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Lexical Density and Readability of the Facil's 'Advanced Learning Textbook' for Indonesian High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the lexical density and readability levels in Facil's 'Advanced Learning English textbook for high school students in grade XI. The documents of this study were 11 reading texts selected from each chapter in the 'Advanced Learning English 2' textbook. This study's objectives are to (1) determine the average lexical density of selected reading passages from English textbooks and (2) determine the next level of this book and whether it is appropriate for high school students class XI. Grounded on Ure's (1971) text analysis, the researchers analyzed the lexical density of the reading text. Meanwhile, to determine readability level, Flesch's (1994) reading ease scale formula was utilized. After carefully analyzing the data, it was discovered that almost all texts had a high lexical density. The average reading text in this book has a higher lexical density level than 40%.

Additionally, eleven reading texts are classified into five levels based on the Flesch reading ease formula's results: easy for one text, reasonably easy for three texts, and difficult for four texts. For two texts, the difficulty level is standard; for three texts, the difficulty level is relatively complex; and for two, the difficulty level is difficult. Therefore, reading texts in this book is considered appropriate for high school students' learning process because each text has a different and gradual difficulty level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is among the required language skills that high school students in Indonesia have to master. It is a crucial component of the teaching and learning process for the other four skills because it comprises a more significant portion of the teaching syllabus for classroom instruction. In this regard, Brown, Oram-Cardy & Johnson (2013) contend that reading is primarily concerned with developing appropriate and

efficient comprehension strategies. In order to reach the students' comprehension, teachers have to carefully select the reading texts which are suitable for their students. However, selecting appropriate reading materials for students remains a challenging task for teachers over decades, primarily for teaching EFL learners (see Arias, Lare, 1993; 2007; Moffet, 1982; Rezaei Ghahroudi & Sheikhzadeh, 2017; Syunina, Yarmakeev, Shechter, Pimenova & Abdrafikova, 2017; Wheler & Wheler, 1948). In order to gain many benefits from the time spent reading, teachers have been attempting to find out reading materials that fit the students considering some criteria such as relevance, interest, and usefulness (Moffet, 1982). Therefore, reading materials selection becomes among the primary tasks EFL teachers must fulfill before entering the class.

Textbooks are present as common alternatives among the essential sources that help teachers deliver English reading materials. A textbook is one media that is mainly used to teach English. Richards (2001) mentions that textbooks are a crucial component in most language programs. This means that textbooks are critical in assisting students in developing and mastering reading skills and three other skills. Additionally, the textbook serves as the foundation for students' language input and practice in the classroom.

Furthermore, when discussing educational textbooks, language should be precise in its meaning and content to avoid misunderstandings during the learning process. Additionally, the excellent text should be understandable to students. An English teacher must be familiar with the contents and materials of the textbooks that will be used in the learning process, as their suitability affects the learning objectives conveyed through the learning activities that follow the core competencies and essential competencies in the teaching syllabus issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

In order to assist the teachers, one type of analysis that helps them provide appropriate learning materials to students is through determining the texts' lexical density. Halliday (1985) defines Lexical density as the ratio of lexical items to running words (the word used). Rather than function words, content words or lexical items such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs convey much information. When a text contains fewer lexical items than grammar, its lexical density decreases, making it easier to understand. On the other hand, if a text contains more lexical items than grammatical ones, it has a high lexical density, making it more difficult to comprehend but contains a wealth of information.

Lexical density is related to word content, as English vocabulary can be classified into content and function words. While content words have meaning and reference, function words serve a purpose in forming English grammar. The notion of density refers to a sort of complexity that results from the development of words. On the other hand, this relates to the concept of lexico-grammar in terms of the level of wording in the language (Halliday, 1985). According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2013), lexical density is the ratio of lexical items (content words) to total running words or higher grammatical units, namely clauses. Lexical density serves as the reflective representative function of a written text. It is thus less active and spontaneous than spoken language, which tends to become a language in action.

