

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background of this research. In this study, the researcher examines the readability of texts in the "Bright" English textbook published by Erlangga. Upon obtaining the results from the text analysis, these tests were administered to eighth-grade students for direct assessment.

### A. Background

This study aims to measure the readability of English textbooks used in junior high schools. The evaluation of literacy and structural qualities of reading materials determines their suitability for the cognitive and language abilities of the intended students. Readability is impacted not just by sentence length and word complexity but also by the structure of concepts, the inclusion of pictures, and cultural relevance, all of which collectively influence the learning experience.

The textbook analyzed in this study is "Bright an English Course for SMP/MTs Grade VIII," an English textbook for eighth Grade published by Erlangga, to be used in teaching-learning. This research aims to evaluate the readability of reading materials in the curriculum Merdeka textbooks. The researcher uses various methods to assess readability, including readability formulas and cloze tests. The research findings can be used to develop recommendations for improving the readability of the reading materials in the curriculum Merdeka textbooks.

In learning a language, EFL students need to be proficient in reading. Learning is gaining information about a subject or skill via study, experiences, and education (Syafei et als., 2021). Therefore, learning is acquiring information or abilities via study, practice, experience, or education. It involves understanding new ideas, developing learning skills, or enhancing current competencies to adapt and evolve in several facets of life.

Reading is the ability that may help students become more proficient in teaching and learning among all those talents. Johnson (2008) states that reading is a continually growing skill. Reading, like any other skill, may be improved by practice. Conversely, if reading skills are not practiced, they may not develop, and reading skills may worsen. Students who study English-language materials, for instance, get several advantages. Students can broaden or improve their understanding of the outside world from reading. Reading helps the students perceive things nicely, which motivate students to get a high score. Furthermore, it has the potential to enhance their memory.

Reading has shown the capacity to improve memory and cognitive skills in many approaches. Research indicates that reading activates intricate neural networks in the brain, enhancing memory and comprehension abilities over time. Chang et al. (2020) state that Increasing self-directed reading engagement is associated with a decreased risk of cognitive degradation in later life. Moreover, reading enhances vocabulary acquisition and linguistic understanding, which is associated with enhanced short-term and long-term memory retention.

Because of the significant role, appropriate reading materials are required in learning activities for students who learns English as foreign language at school. Reading materials include any resources that aid in language acquisition, including coursebooks, videos, graded readers, flashcards, games, websites, and mobile applications (Tomlinson, 2012:143). As a result, determining the reading materials that are given in class is critical. It can help learners improve their proficiency, build confidence, and enjoy learning. Teachers typically use textbooks to offer students appropriate reading material.

Therefore, textbooks are a medium of instruction used in almost every grade level of students in the school. Textbooks are a significant source for English teaching and learning due to their comprehensive content, including reading, directions, and exercises. Students have to understand the basic written information provided in their textbooks. This is because the textbook already has instructional goals that determine the effectiveness of activity-based

learning. The low accomplishment may be caused by an internal issue originating from the students, such as their level of motivation and intellect (Nuraeningsih et al., 2021). Textbooks are essential in tackling these difficulties by offering suitably demanding information that is entertaining and linked with students' capabilities. Effectively designed textbooks may stimulate motivation by providing relatable, engaging, and culturally pertinent content alongside diversified assignments to accommodate diverse intellectual capacities. Customizing textbooks to meet students' requirements helps mitigate comprehension gaps and enhance the learning environment.

Furthermore, when selecting reading materials, it is crucial to evaluate various factors to ensure the content is appropriate for the intended audience and effectively advances their educational objectives. These guidelines generally contain several vital elements. Brown (2001:314) states that there are three standards for choosing reading material. The first is content suitability, which refers to information that is appropriate for students' English learning goals and that they find it engaging, fun, and challenging. The second is exploitability, a book that supports language and content goals, may be used for instructional purposes, and integrates with other abilities. Besides considering the criteria of a good textbook based on a few specialists, the teacher should understand the correct material in English. To ensure that reading materials are appropriate, teachers must evaluate the clarity level of the analyzing material before providing it to the students which the last point is readability. Readability is what makes a few texts easier to study than different (Yetti, 2021 cited DuBay, 2004). Readability indicates the simplicity with which a text may be comprehended, significantly influencing the relative difficulty of studying various materials. Texts with suitable readability are more accessible to students since they correspond to their cognitive capacities and linguistic competency. Well-structured texts, appropriate to the reader's comprehension level, enhance students' engagement with the content, facilitate learning, and foster a deeper understanding.

