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READABILITY PROFILING OF THE *LIFE TODAY* SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK BASED ON RUDOLF FLESCH'S READING EASE FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Readability is not just a measure of text difficulty, but it is a vital indicator of how effectively learning materials communicate with their intended audience. This research investigates the readability level of the reading texts in the *Life Today* textbook for twelfth-grade senior high school students using the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. The study aims to determine whether the texts in the textbook are appropriate for students' reading abilities and align with the learning expectations of the Merdeka Curriculum. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method. Twelve reading texts from the textbook were selected and analyzed. The readability level of each text was calculated by determining the Average Sentence Length (ASL) and Average Syllables per Word (ASW), which were then processed using the Flesch Reading Ease formula. The readability scores range from 32.00 to 76.00, showing substantial variation in text difficulty. The results reveal that 3 texts (25%) are *Fairly Easy* (70–80), 3 texts (25%) are *Standard* (60–70), 5 texts (41.67%) are *Fairly Difficult* (50–60), and 1 text (8.33%) is categorized as *Difficult* (32.00). Most texts fall into the *Fairly Difficult* category, indicating general suitability for senior high school readers, although some texts are either too easy or too complex. These findings suggest a need for teacher guidance when presenting more difficult texts and highlight the importance of evaluating textbook readability to support effective learning.

Keywords:

Readability, Flesch Reading Ease, English textbook, text difficulty

A. INTRODUCTION

Many different people and publishing companies have written and published a large number of English textbooks for students with varying levels of skill. Many publishers have produced educational resources, including English textbooks, due to the importance of textbooks. As a result, the crucial duty of selecting the best textbooks for their classes falls on teachers. The significance of textbooks in an English as a second or foreign language class highlights the critical nature of the selection process; at times, it falls upon the teacher to make the textbook selection for a particular class." Reading is frequently one of the top priorities for foreign language learners. Informational purposes and personal enjoyment, careers and academic pursuits are the main aspiration in developing their reading skill. In many students, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting is referred to the primary goal for students is often to attain proficiency in reading a foreign language. (Kroll, 2001).

Readability influences how well readers grasp written material by considering language complexity and familiarity with words. In research, assessing readability is vital because it improves communication quality, ensures content matches the audience's understanding, and minimizes misunderstandings. When choosing English textbooks, selecting the most appropriate one depends on evaluating how easily students can comprehend the text through readability analysis. Richards (2001). This method helps determine if the content is challenging, simple, or easy for learners.

Nearly half of students find school information books confusing. This confusion might result from students' lack of skills or from the texts being poorly organized or overly complex. Regardless of the cause, students tend to avoid reading. Therefore, selecting suitable reading materials is a complex but essential task. Good texts should introduce engaging topics, promote discussion, and stimulate creative responses. The challenge is ensuring the texts are appropriate to the students' abilities to encourage reading development. Teachers can use readability measures to select appropriate textbooks, which reflect how easily the texts can be understood. Readability considers factors like sentence length, unfamiliar words, and grammatical complexity, helping educators choose texts that effectively communicate information.

The analysis of the "Life Today" textbook is essential to determine whether the difficulty level of its texts aligns with the educational standards set by the Merdeka Curriculum for 12th-grade students. The goal is to ensure the material's appropriateness and consistency with curriculum objectives, which directly

influences students' comprehension. The research aims to understand how the complexity of reading materials affects student understanding and to identify potential improvements for better catering to varied literacy levels. The findings will also assist teachers in developing effective instructional strategies and provide valuable feedback for enhancing teaching materials, ultimately supporting effective English language learning in schools.

