

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

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the reading sections of English textbooks for Tenth grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman in terms of their readability and lexical density. To check their readability indices and to assess their lexical density. Data were compiled from reading sections in the textbooks, and quantitatively analyzed through online text analysis software. The findings showed that Jordanian and Omani English textbooks for 10th grade featured the same lexical density and showed that both textbooks include reading sections with low lexical density which indicated that the reading sections were appropriate for 10th grade. Moreover, the research revealed that, Jordanian English textbook is suitable for 7th grade while Omani English textbook is suitable for 8th grade. It is concluded that Jordanian and Omani English textbooks for 10th grade do not meet the standard requirements of readability indices as they are easier than the expected indices for the target levels.

Keywords

lexical density; readability; textbook; Jordan; Oman



I. Introduction

The most crucial element in teaching space is the textbook. It plays an essential role in teaching learning process because it is used to convey the teaching tools to learners, to simplify the teaching learning process. In addition, it can be a source for instructor who has partial teaching practice. It is provided in many subjects like English textbook, science textbook, social textbook, religion textbook, civic textbook, etc.

In English schoolroom, textbooks are used to assist the learners' need about language skills. It also affords knowledge and information that the learners need that cannot be given by the instructor. The central points of the textbooks are to develop the learners' English ability. In other words, the textbooks are tools for the instructor for conveying the knowledge. The textbooks can have different amount in providing the language skills. (Yulianto, 2019; Syed, 2018; Fong, DeWitt, & Leng, 2018)

Reading text is usually in the form of text that is used to teach reading skill such as pronouncing words, understanding the content of the text, receiving vocabulary, and also understanding of language rules. Through reading text, the learners can acquire the knowledge and information and also the grammar and the vocabulary. It is provided in various forms which are called as genre. The forms of genre are arranged well based on the curriculum. (Borràs & Llanes, 2020; Hidayatillah & Yetti, 2020; Sarwo, 2014)

In reading sections, each learner usually gets complications in understanding text, the main point of difficult text is the lexical density of the text, in which the more lexical

pieces the text has, the more difficult the text is. If the text is designed in grammatical configuration, the text is not too difficult. While if the text is designed in lexical configuration, the text is characterized in difficult text.

These days, every learner has to be able to comprehend each reading text in the textbook which is covered in the curriculum.

In the curriculum, reading text must be related to the learners needs. The instructors have the freedom to select the teaching means or tactic to improve the learners' communicative competency which is relevant to the learners' condition and needs. One of the learners' needs is to comprehend or understand the text based on the situation given in English subject.

The condition of the words' proportion in the text is called lexical density. It shows the relation of lexical items to grammatical items. Lexical items consist of noun, adjective, verb, and adverbs while grammatical items consist of determiner, pronoun, most preposition, conjunction, finite verb, and classes of adverb. Lexical density is showing the complexity of words inside text and describing the development of in the written language. (Prawianto&Bram, 2020; Ebedy, 2020; Sari, 2016).

Usually learners find difficulties in understanding and comprehending reading text because the density of text is often unavailable for the learners' level, they cannot understand the content of the text due to unfamiliar words found in the text; the sentences with high lexical density will be more complicated or difficult than the sentences with low lexical density, high level of lexical density does not give readability text for learners, the sentences with low density give readability text and easily to be comprehended. Lexical density = (sum of lexical words whole number of words) × 100. (Abu Rabiah, 2020; Crossley& Skalicky, 2019; Choi& Jeong, 2016)

Dale and Chall (1948) describe readability as the totality of all those elements inside a given piece of written material that affect the prosperity a group of learners have with it. The prosperity is the extent to which they realized it, read it at best way and find it exciting. There are many factors affecting the readability, Gray and Leary (1935) arranged these factors into four unique classes:

- 1) Variables related to content which described as the subject matter of the text.
- 2) Variables related to style which stated the kinds of sentences and words used in the text.
- 3) Variables related to format which related to the features of visual demonstration like typography and page layout.
- 4) Variables linked to features of organization like headings, paragraphs used to unify the ideas of the text. Moreover, Gray and Leary (1935) demonstrated that content is the most significant factor controlling readability.

