

# ASSESSING READABILITY OF READING TEXTS IN ‘BRIGHT’, AN ENGLISH COURSE FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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**Abstract** : Textbook is one of media instruction that used in almost every grade level student at the school. Textbook is crucial teaching learning material composed of text or images that is used in many schools and facilitating sequences of learning activities. This title of this study “Assessing Readability of Reading Texts in ‘Bright’, an English Course for Junior High School Students” is taken because predicting readability level of reading texts can help the teachers to match the texts with students in comprehending the material. The causes of this observe is to recognize the clarity degree of studying texts in English language textbooks utilized by trainer. These studies make use of quantitative technique to investigate the information. Twelve studying texts are decided on as studies population. All of decided on texts are analyzed using Flesch Reading Ease method. In this studies, the researchers locate clarity of studying texts with inside the “Bright” aren’t appropriate for 9th grade students. Based at the end result of Flesch reading ease method, from 12 reading texts, 9 (75%) studying texts are too Easy for 9th grade students, 3 (25%) studying texts are Standard for 9th grade students. They are three studying texts (25%) appropriate for 9th grade students.

**Keywords** : *Assessing Readability, English Textybook, Junior High School*

## INTRODUCTION

Textbooks as source of instructional material are indispensable that correspond closely to the aims and objectives of a teaching program. As just pointing out, textbooks are using by both teachers and students. One of the main advantages of textbook for teacher is that, as (Hycroft, 1998) argues, the students’ progress and achievement can be measure correctly when we use them. The purpose of English teaching, among others, is not only to develop students’ reading skill, but also to help students become fluent, independent, and confident readers and make reading their habits. For this purpose, the motto ‘reading gain without reading’ (Day & Bamford, 1998, p.121), always be remember when English teachers select textbooks. EFL textbooks are not perfect. Studies on readability of

reading texts in textbooks reveal that reading texts in the textbooks are not properly select in terms of their readability. Nababan (2017) for instance, finds that the reading texts in the English Zone textbook are not suitable to be using by the students at the tenth grade students of Senior High School.

Yulianto (2019) states that only one text from eight texts is relevant to the eight grade students of Junior High School. Alipah (2019), using Flesch’s Reading Ease, finds that one text is in the Easy level; four reading texts are in the fairly easy level; five texts are in fairly difficult level; and four reading texts are in difficult level. Similar result is reveal by Zahra (2016). Since EFL textbooks are not perfect, textbook evaluation shall, therefore, be done. Such a study is the key for English teachers to select most

appropriate textbooks; for textbook writers to reevaluate their textbooks; and for government or decision makers to provide good quality textbooks for students. In this context, the study discussed here is conducting.

The reading skill is also very crucial for students. They need to be able to have a good reading skill to support their learning process in school. If they have a good reading skill in English, it is easier for them to find many resources for their studies through books or articles using English. They can find much useful information in the Internet. Mostly, the information in the Internet is written in English. The problem is that a lot of the reading books for Junior High School Students have words that do not correspond to their respective class. Based at the description with inside the heritage, the studies query addressed is : Are reading texts in 'Bright', an English course for ninth grade junior high school students written by Nur Zaida, publishing by Penerbit Erlangga (2018) suitable for ninth grade in phrase in their clarity degrees? The cause of this observe is to research studying texts with inside English textbook entitled 'Bright' for ninth grade if they're readable for the goal college students.

Johnson definite simply, but emphasize two key words, that are creating and meaning. Hornby states reading text is any form of written material presented for reader while reading itself the process to read the text. From the definitions above, it can be concluded reading is a process to understand about meanings of the text convey. Sometimes reading and reading text are most similar. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to explain about reading text in different place to distinguish or avoid misinterpretation both them. Textbooks for overseas language getting to know are frequently a part of a graded collection overlaying a couple of talents (listening, reading, writing and

grammar) or address a unmarried talent. From the definition above, it may be concluded the textbook is compilation of records, supply of understanding and as guidance media that organized to discover college students and explore students. Types of textbook involve Core textbook collection, Supplemental texts, Grammar texts, Content primarily based totally texts, and Dictionaries. Also a textbook is a book containing a comprehensive compilation of content in a branch of study with the intention of explaining it. Textbooks are produced to meet the needs of educators, usually at educational institutions. Schoolbooks are textbooks and other book used in schools. Textbook is a book used for study of a subject. People use a textbook to learn facts and methods about a certain subject. Textbooks sometimes have questions to test the knowledge and understanding of the learner. A textbook is usually lent to students by a school to accompany a course the school is teaching. Sometimes, especially at university, students have to buy the textbooks they need themselves or borrow them from a library. Most textbooks are only published in printed format. However, some are now available online as electronic books.

