



Readability of two SS i English language textbooks in secondary schools in Oyo, Oyo State

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Abstract

Textbook is an important teaching and learning material for the teaching and learning of English as a second language. Without good textbooks, the teaching of reading comprehension cannot be effectively taught. Despite the importance of reading comprehension, researches have shown that many students are still deficient in reading. This has been traced to the poor quality of English reading texts recommended for use. In assessing the quality of books, one of the factors used in assessing the quality is readability, which has to do with the ease of understanding a text or passage. Previous studies have focused on student factors, school factors affecting the effective teaching and learning of reading in schools, with little emphasis on the readability of recommended texts used in schools. Studies have shown that readability of a text is one of the factors that can affect reading comprehension. This study therefore assessed the readability of two English language textbooks in secondary schools in Oyo. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The researcher examined two English language recommended textbooks used in the senior secondary school 1 to measure the readability of the texts. The two recommended textbooks were Senior English Project Book 1 and New Oxford Secondary English Course for Senior Secondary Schools. The readability indices of the two textbooks were calculated using the SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook). Three passages in each of the textbooks were measured with the readability formula (SMOG). The text statistics were analyzed further by finding out the weighted mean scores and differences between the results of the two text statistics using the inferential statistics of t- test. The results showed that the readability of the two recommended English language textbooks used in senior secondary schools 1 is low (passage A: 6.9, passage B: 8, passage C: 9.4). The findings also revealed that the readability indices of the two textbooks are not significantly different ($t = -2.078$; $df = 2$; $p > .05$). Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that government and stakeholders in textbook selection should put age of the learners into consideration. The age of a learner determines the method, technique and the level of language to be used in the classroom. In addition, background knowledge of a text is very essential. Writers should include passages that are familiar to students when constructing passages.

Keywords: readability, English language textbooks, secondary schools

Introduction

Textbooks serve a lot of purposes for teachers and students. For teachers, they serve as supplementary and also an inspiration for classroom activities. Textbooks assist in managing a lesson because it saves time, give direction to lessons, guides discussion in the classroom, makes teaching easier, better organised, facilitates the giving of homework by teachers and provides confidence in teachers. They serve as a guide for the students and help them organize learning both inside and outside the classroom. Textbook can be referred to as a published book specially designed to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities. In addition to being a learning instrument, textbooks are also used as a supporting teaching instrument. Words in textbooks can be considered to be the building blocks of language as they stand for objects and ideas and form a link between print and concept. One of the resources for teaching English language in schools is textual materials. Textual materials are indispensable to the teaching learning process. For reading comprehension to be effective, textbooks are essential.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2006)^[31], textbooks are designed in a way that their table of contents suggest a gradual development of language forms and functions, from the most basic to the most complex. All these approaches and features are intended to develop the use of

communicative language. Textbooks help in allowing teachers to know the materials to be covered and the design of each lesson which is normally and carefully spelled out in detail. The detail provides organized unit of work and balanced chronological presentation of information. They play crucial roles in teaching and learning process. Textbooks play an essential role in language classrooms (Richards, 2001)^[31]. Adegboyeje and Afolabi (1991) stated some usefulness of textbooks to the teachers and students: Textbooks help to individualise instruction, that is, students can proceed on their own individual rate, they enable students from different backgrounds to study at the same time or re-study an item, they help in organizing and providing unity for classroom instruction, they help students in learning how to study, reading better, weighing evidence and solving problems and they are also helpful in improving teacher's skill.

A text serves as the common material for language of instruction. Textbook or a text material is a kind of teaching and learning material that is commonly used in all teaching and learning process (Rahmad, 2016). Textbooks enhance students learning process. Textbook also improves students understanding and learning process. Hedgecock and Ferns, (2009) put a text as a collection of random words or sentences, even if they are formatted to appear visually cohesive. Textbook makes learning to be easier and better.

As explained by Oakes and Saunders cited in Mojere (2018)^[20], textbooks are recognized to be a critical part of education, as necessary as the classroom itself, and as indispensable as the classroom teacher. Textbooks are therefore essential and a life-wire of teachers for sustainable teaching in the classroom and comprehensive learning by students.

Textbook comprises an integral components of learning in schools. Many occasions, text serves as the background for much of the input in language, where learners receive and practice language in the classroom. A textbook serves as an essential component of any language learning. It is thus necessary, to select suitable textbook for language learning. According to Gul, Syed, and Humail (2015)^[13], textbooks are published materials specially designed to help language learners to improve their linguistic and communicative abilities. The content the learning materials according to them should be persuasive enough to activate all the required skills applicable to the appreciated society of the students.

