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The Readability of Reading Materials in the English Textbook "English for Nusantara" for Eighth Grade Students Based on Lexile Framework

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Abstract: Reading materials in English textbooks should provide an appropriate level of difficulty for students so that they can engage with texts and develop their reading skills. However, the readability levels of texts may vary within the same textbook. This study aimed to examine the readability of reading materials in the eighth-grade English textbook *English for Nusantara* using the Lexile Framework and to determine how well the texts aligned with the expected reading proficiency range for eighth-grade students. This research employed a quantitative descriptive design. The data consisted of 20 reading texts selected from the textbook, which was published in 2022. The texts were analyzed using the Lexile Text Analyzer, and the results were examined through descriptive statistics and classification based on the 540L–800L benchmark adopted in this study. The findings showed that the Lexile measures ranged from 390L to 890L, with an average of 576L. Nine texts (45%) were below the expected range, nine texts (45%) were within the range, and two texts (10%) were above it. These findings indicate that the textbook contains reading materials with varying levels of readability, suggesting the need for teachers to consider text difficulty when planning reading activities.

Keywords: Lexile Framework; readability; English textbook; reading materials; eighth-grade students.

Abstrak: Bahan bacaan dalam buku teks bahasa Inggris sebaiknya memiliki tingkat kesulitan yang sesuai dengan kemampuan membaca siswa agar mereka dapat memahami teks dan mengembangkan keterampilan membaca. Namun, tingkat keterbacaan teks dalam satu buku teks dapat bervariasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tingkat keterbacaan bahan bacaan dalam buku teks bahasa Inggris kelas VIII *English for Nusantara* menggunakan Lexile Framework serta mengetahui kesesuaiannya dengan rentang kemampuan membaca yang diharapkan bagi siswa kelas VIII. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kuantitatif. Data penelitian terdiri atas 20 teks bacaan yang dipilih dari buku *English for Nusantara* terbitan tahun 2022. Setiap teks dianalisis menggunakan Lexile Text Analyzer, kemudian hasilnya diolah melalui statistik deskriptif dan diklasifikasikan berdasarkan rentang 540L–800L yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa skor Lexile teks berkisar antara 390L hingga 890L, dengan nilai rata-rata 576L. Sebanyak sembilan teks (45%) berada di bawah rentang yang diharapkan, sembilan teks (45%) berada dalam rentang tersebut, dan dua teks (10%) berada di atasnya. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa bahan bacaan dalam buku teks memiliki tingkat keterbacaan yang beragam. Oleh karena itu, guru perlu mempertimbangkan tingkat kesulitan teks ketika merencanakan kegiatan pembelajaran membaca.

Kata kunci: Lexile Framework; keterbacaan; buku teks bahasa Inggris; bahan bacaan; siswa kelas VIII.

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Introduction

Reading is an important part of English language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Through reading, students have opportunities to encounter new vocabulary, understand sentence structures, and develop their ability to use language in meaningful contexts. Reading materials also provide exposure to language beyond what students usually experience in classroom conversations. Previous studies have shown that extensive engagement with reading can contribute to vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Fitrah et al., 2025; Liu & Saad, 2025). Nation (2022) further explains that vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension because understanding written texts requires learners to recognize and understand the words used by the writer. For this reason, the selection of appropriate reading materials deserves attention in English language teaching.

However, providing reading materials is not simply a matter of making texts available to students. Their level of difficulty also needs to be considered. Grabe and Stoller (2020) explain that successful reading comprehension involves an interaction between the characteristics of a text and the reader's language knowledge and reading abilities. When students encounter texts that are far beyond their current proficiency, understanding the main ideas and supporting information may become difficult. On the other hand, texts that are too easy may not provide sufficient opportunities for learners to develop their reading abilities. This indicates that reading materials should offer an appropriate level of challenge. One way to examine this issue is through readability analysis, which provides information about the linguistic difficulty of written texts.

In Indonesia, the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka has introduced various learning resources, including *English for Nusantara*, an English textbook developed for junior high school students. The eighth-grade textbook presents reading materials through different genres and familiar Indonesian contexts, with characters such as Galang, Monita, and Andre. These elements help connect English learning with students' everyday experiences. Nevertheless, familiar topics and engaging content do not necessarily mean that all reading passages have an appropriate level of linguistic difficulty. Some texts may contain more demanding vocabulary or longer sentence structures than others. Therefore, examining the readability of the materials is important to understand the range of text complexity presented in the textbook.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws on the concept of readability and the Lexile Framework for Reading. Readability generally refers to the extent to which a written text can be read and understood by its intended readers. From the perspective of Grabe and Stoller (2020), reading comprehension is not determined by the text alone but also by the reader's language proficiency, background knowledge, and ability to process written information. This perspective suggests that the suitability of reading materials should be considered in relation to the learners who are expected to use them. In other words, a text may be linguistically manageable for one reader but challenging for another, depending on their reading abilities and prior knowledge.