Therefore, readability determines how well the reader understands a document. Readability is one of the most vital aspects to consider when choosing a remarkable passage for students (Nurhamsih, 2017 cited Walter, 1979). By measuring a text's readability, it would be as plain as possible and better match it to its intended audience. It is beneficial for language learners since it assists teachers in determining if a specific book is appropriate for a student.

This study is crucial because it provides important information regarding the readability of the reading materials in the Merdeka curriculum textbooks. This information may improve the text's readability and make it more readable to all junior high students. As a result, a good English textbook should be legible, intelligible, and comprehensible for students. Textbooks may be methodical regarding the quantity of vocabulary taught to students and allow them to study outside of the class (Harmer, 1983).

In the initial observation for this study, the researcher utilized information from a previous investigation at a school and enhanced these findings with an interview with the 8th-grade English teacher. The researcher asked regarding the book that used in the classroom to facilitate English learning. The teacher used "Bright an English Course for SMP/MTs Grade VIII". The teacher does not know about the readability quality of the texts contained within it, as the book was a recent publication aligned with a new curriculum. The researcher aims to measure the readability of this book to determine its suitability for its intended level, so facilitating the enhancement of reading proficiency.

Previous studies have been conducted on the readability of English textbooks. Yetti (2021) adopted a descriptive quantitative approach, gathering data via document analysis with the Flesch Reading Ease Formula. This study applies a descriptive quantitative approach and uses an English textbook for tenth-grade students. The study assesses the textbook's readability only.

The second study, Rombepajung (2022), conducted descriptive quantitative research. This study analyzed 14 reading texts of over 100 words and used two readability formulas: Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level.

The result showed that only three of the 14 texts matched the student's level. This study also used a descriptive quantitative design with two instruments. The data source is from the eleventh-grade English textbook.

The third study by Yulianto (2019), conducted a qualitative approach with the Flesh-Kincaid Readability Formula. This study analyzed eight reading texts from an eighth-grade English textbook. The result is that only one text is suitable for eighth-grade students in Junior High School.

This research differs from previous studies by concentrating only on English textbooks intended for eighth-grade students, grounded in an autonomous curricular framework. This study employs a dual methodology to assess the appropriateness of the reading materials. The readability of the chosen texts is assessed using known formulae, enabling a methodical evaluation of their difficulty and suitability for the intended grade level.

The textbook analyzed in this study is limited to an English textbook entitled "Bright an English Course for SMP/MTs Grade VIII," an English textbook for eighth Grade published by Erlangga, to be used in teaching-learning. This research aims to evaluate the readability of the reading materials in the curriculum Merdeka textbooks. The researcher uses various methods to assess readability, including readability formulas and cloze tests. The research findings can be used to develop recommendations for improving the readability of the reading materials in the curriculum Merdeka textbooks.

## **B. Research Questions**

- 1) How is the readability level of reading materials in "Bright" English textbook by Erlangga for eighth grade of Junior High School?
- 2) Is the eighth grade "Bright" English textbook reading materials appropriate to the abilities of students with different reading levels and background at Mekar Arum Junior High School?

## **C. Research Purposes**

1. To find out the readability level of the reading materials in textbook "Bright" for eighth grade of Junior High School.

2. To find out whether the reading materials in “Bright” English textbook is appropriate for the eighth grade of Mekar Arum Junior High School Students English level.

#### **D. Research Significances**

This study's significance is to be attained based on how the problem was formulated above.

Theoretically, the findings of this study enhance the knowledge by studying creative notions, structures, and models. This study contributes to the generation of new ideas and the refinement of existing ones, thereby altering intellectual paradigms within a particular field. The essential theories presented in this study serve as the foundation for practical research. It establishes a conceptual framework that guides empirical research and real-world applications, ensuring a solid foundation for future study. This research is important in education because it develops the conceptual foundations of academic programmers and drives curriculum development. This research leads to and inspires future studies by highlighting areas that deserve further investigation, presenting unanswered issues, and proposing new avenues of study. It creates a framework for future research projects and encourages an ongoing cycle of intellectual development.

