Readability of Reading Texts in Alexander's *Practice and Progress: An Integrated Course for Pre Intermediate Students*

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Abstract: Determining the appropriate reading materials for students is not merely a matter for a teacher's preference and viewpoint. The teacher must ensure the readability level of reading materials is on the same level as students' since they easily attain the information depends on the readability of the text. Since there are so many books in bookstores which can be recommended by the teacher as a learning material, Alexander's *Practice and Progress* is the common English book which provides a bunch of reading texts. In this case, this article reviews three readability measurements: Flesch-KincaidGrade Level, Coleman-Lieu Index, and SMOG, of reading texts provided by Alexander's *Practice and Progress*. Also, to what extent of student's level is presented based on those readability measurements.

Key words: reading texts, readability, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, Coleman-Lieu Index, SMOG

Reading texts essentially provide information for a reader in which a writer wants to convey.Texts can be difficult or easy, depending on factors inherent in them, on the relation between the text and the knowledge and abilities of the reader and on the activities in which the reader is engaged (Block *et.al*., 2002:26). Difficulties in comprehending texts may vary among readers. It may come from vocabularies, words, phrases, or sentence structures (Pearson & Johnson, 1974:15-17). Those linguistic factors hamper readers extract the information reasonably. In this case, teachers should carefully select reading texts if they want to provide students with them as supplementary materials. Thus, the teachers must regard on materials based on three points of view, one of which is readability (Nuttall, 1982:25).

Finding out readability level of the texts helps teachers recognize whether the texts provided match students' level or not. Every student should be given material appropriate specifically to his own needs.Text characteristics must match reader knowledge and abilities for optimal comprehension to occur (Block *et.al.*, 2002:27). In this case, a reading text given should be on the same level as the students' reading competence. Recognizing the appropriateness between the readability level of the texts and the students' level, then, becomes very crucial.

Concerning readability measurements,Flesch (1986:145) explained readability as ease of reading plus interest. They want to make as little effort as possible while they are reading, and they also want something 'built in' that will automatically carry them forward like an escalator.Different from Flesch(1986), Nuttall (1982:26) points out that readability makes use of counts of word length and sentence length.Further, Dale and Chall (1949, as cited in Oakland and Lane, 2004:9) proposed the definition of readability as the total sum, including the interactions, of all those elements within a given piece of printed material that affects the success a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimum speed, and find it interesting. In other words, to measure readability of a text, structural and lexical elements in a text should be calculated so that the text can be in regard to be easy and interesting to read by a reader.In addition, readability is a complex construct that involves not only the observable characteristics of a text, but also aptitude, knowledge, experience, skill, efficiency and motivation that the reader brings to the text and to the reading task, as well as to the situation for reading (Hedgcock& Ferris, 2009:89). Readability measures must account for how certain text properties, primarily the arrangement of the propositions in the text base, word frequency and sentence length, interact with the reader's processing strategies and resources (Miller &Kintsch, 1980 as cited in Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009:339)

To measure readability of the texts, readability formula was employed. Caldwell (2008:10) pointed out that readability formulas are based on upon the premise that longer sentences and longer words make text more difficult. These count such things as the number of words in a sentence, the number of syllables in

the words, and the number of words that are not considered common of frequent.Further, the result of the count is interpreted with readability index which provides the interpretation of what grade level the readability score is.

In conjunction with readability formulas, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL), Coleman-Liau Index (CLI), and SMOG are among readability formulas employed mostly in computing readability of the texts.FKGL measures readability of a text by analyzing the average number of syllables per word and average number of words per sentence. It is the most common readability formula used in USA. It is also available in Microsoft Word. CLI, which is the second mostly used readability formula in USA, the same as FKGL. The result of both FKGL and CLI showed the grade level used in USA. In other hands,SMOG examines 10 consecutive sentences from the beginning, middle, and end of a text. In the 30 selected sentences, all words containing three or more syllables were counted. Although it is used by first language teachers to measure readability of the texts, it is employed by foreign language teachers to measure readability of the texts for that the result of SMOG is closely accurate for foreign language learners.

