THE LINGUISTIC FACTORS FOR READABILITY
(A Discourse Analysis of English Student Book for Senior High Schools of Surakarta)

Sri Handayani
Universitas Slamet Riyadi

Abstract: This research aims at finding the readability of English student’s book through linguistic aspect especially in lexical and grammatical analysis. This research applies descriptive qualitative method specifically a discourse analysis. The primary data are the lexis and sentences used in the student’s book. The collected data were obtained by applying discourse analysis of the book. Meanwhile to analyze the data, the ethnography technique proposed by Spreadly was employed. The research findings show that: (1) in terms of the lexis used they can be divided into two categories, they consist of 57% congruent and 43% incongruent lexis, (2) from the grammatical aspect, the complexity of the clauses consists of 46% simple sentence and 18% compound and 36% of complex sentences. (3) the result of the computation using Flesch Reading Ease Formula shows that the readability of English lesson is low, where the readability obtained from those formula is 42%, where the average of length of words per sentence is 16. The factors causing the low readability of student’s book come from two basic factors, they are, its lexis and grammatical aspect. In term of lexis, the low readability is caused by the incongruency of the lexis. While from grammatical views, texts which mostly consist of compound and complex sentence make the texts have low readability levels. From the research findings, the researcher generates a theory for readability as follows: viewed from linguistic aspect, the readability of a student’s book is influenced by two major factors, they are the congruency of its lexis and the complexity of clauses found in the text.

Keywords: Readability, congruency, lexis, grammatical

Background of the Study
Student books play an important role to the success of teaching learning process. So, teachers must pay attention to the selected book to be implemented in the classroom. When writing a textbook, a work-sheet or an examination paper, an author is intented on transmitting information to the reader. How well the author succeeds will depend on the readability of the text. Readability is concerned with the problem of matching between reader and text. An accomplished reader is likely to be bored by simple repetitive texts. A poor reader will soon become discouraged by texts which s/he finds too difficult to read fluently. This is likely to happen when the text is poorly printed, contains complex sentence structures, long words or too much material containing entirely new ideas. The term readability refers to all the factors that affect success in reading and understanding a text.

These factors include: The interest and motivation of the reader; the legibility of the print (and of any illustrations); the complexity of words and sentences in relation to the reading ability of the reader. In this research, the researcher applied Flesch Reading Ease Formula to determine the level of readability in ‘English Alive’ students book which is used in senior high school in Surakarta, where the causes of the readability is viewed from linguistics factors.

Theoretical Review
Readability refers to the easy degree of a text to be understood (Sakri, 1993: 135) in Nababan (1999: 62). The same definition stated by Richard et al (1985: 238) in Nababan (1999: 62) readability is how easily written materials can be read and understood. From the two definitions above it can be seen that readability is the easy degree a written text to be read and to catch the content by the readers. The involvement of the reader in deciding the readability of the text is a really important addition element in linguistic factors. However, every text resulted has a purpose to be read, so that automatically that text involves the readers.

Readability statistics measure text features that are subject to mathematical calculations such as number of syllables and sentence length. Not all features that promote readability are measurable mathematically, so readability statistics are only predictors of readability but are not the entire story. For example, these statistics cannot tell if we presented the ideas clearly, since complex words and long sentences can obscure clarity.

Research Method
This research is a discourse analysis. It aims to study and analyze the use of discourse in at least one of the three ways stated above, and more often than not, all of them at once. In this research, the researcher analyze students book for Junior High School entitled “English Alive” published by Yudhistira. To get the data, the
researcher conducted documentation and interview to the students. While the technique of data analysis, Ethnography proposed by Spreadly is employed.

Research Finding and Discussion

The object of this research is “English Alive”- a student’s book. It consists of 186 pages which is divided into 10 units. From those units, the researcher chooses three units which are selected by taking texts written the beginning, middle and the last of the book to fairly difficult category.

a. Readability

Based on the result of computation from those three texts mentioned above, it can be seen that the average of length of words per sentence is 16, while the readability of this book is 42, that belong to difficult category.

b. The Lexis in English Alive

In this research, the analysis of lexis covers the description of each text in term of its congruency. Based on the result of analysis, it can be concluded that the lexis used in “English Alive” student book consist of 57% congruent and 43% incongruent lexis. It can be seen that almost a half of this book consist of incongruent lexis. Here are the example of incongruent lexis found in the text:

Then align your new card with the expansion slot, and press it firmly until the card is fully seated.
The word “expansion” in this sentence is incongruent lexis since the symbol and the reality is not linear.

The incongruent lexis as mentioned above causes the difficulty in grasping the meaning of a sentence, since incongruent lexis requires high information load.

c. The Gramatical in English Alive

In this research, the researcher analyzed the grammatical aspect that covers the system of clause in sentences. From the result of the research above, it can be concluded that grammatical used in “English Alive” student book consists of 46% simple sentence and 18% compound and 36% of complex sentence. It can be seen that compound sentence mostly used in the text of this book, followed by complex sentence. This may cause the readability of this book is low.

Discussion

In this research, the researcher analyzed the readability of students book focusing on the aspect of lexis and grammatical. The result of the computation using Flesch Reading Ease Formula shows that the readability of English lesson is low, 42%, with the average of length of words per sentence is 16. According to Sakri in Nababan (2003:40) length of words may influence the level of readability. In this case, 16 belongs to Standard category.

The factors causing the low readability of students book come from two basic factors, its lexis and grammatical aspect. In term of lexis, the low of readability is caused by the incongruency of the lexis. While from grammatical views, compound and complex sentence make the text have low readability levels.

In more detail description, the lexis used in the book can be divided into two: 57% of congruent lexis and 43% of incongruent lexis. Meanwhile, from the grammatical aspect, the complexity of the clauses shows 46% simple sentence and 18% compound and 36% of complex sentence. According to Riyadi Santoso (2003:54) the congruency of lexis affected on how easily a text can be understood by the reader. Furthermore, it is explained that the system of clause and the congruency of the lexis affected on how will the text form its register. Thus, from the research findings, the researcher generates a theory for readability as follows: viewed from linguistics aspect, the readability of a students book is influenced by two major factors: the congruency of its lexis and the complexity of clauses found in the text.

Conclusion

From the result of the research, it can be concluded that viewed from linguistics aspect the level of the readability of “English Alive” students book is low. The low readability of this book is caused by two major factors, the congruency of the lexis and the system of clause of the sentence. So, in selecting and writing a students’ book teacher must consider those two factors to meet the students’ level. While in delivering the
instruction in teaching learning process, a teacher must help the students to grasp the content of the lesson by giving clear description and explanation.

References

Biodata
Name: Sri Handayani, S.Pd.M.Hum.
Affiliation: English Department of Slamet Riyadi University
Email Address: Srihandayani_59@yahoo.com