Practically, primarily targeting Textbook publishers should concentrate on the influence of readability and content relevance in improving student learning results. Investigations in this field may provide significant insights into the development of textbooks that more effectively fulfill the cognitive and linguistic requirements of students across different educational levels. Publishers can get advantages by comprehending which text structures, vocabulary intricacy, and topic connection with curricular standards more effectively attract students. Meanwhile, teachers have the chance to improve their professional skills in pedagogical management by utilizing various teaching methods and maximizing the educational potential of textbooks. These instructional improvements correspond with the selected course materials, so enhancing the overall methodology of English language training.

## **E. Research Scope**

It becomes necessary to define the parameters of the investigation in order to improve concentration and encourage discussion that is helpful in reaching the goals of the research. Within this framework, the researcher limits the research to review the reading materials in English textbook designed for junior high school students in the eighth grade, namely "Bright and English Course for SMP/MTs Grade VIII" published by Erlangga. This study's main goals are to assess the aforementioned textbook's readability level and determine whether or not it is appropriate for students in eighth grade of Junior High School.

To find out the compatibility of the textbook, the researcher verifies the compatibility of the textbook to the students of junior high school. The researcher does the verification to eighth grade Junior High School.

## **F. Conceptual Framework**

This research is related to measuring the level readability of textbook. The reading materials is learning media for students to learn English so, it is important that reading materials should be suitable for student base on their grade.

As a pedagogical example, the teacher is responsible for selecting a suitable textbook for students, as the textbook selection process necessitates aligning the content of the chosen textbook with the prevailing curriculum within the educational institution. According to Cunningsworth (1995), It is known that there is not a perfect textbook, but teachers may use their discretion to choose one that is better suited for their students' learning objectives.

A textbook serves as an educational guidebook in a variety of academic fields. Thomson (2003:176) defines a textbook as having numerous roles. Examples of these responsibilities encompass individualization of instructional approaches, provision of organizational guidance, contribution to tutorials, and enhancement of instructional methodologies. This educational resource is crucial to the educational process since it serve as tool

for effective instruction and learning. Textbook enable teachers to efficiently disseminate learning materials in the classroom. In line with previous assertions, Mudzakir (2010) claims that the value of a textbook is enhanced by student participation in supplemental tasks.

The first aspect, curriculum alignment and contextual considerations, emphasizes the need of textbooks addressing curricular components in both broad and specialized educational contexts. The second criteria, conformity with instructor expectations, emphasizes the importance of textbooks including four crucial elements: relevant material, practical illustrations, manageable and diversified activities, and good presentation. Third, alignment with student requirements is the ultimate criteria, and it is dependent on four factors: compelling information, relevant examples, diverse tasks, and good presentation. Byrd, as mentioned in Celca-Murcia (2001:416) argues that textbooks ought to incorporate a minimum of three essential components.

This suggests that people have the chance to come across information that helps them learn when they interact with written materials. According to Andrew (2008), reading is a fundamental cognitive ability that involves interpreting written stuff in order to gain knowledge and obtain information. It is the deliberate process of deriving meaning from written content. Reading, then, involves engaging in a regular activity associated with the text in order to understand its meaning. Reading is a means of absorbing new ideas and identifying material that is helpful in the process of learning (McWhorter (1999). In order to become proficient in reading, one must be able to absorb and make sense of the content that is written down. Harmer (2007) claims that reading is a very dynamic cognitive activity that demands active engagement with the text and a deep comprehension of the meaning that is being expressed by the words employed.

Reading materials are a vital strategy for promoting the absorption of new vocabulary throughout the language learning process (Beinborn et al., 2014). Textual lexicons typically have higher richness and specificity than spoken

language. Arindya (2023) states that, it is imperative to attend to the quality of materials and tasks employed by students within the coursebook, as this significantly influences the advancement of their reading proficiency.