A textbook is packaged to give coherence to the language teaching and learning process by arranging direction, support and specific language-based activities geared at providing classroom practices for students. An acceptable text can make or mar a given class. This is realisable in the handling of the recommended text by the teacher in the classroom. Comprehending a text is not a simple process, as well as teaching learners to comprehend the text. Scholars and experts in reading had handled the text to decipher ways of how to ease learner and teacher, to work out learning and teaching reading through the discourse of text. Broom (2000) enunciates different terms of written language. This term refers to the same point, which is the textbook that states that written language has features of permanence, processing time, distance, orthography, complexity, vocabulary and formality. These features as he puts it help the teaching in diagnosing certain reading difficulties emanating from the peculiarity of textbooks; signaling techniques toward specific objectives; and remind learners of some of the advantages of the written language or text.

As part of the types of instructional materials mentioned by Jaafar (2014)^[15] which are film, slides, and journals; is the textbook. Textbooks according to him are superbly, compact, economical and practical devices of storing (print copies) and retrieving information and knowledge. Textbooks are a collection teaching –learning materials that constitute an integral component of instruction or training process and are utilized in delivering educational information to the learners with the hope of facilitating effective and efficient communication in the teaching and learning process. Textbooks have potentials of helping to improve skills of teachers in recommending ways to handle instructional problems. The classroom teachers determine what to teach and at what period or duration; recommending instructional materials to be used, the methodology to adopt, equipment and space to be used.

Ogunsiji (2015)^[26] notes that textbooks occupy a central place among all instructional materials used for effective dissemination of knowledge in the school system. Textbooks can be said to serve the function of providing a source of comprehensive content, facilitating easy retrieval of information, providing a sense of security for both teachers and students, providing guides for educational programmes and expanding the content and its organisation.

Garinger (2001)^[10] comments on the usefulness of textbooks that they are one of the most effective and readily available ways to relieve some pressure put on teachers, lessens preparation time, provides ready-made activities and finally provides concrete samples of classroom progress through which external stakeholders can be satisfied.

Despite the importance attached to English language textbooks, a number of studies have suggested that most English language textbooks are developed for commercial purposes but are not based on the principles of language acquisitions and development recommended by scholars, educators and curriculum developers (Tomlinson, 2008). Financial success has become the primary goal of textbook publishing (Sheldon, 1998; Litz, 2005)^[33, 16]. Textbooks, like any other books that publishers print, are pieces of merchandise, the ultimate goal of their production is for commercial success (Dendrinis, 1992)^[7]. Instead of contributing positively to students' development in the acquisition of the English language, many textbooks are in fact leading to learners' failure in acquiring the language and in worst case, contain serious pedagogical flaws and practical shortcomings (Litz, 2005 and Tomlinson, 2008)^[16, 34].

A cursory look at the English language textbooks used at many secondary schools in Oyo State, Nigeria reveals that they are being used without consideration for their contents. Most of the teachers in senior secondary schools in Oyo State are more concerned about using any textbook without considering whether the contents of the text will aid learners in acquiring communicative skills or competence. A lot of textbooks in use are poorly organised. The materials to be taught are not usually arranged in order of difficulty and topics grouped together are unrelated and materials are somehow irrelevant to the communicative needs, interests and environment of the learner (Ndahi, 1977)^[21]. Therefore, the problem of this kind has become one of the greatest areas of concern in our educational system in recent times, particularly at senior secondary schools, which witness remarkable decline in both communicative and linguistic competence of the students of the English Language. The problem identified above is inimical to intended curriculum outcome of English language in Nigeria senior secondary schools and even beyond the school system.

As a way of addressing this problem, previous studies have focused on a review of language textbooks and language teaching in Nigeria, a critical analysis of the English language textbooks, book development and national orientation, an evaluation of intensive English as a course book for English as second language in Nigeria and teacher-student views on and attitude to the use of textbook in English language pedagogy in selected secondary schools. Most of these studies came up with good contributions but with little emphasis on readability of senior secondary English language textbooks in Oyo State. The contents of English language textbooks have significant association with the learning of the students, they must not contain errors because errors imbibed by students will have adverse effect on their learning.