Learning to read is one of the most critical skills students must obtain during early childhood education. Reading skills set the foundation for overcall academic success. Students grade kindergarten through third grade are learning to read. From fourth grade on, students make a significant shift, and they are then reading to learn. In order for students to be successful in the middle through high school grades, it's important for them to have a solid foundation of reading skills. One effective way to ensure students have the necessary reading skills is for teachers to know if students are below level or on level for their age group, additionally to be differentiate reading instruction, teachers also need to know three additional levels

for each students : instructional level, frustration level and independent reading level.

Textbooks are frequently notion to manual the trainer every day exercise and to offer the principle coaching fabric that scholar's experience. Accordingly, textbooks are predicted to have an effect on college students getting to know progress. At SMA degree, textbooks are nevertheless a number one supply of route content material. However, this will most effective be efficacious if the supposed readers are capable of recognize the content material of the textbooks adequately. Therefore, textbooks used have to be evaluated so one can they're suitable for the goal college students.

Early work on readability formulas began between 1915 and 1920 in the search for subjective methods to judge individual reading abilities, especially with the advantages of standarts reading texts (Gillam & Newbold, 2010). Thorndike's the teacher's workbook publishing in 1921 is the first milestone, his tabulation of the frequency of 10000 printing words in sample texts set the stage for the readability formulas (Carrel,1988). Thorndike's book is following by another landmark work by George Kingsleg Zips in 1949. Zipf came up with Human Behavior and the Principles of Least Effort, in which he declared a mathematical relationship between the hard and easy words, call Zapf's curve (Scoot, 2005).

According to Beverly L. Zakaluk and S. jay Samuels, readability is the ease of reading documents so that they can be read easily. Readability refers to how easily writing is to read and understand, readability was created to assess the suitability of text for student at a certain grade levels or ages. Readability as it applied to language is concerned with the comprehensibility or understands ability of a piece of written text. In 1963, George R.

Klare is publishing his book, *The Measurement of Readability*, in which he review the efforts to improve comprehensible language by revising the texts to lower readability scores. He also suggests to using readability formulas as an aid to increase effectiveness of writing and speaking. Klair is publishing over 80 papers and studies on readability in professional and scholarly journals. He died in 2006. Some the other significant contributors of readability formulas include Edgar Dale, Jeanne Chall, Robert Gunning, Ed Fry, Tom Trabasso, and J. Peter Kinkaid, etc.

As a parameter of written language, many factors influence the readability. The readability is complex and not a simple, precise measure is reflected in a statement from the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association. "*Many factors enter into determining the readability of materials, including the syntactic complexity of sentences, density of concepts, abstractness of ideas, text organization, coherence and sequence of ideas, page format, length of type line, length of paragraphs, intricacy of punctuation, and the use of illustrations and color. In addition, research has shown that student interest in the subject-matter plays a significant role in determining the readability of materials*".

Their research shows that the most important of these categories are content and writing style, followed by format and "features of organization". A significant finding is that of the four categories, only style and variables related to it could be measured statistically. The expert consequently characterizes 64 variables related to reading difficulty and used correlation coefficients to identify the best readability indicators. The factors with greatest impact are the following : average sentence length in words, percentage of easy words, number of words not known to 90% of sixth grade students, number of "easy" words and number of different

“hard” words, minimum syllabic sentence length, number of explicit sentences, number of first second and third person pronouns, maximum syllabic sentence length, average sentence length in syllables, percentage of monosyllables, number of sentence per paragraph, percentage of different words are not known to 90% of sixth grade students, number of simple sentences, percentage of different words, percentage of polysyllables, and the last is number of prepositional phrases.

In assessing readability, some methods can be applied. Teachers who want to select appropriate text for the students in the process of teaching and learning reading could use any kind of method depended on their beliefs. The purpose of readability assessment is to help someone in knowing the readability level of text for certain reader. There are some factors that can influence readability or written text, Richard R Day also explains about the factors that influence the readability. He mentions five factors as follow; lexical knowledge is important factor because when the number of unknown lexical item in reading passage increase, students will get more difficult in comprehending the text; background knowledge is essential in the readability of a text. The more readers know about the particular topic, the more quickly and accurate they can read it ; organization refers to both the rhetorical organization of the text and clarity of the organization. A passage that is not well organized might present problems for EFL students, especially at the beginning stages.