Moreover, density refers to a level of complexity associated with the evolution of words. In other words, it is related to the lexico-grammar concept, which refers to the level of wording in a language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). The lexical density can be quantified in a variety of ways. Initially, Ure (1971) proposed that lexical density should be defined as the ratio of lexical items to running words. Halliday (2002) refined this formula as his initial approximation for lexical density measurement, which was then further developed by O'loughlin (1995). In order to measure lexical density, it is necessary to distinguish grammatical items from lexical items and their differences. Grammatical items, or 'function words,' come in a closed system comprising determiners such as articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, some classes of the adverb, and finite verbs Halliday & Matthiessen (2013).

By contrast, lexical items or 'content words' are lexical because they operate in lexical sets; they are a part of an open system rather than a closed system. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Besides that, the term "lexical words" must be defined to calculate the lexical density. When the concept of "lexical density" was introduced, " Ure (1971) categorized words into lexical and non-lexical categories. Language is composed of lexical words, which are the primary carriers of meaning, and non-lexical words, which serve no lexical

function but are "purely grammatical in nature." According to Ure (1971), a word is only orthographic, and a lexical item such as "turn out" is divided into two different words: "turn" is a lexical word, while "out" is a non-lexical word. The preceding explanation demonstrates that lexical words belong to the open class, while non-lexical words belong to the close class.

Along with lexical density, it is necessary to quantify readability in a text to assist teachers in developing teaching materials that adhere to the teaching syllabus. By analyzing the text's readability level, the teacher can predict whether the text is complex, plain, or easy for the student. Dubay (2006) defines readability as the property of some texts that makes them easier to read and comprehend than others. Analyzing readability enables you to determine the level of difficulty associated with a piece of text. About the issue, To, Fan & Thomas (2013) researched four English textbooks that focused on reading text. The research examines four texts from an English textbook to determine the text's lexical density and readability, examines the relationships between lexical density and readability, defines the text levels, and analyzes the correlation between lexical density and readability measurements. According to the research findings, three of the four reading texts have a high lexical density and are intended for upper secondary students. In terms of readability, the readability of the text is proportional to its level. However, the highest level does not necessarily correspond to the highest readability, with a slight increase in lexical density and readability proportional to the increase in text level and little indication of a relationship between text level, readability, and lexical density.

Similarly, Sujatna & Sopian (2017) conducted another study on the readability of English short stories for children. This study aims to ascertain the average number of difficult words and the lexical density (grammatical intricacy) of English children's short stories. The average percentage of difficult words in English children's short stories is 3.06 percent, while the average percentage of difficult words in English children's short stories is 33.62 percent.

The readability of an extended reading is determined by the number of ideas and language presented. Additionally, readability quantifies how well and quickly a text conveys meaning to its readers. According to Pikulski (2002), readability is "the level of ease or difficulty of a text material that can be understood by certain readers and reads the text for a specific purpose." Woods et al. (1998) also define that the readability of text was investigated to measure the writing complexity and estimate the reading or education level required for comprehension of the text. Readability concerns the possibility that the reader's content can be understood and distinguished from readability, a measure of how easily a letter or character can distinguish from one another and how they are presented in text form. Furthermore, McLaughlin (1969), the creator of the SMOG readability formula, defines readability as the degree to which a particular class of people finds specific reading matters exciting and understandable. This definition emphasizes the interaction between a text and a group of readers with known characteristics such as reading skills, prior knowledge, and motivation.

Grounded on the importance of providing readable texts in the EFL teaching and learning, in this present study, the researchers attempted to examine a textbook, Advanced Learning English 2 by Facil, which focuses on reading texts. This book was selected due to its intensive usage in some schools in Indonesia. The analysis was conducted to measure lexical density and readability. The lexical density was determined using Ure's formula, and the readability was by using the Flesch reading ease scale. This study's objectives are (1) to find out the average lexical density of selected reading passages in Advanced Learning English 2 and (2) to ascertain the textbook's next level to determine whether it is appropriate for high school students in Grade XI. This study is expected to benefit high school teachers in Indonesia to consider this textbook to use or not use as their learning sources. Moreover, independent students looking for suitable reading materials might take advantage of this research. Last but not least, it is expected that the findings of this study can contribute to the expansion of scholarship in the area of lexical density and text readability.