Statement of the Problem

Textbook is an important teaching and learning material for the teaching and learning of English as a second language. Without good textbooks, the teaching of reading comprehension cannot be effectively taught. Despite the

importance of reading comprehension, researches have shown that many students are still deficient in reading. This has been traced to the poor quality of English reading texts recommended for use. In assessing the quality of books, one of the factors used in assessing the quality is readability, which has to do with the ease of understanding a text or passage. Previous studies have focused on student factors, school factors affecting the effective teaching and learning of reading in schools but with little emphasis on the readability of recommended texts used in schools. Studies have shown that readability of a text is one of the factors that can affect reading comprehension. This study therefore investigated the readability of two English language textbooks in secondary schools in Oyo.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the readability index of the recommended English language textbook: Senior English Project Book 1?
2. What is the readability index of the recommended English language textbook: New Oxford Secondary English Course for Senior Secondary Schools 1?

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the readability indices of the two textbooks.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on two English language textbooks recommended by Oyo State Ministry of Education for use in senior secondary I. The study covered the suitability and readability of the recommended textbooks using SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in many ways. It gave the readability indices of two of the recommended English language textbooks used in Oyo State namely: *Senior English Project Book I* and *New Oxford Secondary English Course SS I*, thereby, addressing the problem of text difficulty as a factor responsible for students' poor reading comprehension.

The findings would expose the stakeholders to the rationale for the selection of textbooks in all the levels of education, right from the pre basic to the post basic levels.

The findings would serve as a guide to teachers of English language, principals of schools, Ministry of Education on the quality of English language textbooks. It would also acquaint them with the criteria often used in determining quality of English language textbooks in schools.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Text-Centered Theory: Text-centered theory is an offshoot of Gestalt Cognitive theory. It is an opposing theory to schema theory for its over reliance on background knowledge of the reader as a determinant for comprehension. This theory states that readers are passive recipients of the text. Their main point is that the readers get meaning from the text rather than making or constructing meaning (Tswanya, 2006). This theory like the bottom-up approach to reading considers reading as a visual semantic process. Everything whether pictures, phrases or whole

sentences is taken in at the same time, so there is no act of re-constructing words into syllables or smaller unit. Thus, coherence is the major element in the text readability. This means that a writer has to link his words and information accurately to have a good flow of thought to the reader. This makes reading easier and reduces difficulty in comprehension. Hence, many researchers (Halliday and Hasan 1980, and Tswanya 2006) have attempted to understand the fundamental properties of texts, and as a result, different approaches have been undertaken towards the study of texts and the determination of what constitute a coherent text as opposed to a sequence of sentences which may not be considered a text. The two aspects of the coherence according to Halliday and Hasan [1976] are cohesion and topic-chain. While the cohesion theory makes use of five main categories of ties as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion, the topic chain simply entails the repetition of same through the paragraph for example, if the topic comes at the beginning of the sentence, it keeps reoccurring throughout the paragraph. This theory is relevant to this study because the reading materials have to be written in a coherent form to allow for easy flow of thoughts. It will also afford the teacher the opportunity to critically consider texts to be used by students and question the texts if they indeed have the linguistic tools to access whatever is presented.

Concept of Reading

Reading is one of the basic language skills of listening, speaking, and writing. It is a communication process that is fundamental to formal learning. Reading involves receiving a message through verbal means in written form. In essence, when reading takes place, effort is made to understand and respond appropriately to the attitude, thought, feeling and mood of the author. Abiola and Kehinde (2009) added that reading as a communication process involves the transfer of the author's feeling, thought, ideas, mood experiences and the like through the medium of written codes, to the reader. This made Okeeffe (2013) [25] to affirm that reading is an integral part of language study which is linked to the learning of grammar, improvement in pronunciation (including intonation) and writing.

Yang (2017) [39] defines reading as a highly complicated human behavior. It is a thinking process that sets two people in interactivity together---an author and a reader. Reading ability is the important part of English learning plays a more significant part in acquiring cultural, economic, scientific and technical knowledge, for collecting worldwide information and carrying out international exchange and cooperation. According to Ayedun (2014) [3] reading as knowing what the author says about what he writes, pre-empting him for what he intends to say but which he has not said. In other words, an effective reader is capable through reading, to search for the deep intended meaning of a writer. He emphasized that reading requires flowing with the writer's thoughts. Ozioko (2014) stresses that reading involves the ability to comprehend, to react, to assimilate, to summarize and to utilize information as well. Utilizing the information denotes meaning that could be derived from reading, where the reader understands not only the meaning of the isolated, but also their meaning when combined in phrases, sentences and longer groups.