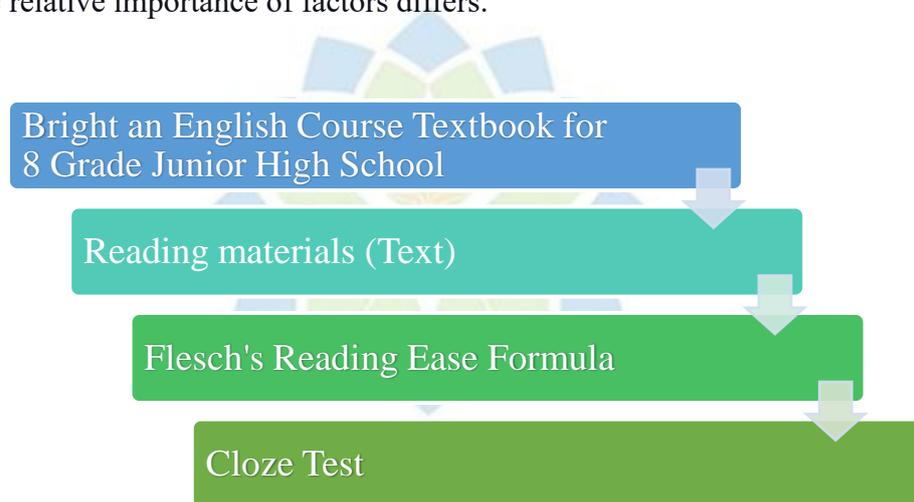
Readability defined as the ease with which a text can be read and comprehended, and it may be measured using metrics such as the syllabic count in a phrase or the number of words used to determine a 'level' or readability score (Lestari, 2023). Readability may be objectively assessed by many indicators, including syllable count in words or phrases, average word count per sentence, and the employment of complicated or unusual terminology. These indicators are frequently employed to calculate a readability score or level, which aids in assessing the text's accessibility for readers of varying age groups, educational backgrounds, or language skill. By assessing and modifying these elements, authors and educators may guarantee that their information is suitably customized for the target audience, enhancing its clarity and efficacy.

The idea of readability is an important factor in the selection of instructional materials for students because it has a significant influence on the achievement of teaching objectives in the arena of reading (Perwira, et al. 2019). Various researchers define readability in various ways, recognizing its importance not only in terms of section length or word length, but also in terms of the written text's compelling and gripping quality. Barbara (1998) defined text readability as the examination of writing complexity and the assessment of the required reading or educational proficiency level for comprehending the text. Mesmer (2008) also defined Readability serves as a tool in the pedagogical domain, designed to assess the level of complexity in textual materials, thereby facilitating the identification of appropriate reading materials for students. Readability assesses how effectively a piece delivers its meaning to readers.

The formula for easy reading focuses on sentences, word lengths, and syllables, which are the most important components in determining readability (Dubay, 2004). Content, structure, style, layout, and design are all

aspects that influence the outcome. There are some readability formulas that can be used to measure the level of text difficulties. This study uses one of the formulas to help the researcher to measure the level of readability.

This study uses “Flesch Reading Ease Formula”, Rudolf Flesch developed the Flesch reading Ease formula. The reading level was determined using a statistical model based on syllable count, word count, and sentence length. The Flesch-Kincaid readability tests assess how difficult a text in English is to understand. There are two tests: the Flesch Reading Ease and cloze test. Despite using the same underlying criteria (word length and sentence length), the relative importance of factors differs.



**Figure.1.1 Conceptual Framework**

### **G. Previous Studies**

First, Zantoni's (2018) study used a quantitative analytical approach to evaluate the readability of sixteen reading materials targeted at eighth-grade students. The data source uses an English textbook entitled English on Sky 2 for eighth-grade students published by Erlangga. The research, employing the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula as the main instrument, revealed significant insights into the suitability of the materials. The findings indicated that 62.5% of the texts were fundamental and did not meet the required competency level for eighth-grade students. In contrast, 12.5% of the materials

were considered appropriate for the grade level. Furthermore, 31.25% of the texts surpassed the designated skill level, presenting problems that may be excessively sophisticated for the intended readership. Among the sixteen items, only one text fulfilled the criterion for eighth-grade reading. The findings underscore a substantial discrepancy between the materials' readability and the anticipated grade criteria, indicating an imbalanced selection procedure. This study conducted a quantitative approach to analyzing the data using one instrument. The textbook used the previous curriculum, which differed from this study.