Readability is an important consideration in selecting reading materials because the difficulty of a text is not determined by vocabulary and sentence structure alone. DuBay (2004) explains that reading ease is influenced by several characteristics of both texts and readers. These include the language used, the organization of ideas, and the reading abilities of the intended audience. This perspective suggests that reading materials should be evaluated in relation to the learners for whom they are intended. In the context of English language learning, examining text readability can therefore provide useful information about whether the

language demands of a textbook are appropriate for its target learners.

To examine text difficulty more systematically, this study applies the Lexile Framework for Reading, developed by MetaMetrics. The framework provides a numerical measure of text complexity, expressed in Lexile units and represented by the letter "L." Lennon and Burdick (2004) and MetaMetrics (2022) explain that the Lexile Framework considers two important linguistic dimensions: semantic difficulty and syntactic complexity. Semantic difficulty is associated with word frequency, which reflects how commonly words occur in language. Syntactic complexity is represented by sentence length, as longer sentences may require readers to process more linguistic information. By considering these features, the framework produces a numerical measure that can be used to describe and compare the relative complexity of reading texts. In this study, the Lexile measure is used as an indicator of text complexity rather than as a direct measurement of students' actual reading comprehension.

Nevertheless, numerical readability measures should be interpreted with appropriate consideration. Bailin and Grafstein (2001) argue that readability formulas cannot fully represent all the factors involved in understanding a text. Although linguistic features such as vocabulary difficulty and syntactic complexity provide useful indicators of text difficulty, other aspects, including textual coherence and readers' background knowledge, may also influence how a text is understood. This does not mean that readability measures are without value. Rather, their results should be understood as indicators of textual difficulty rather than complete representations of individual reading comprehension. Accordingly, the present study uses Lexile measures to examine the linguistic complexity of textbook reading materials without claiming to directly measure students' actual comprehension.

Several previous studies have examined the readability of English textbooks in Indonesian educational settings. Basir et al. (2025), for instance, analyzed 20 reading texts from the eighth-grade *English for Nusantara* textbook using lexical density and the Flesch Reading Ease formula. Their findings indicated that most of the analyzed texts were considered inappropriate for eighth-grade students. Basori (2023) also investigated the readability of the seventh-grade *English for Nusantara* textbook using the WebFX readability tool. Meanwhile, Hanifah et al. (2022) examined reading texts in an English textbook for Indonesian senior high school students using Coh-Metrix. These studies illustrate how different tools and approaches can be used to evaluate the linguistic characteristics of English reading materials. In addition, Santi and Endarto (2024) applied the Lexile Framework and corpus analysis to evaluate English textbooks for vocational high school students in Indonesia, demonstrating the relevance of Lexile-based analysis in textbook evaluation.

Although these studies provide useful information about textbook readability, there is still room to examine the complexity of reading materials from different perspectives. Basir et al. (2025) investigated the same eighth-grade *English for Nusantara* textbook using lexical density and Flesch Reading Ease, while the present study uses the Lexile Framework to analyze the selected texts. In addition, Santi and Endarto (2024) focused on vocational high school textbooks, whereas this research concentrates on reading materials for junior high school students. By examining 20 selected texts from the eighth-grade textbook, this study provides additional information about their Lexile measures and the distribution of text complexity. Thus, it offers a complementary perspective to previous research rather than attempting to replace the findings obtained through other readability instruments.

For the purpose of interpreting the results, this study also refers to the alignment between the Lexile Framework and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) presented by Wei and Van Moere (2021). Their research brief

associates the CEFR A2 level with the Lexile range of 540L–800L and the B1 level with 805L–1090L. Based on this alignment, the 540L–800L range is adopted as the analytical benchmark in the present study. The selected texts are subsequently grouped into three categories: Below Range, Within Range, and Above Range. It is important to clarify that this benchmark is used as a reference for the analysis and should not be interpreted as an official national reading standard for all Indonesian eighth-grade students.