Readability states the easiness with which a learner can read and comprehend the text (Oakland & Lane, 2004) and it depends on several factors including the average length of sentences, the amount of unique words enclosed, and the grammatical difficulty of the language (Richards, et al., 1992). Relating to readability, Jauss (1982) is of the view that features such as learners' background, their language and instructors' curricular ends determine the appropriateness of a text, while some aspects such as average length of sentences, the total of new vocabulary and the grammatical difficulty of the language used in the text are effective on a text being readable too. Stephens (2000) states five style aspects possible to affect the readability of a text as the number of pronouns, number of words in each sentence, percentage of unique words and number of prepositional phrases.

Readability formula is an analytical technique to guess readability. General readability formulas are according to wide research and their guesses relate very well with the outcomes of the real readability measurements of professional judgments, comprehension assessments (Syafitri& Sumarni, 2014; Vinh & Thomas, 2013). Readability formulations were originally developed in the 1920s. They grew from the need to match reading materials with particular audiences, and they have been broadly using by instructors and supervisors in the educational system to select reading materials for the schoolroom. Table 1 shows reading scores, style descriptions and estimated reading grade.

Table 1. DuBay's Flesh Reading Ease Score

Reading Score	Style Description	Estimated Reading Grade
0-30	Very difficult	College students
30-50	Difficult	13th to 6th grade
50-60	Fairly difficult	10th to 12th grade
60-70	Standard	8th-9th grade
70-80	Fairly easy	7th grade
80-90	Easy	6th grade
90-100	Very easy	5th grade

Readability formulations were originally developed in the 1920s. They grew from the need to match reading materials with particular audiences, and they have been broadly using by instructors and supervisors in the educational system to select reading materials for the schoolroom. There were many studies used lexical density as an instrument to study various type of text and different results have achieved.

Sari (2017) conducted a study to assess the quality of senior year of high school's textbook in Indonesia. In order to assess the quality of English textbook, he analyzed reading texts. The result showed that the levels of texts analyzed in this research did not match the expected indexes of lexical density.

Thida (2018) in her research analyzed the lexical density and the readability of students writing at Yadanabon University. The data was 19 writings. She used Ure (1971) to analyse the lexical density and Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula to analyze the readability. The findings showed that the lengths of texts were not the same, lexical density did not depend on the length. The lexical density was high while the text was not long. Lexical density was low while their lengths were short; lexical density of the texts was higher than 50% were fairly difficult to read.

Fadhilaah (2018) conducted a study to analyze lexical density of reading Texts in Pathway textbook; the study used 15 Pathway reading texts. The data was examined by Lexical Density Ure's method (1971). The results found that lexical density in the texts were high; it means that the reading texts in Pathway were complicated.

Another study by Waruwu, Sinulingga and Erlita (2019) stated for analyzing the lexical density and readability in English textbook. The data were 7 reading texts. Ure's formula used to assess the lexical density and Flesch Reading Ease Formula used to assess the readability. The findings showed that the lexical density was high and the readability score was standard level. It showed that the reading texts were readable for 8th grade.

1.1 Operational Definitions of Terms

- Textbook: is manual instruction that provides a text Ginting and Nesia (2014). It is the device that instructor use to teach learners. Brown (2000) says that “textbook is a mean which involves the material of subject and it is well systematized and contribution in written form for instructor and learners”. In this study the textbook is focused on Action Pack , English for Me
- Reading sections: is all reading texts used by instructor about reading skill. Nesia and Ginting (2014) stated that “reading text is written, paragraph and passage as an instrument which has function to study vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation”. In this study the reading sections focused on Action Pack, English for Me for tenth grade
- Lexical Density: Johansson (2008) stated that lexical density is a term which is used in text analysis Lexical density is defined as sum of content word divided by total number of word. In this study the researcher focused on analyzing lexical density on Action Pack and English for Me for tenth grade
- Readability : the degree of easiness or difficulty with which text material can be comprehend by a learner who is reading that text for a particular goal (Pikulski, 2002).In this study Flesch Reading Ease was used to analyze readability the reading sections focused on Action Pack , English for Me for tenth grade

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The educational systems of Jordan and Sultanate of Oman are very similar. Considerable changes have been undertaken to enhance the educational system, looking for development in the quality rather than quantity of teaching and learning, to run into the demands of the 21st century. The ministries of education realized the significance of developing English language teaching for learners. A lot of money is spent each year on education in Jordan the Sultanate of Oman, yet there is a massive disaffection with the educational system.