METHOD

This article describes readability of reading texts in Alexander's *Practice and Progress*. The book is divided into four units, in nature, in which each unit consists of the same number of texts, 24 texts per unit. All 96 texts are computed its readability by the help of online services, readability-score.com and read-able.com, for practicality. To make sure that the result of the readability-score.com is the same as other readability computations, all texts are also computed by means of read-able.com. The results of both online readability services, than, compared to find out whether there is any difference in result or not.

Both readability-score.com and read-able.com briefly interpret the result of readability grade level only, without showing readability score of each text. However, both online services demonstrate to what age the text is appropriate with. They also provide the computation of Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (FKGL), Coleman-Lieu Index (CLI), and Simple Measure of Gobbledygook (SMOG).In addition, this article provides the description of readability grade level of the texts and appropriateness of students' age level.

FINDINGS

The computation of readability grade level using readability-score.com for all texts was conducted gradually. After computing the readability of the texts using readability-score.com, all texts were computed its readability by using read-able.com. The result of online readability computation of the Alexander's *Practice and Progress*was presented per Unit. Table 1. presented the result for Unit One:

Table1. The Result of Online Readability Grade Level Computation of Alexander's Unit One

Unit One	Readability Grade		
	FKGL	CLI	SMOG
1	2	5.8	3.8
2	1.1	4.9	2.8
3	3.2	5.8	4.6
4	4.8	8.1	6
5	6.5	10	6.4
6	2.1	5.3	3.5
7	6.7	11.9	6.7
8	6.7	9.4	6.4
9	3.2	9.2	3.8
10	2.9	7.3	5.5

11	4.5	6	3.8
12	3.9	8.5	4.8
13	4.4	9.8	6
14	3.3	5.6	3.8
15	2.6	6.1	4.3
16	4.7	7	5
17	3.2	6.5	4.6
18	1.5	3.5	2.4
19	1.8	6.1	3.5
20	4.2	8.9	4.7
21	4.3	7.5	5
22	6	8.8	5.6
23	3.4	6.9	3.9
24	3.7	6	5.5

Table 1.showed that Unit One serves the easiest text was the text number 2 in which the score of FKGL was 1.1, the score for CLI was 4.9, and the score for SMOG was 2.8. The most difficult text in Unit One was the text number 7 in which the score for FKGL was 6.7, the score for CLI was 11.9, and the score for SMOG was 6.7. Further, the easiest text in Unit Two was the text number 40 in which the score for FKGL was 2.1, the score for CLI was 5.7, and the score for SMOG was 3.3. The most difficult text in Unit Two was the text number 29 in which the score of FKGL was 8.1, the score of CLI was 11, and the score of SMOG was 8.1. The result of online readability computation of Unit Two was presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Result of Online Readability Grade Level Computation of Alexander's Unit Two

Unit Two	Readability Grade		
	FKGL	CLI	SMOG
25	3.8	8.9	5
26	3.1	7.6	3.6
27	3.3	7.8	3.4
28	4.6	6.7	4.1
29	8.1	11	8.1
30	4.3	7	3.6
31	5.3	7.8	6
32	6.9	9.4	7.4
33	4	8.1	4.4
34	5.2	7.8	5.4
35	4.8	8.3	5.5
36	5	8.3	4.3
37	7.2	9.8	7.1
38	6.3	9.3	5.4
39	7.3	9.6	7.6
40	2.1	5.7	3.3
41	3.3	5.4	4.2
42	6.4	7.2	6
43	4.8	8.2	4.8
44	3.1	7.5	3.4
45	4.8	6.5	4.2
46	5.8	7.1	5.1
47	5	7.9	4.6

48	5.3	8.2	5

The below Table 3.showed the easiest text in Unit Three was the text number 50 in which the score of FKGL was 2.9, the score of CLI was 4.6, and the score of SMOG was 5.1. The most difficult text in Unit Three was the text number 61 in which the score of FKGL was 8.3, the score of CLI was 10.7, and the score of SMOG was 8.5

Table 3. The Result of Online Readability Grade Level Computation of Alexander's Unit Three