Based on the theoretical considerations and previous studies discussed above, this research aims to analyze the readability of reading materials in the eighth-grade *English for Nusantara* textbook using the Lexile Framework. Specifically, it addresses two research questions: (1) What are the specific Lexile measures of the reading materials provided in the eighth-grade textbook *English for Nusantara*? and (2) How are these Lexile measures distributed in relation to the benchmark adopted in this study? By answering these questions, the research is expected to provide additional empirical information for evaluating English textbook materials. The findings may also help teachers consider text difficulty when planning reading activities and provide useful insights for textbook developers and future researchers interested in readability analysis.

Method

Research Design and Setting

This study used a quantitative descriptive design to examine the readability of reading materials in the eighth-grade English textbook *English for Nusantara*. This design was considered appropriate because the study focused on describing text readability through numerical data obtained from the Lexile Text Analyzer. Rather than testing a hypothesis or examining a relationship between variables, the research aimed to identify the readability levels of the selected texts and describe how they were distributed across the textbook.

The Lexile measures obtained from the analysis were summarized using descriptive statistics, including the mean, range, and percentage distribution. These results provided an overview of the overall text complexity and helped determine how the reading materials corresponded to the benchmark applied in this study.

Data Sources

The main source of data was the eighth-grade English textbook *English for Nusantara* (Damayanti et al., 2022), published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia through the Center for Books.

A total of 20 reading texts from the textbook's five core chapters were selected for analysis. The texts consisted of written materials intended for reading activities, including short stories, dialogues, descriptive passages, and informational texts. Vocabulary lists, grammar exercises, illustrations, and audio transcripts were not included because they were outside the scope of the reading-text analysis.

Instruments and Measures

The instrument used in this study was the Lexile Text Analyzer, a digital tool developed by MetaMetrics. It was used to examine the readability of each selected text and generate a score expressed in Lexile units, indicated by the letter “L.”

The Lexile Framework evaluates text complexity through two main features: sentence length and word frequency. Sentence length is used to represent syntactic complexity, while word frequency reflects the level of vocabulary difficulty. By examining these features, the analyzer provides a numerical measure of each passage's text complexity. In this study, the resulting Lexile scores served as the primary data for describing the readability of the textbook materials.

Procedure and Research Ethics

The data collection followed a documentary method because the research focused on existing written materials rather than involving students or other human participants. The process began with obtaining the official digital version of the 2022 *English for Nusantara* textbook. The researcher then identified and selected the reading passages from its five core chapters based on the scope of the study.

After the passages had been selected, they were copied into plain-text files (.txt) for analysis. The texts were cleaned by removing elements that were not part of the passages, such as page numbers, images, formatting elements, and student exercises. This step was carried out to ensure that only the relevant written content was submitted to the Lexile Text Analyzer. The prepared texts were then organized by chapter and processed individually using the analyzer.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research. The researcher acknowledged the sources used and reported the analysis results as they were obtained, without altering or manipulating the scores. The use of the textbook was also intended for academic analysis, with respect for the copyright of its authors and publisher.

Data Analysis

After the 20 reading texts had been analyzed using the Lexile Text Analyzer, the resulting scores were examined through descriptive statistics. The analysis was conducted in three steps to address the research questions.

First, the mean and range of the Lexile scores were calculated. The mean was used to identify the average readability level of the selected texts, while the range showed the difference between the lowest and highest scores. These calculations provided an overall picture of the variation in text complexity across the textbook.

Second, the Lexile scores were classified according to the benchmark adopted in this study. Referring to the alignment between the Lexile Framework and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) reported by Wei and Van Moere (2021), the A2 level corresponds to 540L–800L, while the B1 level corresponds to 805L–1090L. Based on the study's benchmark for eighth-grade reading materials, the texts were grouped into three categories: below 540L (under-challenging), 540L–800L (suitable/optimal), and above 800L (frustrating/above range).

Finally, the percentage of texts in each category was calculated to show how the reading materials were distributed across the three readability levels. The findings were presented in frequency tables and a pie chart to make the distribution easier to understand and compare.

Results and Discussion

Results

This section presents the results of the readability analysis of 20 selected reading texts from the eighth-grade English textbook *English for Nusantara* (2022). The analysis was conducted using the Lexile Text Analyzer to identify the Lexile measure of each text. The findings are presented in three parts: the Lexile measures of the selected texts, their classification based on the Grade 8 benchmark, and the overall distribution of the results using descriptive statistics.