2. METHODS

This study was conducted to answer two primary research questions (RQ), namely (1) What is the average lexical density in the selected reading texts in the Facil's textbook entitled 'Advanced Learning English 2'? and (2) Is the next level of this book suitable for high school students grade XI? To collect the data, the researchers employed a documentation technique considering three significant aspects; access, sampling, and relevance (Rapley & Rees, 2018). The documents were 11 selected reading texts from Facil's textbook entitled 'Advanced Learning English 2' taken from each chapter. The reading texts chosen are complete and not jumbled. Nevertheless, some texts in the textbook continue on the following page. Meanwhile, to analyze the data, the researchers used an application at https://www.usingenglish.com/members/text-analysis/ referring to Ure's (1971) lexical density formula and the Flesch Reading Ease formula (1950) that analyzed the readability level through the numbers of syllables, words, and sentences, as follow.

Table 1. Lexical Density Formula of Ure

Source: Halliday, 1985b; O'Loughlin, 1995; Ure, 1971 cited in To, et al., (2013)

Lexical density =	number of lexical items x 100
	total number of words

Based on this measurement, if the resulting figure exceeds 40 %, it contains a higher lexical density.

Table 2. Flesch Reading Ease Scale Formula

Source: Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 344 cited in To, et al., (2013)

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

Notes:

ASL = average sentence length (the number of words divided by the number of sentences)

ASW = average number of syllables per word (the number of syllables divided by the number of words)

Table 3. Original Flesch reading ease description of style Educational Attainment Level (US)

(Courtis et al. 2002; To et al. 2013)

0-30	Very difficult	Postgraduate
30-50	Difficult	Undergraduate
50-60	Fairly difficult	Grade 10-12
60-70	Standard	Grade 8-9
70-80	Fairly easy Grade	Grade 7
80-90	Easy	Grade 6
90-100	Very easy	Grade 5

Table 3 shows us how to determine the reading ease on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0–29 indicating 'very difficult,' 30–49 indicating 'difficult,' 50–59 indicating 'fairly difficult,' 60–69 indicating 'standard,' 70–79 indicating "fairly easy," 80–89 indicating 'easy,' and 90–100 indicating 'very easy.' The description

in table 1 may be more readily understood as the correlation between the Flesch Reading Ease scale and the reader's level.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The 11 selected reading texts taken from the book 'Advanced Learning English 2' published by Facil, as the materials for analysis, are listed below.

Table. 4 List of 11 reading texts in 'Advanced Learning English 2' published by Facil

Number of the texts	The headings
1	Drinking Coffee has Health Benefits
2	Momotaro the Peach Boy
3	William Shakespeare
4	Romeo and Juliet
5	Obesity is a Nightmare
6	The Ugly Duckling Part 3
7	The Ugly Duckling Part 2
8	The Ugly Duckling Part 1
9	Komodo Dragon
10	Flower
11	Bullfrog

The Results of Eleven Texts Analysis

The eleven reading texts studied in this paper were obtained from each chapter of the 'Advanced Learning English 2' published by Facil. Each reading text is calculated for its lexical density and readability using a web application at https://www.usingenglish.com/members/text-analysis/. In this study, the writers described texts taken from English textbooks. After conducting an analysis, the writer found the statistics as the result of the calculation of each text, as follows.

Table 5. Text 1 Drinking Coffee has Health Benefits

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	41	
Long Words	79	
Lexical Density	65.95%	
Flesch Reading Ease	34.68	Difficult: Undergraduate

As illustrated in Table 4, the generated lexical density is 65.9 percent. When the Ure formula is used, this text is classified as having a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. Additionally, the readability score for the first text is 34.7, indicating that the text is complicated. According to Flesch's table, the text is considered difficult and classified as a text for undergraduates.