Unit Three	Readability Grade		
	FKGL	CLI	SMOG
49	5.2	6.7	3.6
50	2.9	4.6	5.1
51	5.1	8	6.2
52	4.4	5.8	3.9
53	6	9.4	6.8
54	3.9	8	4.8
55	6.7	9.7	5.7
56	4.7	7.3	5
57	6.5	8.8	7.1
58	6.4	7.7	4.6
59	5.6	8.6	4.9
60	4.1	6.5	4.7
61	8.3	10.7	8.5
62	7.3	11	7.1
63	6	8.8	4.9
64	7	9.4	6.5

Unit Three	Readability Grade		
	FKGL	CLI	SMOG
65	7.4	8.8	6.3
66	7.4	8.6	7.2
67	7.7	9.7	7.5
68	3.4	5.7	4
69	5	8.3	6
70	6.1	9.7	7.2
71	4.4	8	6
72	6.2	8.8	5.2

Table 4.showed that the easiest text in Unit Four was the text number 87 in which the score of FKGL was 2.4, the score of CLI was 5.1, and the score of SMOG was 4. The most difficult text in Unit Four was the text number 90 in which the score of FKGL was 9, the score of CLI was 10.9, and the score of SMOG was 8.3.

Table4. The Result of Online Readability Grade Level Computation of Alexander's Unit Four

Unit Four	Readability Grade		
	FKGL	CLI	SMOG
73	6.6	7.7	5.8
74	3.6	8.3	4.3
75	5.2	8.6	4.8
76	8.1	11.5	8.7
77	6.1	8.4	6.2
78	7.6	9.7	8.1
79	6.6	8.2	6.7
80	7.8	9.9	6.9

Unit Four	Readability Grade		
	FKGL	CLI	SMOG
81	5.5	9.1	6.2
82	7.4	9.3	6.8
83	6.6	10.7	7.5
84	5.7	9.3	5.5
85	8.4	9.8	8.3
86	6.3	9.8	6
87	2.4	5.1	4
88	5.6	9.5	6.6
89	6.2	8.4	7.5
90	9	10.9	8.3
91	7.7	9.9	5.7
92	5.5	6.8	5.4
93	10	9.7	10.4
94	7.4	10.6	6
95	3.8	8.3	5.1
96	8.7	8.4	6.3

From Table 1., Table 2., Table 3., and Table 4., it can be inferred that the easiest text in Unit One was the text number 2, the easiest Unit Two was the text number 40, the easiest text in Unit Three was the text number 50, and the easiest text in Unit Four was the text number 87. The most difficult text in Unit One was the text number 7, the most difficult text in Unit Two was the text number 29, the most difficult in Unit Three was the text number 61, and the most difficult text in Unit Four was the text number 90.

The Result of Online Readability Grade Level Based on Unit

The online readability computation by readability-score.com and read-able.com resulted readability grade level. Table 5.presented the result of online readability grade level computation of Alexander's *Practice and Progress* based on each Unit. The result of the computation can be seen in below Table 5.

Table 5.The Result of Online Readability Grade Level Computation of Alexander's Units

Unit	Readability Grade Level					
	readability-score.com			read-able.com		
	FKGL	CLI	SMOG	FKR	CLI	SMOG
Unit One	3.8	7.3	4.7	3.8	7.3	4.7
Unit Two	5.0	8.0	5.1	5.0	8.0	5.1
Unit Three	5.7	8.3	5.8	5.7	8.3	5.8
Unit Four	6.6	9.1	6.5	6.6	9.1	6.5
Average	5.3	8.2	5.5	5.3	8.2	5.5

Note:

FKGL = Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

CLI = Coleman-Liau Index

SMOG = Simple *Measure of Gobbledygook*

Table 5.demonstrated that, based on the result of readability-score.com computation, the average readability grade level for Unit One based on FKGLwas 3.8 which meant that itwas appropriately suitable with students in grade three to four while the result of CLI was 7.3 which means that it was suitably appropriate with students in grade seven to eight. Further, the average readability grade level for Unit One based on SMOG was 4.7 which meant that it

was mostly comprehended by students in grade four to eight. In addition, the result of read-able.com was the same as the result of readability-score.com.

