THE READABILITY OF STUDENTS' TEXTBOOK USED IN SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC COURSE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAM OF UNIVERSITAS NEGERI PADANG

THESIS

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By

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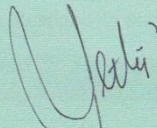Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

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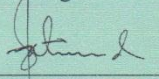English Language Education Program of Universitas Negeri Padang

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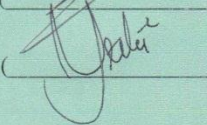Tim Penguji   Tanda Tangan

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Dengan ini menyatakan, bahwa Tugas Akhir saya dengan judul *The Readability of Students' Textbook Used in Semantic and Pragmatic Course in English Language Education Program of Universitas Negeri Padang* benar merupakan hasil karya saya dan bukan merupakan plagiat dari karya orang lain. Apabila suatu saat terbukti saya melakukan plagiat maka saya bersedia diproses dan menerima sanksi akademis maupun hukum sesuai dengan hukum dan ketentuan yang berlaku, baik di institusi Universitas Negeri Padang maupun masyarakat dan negara.

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ABSTRAK

Hidayatillah, Nur. 2020. *The Readability of Students' Textbook Used in Semantic and Pragmatic Course in English Education Department of UNP*. Skripsi. Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Banyak mahasiswa program pendidikan Bahasa Inggris mendapatkan nilai rendah pada mata kuliah *Semantic and Pragmatic*. Mereka mengatakan bahwa buku pedoman dalam mata kuliah ini terlalu sulit untuk dipahami. Hal ini memunculkan kemungkinan bahwa adanya hubungan antara nilai rendah yang didapatkan mahasiswa dengan tingkat kesulitan buku yang digunakan. Dalam penelitian sebelumnya, ditemukan bahwa kecocokan tingkat kesulitan buku dengan keterampilan membaca mahasiswa adalah dua hal penting untuk dipertimbangkan agar mencapai hasil pembelajaran yang maksimal. Oleh karena itu, mengukur tingkat kesulitan buku menjadi penting. Selain itu, menemukan faktor yang mempengaruhi tingkat kesulitan dan bagaimana cara terbaik menggunakan buku juga menjadi hal yang penting. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kuantitatif deskriptif. Sampel penelitian ini adalah 3 halaman dari 3 bab dari buku yang digunakan pada mata kuliah *Semantic and Pragmatic*, yaitu bab 9, 10, 11 yang dipilih secara acak dari masing-masing bab. Instrument penelitian ini adalah angket, *website* penghitung tingkat kesulitan buku dan catatan selama melakukan wawancara. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah tingkat kesulitan buku yang diukur oleh mahasiswa dan formula *Flesch Reading Ease Formula* adalah sulit. Faktor yang paling menentukan tingkat kesulitan buku adalah ketertarikan dan kosa kata buku. Cara terbaik untuk menggunakan buku ini ada dengan menggunakan satu buku, diedit dengan menambahkan catatan di halaman yang ada oleh pengajar dan menjelaskannya dalam bentuk *lecture format*.

Kata kunci: readability of students' textbook, factors influencing readability level, the best way to use the textbook

ABSTRACT

Hidayatillah, Nur. 2020. *The Readability of Students' Textbook Used in Semantic and Pragmatic Course in English Education Department of UNP*. Thesis. English Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Many students got a low score in Semantic and Pragmatic course. They complained that the textbook used in the course is difficult to understand. It is possible to consider that there is a correlation between the students' bad scores and the readability of the textbook. In previous research, it found that a suitable level of readability and reading skills is an important consideration to reach maximum learning gain. Because of that, it becomes important to measure the readability level, the factors influencing the readability level and the best way to use the textbook. This research was a descriptive quantitative research. The sample of this research was 3 pages from 3 chapters of the textbook, chapter 9, 10, and 11 chosen randomly from each chapter. The instruments were a written questionnaire, an online readability measurement website, and notes during the interview. The findings show that the readability level measured by students and readability formula was difficult. The most influencing factors in determining the readability level were interest and vocabulary difficulty. The best way to use the textbook was by using one single textbook, editing by put some notes on the page, then presenting it in a lecture form by the lecturer.

Keywords: readability of students' textbook, factors influencing readability level, the best way to use the textbook

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Finally, the researcher realizes that this thesis is far from perfect. The researcher welcomes constructive criticism and suggestion to make this thesis better.

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Nur Hidayatillah

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, it starts with the presentation of the background of the problem that concludes some definitions and overviews of the study. It is followed by the concern of the research and limitation of the problem. Then, the formulation of the problem and objectives of the study are following it. Finally, the significance of the study and the definition of key terms are provided.

