage the deleted Words
Text 1	8.45%
Text 2	7.61%
Text 3	7.03%
Text 4	6.52%
Text 5	8.04%

After giving the Cloze Test to 30 students and correcting their answer, the researcher counted the students’ score by using formula:

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

Then, the researcher counts the percentage of the scores as presented on Appendix F. The result of the data shows that the five texts get scores as follows:

1. The text entitled “Dear Diary” has cloze test score 60%
2. The text entitled “Gatot Kaca” has cloze test score 49.90%
3. The text entitled “Hercules” has cloze test score 54.67%
4. The text entitled “Nyai Lara Kidul” has cloze test score 32.64%
5. The text entitled “Romeo and Juliet” has cloze test score 58.75%

After finding the average of Cloze Test score of each text, the researcher determines the text’s reading difficulty level, and the result is as follow:

Table 10. The score of cloze test and reading difficulty level of the texts

Text	Cloze Score	Level
Text 1	60%	Independent Level
Text 2	49.90%	Instructional Level
Text 3	54.67%	Independent Level
Text 4	32.64%	Frustration Level
Text 5	58.75%	Independent Level

From this table, the researcher calculated the data to find out the average score of readability level of the textbook as follow:

$$\frac{60\%+49.90\%+54.67\%+32.64\%+58.75\%}{5} = 51.20 \text{ (Independent Level)}$$

The averages of cloze test score from the 5 texts are 51.20%. The text is in Independent Level. It is predicted to be of appropriate difficulty.

4.2 Discussion

This research is aimed to seek the readability of texts in the tenth grade students' textbook. It is done by analyzing the selected reading texts of the textbook by using Flesch Reading Ease Formula and Cloze Test. Based on the theory of Flesch, readability concerns with the sentence length, average number of words and syllables of the analyzed texts. The result of the analysis by using Flesch Reading Ease Formula is grouped into three levels which are Very Easy, two Easy, and two Fairly Easy.

The result of the analysis generally shows that the average level of the five texts is categorized to Fairly Easy level. That level indicates that all texts are actually readable but they are still inappropriate for the students' grade. In line with the theory of Flesch, the tenth grade students should have been given texts which level is Fairly Difficult and therefore, the texts in the textbook fail to fulfill the needs of the students.

While from the result of Cloze Test, the researcher gets the data where the text "Dear Diary" gains cloze test score 60%, it means that the texts are falls in *Independent Level*. The text "Gatot Kaca" gains the cloze test score 49.90% in which it falls in *Instructional Level*. The text "Hercules" gains cloze test score 54.67% in which it falls in *Independent Level*. The text "Nyai Lara Kidul" gains the cloze test score 32.64% in which it falls in *Frustration Level*. The text "Romeo and Juliet" gains cloze test score 58.75% in which it falls in *Independent Level*. The average readability score of the five texts is 51.20% (*Independent Level*). The textbook is difficult for the tenth grade students of SMA N 2 Bandar. The students need the teacher's support to use this textbook.

From the data above, the researcher can be interpreted that through Flesch Reading Ease, the textbook has *high readability* and suitable for the tenth grade students of Senior High School, but through Cloze Test which is conducted at the tenth grade students of SMA N 2 Bandar, it has *lower readability*. The students have difficulty in understanding the reading texts of the textbook. The researcher assumes that it is influenced by their ability in reading comprehension. The English teachers should select other materials in facilitating English teaching learning process.

The two measurements of readability level above have their strength and weaknesses. The readability formula is considered to have more weaknesses than the cloze readability test. Pikulski (2002) believes that the readability formula certainly does not come to grip with the enormous complexity of readability. This technique does not take into consideration readers in processing the text. That is the reason this technique is considered as inaccurate measurements. However, a readability formula is relatively easy to calculate and have some general ability to broadly predict text difficulty. For this reason, a readability formula readability level of texts. However, they should not be regarded as precise measurements.

The findings in this study give important information to the teachers and the authors of English textbooks on the way how to select and provide good reading materials which are appropriate with the students' level. Bad materials can cause a detrimental effect to students' fluency, interest and motivation (Westwood, 2001). The teacher has to be able to select appropriate reading materials for students so that they can succeed academically (Ehlers- Zavala, 2008).

Finally, analyzing the readability of reading texts is important for teachers to obtain information about their readability level. Thus, after knowing the text's readability level, the teachers are able to decide which texts are appropriate for their students. The teachers are also able to decide whether they need other materials to support their teaching or not.

5. Conclusion

The problem of this study tries to observe is the readability level of reading texts. To get the data about this, the researcher distributed the Flesch Reading Ease and Cloze Test of the five reading texts. After analyzing and interpreting the data of the five reading texts in the *English Zone* textbook through Flesch Reading Ease and Cloze Test. After analyzing and interpreting the data, the researcher finds that there is 1 text classified into two *Easy Level*. It is *Dear Diary and Nyai Lara Kidul*, this text is basically suitable for the 6th grade students. Further, there are 2 texts that are classified into *Fairly Easy Level* they are *Gatot Kaca and Romeo and Juliet*, these texts are basically suitable for 7th grade students. There is 1 text that classified into *Very Easy Level*. It is *Hercules*, this text is basically suitable for the 5th grade students.

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.

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