Discourse phenomena at the level of discourse include the arrangement of topics, and comments in a reading passage, and consideration of cohesiveness and coherence. Length of passage is the final factor of readability concerns to length of potential reading passage. The most common mistakes of inexperienced teacher or who is not able judge the

reading abilities of their students is to select passage that is too long. Fry suggests that an objective measured like readability formula is used when it is important to determine the difficulty level of passages, although subjective judgment and try out should not be abandoned. Schulz in Ainiyah gives three ways to measure the readability formula. From the explanation above, it can conclude that the approaches to assess readability minimal use two ways : a judgment and readability formula. The next is a measure of how easily and how well a text in conveying its intended meaning to a reader of the texts.

One common approached to predicting readability is using readability formulas. Chall states on his book that readability formula is a tool for predicting the difficulty of text. Readability formulas measured certain textual characteristics that are quantifiable. Such as characteristics are usually describe as “semantic” and if they concern the words used and “syntactic” if, they have to do with the length or structure of sentences. According to Haris and Hodges, *“readability formula are any of number of objective methods of estimating or predicting the difficulty level of reading material by analyzing the sample from them with result usually expressed as a reading grade level. Principally, readability formula is an instrument to estimate the difficulty level in understanding reading text. Amount of difficult words, amount of words in a sentence and the length of sentences got the readability score based on this formula in the reading text. One of the part of them is Flesch Reading Ease Formula.”*

Here one of clarity method which maximum is used to check the clarity of the textual content and this method might be used on this observe. The method is Reading Ease method with the aid of using Rudolph Flesch. Rudolph Flesch creates Flesch reading to ease formula. A statistical readability formula analyzes the

readability level through the numbers of syllable, words and sentences. Chall states on Dubay's book that is the most popular formula and the most tested and reliable. The Flesch Readability Formula has advantages. The first, they are very convenient because Microsoft Word is so widely used, these readability formulas are available to many people with digital scanners that can copy the text into a file. Users can avoid typing text into a Microsoft Word file and a simply obtain the readability estimate.

Flesch clarity method is taken into consideration as one of the oldest methods that could live on amongst of the brand new method appear. Then degree with Flesch clarity method and locate clarity degree. The precise mathematical sample for the method is :

$$RE = 206.835 - (1.015 \times ASL) - (84.6 \times ASW)$$

**Note :**

**RE** = Readability Ease

**ASL** = Average Sentence Length (the number of words divided by the number of words)

**ASW** = Average Number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

It calculates reading ease on a scale from 1 to 100, with the range of 0-30 being "very difficult", 30-40 being "difficult", 50-60 being "fairly difficult", 60-70 being "standard", 70-80 being "fairly easy", 80-90 being "easy", and 90-100 being "very easy". This description could be easier to be understood in the table 1 :

**Table 1. Flesch Reading Ease Score table :**

Flesch Ease Score	Reading Readability Level/ Category	Estimated Grade	Reading
0-30	Very Difficult	College graduate	
30-40	Difficult	13 <sup>th</sup> to 16 <sup>th</sup> grade	
50-60	Fairly difficult	10 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	
60-70	Standard	8 <sup>th</sup> or 9 <sup>th</sup> grader	
70-80	Fairly easy	7 <sup>th</sup> grader	
80-90	Easy	6 <sup>th</sup> grader	
90-100	Very Easy	5 <sup>th</sup> grader	: Teaching)

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## RESEARCH METHOD

The studies layout of this observe is descriptive quantitative because the studies are most effective monitor the present information resulted with the aid of using studying the content material of textbook. The subject employed in this study is English Language textbook used in ninth grade of Junior High School. Sources of data in this study are textbook in Bright, written by Nur Zaida. Published by Penerbit Erlangga Publisher. The information is with inside the shape of studying textual content in books with a minimal period of one hundred phrases.