A. Background of the Problem

Today, authentic materials are common in EFL classes. For example, in the English language education program of Universitas Negeri Padang, the students use textbooks which are written by Jack C.Richard and David Bycina, Patricia K Werner, Alan Cruse, C.G Draper, James Dean Brown, Norman C. Stageberg, and Richard Velt. They are known as native speakers. It is assumed that using authentic materials in EFL classes helps learners to be familiar with real English communication. However, Lu (2002) argued that authentic materials, such as authentic textbooks, may be complicated for EFL learners (Lu, 2002).

The word *authentic* refers to "the language produced by native speakers for native speakers in a particular language community" (Porter & Roberts, 1981; Little et al. 1989, as cited in Gilmore (2007: 3)). Since EFL students are given textbooks that are considered for native speakers, it is assumed that the students will find difficulties in understanding the textbooks. There might be a significant

gap between native speaker students and non-native speaker students, especially in their capability in reading the textbook. Students who live in English speaking countries get the vocabulary and language system, or grammar, in their daily life. On the other hand, students in the non-English speaking country that considers English as a foreign language as in Indonesia, the students meet English just while they are in English class. The students get the vocabulary from the class only. Thus, giving the non-native speaker students textbooks that are commonly used for native speaker students can be harmful and frustrating.

One example of this case is a textbook with title *Meaning in Language an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics 3rd Edition* by Alan Cruse. It is used in Semantic and Pragmatic course in the English language education program of Universitas Negeri Padang. Many students in the English language education program said that the textbook was complicated to understand. These complaints were supported by their low score for this course. Since many students, not just one or two students, got a bad score for this course, it can be assumed that there might be a correlation between their low score and the difficulty level of the textbook. This assumption is also proven by my friends' experience while learning in Semantic and Pragmatic course. She and all members of her class were not able to understand the textbook by themselves. No one of them could understand the textbook well. So, before coming to the course, they had to have a class discussion with a senior student. They asked the senior student to help them to understand the explanation from the textbook. One of them said that the reason for doing it is because the members of the class felt the textbook was difficult to understand, so no one of them was sure about their understanding through the textbook explanation. They could not draw a conclusion without help the senior student

almost for every unit in the textbook. Even, some students who retake the course still said that the textbook was difficult to read.

It is found that measuring the readability level of a textbook is one of the efforts which could solve the problem. Many scholars agree that readability is the most necessary issue in selecting the appropriate textbook for a course (Ulusoy, 2006; Kasule, 2010; GEÇİT*, 2010; Rezaee & Norouzi, 2011; Burton, 2014) to achieve benefits from the textbook. Kasule (2010: 63) found in his research that awareness of "readability issues will help educators to make effective reading instruction during the critical formative years of school". It is because the result of estimating the readability of textbooks shows the appropriate level of the textbooks to be used (Bailin & Grafstein, 2001; Compton, Appleton, & Hosp, 2004; Harrison, 1980 as cited in Begeny & Greene, 2013).

Readability means levels that describe the easiness of the text to be comprehended while reading it (Dubay, 2004). For the first time, readability has been measured by certain formulas. Some studies about investigating the readability level of students' textbook using the readability formulas were conducted.

The studies investigated students' textbooks in primary school, junior high school, senior high school, and university. There was one study about textbook readability for primary school textbooks. The research was conducted by (Kasule, 2011). By using the cloze procedure, it was found that the textbook level was difficult. In the junior high school textbook, there were two studies from Langeborg (2010) and Suheri, Azhar, and Afrianto (2018). Both of them used both of the Flesch formulas to measure readability level. Langeborg (2010) compared the readability level of the textbook series and resulted that each series has

different levels. Suheri, Azhar, and Afrianto (2018) found that the textbook which they analyzed was at the appropriate level. Furthermore, there were several studies for investigating senior high school students' textbooks. The investigation used Flesch formula (Rahmawati & Lestari, 2012; Kim & Ma, 2012; Ghorbanchian, Youhanaee, & Barati, 2014; Hidayat, 2016; Miftaahurrahmi, Fitrawati, & Syarif, 2017) and Raygor Readability Estimate (Nurhamsih, 2007) to measure the level of readability of senior high school students' textbooks.

