



Analyzing The Readability Level of Reading Texts of “Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress”

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ABSTRACT

This research utilizes a content analysis and quantitative descriptive approach, and investigates the students' perception and readability of reading texts in "Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress." The study involves 44 tenth-grade students from SMAN 1 Sangatta Utara, employing a Likert scale questionnaire, Cloze Procedure Test, Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease, and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level as research instruments. Findings reveal a substantial portion of the texts within "Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress" is accessible to tenth-grade students in Kutai Timur. However, concerns arise regarding the result of the readability formula being above the student's level. The study concludes that a considerable portion of the reading texts are easily understandable for tenth-grade students in Kutai Timur. Yet, a noteworthy concern arises as the material seems to be above the targeted readability level for students at this grade, particularly in alignment with government learning objectives and CEFR levels. The study recommends authors diminish the reading ease of reading texts for tenth-grade students to maintain an appropriate difficulty level. Concerning readability, the study is limited to the ease of comprehension of reading texts. Future studies should broaden the subject base beyond Kutai Timur, possibly incorporating Kalimantan Timur Province or considering a national scope. This approach could offer a more thorough understanding of the readability requirements of tenth-grade students in varied settings. The researcher suggests future studies include a questionnaire to comprehensively explore students' perceptions. This study is confined to assessing students' perceptions solely in terms of text difficulty, leaving other aspects of readability unexplored.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia marks a significant shift in educational practices, including the development of new teaching materials that align with its principles. One such material is the government-issued English textbook Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress, designed for Grade 10 students. This textbook is expected to support learner-centered instruction by providing relevant, engaging, and appropriately leveled reading materials. As textbooks remain central to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesia, their effectiveness greatly depends on both the readability of the content and how students perceive it.

Readability refers to how easily a text can be read and understood, often influenced by sentence complexity, vocabulary load, and text structure. Readability is a crucial factor in ensuring that students are neither overwhelmed by linguistic challenges nor under-stimulated by overly simplified content. In addition, student perception plays a vital role in learning engagement and motivation. If students perceive texts as too difficult or irrelevant, their willingness to engage with the material may decrease, potentially affecting their language development.

Despite the importance of readability and perception in textbook evaluation, little research has been conducted on Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress under the new curriculum. This study addresses that gap by

analyzing the textbook's reading texts using objective readability measures and collecting student perceptions to understand how accessible and engaging the materials are for learners. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions: (1) What is the students' perception of the readability of reading texts in Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress? and (2) What is the readability level of the reading texts in Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative content analysis design, as it involved a systematic examination of textual materials using numerical data to evaluate readability. Creswell (2012) describes quantitative research as an approach that collects and analyzes numerical data to understand patterns, relationships, and phenomena. Content analysis was chosen to assess the readability of English reading texts in the textbook *Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress*, which is used by tenth-grade students following the Kurikulum Merdeka in Indonesia. The analysis focused on six reading texts presented across four chapters in the first semester edition of the textbook.

The research participants were tenth-grade students from SMAN 1 Sangatta Utara. The school has 11 tenth-grade classes, each consisting of 32 students. To ensure a balanced representation of gender and class, stratified random sampling was employed. From each class, two male and two female students were selected, resulting in a total sample of 44 students. This sampling technique ensured the inclusion of diverse student perspectives in terms of academic ability and gender. Stratified sampling is recognized for enhancing the representativeness of the sample by reflecting key subgroups in the population (Creswell, 2012).

Three instruments were used to collect data: a questionnaire, a cloze procedure test, and readability scoring tools based on the Flesch-Kincaid formulas. The questionnaire, adapted from Hakim et al. (2021), employed a five-point Likert scale where students rated the perceived difficulty of each reading text, ranging from 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult). This perception scale aligned with the readability levels described in the Flesch Reading Ease Index. The cloze procedure test, introduced by Taylor (1953), involved removing every fifth word in a passage. Participants were asked to fill in the blanks based on their understanding of the context. According to William Kodom and Dorcas Pearl (2019), if the mean score of a cloze test is 58% or higher, the text is considered readable for the tested population.

To assess objective readability, the study applied the Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formulas. These tools evaluate text difficulty based on average sentence length and syllables per word (Kincaid et al., 1975; DuBay, 2004). An online readability calculator provided by WebFX was used to analyze the six selected texts. The scores were then cross-checked using other platforms, such as Readable.io, to ensure accuracy. Because the Flesch-Kincaid formulas were originally designed for native English speakers, the cloze procedure served as a complementary method to assess the appropriateness of the texts for Indonesian learners of English.