Table 6. Text 2 Momotaro the Peach Boy

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	39	
Long Words	97	
Lexical Density	32.87%	
Flesch Reading Ease	74.90	Relatively Easy: Grade 7

The second text has 32.9 percent in terms of lexical density. According to Ure's formula, this text is classified as easy because it had a value of less than 40% when the readability statistic was compared to the Flesch table, 74.9, indicating that this second text is relatively easy.

Table 7. Text 3 William Shakespeare

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	97	
Long Words	149	
Lexical Density	54.34%	
Flesch Reading Ease	42.16	Difficult: Undergraduate

The third text in Table 7 demonstrates the result of 54.34 percent lexical density. This text has a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. Similarly to readability, this text is complex at 42.2 and is appropriate for undergraduates.

Table 8. Text 4 Romeo and Juliet

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	60	
Long Words	72	
Lexical Density	48.62%	
Flesch Reading Ease	55.49	Somewhat Difficult: Grade 10-12

The fourth text in Table 8 has a lexical density of 48.6 percent. The figure demonstrates that text 4 has a high lexical density, exceeding 40%. Following a readability score of 55.4 that has been adjusted for the table's size, the text is relatively tricky, with a grade of 10-12.

Table 9. Text 5 Obesity is a Nightmare

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	30	
Long Words	44	
Lexical Density	64.77%	
Flesch Reading Ease	51.81	Somewhat Difficult: Grade 10-12

According to Table 9, the fifth text generates a lexical density of 64.7 percent. When the Ure formula is used, this text is classified as having a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. Additionally, the readability score for this fourth text is 51.8, indicating that the text is relatively tricky. According to Flesch's table, the text would be relatively tricky and classified as a text for classes 10-12.

Table 10. Text 6 The Ugly Duckling 3

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	15	
Long Words	41	
Lexical Density	57.76%	
Flesch Reading Ease	79.02	Relatively Easy: Grade 7

As illustrated in Table 10, text 6 generates a lexical density of 57.7%. This text has a high lexical density of more than 40% when the Ure formula is used. In contrast to other readability measures, text 6 has a readability score of 79, indicating that the text is reasonably early and considered a text for Grade 7.

Table 11. Text 7 The Ugly Duckling 2

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	13	
Long Words	30	
Lexical Density	60.30%	
Flesch Reading Ease	81.65	Easy: Grade 6

As illustrated in Table 11, the resulting lexical density is 60.3 percent. When the Ure formula is used, this text is classified as having a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. This text has a different readability score, and it is shown that the seventh text has a score of 81.6. When viewed in conjunction with the image, this entire text is classified as complex. However, according to Flesch's table, the text is categorized as accessible and is appropriate for grade 6.

Table 12. Text 8 The Ugly Duckling 1

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	13	
Long Words	39	
Lexical Density	57.74%	
Flesch Reading Ease	78.96	Relatively Easy: Grade 7

The resulting lexical density is 57.7 percent in Table 12. When the Ure formula is used, this text is classified as having a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. This eighth text scores differently on readability than the seventh text, scoring 79.0. When viewed through the lens of an image, this text is classified as problematic. Nonetheless, when categorized according to Flesch's table, the text is relatively easy and is at the grade 7 level.

Table 13. Text 9 Komodo Dragon

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	49	
Long Words	76	
Lexical Density	59.79%	
Flesch Reading Ease	54.01	Somewhat Difficult: Grade 10-12

The ninth text in Table 13 has a lexical density of 59.7 percent. When the Ure formula is used, this text is classified as having a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. This text is rated as 54.0 in terms of readability. According to Flesch's table, the text is categorized as relatively tricky and is appropriate for students in grades 10-12.

Table 14. Text 10 Flower

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	17	
Long Words	59	
Lexical Density	48.21%	
Flesch Reading Ease	64.89	Standard: Grade 8-9

The lexical density in Table 14 is 48.2 percent, as indicated by the tenth text. According to the Ure formula, this text has a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. The readability score for this passage is 64.9. According to Flesch's table, the text is classified as Standard and is appropriate for students in grade 9.