In the scope of college textbooks level, there were studies from Cline and Lu. Cline (1972) investigated college students' textbooks in Colorado. He compared the 279 students' Nelson-Denny test scores and readability by the Dale-Chall formula of seventeen textbooks which were used by the students. Lu (2002) studied the application of readability in reading materials selection and coursebook design for college English in an EFL context in China. It found that the role of readability was important in selecting materials and the task design for college English. It will be described further in previous studies in chapter 2.

From the presented previous research, the readability of textbooks was measured by formulas. The Reading Ease Formula from Flesch found as the most used formula. However, readability formulas have been criticized by many researchers.

In the middle of 1990, a significant decrease happened in readability formulas research. It was discovered that formulas were not reliable and valid predictors of text difficulty (e.g. Redish & Selzer, 1985; Bruce, Rubin & Starr, 1981, as cited in Janan & Wray, 2012). Since criticisms for readability formulas pronounced and explained in some research (Hewitt & Homan, 2004; Kouamé, 2010; Rezaee & Norouzi, 2011; Janan & Wray, 2012; Tabatabaei & Bagheri, 2013; Janan & Wray,

2014; Bailin & Grafstein, 2016; Pishghadam & Abbasnejad, 2016), scholars started to find other measurement to measure readability level.

Scholars found several methods in measuring the readability level to answer the criticisms in readability formulas. Rush (1986) mentions *alternative methods* as another measurement to measure readability. There are two methods of *alternative methods*, text-based alternative and reader/text-based alternative (Rush, 1986: 10). On the other point, Heilman, Collins-Thompson, Callan, and Eskenazi (2007) conducted a study to improve readability meausrement by combining lexical and grammatical features. Then, the cloze procedure and Coh-Metrix are viewed as other methods in measuring the readability level (Bailin & Grafstein, 2016).

Asking the target readers to measure the readability level is also viewed as another measurement of readability. A scale questionnaire and interview are the way for measuring the readability level by asking the target readers. Djatmika, Khrisna, and Nuraeni (2012) interviewed their participants and asked them to measure the readability level of the books. Kouamé (2010) and Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono (2012) had already conducted research measuring readability level by asking the target reader with a scale. Kouamé's (2010) research used a 1 to 10 scale and revealed that the students' participation, as the target readers, in investigating the readability level can represent the accurate readability level of the outcomes. This will be described further in chapter 2.

So far as I'm concerned about the previous studies mentioned, there is still little research that investigating the readability of students' textbooks by asking the target reader to measure the readability level. However, Ardi (2015: 134) stated that according to the definition of readability, the level of readability should

be accurate if the text is evaluated by the target reader to measure the readability level of a textbook. Because of that, the present study investigated the readability of a students' textbook by asking the target readers to measure the readability level. In this case, students who currently used the textbook are students at K-2017 class. The readability of Semantic and Pragmatic textbook with title *Meaning in Language an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics 3rd Edition* by Alan Cruse was measured by deciding the level 1 to 4 by indicators proposed by Ardi (2015). So far I read the previous studies, this was the first study that used the scale in investigating the readability level of students' textbook. The result of this study was completed by using Reading Ease Formula by Flesch as the most used formula. This study did not only investigate the readability level of the textbook, but also investigate what the students think about factors influencing the readability level and the best way to use the textbook.

B. Focus of the Research

This research focused on analyzing the readability of students' Semantic and Pragmatic (Semprag) textbook. The title of the textbook is *Meaning in Language an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics 3rd Edition* by Alan Cruse. The textbook was measured by students in the K-2017 class in the English language education program of Universitas Negeri Padang as the current students who used the textbook. The textbook was measured by asking the students as the target readers to measure readability of the textbook and by Flesch Reading Ease Formula. This study also focused on factors influencing the readability level and the best way to use the textbook.

C. Formulation of the Problem

Based on the focus of the research above, the researcher formulated the problem into an analysis about the readability of students' textbook used in Semantic and Pragmatic course in English language education program of Universitas Negeri Padang.

D. Research Question

The research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the readability level of the textbook titled *Meaning in Language an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics 3rd Edition* by Alan Cruse measured by K-2017 of English language education program of Universitas Negeri Padang students and Reading Ease Formula by Flesch?

2. What do the students think about factors influencing the readability level?

3. What do the students think about the best way to use the textbook?

E. Purpose of the research

This research is intended to:

1. Seek out the readability level of Semantic and Pragmatic textbook titled *Meaning in Language an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics 3rd Edition* by Alan Cruse measured by K-2017 of English language education program of Universitas Negeri Padang students and Reading Ease Formula by Flesch.