The data collection process began with the selection of participants through stratified random sampling. After obtaining informed consent, students were guided to complete the questionnaire and the cloze procedure tests in three sessions, each covering two reading texts. The tests and questionnaires were administered in a controlled classroom setting. Concurrently, the reading texts were analyzed using readability formulas to obtain Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level scores. These steps ensured that both subjective (student perception) and objective (readability formula) data were obtained for each text.

To analyze the data, quantitative descriptive statistics were employed. Measures of central tendency such as mean, median, and mode were calculated for both questionnaire responses and cloze test scores to answer the first research question regarding students' perceptions of text readability. The same statistical methods were applied to the Flesch-Kincaid results to address the second research question, which explored the alignment of the textbook texts with the students' expected reading level. By triangulating data from perception, comprehension, and readability scoring, the study provides a comprehensive view of how readable and accessible the textbook texts are for tenth-grade Indonesian students.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The findings of this study are drawn from two main data sources: the Cloze Procedure Test for readability analysis and a student questionnaire examining perceptions toward the reading texts. The results from the Cloze Test show that most reading texts in *Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress* fall outside the optimal range of readability for tenth-grade students. Specifically, most scores indicate a frustration level, suggesting that these texts may be too linguistically complex for independent reading. Only a few texts fall into the instructional range, and none meet the independent readability threshold.

This implies a significant discrepancy between the language complexity of the texts and the cognitive-linguistic readiness of students at this grade level. When mapped against CEFR levels—commonly used in government learning targets—the gap becomes more apparent. Tenth-grade students are expected to perform at level B1, which includes reading straightforward factual texts on subjects related to their interests. However, the Cloze

Test results show that many passages require higher-level vocabulary, syntax, and inferencing skills typically associated with B2 or above.

The questionnaire responses further corroborate the findings. While students express general enthusiasm toward English reading activities, they also report difficulties in understanding specific passages due to unfamiliar vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and abstract topics. Many students indicate that they rely heavily on teacher guidance to understand the content. This suggests that, although engagement is present, comprehension is compromised—particularly when instructional scaffolding is limited.

Interestingly, students show positive responses when the reading texts are directly connected to their daily life or interests. Texts that include relatable contexts, such as school activities, hobbies, or family, are perceived as easier and more enjoyable to read. On the other hand, texts that are too academic, abstract, or culturally distant tend to be seen as challenging. This aligns with schema theory, which emphasizes that background knowledge plays a critical role in text comprehension.

From an instructional standpoint, this presents a challenge for teachers who are expected to deliver lessons that are both engaging and aligned with curriculum standards. The data implies that without modification or supplementation, some of the textbook texts may hinder students' reading development. Therefore, there is a need for teachers to assess text complexity proactively and consider integrating materials from other sources that are better matched to student proficiency levels.

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that the textbook does not consistently provide adequate scaffolding to support students' reading development. For instance, pre-reading activities, vocabulary previews, or comprehension strategies are limited in some units. These missing components may contribute to the low comprehension scores observed. By incorporating such scaffolds, educators can improve accessibility and better support students with varying levels of proficiency.

Overall, the results highlight the importance of aligning instructional materials with learners' proficiency levels and the value of ongoing readability evaluation. While the textbook offers rich content and aligns thematically with the curriculum, its linguistic demands often surpass the current capabilities of its intended audience. To foster effective reading comprehension, both material design and teaching practices must adapt to accommodate these challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the reading texts within the Bahasa Inggris: Work in Progress textbook are generally comprehensible to tenth-grade students in Kutai Timur. However, the analysis reveals that a significant portion of the material may exceed the expected readability level for this age group, particularly when aligned with the CEFR target level of B1. Students' perceptions further suggest that while some texts are engaging and understandable, others present varying degrees of difficulty, highlighting the need for differentiated instructional strategies.

To address these challenges, the study suggests that textbook authors consider adjusting the complexity of reading texts to better suit the target learners. Teachers are also encouraged to evaluate and adapt text difficulty using reliable, free tools such as the GSE Teacher Toolkit. This enables them to align instructional content with national curriculum goals and ensure that all students can engage meaningfully with the material. Supplementing textbook content with additional, level-appropriate texts may further support student comprehension.

For future research, a broader sample beyond Kutai Timur—such as participants from across East Kalimantan or nationally—could offer a more comprehensive view of readability issues across diverse educational contexts. Expanding the scope of the questionnaire to explore other aspects of student perceptions and supplementing the Cloze Test with additional comprehension-based assessments would also provide a richer analysis of students' interaction with textbook material. These efforts are essential to inform the development of English learning resources that are both accessible and pedagogically sound for Indonesian high school students.

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