Efforts to improve the system have offered highly attention to the role of text book content in learners’ performance, despite of all the efforts carried out by the Jordanian and Omani ministries of education to improve learners’ abilities in reading skills, the instructors have very usual come across learners whose reading skills are lower than average.

According to EF English Proficiency Index 2020, Sultanate of Oman has very low proficiency score 398 Position in Middle East 9/10 while Jordan has low proficiency score 456 Position in Middle East 5/10.

This study was motivated to compare English textbooks introduced for tenth grade in Jordan and the Sultanate of Oman to expose whether reading sections in the textbooks for tenth grade of Jordan and Sultanate of Oman significantly differ with regard to lexical density (complexity) and readability.

The researchers go on to illustrate that one element which makes a reading sections unreadable is the complexity of the language used in relation to the reading ability of the reader. As the essential focus of this study, it is crucial to assert that English textbooks are main sources of instruction for instructors in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman.

1.3 Study Questions

Three study questions were proposed as follows:

1. What are the readability indices for reading sections of English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman?

2. What are the lexical density indices of reading sections of English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman?
3. How do lexical density and readability of reading sections change throughout English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is set out to compare reading sections of English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman. It is exactly designed to explore whether the reading texts in the selected textbooks significantly differ with regard to lexical density (complexity) and readability. Accordingly, three research questions were raised.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

1. This particular study was limited to the investigation of reading sections of English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman regarding lexical density (complexity) and readability of reading sections.
2. The academic subject which was confined to English books:
 - a. English textbook of 10th grade in Jordan. This has been designated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the Tenth grade in (2007).
 - b. English textbook for the 10th grade in Sultanate of Oman. This has been designated by the Omani Ministry of Education in (2014/2015).
3. Time Limit: the study was conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2020/2021.

II. Research Methods

2.1 Population

The Population for this study covered English textbooks introduced in Jordan public schools and Sultanate Oman which are taught schools for 10th grade. To limit the scope of the study for comprehensive analysis, the researcher selected reading section in these textbooks for more in depth analysis of the lexical density and readability levels.

2.2 Sample

The sample consists of all reading texts which are provided in English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman for first term

2.3 Instrument

To conduct this study, two frames were used for measuring lexical density and readability of English Textbooks. The researcher used online formula in this study for measuring the lexical density and to measure the readability.

2.4 The Validity of the Procedures

Before beginning the process of analyzing, a group of experts reviewed the procedures used by the researchers. Their comments were taken into consideration. To establish the reliability, the researchers analyzed the reading texts as a first analysis. After two weeks, another analysis was made to compare the two results of the analysis. The finding showed that there was a high agreement between the two analyses in total 100. This result means that this result accepted for the study.

2.5 The Validity of Software

The software was handed out to a jury of experts to judge on their validity. They said that this software have high validity that can be used to analyze the reading texts.

2.6 Study Procedures

In order to conduct this study, two textbooks which are taught in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman for grade ten were selected and assessed. These recently developed which are used to teach for Tenth level students were downloaded and used for this study. To select a specific part, the research focused on reading sections of the textbooks. All of the reading sections of every textbook were copied and pasted in specific sheets. Then to analyze the data to find the lexical density of the copied texts, for each textbook .To measure the lexical density, content words have to be separated from the grammatical words and then putting them in lexical density formula which is the proportion of lexical items on the whole number of words can be calculated for each textbook. To calculate the readability of the books, again the specific parts, which were reading sections, were copied and pasted in different sheets and then they were entered to site called:

<https://www.analyzemywriting.com/index.html>

This site provided the researcher with a score for the readability which could be judged according to the table 1.It can be concluded that what is the readability index for each textbook.

