

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The first chapter presents the background, research question, research purposes, research significance, research scope, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

#### **A. Research Background**

English plays a significant role in Indonesia's education system, primarily emphasized from junior secondary school through higher education levels. Fadhillah (2018) reveals that one of the key aspects of English learning is reading, as it helps students build their vocabulary, improve comprehension, and understand various types of texts. In schools, textbooks play a crucial role in supporting students' learning process. They provide structured materials and exercises to guide students in achieving the learning objectives. However, the quality of textbooks needs to be evaluated to ensure they are suitable for the student's level of understanding.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) recently introduced the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This curriculum is designed to promote flexibility and improve the quality of education. To support this new curriculum, various commercial publishers have released textbooks aligned with the curriculum requirements. One such textbook is Bright An English for seventh-grade students, published by Erlangga. Since this commercial textbook claims to align with the goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it is important to evaluate its contents, particularly the reading texts.

Reading texts in English textbooks should match the linguistic abilities of students. Sujatna et al (2022) state if the texts are too difficult, students may struggle to understand them, which could discourage learning. Conversely, if the texts are too simple, they may not challenge students enough to improve their skills. One way to measure the difficulty level of reading text is by analyzing their lexical density. However, preliminary

observations suggest that some reading texts in commercial EFL textbooks may not match students' proficiency levels, with texts potentially being either too complex or too simple for seventh-grade learners. Therefore, analyzing the lexical density of these materials becomes crucial to determine their suitability for the target students. According to Halliday (1985), lexical density refers to the proportion of content words (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) compared to grammatical words (such as conjunctions, prepositions, and articles) in a text. A text with high lexical density tends to be more complex and heavy, while a text with low lexical density is easier to understand.

There have been several recent studies discussing lexical density in different contexts. For instance, Bakuuro (2024) analyzed the relationship between lexical density and readability in Senior High School English textbooks in Ghana. The study found that texts with high lexical density tended to have lower readability, making them challenging for students to understand. This highlights the importance of balancing information load with readability to ensure effective learning. Similarly, Kambaren and Aswani (2022) conducted a study on lexical density in news articles from The New York Times. The research aimed to identify the complexity and information load of journalistic writing and found that lexical density varied significantly across different sections of the newspaper. This study emphasizes the role of lexical density in determining the accessibility of texts for readers.

Moreover, by several existing studies above, there is no research that has specifically analyzed the reading texts in the Bright An English textbook. This represents a significant research gap, particularly considering that this commercially published textbook claims to align with the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and is being adopted by many Indonesian schools without proper linguistic analysis.

Finally, the researcher chose this topic not only because lexical density analysis of reading materials in Indonesian EFL textbooks has not

been widely explored, but also because it is directly relevant to classroom teaching and learning processes. “Bright An English” textbook is specifically designed for seventh-grade junior high school students; however, questions remain about whether the reading texts align with their language proficiency levels. This raises concerns that texts that are too simple may fail to challenge students, while overly complex texts may hinder their comprehension and motivation to learn. This study aims to find out the lexical density of the reading texts and explore the lexical density that reflects the suitability of the reading texts in Bright An English for seventh-grade students.

### **B. Research Questions**

In this study, the researcher formulated the research question:

1. What is the lexical density of the reading text in the "Bright An English" textbook for seventh-grade students?
2. How does lexical density reflect the suitability of reading text in "Bright An English" textbook for seventh-grade students?

### **C. Research Purposes**

This study has two purposes based on the question above:

1. To investigate the lexical density of the reading text in the "Bright An English" textbook for seventh-grade students.
2. To explore the lexical density that reflects the suitability of reading text in "Bright An English" textbook for seventh-grade students.

### **D. Research Significances**

This study's findings are expected to provide significant contributions to four key stakeholders:

#### **For Teachers:**

This research provides valuable insights for English teachers to be more mindful in selecting appropriate textbooks, thus enhancing students' reading skills before using textbooks in classroom instruction.