Choosing the right English textbooks is a difficult task but crucial because well-chosen texts can introduce interesting topics, foster discussion, inspire imagination, and provide a solid foundation for engaging lessons. Ideally, students should be able to read aloud with some expression, answer basic questions, and connect new information to previous readings on similar topics. (Mammadova, 2021)

The Flesch Reading Ease formula is a widely accepted and dependable method for evaluating text readability, as it does not require a specialized vocabulary list. To make the formula more straightforward, Farr, Jenkins, and Paterson replaced the syllable count with the average number of one-syllable words per hundred words. The formula used to calculate the Flesch Reading Ease score is: $\text{Score} = 206.835 - (1.015 \times \text{ASL}) - (84.6 \times \text{ASW})$, where the score ranges from 0 (very difficult) to 100 (very easy), with scores around 30 indicating very difficult texts and scores around 70 being suitable for adult readers. ASL (Average Sentence Length) measures the number of words divided by the number of sentences, while ASW (Average Syllables per Word) reflects the average syllables per word (William H. Dubay, 2004).

Readability refers to how easily a text can be understood or comprehended. According to Richards and Schmidt, *readability* is defined as the ease with which written materials can be read and grasped. Jack. C Richards and Richards, n.d. Several factors influence readability, including

1. the average sentence length in a passage,
2. the number of unfamiliar words it contains, and
3. the grammatical complexity of the language used.

Table 1.2
Reading Ease Scale of the Flesch Formula

Score	Difficulty Level	Reading Grade
0-30	Very Difficult	College Graduate
30-40	Difficult	13 th to 16 th grade (college student)

50-60	Fairly Difficult	10 th to 12 th grade
60-70	Standard	8 th and 9 th grade
70-80	Fairly Easy	7 th grade
80-90	Easy	6 th grade
90-100	Very Easy	5 th grade

The table illustrates the readability scale of the Flesch Formula, linking specific score ranges to corresponding difficulty levels and grade equivalents. For instance, scores from 0 to 30 are categorized as very difficult, suitable for college graduates, while scores from 90 to 100 are deemed very easy, appropriate for 5th-grade students.

Rudolf Flesch crafted several formulas aimed at improving the readability of written materials. Among these, his Reading Ease (RE) formula is the most commonly used and is regarded as highly accurate for predicting how easily adults can read and understand texts.

Three previous studies have explored the issue of readability in English learning materials. First, Zantoni (2018) conducted a quantitative analysis on an eighth-grade Junior High School (JHS) textbook. This research concluded that the vast majority of the texts (ten out of sixteen) were too easy for the students, with very few being truly appropriate for the eighth-grade level. Second, Handayani and Wirza (2021) analyzed a Primary English Textbook, finding that while five texts were suitably leveled, the majority were either too difficult or too easy (below or exceeding the students' grade level). Lastly, Lendo focused on the reading texts used in the JHS English National Examination. Their quantitative results using the Flesch Reading Ease formula indicated that most texts in the high-stakes examination were classified as "very easy" or "easy," with only two texts meeting a "standard" or "fairly easy" difficulty level appropriate for the students. The main gap shown in these three studies is the ongoing mismatch between the grade level the materials are meant for and the actual readability level of the English texts and assessments.

This research aims to analyze the readability of the reading materials contained in the Ministry of Education and Culture's English textbook *Life Today*. The study also intends to identify the extent to which these texts align with the reading abilities of 12th-grade students.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study examines the readability of the reading texts in the *Life Today* English textbook by using the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. This formula measures text difficulty based on sentence length and the number of syllables in words. Alongside the numerical score, the study also considers students' understanding of the texts through observations, interviews, and document analysis.

According to Zuhri in Sugiyono, a qualitative descriptive approach is used to describe how students interact with the reading materials. This method helps the researcher understand students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges when engaging with texts of different difficulty levels. By combining text analysis with students' responses, the study aims to evaluate how well the textbook aligns with the needs and reading abilities of 12th-grade students and whether it meets curriculum expectations. The subject of this research is the English textbook *Life Today*, used by 12th-grade senior high school students. The study focuses on the reading passages included in the book. These texts are analyzed for readability, sentence complexity, vocabulary use, and their alignment with curriculum standards. The main instrument used is the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. Word, sentence, and syllable counts are taken from each text, and the formula is then applied to determine readability. Higher scores indicate easier texts. This tool ensures consistent and reliable measurement.