Table 15. Text 11 Bullfrog

	Overall	Overall Grading
Hard Words	23	
Long Words	53	
Lexical Density	63.60%	
Flesch Reading Ease	64.22	Standard: Grade 8-9

In Table 15, text 11 indicates a lexical density of 63.6 percent. When the Ure formula is used, this text is classified as having a high lexical density because it exceeds 40%. This text is 64.2 percent readable. When viewed in the Flesch table, the text is classified as Standard and is ranked 9.

The analysis shows that the lexical density and text readability are varied, ranging from easy to extremely difficult. In detail, two texts were considered easy, three were reasonably straightforward, and two were standard. These texts are more suitable for students in lower grades than Grade XI. Meanwhile, three texts were determined to be reasonably complex, and two others were classified as problematic. Those categories reveal that texts are appropriate to be used in the higher levels of education than that in Grade XI. The following table provides a comprehensive illustration to summarize the results.

Table 16. The Summary of Texts' Lexical Density and Readability

No.	Texts	Words	Lexical Density	Reading Ease	Overall Grading
1	Drinking Coffee has the benefit	279	65.9%	34.7	Difficult
2	Momotaro the Peach Boy	861	32.9%	74.9	Fairly Easy
3	William Shakespeare	565	54.3%	42.2	Difficult
4	Romeo & Juliet	362	48.6%	55.5	Fairly Difficult
5	Obesity is a nightmare	193	64.8%	51.8	Fairly Difficult
6	Ugly Duckling 3	303	57.8%	79.0	Fairly Easy
7	Ugly Duckling 2	267	60.3%	81.6	Easy
8	The Ugly Duckling 1	265	57.7%	79.0	Fairly Easy
9	Komodo Dragon	378	59.8%	54.0	Fairly Difficult
10	Flower	280	48.2%	64.9	Standard
11	Bullfrog	283	63.6%	64.2	Standard

Table 16 informs that the lowest lexical density is performed by text number 7, Ugly Duckling 2. The seventh text has the total words with the highest value of 267 words from the data sorted. The second-lowest order was in the tenth text entitled *Flower*, with 280 words. Next, in the third lowest order, is the fourth text with the title *Romeo and Juliet,* 362 words overall.

In contrast, according to the data presented above, the highest lexical density was produced by the first text with a gain of 65.9%, the same thing if measured by the Flesch formula then the result is 34.7, which means the text is in a 'difficult' level and is suggested to use by Undergraduate students with an overall total of 279 words. Afterward, the second-highest order was occupied by the fifth text, and entitled *Obesity is a Nightmare*. Unlike other texts, this fifth text is the shortest with the highest lexical density with an overall total of 193 words. Furthermore, the third-highest order was occupied by the eleventh text, entitled Bullfrog, for an overall total of 283 words and followed by the fourth-highest order occupied by the seventh text, entitled The Ugly Duckling 2, with an overall total of 267 words. The above explanation shows that one of the characteristic features of written language is a solid lexicon; In other words, in this case, the lexical item /word content is relatively high spread than the function word.

Discussion

As an essential learning source, textbooks have an extended association with English reading classrooms (Gak, 2011; Wakefield, 2006). Its usage rate was predicted to establish 70-95% of classroom activity in the 1980s and early 1990s (Chambliss & Calfee, 1998; Woodward & Elliott, 1990). For any teaching and learning modes, both face-to-face or online teaching circumstances, textbooks are considered primary or supplementary sources that function as guides or references. Therefore, due to its significant advantages, textbooks are widely used by many EFL teachers across the globe (Ayu & Indrawati, 2019; Bahrami, 2015; Römer, 2004; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). However, teachers have to be careful in choosing the appropriate texts for students because it will influence the success of students' reading comprehension. Therefore, they are encouraged to consider some wise text selection (Arias, 2007). In evaluating suitable texts, teachers can implement many diverse perspectives, such as form and content (Abbasian, 2018). The present study attempted to evaluate the reading texts provided in Facil's 'Advanced English Textbook using the lenses of lexical density and text readability.