**For Students:**

This research provides knowledge in understanding lexical density levels, which can help students improve their reading comprehension and text analysis skills.

**For Other Researchers:**

This research serves as a reference to further develop research in the same field, especially lexical density analysis, using different data sources or levels of education.

**For Textbook Authors:**

This research offers a deeper understanding of lexical density, which can help authors in designing reading materials that align better with curriculum goals and student needs.

**E. Research Scope**

This research focuses on the analysis of reading texts found in the Bright An English textbook for seventh grade published by Erlangga. The scope of this study is limited to analyzing the lexical density of the reading texts. The researcher selected 8 reading texts for analysis. This study uses document analysis as part of a qualitative research approach, which allows researchers to examine written materials directly. Document analysis is particularly suitable for this research because it focuses on analyzing the textbooks themselves without needing to involve students or teachers. Document analysis is also appropriate for lexical density studies since it allows researchers to count and analyze words consistently across different reading texts, ensuring reliable results when comparing text difficulty levels. The lexical density analysis will specifically measure the proportion of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) compared to grammatical words (conjunctions, prepositions, and articles) in the reading texts. This research will not examine other aspects of the textbooks such as exercises, grammar sections, or speaking activities, as this study specifically focuses on the reading texts and their level of complexity in relation to students' comprehension.

## F. Conceptual Framework

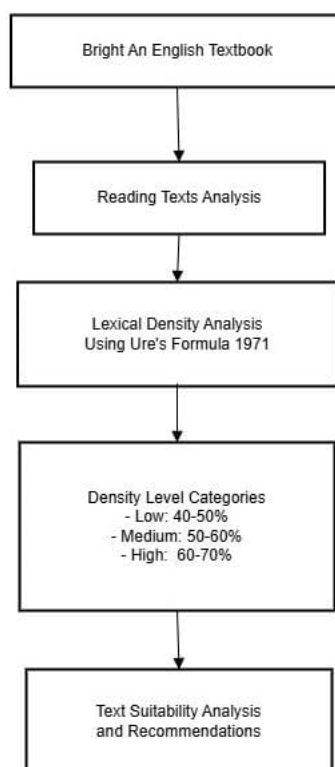


Figure 0.1 Conceptual Framework

This framework explains the analysis process of reading texts in the Bright An English book for seventh grade junior high school students using lexical density analysis as a tool to assess text suitability. Lexical density is defined as the ratio of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) to the total number of words in the text (Johansson, 2008). Halliday (1985) emphasized that texts with higher lexical density generally indicate more complex texts, while lower lexical density indicates easier-to-understand texts. The study employs Ure's formula (1971) to measure this ratio, categorizing results into three levels: low (<40%), medium (50-60%), and high (>60%).

The analysis process involves systematically identifying reading texts, analyzing content words, calculating lexical density, and evaluating text

suitability for seventh-grade students. Based on the calculated lexical density levels, texts are evaluated for their appropriateness, considering that very high lexical density may pose comprehension challenges while very low density might not provide sufficient vocabulary exposure for language development. This analysis leads to practical recommendations for text selection and adaptation, including criteria for identifying optimal density ranges.

This systematic approach aligns with Halliday's (1989) perspective that text complexity should be carefully matched to learners' proficiency levels, particularly in educational materials. Through this comprehensive approach, the study not only measures text complexity but also provides actionable insights for improving educational materials, ultimately supporting better learning outcomes for seventh-grade students.

## **G. Previous Studies**

In this study, the researcher examined five relevant studies related to lexical density and textbook analysis:

### **1. Lexical density and variation in Indonesian folklores in English students textbooks: an SFL study**

This study was conducted by Sujatna, Heriyanto, and Setiadi (2021) examined lexical density and lexical variation in Indonesian folklore texts included in English textbooks for Grade X. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach, collecting data from two textbooks: English: Third Edition (2017) and Interlanguage (2008). Lexical density was calculated using Ure's (1971) formula, while lexical variation was measured following Castello's (2008) framework. The findings of the study revealed that some texts had high lexical density but did not have sufficient lexical variation, making them less understandable to students. Other texts achieved a balance between lexical density and variation, which improved reading. This study is relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of evaluating lexical density to ensure the suitability of reading texts for students. The difference is focuses on narrative texts for high school students.