To gather the information, the device used is the researchers. The researchers reads and analyzes the reading texts selected from the English textbooks. To locate the clarity degree from the accrued information, the method is Flesch Reading Ease that's located with the aid of using Flesch in 1948. The researchers pick a number of studying texts in of "Bright" because the information. The texts are taken from every part of the unit that specializes in talent focuses on reading skill. There are twelve studying texts classified into extraordinary types of textual content. They are manner, information object, descriptive, recount, and narrative texts. The information might be analyzed the use of the Flesch studying ease take a look at. For the cause, Flesch's Readability tool becomes run. The method for the Flesch studying ease rating (FRES) is :

**Flesch Reading Ease**

$$206.835 - 1015 \left( \frac{\text{total words}}{\text{total sentences}} \right) - 84.6 \left( \frac{\text{total syllables}}{\text{total words}} \right)$$

The Flesch Reading Ease Formula calculates an index score of a text sample based on number of words, sentences length and the number of syllables. Flesch

Reading Ease is best meant for school text and is a standard used by many U.S government agencies, including the U.S Department of Defense. Scores range from 0-100 (the higher the score, the easier to read) and average documents should be within the range of 60-70.

Flesch Reading Ease Scale is one of the most tested and reliable and the most used formula outside. It measures reading from 100 (for easy to read) to 0 (for very difficult to read). A zero score indicates text has more than 37 words on the average in each sentence and the average words are more than 2 syllables. Flesch has identified a “65” as the plain English score.

Procedural to count the readability using Reading Ease Formula, those are four steps that explain below :

- Count a sentence of full units of speech marked by period, colon, semicolon, dash, question mark, or exclamation point as one sentence. Sometimes a 100-word mark falls in the middle of a sentence. Count is such as a sentence as one of those in the sample if the 100-word mark falls after more than half of words in it; otherwise discarded.
- Count the words; count each word in the up to 100. After the 100<sup>th</sup> word, put a mark. Count as one word for numbers, symbols, constructions, hyphenated words abbreviations, figures and their combination that are surrounded by one space.
- Count the number of syllables. Count the syllables as they are pronounced, for example : here has one syllable , number consists of two, and combination consists of four syllables. If a word has two accepted pronunciation, use the one with fewer syllables. For example: the word beloved has two kinds of pronunciation, choose the fewer one.

- Find the readability score. Then find the average number of score and word length of the text in the readability table.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers analyze English textbook entitled “*Bright*” an English course for Junior High School. It is published by Penerbit Erlangga, consisted of 11 parts and 184 pages. The each unit contains information that is centered on fundamental English skills like as reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The reading texts in the textbook are the focus of this study.

The writers use Flesch Reading Ease Formula to discover the clarity degree of studying texts with inside the textbook “Bright”. The clarity rating is gotten with the aid of using accessed online via internet site *readabilityformula.com* and calculates the studying in online application. The calculation and result of sentences, phrases and syllables of every textual content is offered in table 1. :

No	Text	total of words	total of sentences	total of syllables
1	Text 1	267	21	390
2	Text 2	415	30	635
3	Text 3	193	14	307
4	Text 4	268	20	392
5	Text 5	366	32	500
6	Text 6	302	30	416
7	Text 7	298	23	456
8	Text 8	145	15	197
9	Text 9	542	42	733
10	Text 10	141	13	214
11	Text 11	274	27	346
12	Text 12	222	17	334

After counting the quantity of phrase, sentences and syllables, the researchers then count ASL and ASW. The following desk summarizes the ASL and ASW calculation consequences from every textual content received with the aid of using being accessed online via the

*readabilityformulas.com* internet site. It may be visible in table 2 :

No	Text	ASL	ASW
1	Text 1	12.71	1.49
2	Text 2	13.83	1.53
3	Text 3	13.78	1.59
4	Text 4	13.4	1.46
5	Text 5	11.43	1.36
6	Text 6	10.06	1.37
7	Text 7	12.95	1.53
8	Text 8	9.66	1.35
9	Text 9	12.90	1.35
10	Text 10	10.84	1.51
11	Text 11	10.14	1.26
12	Text 12	13.05	1.50

Furthermore, after counting the ASW and ASL of each text, the researchers continue to count the readability by using Flesch Reading Ease Formula.

The result finding of the text 1 entitled “Poor Mr. Lebai” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 75, and it means that the text was in *fairly easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 2 entitled “Orang Utan” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 67, and it means that the text is in *standard level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 3 entitled “Tasty Island” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 60, and it means that the text is in *standard level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students.

The result finding of the text 4 entitled “Komodo Dragon” based on Flesch Reading Ease score was 74, and it means that the text is in *fairly easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 5 entitled “Stone on the Road” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 88, and it means that the text is in *easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the

6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 6 entitled “Ali Baba” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 92, and it means that the text is in *very easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

The result finding of the text 7 entitled “Spider” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 72, and it means that the text was in *fairly easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 8 entitled “The Bear & The Bees” based on Flesch Reading Ease score was 89, and it means that the text is in *easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 9 entitled “Timun Mas” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 81, and it means that the text is in *easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade students.