This study aims to assess the readability of the reading texts in the *Life Today* English textbook for 12th-grade senior high school students. To achieve this, the research applies the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, which evaluates text difficulty by examining sentence length and syllable density. In addition to the numerical readability results, the study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to gain deeper insight into how students actually experience and understand the texts. (Margareth, 2017). Through observations, interviews, and document analysis, the research explores how learners interact with the reading materials, what challenges they encounter, and whether the texts match their cognitive and linguistic abilities as outlined in the curriculum.

The data for this study includes both primary data from the textbook itself and secondary data from books, journals, articles, and online sources. Each reading text is analyzed by counting its words, sentences, and syllables, followed by calculations of average sentence length and average syllables per word. The resulting readability scores are compared with grade-level standards to determine suitability. To ensure

accuracy and reliability, the research employs triangulation by cross-checking findings from different data sources and methods. Overall, this methodology provides a systematic approach to evaluating the alignment between textbook readability and students' reading proficiency. (Taherdoost, 2022).

The data analysis process in this study follows three main stages to ensure systematic and meaningful interpretation. The first stage, data reduction, involves selecting and organizing only the relevant reading texts that meet the predetermined criteria of 150–3,000 words, ensuring the analysis aligns with the requirements of the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. After filtering the data, the second stage, data display, presents the results in clear tables that show each text's Average Sentence Length (ASL), Average Syllables per Word (ASW), readability grade level, and overall difficulty level. (Herdyansah, 2019). These visual displays allow the researcher to easily identify patterns and compare the readability of different texts. The final stage, conclusion drawing, involves interpreting these results to evaluate whether the reading materials are appropriate for 12th-grade students and to determine how well they align with curriculum expectations.

To strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings, the study applies triangulation, which ensures that the information is accurate and trustworthy. Source triangulation is used by comparing data from various materials, while method triangulation incorporates different techniques such as text analysis, interviews, and document review. When possible, investigator triangulation involves more than one researcher to reduce bias. Theory triangulation is also applied to interpret the findings through multiple theoretical perspectives. Together, these forms of triangulation enhance the credibility of the research and confirm that the results are consistent, balanced, and dependable.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

. The analysis of the *Life Today* textbook reveals that the reading materials present a wide range of complexity, demonstrating significant variation in sentence length, vocabulary difficulty, and overall readability. The textbook, which consists of 12 reading texts across different genres, was evaluated using the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. This process involved calculating the number of sentences, words, and syllables in each text to determine their readability levels. The results show that the texts range from Fairly Easy to Difficult, indicating that some passages may be too

simple for twelfth-grade readers while others may exceed their expected comprehension level.

The Result of ASL and ASW Calculation

Text	Average Sentence Length	Average Syllable per Word
Text 1	15.12	1.50
Text 2	16.26	1.53
Text 3	14.78	1.36
Text 4	16.47	1.63
Text 5	18.62	1.52
Text 6	16.72	1.58
Text 7	22.11	1.80
Text 8	18.65	1.61
Text 9	22.37	1.55
Text 10	16.18	1.44
Text 11	16.66	1.41
Text 12	18.54	1.60

For each of the twelve reading texts in the Life Today textbook, the table shows the Average Sentence Length (ASL) and the Average Syllables per Word (ASW). When using the Flesch Reading Ease Formula to assess text readability, these two elements are crucial indicators. Overall, the ASL values show a discernible variation in sentence complexity across the texts, ranging from 14.78 to 22.37 words per sentence. Higher ASL texts, like Texts 7 (22.11) and 9 (22.37), are more difficult for readers to understand because of their longer and more intricate sentence structures. Texts with shorter sentences, such as Text 3 (14.78), on the other hand, are typically simpler to read and comprehend.

Similarly, the ASW values range from 1.36 to 1.80 syllables per word, indicating differences in vocabulary difficulty. Texts with higher ASW—such as Text 7 (1.80) and Text 4 (1.63) which contain more multisyllabic words, which usually increases reading difficulty. On the other hand, texts like Text 3 (1.36) and Text 11 (1.41) use simpler vocabulary, making them more accessible.