Finally, the two textbooks were compared in terms of their lexical density and readability to see if they had a logical sequence and were appropriate for the 10th levels or not.

2.7 Data Analysis

In order to answer the first and second study questions regarding the manifestation of the readability and lexical density indices of reading sections in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman textbooks, the reading sections were extracted and saved in two files. Then, the researcher analyzed each file by software to extract the readability and lexical density indices. So, the first and second study questions were examined qualitatively. In order to answer the third research questions regarding how lexical density and readability of reading sections change throughout English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman, the extracted indices were compared with each other considering readability and lexical density.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

This study is designed to examine the degrees of lexical density and readability of Jordanian and Omani English textbooks for Tenth Grade. In this study, adopting quantitative research method, lexical density and readability of the reading sections of the textbooks were investigated to see how do lexical density and readability of reading sections change throughout English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman. The data were analyzed content wisely, providing descriptive statistics regarding readability and lexical density of each textbook.

a. The Finding of the First Question

The first research question examined the readability level of Jordanian and Omani English textbooks for Tenth Grade. In order to answer this research question, the reading sections of each textbook were collected. After gathering data for each textbook, the data

were entered in the readability- core.com site to check the readability measures for each textbook. The results are presented for each textbook (reading sections) separately.

Table 2. The readability Indices According to Jordanian and Omani English Textbooks for Tenth Grade

Readability Formula	English Textbook for Tenth Grade	
	Jordan	Sultanate of Oman
Flesch Reading Ease	65.3	63.5
Gunning-Fog Score	9	10.4
Coleman-Liau Index	9	9
SMOG Index	7.2	8.1
Automated Readability	6.2	7.6
Reader's Age	11-13	12-14
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	7	8

The results shown in the above table are based on English textbooks For Tenth Grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman. The one which is measured in this study is Flesch Formula for assessing readability. As mentioned in table 1, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level of Jordanian English Textbook for Tenth Grade is 7, for Omani English textbooks for Tenth Grade is 8 which is higher than Jordanian. The following results are provided considering each textbook separately to give a detailed description of each textbook characteristic. The norm for measuring readability of reading sections is defined to be Flesch Readability Formula.

Depending Interpretation of the Flesch Reading Ease Score (adopted from DuBay, 2004) and comparing the Flesch readability score with that, it can be inferred that the reading section of in Jordanian textbook is regarded as standard. The readability score is found to be 65.3 which is in the range of 60-70 and Flesch has interpreted this range as standard one which is suitable for 10th grade. It can also be inferred that the readings in the Omani textbook is regarded as standard. The readability score was found to be 63.5 which is in the range of 60-70 and Flesch has interpreted this range as standard one which is suitable for grade 10. As illustrated in Table 2, reading texts in both Jordanian and Omani textbooks are readable for the students.

The analysis results have also revealed that the reading sections in textbooks used in Jordan are same readable those in Sultanate of Oman (JOR: 65.3; OMA: 63.5). Table 3 gives more result related features.

Table 3. Text Statistics Indices of reading sections in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman for 10th grade

Text Quality	
Text Quality Formula	English Textbook for Tenth Grade

	Jordan	Sultanate of Oman
Word Count	3666	3889
Character Length	20262	22086
Unique Word Count	1155	1070
Sentences	318	276
Syllables	5377	5960
Average Words/Sentence	11.5	14.1
Average Syllables/Word	1.5	1.5

The results indicate that reading sections in Jordanian textbook contains 3666 words and 318 sentences with 1155 unique words. In Omani textbook contains 3889 words and 276 sentences with 1070 unique words. This shows that comparing reading sections qualities of Jordanian and Omani, these textbooks seem to be uncomplicated. It was found that reading sections in Jordanian textbooks and Omani textbook are standard.