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

This study was conducted by Rizkiani, Mahdi, and Sujatna (2022) analyzed the lexical density and readability of the Advanced Learning English 2 textbook for Grade XI students. The purpose is to determine the average lexical density of reading texts and assess their readability levels to evaluate their suitability for high school students. Using a qualitative approach, which collected data from 11 reading texts in the textbook and analyzed them using Ure's (1971) lexical density formula and Flesch's (1994) reading ease formula. The findings showed that most texts had high lexical density, with an average exceeding 40%, indicating high text complexity. Readability levels varied across texts, with some classified as easy, while others were challenging, indicating gradual levels of difficulty throughout the book. This study is relevant because of its focus on lexical density as a measure of text complexity and the use of Ure's formula for analysis. While the difference is different in scope and context. The researchers examined high school textbooks and included a readability analysis.

## **3. A Content Analysis of Reading Materials Used in the English Textbook Entitled "Bahasa Inggris" Used by Eleventh Grade of MAN Kota Magelang”**

This study was conducted by Purwaningtyas (2022) and focused on content analysis of reading materials in English textbooks used by class XI students of MAN Kota Magelang. This study aims to evaluate the accuracy of reading materials that are adjusted to the standards set by BSNP (National Education Standards Agency). This study uses a qualitative approach, with data collection through document analysis. The results of the study indicate that the accuracy of the reading materials is generally good, with 75% of the linguistic features meeting the requirements. The textbook is considered appropriate to support student understanding and is in line with the curriculum.

This study is relevant and focuses on analyzing reading materials in textbooks to assess their suitability for students. The difference is the scope and approach. This study evaluates the accuracy of reading materials based on BSNP requirements for high school students.

#### **4. Readability and Lexical Density of Reading Sections of Tenth Grade English Textbooks in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman: A Comparative Study**

Amer and Baarah (2021) conducted a comparative study examining the readability and lexical density of reading passages in tenth grade English textbooks used in Jordan and Oman. The study analyzed reading passages from textbooks from both countries using online text analysis software to calculate lexical density using Ure's formula and readability using Flesch's Reading Ease formula. The findings revealed that both textbooks displayed similar levels of lexical density (46%) indicating appropriate complexity for 10th-grade students. However, the readability analysis showed that the Jordanian textbook was more appropriate for 7th-grade students while the Omani textbook aligned with an 8th-grade reading level. This study is relevant because of its comparative approach to analyzing textbook readability and lexical density across different education systems, despite the difference in examining textbooks from two different countries.

#### **5. Lexical Density as an Improvement Indicator in the Written Performance of EFL Majors**

This study was conducted by Elgobshawi and Aldawsari (2022) analyzed lexical density in Saudi undergraduate EFL students' written performance. The study aimed to assess lexical density in students' written texts and explore the relationship between lexical density and writing quality. Using linguistic content analysis, they examined final exam texts from 60 students in two groups, analyzing them using Ure's (1971) lexical density formula.

The findings revealed that students' lexical density generally increased as they progressed to higher levels of study, with the second group

showing a higher average lexical density compared to the first group. This study is relevant because it examines how lexical density can serve as an indicator of improved writing proficiency. However, its scope and context differ as it focuses on university-level writing performance rather than textbook analysis.

The difference between this research and previous studies in several important ways. First, while most earlier studies looked at high school textbooks or university writing, this research focuses on a textbook for seventh-grade students that follows Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka. Second, this study specifically looks at lexical density as a main tool to determine if texts are suitable for junior high school students, unlike other studies that combined multiple measurement methods. Finally, this research examines the Bright An English textbook which, despite being widely used, hasn't been analyzed before for the difficulty level of its reading texts. This study fills these gaps and provides useful information about reading materials for younger students in Indonesia's current education system, which could help improve future textbooks.