Lexile Measures of the Reading Materials

The first research question focused on identifying the specific Lexile measures of the reading materials in *English for Nusantara*. To address this question, all 20 selected texts were analyzed individually using the Lexile Text Analyzer. The results showed differences in the readability levels of the texts, with scores ranging from 390L to 890L.

Table 1. Lexile Measures of the Selected Reading Texts

No.	Text Title	Word Count	Lexile Measure
1	A Parade in My Hometown	164	620L
2	SMP Merdeka's School Parade	195	830L
3	A School Parade	174	530L
4	Monita's Story	259	550L
5	The Ugly Duckling	327	500L
6	The Elephant and His Friends – Part 1	137	420L
7	The Elephant and His Friends – Part 2	154	550L
8	Jakarta's Old City Tour	123	890L
9	Features of Social Media	200	410L
10	How We Can Do to Save Our Planet	63	390L
11	This Is the Way	215	470L
12	Help Your School, Save Water	47	480L
13	Let's Donate	58	410L
14	The Tosser	164	770L
15	Live in Bali	179	790L
16	A Soccer Field – Part 1	182	620L
17	A Soccer Field – Part 2	224	460L
18	A Soccer Field – Part 3	182	650L
19	The Semester Exam	188	600L
20	Getting into the Band	245	580L

Source: Researcher's analysis of English for Nusantara, Grade VIII (2022).

As shown in Table 1, the Lexile measures varied considerably among the selected reading texts. The lowest score was found in *How We Can Do to Save Our Planet*, with a measure of 390L. In contrast, *Jakarta's Old City Tour* received the highest score, at 890L. The difference between these two texts indicates that the textbook contains reading materials with different levels of linguistic complexity.

Classification of Reading Materials Based on the Grade 8 Benchmark

The second research question examined how the measured readability levels corresponded to the benchmark adopted for eighth-grade EFL learners. Based on the criteria established in this study, the texts were classified into three categories: Below Range (under-challenging), Within Range (suitable/optimal), and Above Range (frustrating).

Table 2. Classification of Reading Materials Based on the Lexile Benchmark

Category	Lexile Range	Interpretation
Below Range	Below 540L	Under-challenging
Within Range	540L–800L	Suitable/Optimal
Above Range	Above 800L	Frustrating

The classification results showed that nine texts fell below the selected benchmark, nine were within the benchmark, and two

exceeded the upper limit. This distribution indicates that the reading materials were not concentrated in a single readability category. Instead, the texts showed different levels of complexity when compared with the benchmark used in this study.

Distribution of Lexile Measures

To provide an overall description of the readability levels, the Lexile scores were summarized using descriptive statistics. The analysis included the number of texts, mean score, lowest and highest scores, and the range between the two extreme values.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Lexile Measures

Statistical Measure	**Result**
Number of reading texts	20
Mean Lexile measure	576L
Lowest Lexile measure	390L
Highest Lexile measure	890L
Lexile range	500L

Table 3 shows that the mean Lexile measure of the 20 reading texts was 576L. The scores extended from 390L to 890L, resulting in a range of 500L. Although the mean score falls within the 540L-800L benchmark, this average does not mean that every individual text belongs to the same category. The individual scores therefore need to be considered alongside the overall mean.

The percentage distribution of the three categories is presented in Table 4 to show the proportion of reading materials in each readability range.

Table 4. Distribution of Reading Materials by Lexile Category

Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Below Range	9	45%
Within Range	9	45%
Above Range	2	10%
Total	**20**	**100%**

As presented in Table 4, the Below Range and Within Range categories each accounted for 45% of the selected texts. Meanwhile, the Above Range category represented 10% of the total reading materials. Thus, the number of texts below the benchmark was equal to the number of texts within it, while a smaller proportion exceeded the established range.

Overall, the results indicate that the readability levels of the 20 selected texts varied. While the mean Lexile measure was within the benchmark adopted in this study, the classification of individual texts showed that not all reading materials fell within the expected range. These numerical findings provide the basis for examining the implications of the textbook's readability levels in the discussion section.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the reading materials in *English for Nusantara* have different levels of readability. Although the average Lexile score was 576L, which falls within the 540L–800L benchmark used in this study, the individual scores tell a slightly different story. Out of the 20 texts analyzed, nine were below the benchmark, nine were within the expected range, and two were above it. This suggests that the level of difficulty is not the same throughout the textbook.

The difference between the lowest and highest scores also deserves attention. *How We Can Do to Save Our Planet* received the lowest score of 390L, while *Jakarta's Old City Tour* had the highest score of 890L. The 500L gap between these texts reflects the variation in their linguistic complexity. It also shows why looking only at the average score may not provide a complete picture of the

textbook's readability. Examining each text individually helps reveal which materials fall below, within, or above the benchmark.