Considering the range of lexical density across levels of the reading texts, Ure's (1971) and Flesch's (1948) methods featured relatively similar patterns even though some distinctive structures were revealed from the findings. As the results reported that the reading texts in Facil's 'Advanced English Textbook' mainly were dense, the notion coined by Halliday (1985) mentioned that written texts typically contain a higher degree of lexical words than spoken texts which generate the complexity in its formation was seeming to be supported. Furthermore, he maintains a valuable (although relatively limited) outline to differentiate between lexical and grammatical substances in a text. Function words and operations in closed, finite systems in the language are how he defines the grammatical items. On the contrary, lexical items are content words and enter into exposed sets that are substantially extensible. Therefore, Halliday proposes that 'determiners, pronouns, most prepositions, conjunctions and some classes of adverbs are grammatical items' (Johansson, 2008, p. 65).

Furthermore, Ure's (1971) analysis of noun groups indicates that the writers must use simple nominal structures with a tendency to post-modification when attempting to deliver communicative needs. Therefore, the readers will not get significant difficulties comprehending the texts. This study deploys a careful and quantitative analysis of textbooks written by English non-native speakers in terms of lexical density, which results from premodification. In line with this, Anderson (1975) argues that the regulation of premodification as a crucial factor in lexical density has been increased. Therefore, longer strings of words and phrases precede the headword in some use styles to increase lexical density.

Similarly, Thompson (1991) mentions that lexical density is related to the use of noun group structure in English. Apart from the clauses, the nominal group is ''the grammatical unit'', which allows the broadest range of meaning to be expressed. As an impact on the production of texts, Chaudron

(2003) researched the EFL students' lexical density in their text production and concluded that EFL students use few numbers of words per clause.

Proposing the concept of readability, the findings of this study inform the lack of rationale sequence. It means that the structure of the texts was not arranged based on the difficulty level in which the densest text, which was considered the most difficult, was placed at the beginning of the chapter. According to readability accounts, it can be implied that they have not been arranged in a logical order from easy to difficult (Abbasian, 2018). It is concluded that to have a comprehensible language, the passages should be revised and revisited based on logical and standard orders. Therefore, it is suggested that Facil's 'Advanced English Learning Textbook' writers reconstruct the reading contents, managing from the easiest to the hardest.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper investigated lexical density (Halliday, 1985; Ure, 1971) and readability (Flesch, 1948) of eleven selected reading texts from Facil's 'Advanced English Textbook' for Grade XI. The results indicate that almost all texts, except Text 2, had high lexical densities. If the average amount is calculated involves the result of the second text. The average result will be 55.8%, and if the average result without involving the results of text 2, the average number of lexical densities will exist at 58,1 %. After looking at the average number of the calculations above, according to the formula proposed by Ure (1971), the reading text in this book has a higher lexical density level because it exceeds 40%. The second question in this study showed that this text was suitable for grades 10-12 despite being assessed regarding American educational attainment levels. By applying the Flesch Reading Ease Formula and analyzing the results, it is possible to conclude that 11 reading texts are classified into five levels: Easy for one text, Fairly Easy for three texts, Standard for two texts, Fairly Difficult for three texts, and Difficult for two texts. The text is generally considered to be of a Fairly Difficult level of difficulty. These findings suggest that the reading texts in this book are appropriate for Grade XI because they contain various levels and can be used as a handbook to assist them in learning according to the teaching syllabus for class XI. The researchers admit that they encounter difficulties in converting the American reading grade to Indonesian Standard due to the readability, as there are no previous studies or reliable references that use reading grade conversion. As a suggestion, future studies could expand on developing the grading formula contextual to Indonesian contexts. Moreover, future studies are also suggested involving more corpus and employing corpus analysis to get more comprehensive portrayals.

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