The result of readability-score.com computation for Unit Two grade level illustratedthat the average FKGL grade level was 5.0 which meant the unit was easily understood by the students in grade five while CLI grade level was 8.0 which meant the unit was appropriate with students in grade eight. Further, the SMOG grade level was 5.1 which meant the unit was suitable with students in grade five to six. The result of read-able.com for Unit Two was also the same as the result of readability.com.

The average readability grade level based on the readability-score.com for Unit Three resulted grade level for FKGL was 5.7 and SMOG 5.8 which meant that the Unit was best-suited for students in grade five to six while grade level for SMOG was 8.3 which meant that the Unit was appropriate with students in grade eight to nine. Further, the average readability grade level for Unit Four showed that FKGL and SMOG grade levels were 6.6 and 6.5 which meant that the Unit was suitable with students in grade six to seven while CLI grade level was 9.1 which meant that the Unit was well comprehended by students in grade nine to ten.

Table 5.presented no difference in score between the result of the computation using readability-score.com and read-able.com since both online service employed identical formula either for FKGL, CLI, or SMOG. In this case, there was no need to recheck the result of readability-score.com and read-able.com with others online services which provide online readability calculation.

Appropriateness of the Text with Students' Age

Concerning the computation for students' appropriateness age, the calculation was computed by the help of readability-score.com and read-able.com. The result of the computation was presented in Tabel6.

Table 6. The Result of the Appropriateness of the Text with Students' Age

Students' Age	The Appropriateness of the Texts			
	Unit One	Unit Two	Unit Three	Unit Four
	Text	Text	Text	Text
7 to 8	2, 18			
8 to 9	1, 6, 19,	40		87
9 to 10	3, 11, 14, 15, 23	2, 41	50, 68	
10 to 11	9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 24	25, 27, 28, 30, 33, 44,	52, 52, 60	74, 95
11 to 12	4, 13,	31, 34, 35, 36, 43, 45, 46, 47, 48	49, 51, 56, 59, 69, 71	75, 92
12 to 13	8, 22	38, 42	58, 63, 72	73, 77, 79, 81, 84, 89,
13 to 14	5, 7	32, 37, 39	53, 55, 57, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70	82, 83, 86, 88, 91, 94
14 to 15		29	62	76, 78, 80, 85, 90
15 to 16			61	96

Based on the Table 6., most texts in Unit One were suitable with ten to eleven years old students while most texts in Unit Two are appropriate with eleven to twelve years old students. Further, most texts in Unit Three were best suited for thirteen years old students while most texts in Unit Four wereeasily comprehended by twelve to thirteen years old students.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that each Unit consisted of the easiest text and the most difficult text. It means that level of difficulty presented in Alexander's Practice and Progress is varied. In this case, the teacher is allowed to select the text based on the level of difficulty inherent by the text and is allowed to shift gradually form the text on the same level as the students' to the more difficult one. This trains

students reading comprehension on variety of text level and insists them to sharpen their reading skills.

The findings also uncover that Alexander's *Practice and Progress*serves seven-to-sixteen-year-old students variety texts with different readability grade levels. Each unit contains texts which are easily comprehended by students at that age. This is in line with what Flesch (1986:145) described that students want to make as little effort as possible while they are reading, and they also want something 'built in' that will automatically carry them forward like an escalator. In this case, Alexander's Practice and Progress has maintained the readability level for the intermediate students as it is intended to serve. In this case, the teacher is free to choose the available materials on the students' level and provide them with the difficult ones. Further, this will ease them in attaining the information and to promote their reading comprehension

The grade level varies from eight to sixteen. This illustrates that Alexander's *Practice and Progress* promotes students to read more difficult texts. This gives students chance to enhance their reading competence. The more difficult the texts, the more exposure students deal with. In this case, they are used to face such texts. When it comes to get information as soon as possible, they are allowed to read the text on their level, and when it comes to improve their reading competence, they are allowed to read the texts above their level.

CONCLUDING REMARK

Knowing the readability of the texts given to the students, either as primary or as supplementary materials, is beneficial for the teacher to assess students' comprehension for that the readability level determines whether the students easily extract the information contained in the text or not. Further, providing the materials in the same level as students' level is expected to ease them find the information as they need. To sum up, readability of the text is not a major aspect to support students' comprehension, but it is a considerable aspect to ease students comprehending the texts they are to extract information within.

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