This variation is worth considering in relation to the role of reading materials in EFL learning. Grabe and Stoller (2020) explain that reading materials should take into account the relationship between the difficulty of a text and the reading abilities of learners. When a text is too difficult, learners may struggle to understand its content. On the other hand, materials that offer too little challenge may not provide enough opportunities for language development. Viewed from this perspective, the results of this study suggest that attention should be given not only to the content of a textbook but also to the readability of each reading passage.

The findings can also be considered alongside the research conducted by Basir et al. (2025), who examined 20 reading texts from the same eighth-grade *English for Nusantara* textbook. Their study used lexical density and the Flesch Reading Ease formula and found that 16 of the 20 texts were considered inappropriate for eighth-grade students. The present study examined the same textbook using the Lexile Framework. It found that nine texts were below the selected benchmark, nine were within it, and two were above it. Since the two studies used different instruments and classification criteria, their results cannot be compared directly. However, both studies draw attention to the variation in readability among the reading materials in the textbook.

A related finding was reported by Santi and Endarto (2024), who used the Lexile Framework and corpus analysis to evaluate English textbooks for vocational high school students. Their study found that the readability levels were not consistently aligned across grade levels. Although their research focused on a different educational level, it raises a similar concern about the importance of matching reading materials with the intended level of learners. The present study adds to this discussion by providing information about the Lexile measures of reading texts in an eighth-grade English textbook.

Other studies have also highlighted differences in the readability of English textbook materials. Hanifah et al. (2022) examined reading texts in an English textbook for Indonesian senior high school students using Coh-Metrix, while Basori (2023) analyzed the readability of the seventh-grade English for Nusantara textbook using WebFX. These studies demonstrate the use of different approaches to evaluate text readability in English textbooks. The present research offers another perspective by applying the Lexile Framework to the eighth-grade English for Nusantara textbook. In particular, the classification into Below Range, Within Range, and Above Range provides a numerical overview of how the selected texts are distributed according to the benchmark used in this study.

These findings may also have practical value for English teachers and textbook developers. For teachers, information about text readability can serve as an additional consideration when choosing reading materials and preparing classroom activities. Texts that fall within the selected benchmark may be considered when planning reading lessons, while those below or above the range may require different levels of instructional support. For example, teachers may provide additional vocabulary explanations or reading guidance when working with texts that present greater linguistic challenges. Textbook developers may also consider the distribution of text difficulty when reviewing materials for future editions.

However, the results need to be understood within the scope of this research. The analysis focused on text complexity through sentence length and word frequency, as measured by the Lexile Framework. It did not involve testing students or examining their actual reading comprehension. Other factors, such as students' background knowledge, familiarity with the topic, and personal experiences, were also outside the scope of the analysis. Therefore, the classification of a text as suitable or optimal does not necessarily mean that every eighth-grade student will understand it equally well. Further research involving students could provide a clearer picture of how Lexile measures relate to their actual reading performance.

Overall, the findings provide a description of the readability levels of the 20 selected texts in *English for Nusantara*. While the average Lexile score falls within the benchmark adopted in this study, the individual results show that the reading materials are spread across three different categories. This indicates that evaluating textbook readability requires attention to individual texts as well as the overall average. The study therefore provides information that may support teachers and textbook developers in considering the readability of English reading materials for eighth-grade learners.

Conclusion

This study explored the readability of 20 reading texts in the eighth-grade English textbook *English for Nusantara* using the Lexile Framework. The results showed that the texts had Lexile measures ranging from 390L to 890L, with an average score of 576L. When compared with the 540L–800L benchmark used in this study, nine texts (45%) fell below the expected range, another nine texts (45%) were within the range, and two texts (10%) were above it. This finding shows that the reading materials do not have the same level of difficulty. Although the average score falls within the expected range, some texts may be easier or more challenging than the benchmark suggests.

These findings highlight the importance of considering text readability when teachers use reading materials in the classroom. Some texts may need additional support, such as vocabulary explanations, reading guidance, or activities that help students understand the content. Textbook developers may also consider readability levels when selecting and arranging reading materials to provide a more balanced reading experience. Nevertheless, this study focused on the readability of the texts through the Lexile Framework and did not directly measure students' reading comprehension. Future studies could involve students to explore how the readability of these materials relates to their actual reading comprehension.

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