The second, Syahlefi's (2022) research employed a descriptive qualitative analysis approach, using the Experiencing English textbook for Grade VIII Junior High School as the data source. The data collection used two methods: "identification" and "counting," employing the Flesch Reading Ease Formula and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula as instruments. The findings indicated that, based on the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, 4 out of 7 books (57.14%) were accessible to eighth-grade students, 1 text (14.28%) was challenging, and just 2 texts (28.57%) were considered appropriate for the grade level. Similarly, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level formula revealed that 5 texts (71.42%) exhibited low readability, 1 text (14.28%) shown excellent readability, and only 1 text (14.28%) was appropriate for eighth-grade understanding. The findings reveal a notable difference in the textbook's reading contents, as the majority are either overly simplistic or overly complex, emphasizing the necessity for improved alignment with the reading capabilities of the intended audience.

The third, Zhang's (2022) study analyzes the readability of texts from volumes 3 and 4 of the New Target College English Integrated Course (2nd edition), utilized by sophomores, in comparison to the reading comprehension passages of the College English Test Band 6 (CET-6). The Flesch Reading Ease (RES) and Readability Index 1 (RI1) formulae were utilized to assess the readability levels of the texts. A statistical study was performed to assess the alignment of textbook materials with CET-6 reading comprehension passages

regarding readability. The findings indicate that the textbook materials present a demanding reading level. Volume 3 exhibits a mean RES of 55.85 and a mean RI1 of 11.41, but Volume 4 presents a mean RES of 51.02 and a mean RI1 of 12.34, indicating that Volume 4 is more challenging than Volume 3. The reading levels pertain to books appropriate for 17-year-old American high school juniors (Volume 3) and 18-year-old American high school seniors (Volume 4). Furthermore, Volume 4 has increased variability in text complexity, as seen by elevated standard deviations for RES and RI1 relative to Volume 3. The CET-6 reading comprehension passages had a mean RES of 41.73 and a mean RI1 of 13.93, indicating a persistently elevated difficulty level over the last three years, accompanied by a standard deviation of 2.94. These passages are appropriate for 21-year-old American college freshmen or seniors. In contrast to the textbooks, the CET-6 passages demonstrate insignificant variation in difficulty, characterized by low standard deviations for both RES and RI1. The comparison indicates that both volumes of the textbook have decreased mean RES and RI1 scores in relation to CET-6 passages. Volume 4 is more closely aligned with CET-6 sections about RI1, rendering it a great resource for students studying for the examination. This connection indicates that Volume 4 may function as a valuable resource for connecting classroom education with CET-6 comprehension standards. This study evaluates the readability of text in an examination and educational material. Researchers examined the differences between the textual inquiries addressed by students and the literature they studied.

The fourth, Lestari's (2023) study used a descriptive qualitative methodology, with the researcher acting as the primary instrument. Data were gathered via document analysis to assess the readability levels of reading texts utilizing the Flesch Reading Ease formula. The analysis concentrated on 10 units and 26 reading passages from the English textbook *Forward An English* (Course for Vocational School Students Grade XI) published by Erlangga. The findings indicated that seven reading passages in the textbook were appropriate for eleventh-grade Vocational School students. However, overall readability

standards for the reading materials proved quite challenging. The Flesch Reading Ease calculation provided the following distribution: Four reading texts (15.4%) attained scores between 80–89, classified as "Easy"; four reading texts (15.4%) achieved scores between 70–79, classified as "Fairly Easy"; six reading texts (23%) received scores between 60–69, classified as "Standard"; seven reading texts (27%) garnered scores between 50–59, classified as "Fairly Difficult"; four reading texts (15.4%) obtained scores between 30–49, classified as "Difficult"; and one reading text (3.8%) scored between 0–29, classified as "Very Difficult." The results indicate a varied range of reading levels within the textbook, providing both accessible and complex content. The significant percentage of texts categorized as "Fairly Difficult," "Difficult," or "Very Difficult" indicates that several resources may be beyond the understanding capabilities of the intended audience. This highlights a possible difference in text design and raises concerns over the textbook's effectiveness in facilitating students' reading development.

From all the previous studies, this research is different in sources of the research and data analysis, because besides measuring the level of readability of the textbook, the result is tested to eighth grade students at junior high school in Mekar Arum Junior High School. Several studies focused entirely on the readability of text from a book. However, one researcher correlates it with the reading passage in the examination questions.