Table 4. The Classification of Lexical Items in the Reading Sections

Lexical Items	Percentage	
	Jordanian	Omani
Nouns	30.05%	31.09%
Adjectives	8.76%	8.25%
Verbs	9.84%	11.29%
Adverbs	4.57%	4.41%
Prepositions	12.42%	11.94%
Pronouns	5.3%	4.51%
Auxiliary Verbs	6.9%	6.44%

Table 4 shows that all of the reading sections in Jordanian and Omani textbooks are dominantly formed by using noun which followed by verb and adjective.

b. The Finding of the Second Question

The second research question examines the lexical density indices of reading sections of English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman. Reading sections of each textbook was extracted and analyzed.

Table 5. Lexical Density of Reading Sections in English Textbooks for the 10th Grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman

Complexity Factor (Lexical Density)
English Textbook For Tenth Grade

Jordan	46%
Sultanate of Oman	46%

The results indicate that Jordanian and Omani textbooks used for Tenth Grade include reading sections with low lexical density both in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman (Jor: 46%; Oma: 46%). These results report that reading sections in Jordanian and Omani textbooks are easy to understand due to medium lexical density. Concerning the comparison of the results, it could be concluded that the textbook used in Jordan include reading sections lexically similar the one used in their Sultanate of Oman counterparts.

c. The Finding of the Third Question

The third question examined how lexical density and readability of reading sections change throughout English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman. According to the previous tables 2,3,4,5, the results demonstrated that the reading sections in English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman are steady and they are not fluctuating in terms of complexity and readability.

3.2 Discussion

In the present study, two lineaments of textbooks called lexical density and readability were examined. In order to conduct this study, Reading sections of English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman, were investigated. After data collection, in order to check the readability and lexical density of these textbooks, they were fed into special sites. Regarding the first research questions addressing the readability of these textbooks, it was found that there is a logical order between Jordanian and Omani English textbooks for the 10th grade in terms of their readability.

The second a research questions of this study examined the lexical density in reading sections of these textbooks. Reading sections were extracted from textbooks and analyzed in order to find the lexical density for reading sections of each textbook. The results revealed that there is a logical concatenation when comparing reading sections in terms of their lexical density. It means that, reading texts in Jordanian and Omani textbooks are easy to understand due to low lexical density.

The third research question inspected how lexical density and readability of reading sections change throughout English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman. The results demonstrate that reading sections change throughout English textbooks for the 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman follow a steady curve.

The findings of this study displayed that English textbooks employed for tenth grade both in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman include reading sections with low lexical density and readability. This seems to be a pleasing result since these two factors are considered to facilitate learners' learning and improve their reading skills in English language. Consequently, well-selected reading texts are believed to increase learners' motivation to read in English language, to help them improve optimistic attitude toward learning English language.

IV. Conclusion and Suggestion

4.1 Conclusion

To sum up, the results of this study revealed that reading sections of the English textbooks for 10th grade in Jordan and Sultanate of Oman are neither having an

appropriate readability index nor aligned to the grade levels of the learners. Further, the reading sections in the sample have been written at a level that is not that much challenging and stimulating for an individual to understand. Additionally, this study revealed that, in contrast to the readability level, the textbooks enjoy a logical series in terms of lexical density.

It can generally be concluded that these textbooks are lexically dense and the lexical indices are suitable. As for readability index, reading sections of the textbooks including Action Pack (Jordan) and English for Me (Sultanate of Oman) were syntactically easy to read. Moreover, the study revealed that according to Flesch Readability table, Jordanian textbook is suitable for 7th grade while it is taught for 10th grade and Omani textbook is suitable for 8th grade while it is taught for 10th grade. There was a rational sequence among the reading sections of these books in terms of their lexical density

4.2 Suggestions for Further Research

In the light of results gained in this study. These recommendations can be made:

- Further comprehensive researches should be made in order to determine the level of learners concerning text readability.
- Learner level should not be ignored, and texts should develop in difficulty gradually according to the grade levels.
- Textbook's designers can take advantage of the findings of this study for checking readability and the lexical density of the textbooks.
- Moreover, the findings can also be fruitful for English instructors to check their own developed material choose the ones which have appropriate readability and lexical density and which fulfill the needs of the learners.

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