2. Seek out what the students think about factors influencing the readability level of the textbook.

3. Seek out what the students think about the best way to use the textbook.

F. Significance of the research

Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the current theories on the readability of students' textbooks. It is hoped that this investigation does that previous studies did not do. The previous studies used readability formulas to measure the level; meanwhile, readability theory found that asking the target readers to measure readability is the more accurate one. Unfortunately, there still has less investigation and application on asking the target readers to measure readability. This study also tried to find what the students think about factors influencing the readability level and the best way to use the textbook.

Practically, this research is expected to help lecturers by presenting the level of readability of a students' textbook. This study is also expected to reveal what the students think about factors influencing the readability level to the lecturers. The best wayto use the textbook according to what the students think may help lecturers to decide the best way to use the textbook.

In the future, the result of this research will be possible to give information, about the readability level of the textbook. This research also revealed what the students think about factors influencing the readability level. The result of this study is also expected to pronounce what the students think about the way to use the textbook to make them understand easier. It is supposed to help lecturers who use the textbook in the course to consider the level of the readability of the textbook and may help lecturers to notice the factors influencing readability level and predict the appropriate method in increasing students' comprehension. It is crucial because students' understanding about Semantics and Pragmatics is important.

Definition of Key Terms

Several important terms employed in this thesis are:

1. Textbook refers to a teaching tool (material) containing theories, exercises, and other related matters of certain subjects developed according tothe curriculum.

2. Readability refers to the degree of difficulty to comprehend the textbooks.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter contains two main points. For the first point, this chapter contains the conclusion of the study. The conclusion is drawn based on the findings of this study. Then, after drawing a conclusion, some suggestion is given. This suggestion is offered based on the finding of the research.

A. Conclusion

The goal of this study is to describe the readability level, the factor influencing readability level and the best way to use students' textbooks in Semantic and Pragmatic Course with title *Meaning in Language an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics 3rd Edition*by Alan Cruse. The finding of this study was based on data which employed written questionnaire and interview research. After analyzing the data, it found the readability level, factors influencing the readability level of the textbook, and the best way to use the textbook.

The readability level of the textbook measured by students was at a difficult level. It means that the textbook was hard to understand. Similarly, the readability level measured by readability formula was at a difficult level. It means that the textbook is readable for students in 13th to 16th grade (college), or for 1st-4th-year college students in Indonesia. In other words, the readability level of the textbook matched with the students who participated in this study. The results from asking the target readers and Flesch Reading Ease Formula showed different meaning. The differences can be caused by different indicators from readability formulas for native speakers with non-native speakers in English.

In the readability factor, the result showed that the most influencing factor in determining the readability level of the textbook was interest and words in the text. Interest is known as the reader factor in the readability level. It is important for students to have the desire to read and find enjoyment in reading (Gilliland, 1968). Besides, the vocabulary is known as the text factor. If the larger number of easy words are used in a textbook, the textbook will be easier to understand.

Then, another important issue that this study investigated the best way to use the textbook. It found that the best way was using single textbook, editing the textbook by putting some notes on pages of the textbook, then presenting it in a lecture format by the lecturer. This is because using the single textbook and presenting it in a lecture format by the lecturer can avoid confusion and misunderstanding among the students.

B. Suggestion

According to the findings and conclusion of the research, there are some suggestions offered to the lecturers and the next researchers. It is necessary for the lecturers to measure the readability of the textbook which will be used by the students. Researchers at School Renaissance Institute and Touchstone Applied Science Associates, as cited in DuBay (2007), found that "maximum learning gain requires careful matching of book readability and reading skill". According to the discussion of the finding, it is an important consideration to ask the target reader to determine readability rather than use the readability formula proposed for native speakers. It is because the result from Flesch Reading Ease Formula had different result with the result from asking the target readers. The factors behind the readability level of the textbook also can give lecturers information and consideration in helping students to solve their problems in reading the textbook.

The textbook needs improvement in vocabulary, sentence structure, layout, and line space of the text to increase students' interest as the most influencing factor in the readability level. This study also revealed what the students think about the best way to use the textbook. The textbook can be adapted or completed with some resources by the lecturers. The textbook compilation can be summaries from some textbooks in a simple way. Furthermore, the textbook can be discussed in group discussion. It is suggested to use translated textbook of the textbook as the supplementation aid of the textbook.

For the next researchers, it is advisable to explore more about the readability, the factorsinfluencing readability level, and the textbook used in other textbooks and other courses. The next researchers can compare the readability of the textbook and the students' comprehension. Another comparison also can be conducted between the readability, the readability factors and the textbook used in one course to another course, or in one semester to another semester.

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