The result finding of the text 10 entitled “Atom” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 60, and it means that the text is in *standard level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 11 entitled “The Mouse and The Cat” based on Flesch Reading Ease score was 97, and it means that the text is in *very easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The result finding of the text 12 entitled “Seashorses” based on Flesch Reading Ease score is 70, and it meant that the text is in *fairly easy level categorized*. Basically, this text is for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade student.

The calculation consequences are received with the aid of using being accessed online via the internet site *readabilityformulas.com*. It may be visible in table 3 :

**Table 3. The Result of Readability Score of the Texts Based on Reading Ease Scale of Flesch Formula**

No	Text	Readability score	Level	Estimated Reading Grade

1.	Text 1	75	Fairy Easy	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade
2	Text 2	67	Standard	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Graders
3	Text 3	60	Standard	8 <sup>th</sup> or 9 <sup>th</sup> Graders
4	Text 4	74	Fairly Easy	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade
5	Text 5	88	Easy	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
6	Text 6	92	Very Easy	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade
7	Text 7	72	Fairly Easy	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade
8	Text 8	89	Easy	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
9	Text 9	81	Easy	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
10	Text 10	60	Standard	8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> Graders
11	Text 11	97	Very Easy	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade
12	Text 12	70	Fairly Easy	7 <sup>th</sup> Grade

Readability is used to describe a combination of structural and lexical difficulties of a text. It is important to assess the right level of readability level for the right student's level. From the information evaluation, The end result of Flesch Reading Ease Formula suggests that 12 studying texts at the textbooks are classified into four levels: The first is very easy level, there's 2 studying textual content (16%) on this degree. The clarity rankings have been 90 – 100 and the anticipated of studying grade, it's miles for fifth grade of essential college. The second class in all, there are 3 studying textual content (25%) in this level. The clarity rankings have been 80 – 89 and the anticipated of studying grade, it's miles for seventh grade of essential college. The third category is fairly easy level, there are 4 studying textual content (33%) on this degree. The clarity rankings have been 70 – 79 and the anticipated of studying grade, it's miles seventh grade of junior excessive college. The fourth category is standard level, there are 3 studying textual content (25%) on this degree. The clarity rankings have been 60-69 and the anticipated of studying grade , it's miles

eighth grade to ninth grade of junior high school. These researchers provide the outline that the clarity of studying texts in Bright isn't appropriate to ninth grade. The result of analysis readability formula shows that many texts are too easy for ninth grade students. Therefore, the texts on the English textbook 'Bright' is not suitable for ninth grade students. This becomes a problem for the students if the readability of students' reading material is too easy. Students will be less interested in reading and students' reading skills will not develop of increase. In fact, students will find it difficult to understand the texts on the textbook because there are other factors outside the readability text that make students will face difficulties in comprehending the English reading texts.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the translation of information, after studying the information of studying text at the textbook "*Bright*" with the aid of using the use of (FREF), the researchers locate clarity of studying text with inside the "*Bright*" aren't appropriate for 9th grade. Based at the result of studying ease method, from twelve texts, 9 (75%) reading texts are too easy and 3 (25%) reading text are standard for 9th grade students. They have been most effective studying texts (25%) appropriate to 9th grade students.

From the discussion above, the researcher would like to offer some suggestions as follows; For the English Teachers and Students. The English teachers should analyze the texts' readability before selecting a textbook. Analyzing the texts' readability is important for the teachers and students. The English teacher could predict and ensure reading material are suitable for his students' reading level. For the students, they should diligent and enrich their vocabulary. Students should be diligent in learning and reading English textbook in

order to practice and increase their reading ability.

The authors and publisher should pay attention and consider the suitability to the texts that will be learnt by students with check the readability level before published the textbook or before publish the book it is strongly recommended for them to measure the readability of reading texts first and change the material into the readable one. The suggestion is given so that the book is suitable based on the level of the student's grade. The writers hope to other researchers to examine other factors that influence the text such as interest, exploitability, topic, appropriateness, cultural suitability and appearance. And for the next researchers also can find out the readability level of English texts by using other technique such as Cloze Procedure test, SMOG formula, etc.

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