**The Readability Score of the Reading Text Based on The Reading Ease Scale
of The Flesch Formula**

Text	Readability Score	Difficult Level	Reading Grade
Text 1	64.00	Standard	8 th to 9 th Grade
Text 2	61.00	Standard	8 th to 9 th Grade
Text 3	77.00	Fairly Easy	7 th Grade
Text 4	52.00	Fairly Difficult	10 th to 12 th Grade
Text 5	60.00	Standard	8 th to 9 th Grade
Text 6	57.00	Fairly Difficult	10 th to 12 th Grade
Text 7	32.00	Difficult	18 y.o and above
Text 8	52.00	Fairly Difficult	10 th to 12 th Grade
Text 9	53.00	Fairly Difficult	10 th to 12 th Grade
Text 10	68.00	Standard	8 th to 9 th Grade
Text 11	71.00	Fairly Easy	7 th Grade
Text 12	53.00	Fairly Difficult	10 th to 12 th Grade

Based on the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, the table displays the readability scores of twelve reading texts from the Life Today textbook. The findings demonstrate that the texts' levels of difficulty vary greatly, from Fairly Easy to Difficult. Texts 3 and 11 are classified as Fairly Easy, meaning they are appropriate for readers in the seventh grade. Four texts (Texts 1, 2, 5, and 10) are suitable for students in grades 8 through 9 because they are classified as Standard. These texts have simpler sentence structures and are reasonably easy to understand.

Most of the texts which five in all (Texts 4, 6, 8, 9, and 12) are categorized as Fairly Difficult, appropriate for students in grades 10 through 12. Because of their longer sentences and more complicated vocabulary, these texts demand a higher level of reading comprehension. Text 7 is the only text that is classified as Difficult, meaning that it requires a reading level similar to that of college students (18 years old and above). The longest sentences and the greatest number of multisyllabic words are probably found in this text.

Overall, the table indicates that most texts fall within the expected readability range (Fairly Difficult), making them suitable for senior high school students, even though some may be too easy or too difficult for twelfth-grade students. While more challenging texts might need more assistance from teachers, simpler texts can be used as introductory material.

The findings also reveal the importance of examining text structure and vocabulary. Texts with long sentences and a high number of multisyllabic words tend to be more challenging for students, as seen in Text 7, which falls into the Difficult category. Conversely, texts with shorter sentences and simpler vocabulary demonstrate higher readability scores, making them more accessible for lower-grade readers. This variation emphasizes the need for balance in material selection to support students' literacy development effectively.

The percentage of readability data

No	Level	Numbers of Text	Percentage
1	Fairly Easy	2	16.67%
2	Standard	4	33.33%
3	Fairly Difficult	5	41.67%
4	Difficult	1	8.33%

The readability analysis shows that two texts fall into the Fairly Easy category, four into the Standard category, five into the Fairly Difficult category, and one into the Difficult category. The majority of the texts—over 40%—are categorized as Fairly Difficult, meaning they are generally suitable for 10th to 12th-grade students. This suggests that, overall, the textbook includes materials appropriate for senior high school learners, although some texts may require additional instructional support to ensure full comprehension. The presence of a Difficult text, which aligns with college-level readability, highlights the need for teacher guidance when introducing highly complex material.

When the readability results are examined in percentage form, it becomes clear that the textbook leans toward moderately challenging texts, with only a small portion categorized as either very easy or extremely difficult. This middle-ground range may benefit students by offering steady exposure to increasingly complex texts. However, certain texts classified as Standard or Fairly Easy may not provide sufficient challenge for twelfth graders, suggesting that their inclusion might be intended for warm-up activities or introductory tasks rather than deep comprehension practice.

A comparison with previous research shows that the *Life Today* textbook is better aligned with high school reading expectations than some earlier textbooks analyzed

in similar studies. While other textbooks showed a significant mismatch between the intended grade level and actual readability, the *Life Today* textbook contains more texts suitable for upper-grade students. Additionally, the researcher ensured accuracy by verifying readability scores using both web-based tools and manual calculations, reducing the risk of numerical inconsistencies.

Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of evaluating readability to ensure that textbooks meet the needs of their target learners. Teachers must be aware of the varying difficulty levels within the textbook so they can adjust their teaching strategies, provide necessary scaffolding, and support students' reading comprehension. The study highlights that while the *Life Today* textbook generally aligns with curriculum expectations, thoughtful instructional planning remains essential to maximize student learning outcomes.

Additionally, the analysis highlights that while the majority of texts fall within the Fairly Difficult range, the distribution of readability levels suggests the textbook attempts to provide a gradual progression of difficulty. This progression can support students' cognitive development by exposing them to increasingly complex language structures. However, for this progression to be effective, teachers must ensure that students are given adequate preparation and support to navigate these varying levels, particularly for texts that reach college-level difficulty. Without appropriate scaffolding, students may become discouraged when encountering passages that are significantly beyond their proficiency level.

The study also underscores the limitations of relying solely on numerical readability scores for evaluating text suitability. Although the Flesch Reading Ease Formula provides valuable insight into sentence structure and vocabulary complexity, it does not account for factors such as background knowledge, cultural familiarity, or conceptual difficulty. A text that receives a high readability score may still pose challenges if it introduces unfamiliar topics or requires advanced inferencing skills. Therefore, readability analysis should be complemented with qualitative evaluations that consider thematic content and student engagement.

Furthermore, the findings point to the importance of teacher mediation in bridging gaps between text difficulty and student comprehension. Teachers play a critical role in providing vocabulary support, context-building activities, and guided reading strategies that help students decode and interpret complex texts. In cases where the textbook does not fully align with students' proficiency levels, teacher

intervention becomes even more essential. Through targeted instructional strategies, students can develop the skills needed to handle more challenging texts, thereby enhancing their overall reading proficiency.

Finally, the results of this study highlight the broader implications for curriculum developers and textbook writers. Ensuring that reading materials correspond to the intended grade level is crucial for promoting effective learning experiences. The balanced distribution of text difficulty in the *Life Today* textbook demonstrates an effort to align materials with student needs, but further refinements may be necessary to eliminate readability mismatches. Incorporating readability checks into the early stages of textbook design can lead to more accessible and pedagogically sound learning resources that support students' literacy development more effectively.

D. CONCLUSION

Using the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, this study examined the readability levels of reading materials in the *Life Today* textbook for students in the twelfth grade. The results showed that there were notable differences in text difficulty, with readability scores ranging from Fairly Easy (77.00) to Difficult (32.00). Six works were classified as Fairly Difficult (50–60) based on the analysis, indicating that they are appropriate for students in grades 10 through 12. However, a few texts (Fairly simple and Standard) were deemed too simple, and one text (requiring college-level reading proficiency) was deemed too challenging. It can be stated that the *Life Today* textbook is only partially appropriate for students in the twelfth grade.

E. SUGGESTIONS

It is advised to investigate students' experiences, engagement levels, and comprehension difficulties when reading texts through interviews, classroom observations, and comprehension tests in addition to analyzing text readability using the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. Furthermore, since this study only looks at one textbook, future studies might compare textbooks from different publishers or examine readability across grade levels and curricula to find recurring patterns of readability difficulty. By looking into instructional tactics, scaffolding approaches, and supplemental materials used to help students grasp more complex texts, future study can also explore the role of teachers in overcoming readability issues. Future studies

can shed more light on readability and how it affects students' comprehension and reading abilities by examining these facets.

The study's conclusions provide textbook producers with useful information for creating content that corresponds with students' reading levels. In order to facilitate progressive learning experiences, publishers are urged to guarantee a fair distribution of text difficulty levels. Students' engagement with complicated materials can be improved by using glossaries, comprehension questions, and guided reading sections. Additionally, adding digital and interactive components, like online tests and multimedia content which can make learning more approachable and interesting for students with different skill levels.

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