Mabawonku (2011) [17] identifies reading at various standpoints. For beginners, reading is concerned with

learning to recognize the printed symbols which represent speech, sound, and meaning of words. For more experienced readers, reading becomes less cumbersome in the recognition of words and more of a matter of reasoning, involving the meaningful interpretation of verbal symbols and requiring at a later stage, thinking, evaluating, judging, predicting, imagining and problem solving meanings when combined in phrases, sentences and longer groups.

Concept of Reading Comprehension

The main objective of reading is comprehension as stated by Goodman (1970) in Mabawonku (2011)^[17]. Readers use graphic information, where readers visualize information; syntactic and semantic information to process the visual inputs are supplied to get meaning, as the goal of reading. As explained by Wuttinsingchai (2011), reading comprehension is the process of relating new information to the known information which is already stored in the memory.

According to Nejabati (2015)^[22] reading comprehension is the ability to construct meaning before, after and during reading through linking reader's background knowledge and the presented information by the author in the context. It is constructing an acceptable accurate meaning by making the connection between what has been read to what the readers already know and think about all of this information until it is recognized. As observed by Offorma (2009) reading comprehension is the culmination of all the reading skills and the ultimate goal of learning to read. Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text, hence, reading for comprehension is observed to be a multifaceted process. For students to adequately comprehend a text, they will need an awareness of print which can be obtained through multiple channels to facilitate word recognition. Carlisle and Rice (2002)^[5] observed that lack of phonological sensitivity did impede reading, but other factors come into play as students progressed through the different levels of reading comprehension. These factors are evident because children who receive phonological awareness training do not necessarily become fluent readers (Scarborough, 2001)^[32]. In addition to decoding skills, students need vocabulary knowledge and metacognitive skills so that they can monitor their understanding and reflect on what has been read. Competent readers learn these components simultaneously and fluently. However, where either component is inadequate, comprehension can be impeded.

The Concept of Readability

Readability is derived from the root word "read", "able" and "ity". According to Webster Dictionary, readability is the noun form of readable (adj) which means 'able to read easily'. Readability is also defined as a fit to read, interesting, agreeable, attractive in style and enjoyable. The intention of any writer or author is to transmit information to the reader. Good writing should be highly readable in order to be clearly understood by a wide audience. The concept of readability has been defined in various ways by scholars. Finding the right fit between students reading ability and textbooks is very important in reading comprehension. Readability involves material which is fit to read, interesting, agreeable, attractive and enjoyable (Dubay

2004)^[8]. It refers to how easy a written text is to read and understand. The ability of a text to consistently measure what it is supposed to measure depends on its readability. This definition is concerned with the interaction between the reader and the text. The readability of a text is a measure of how well and how easily a text conveys the intended meaning to a reader. This implies that when a text cannot be well read and not easily understood it is unreadable. Oyekola (2018) from the perspective of interaction between the text and the reader defines 'readability' as the degree to which a given group of readers finds certain reading materials compelling and comprehensible. (Owu-Ewie, 2014)^[28] indicate that readability is the sum of the total of all those elements which a given piece of printed material has that effect on the success of a group of readers. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimal speed and find it interesting. The implication of the definitions above is that comprehensibility is essential in readability. Thus, good written material should be highly readable in order to be clearly understood by a wide audience.

Maryansyah (2016)^[18] viewed readability as legibility, interest, or ease of comprehension; and the terms *readability* and *legibility* are sometimes used interchangeably to mean ease and speed of reading printed material. Readability may be used to mean understanding or comprehension of the printed text. Such elements as vocabulary and sentence structure, percentage of hard words, and long sentences distinguish between those persons who are literate and those who are highly literate. He explained that interest depends as much on mechanical factors such as size and style of type, length of reading material, drawings or graphs as it does on the subject matter and themes used. Comprehensibility may be a determinant of interest. A book that is too difficult may lose its appeal, even though it is inherently interesting to the reader. Ease of reading, or understanding, depends often on the reader's interest in the subject matter. Factors of format, such as good paragraphing, introductory phrases in bold type, and short chapters facilitate the understanding of the reader.

Nguyen's (2015)^[23] study evaluated an official textbook *English 6* for grade 6 pupils in secondary schools in Vietnam, in the teaching and learning of Mekong Delta. The research was conducted in two stages: a theoretical evaluation and an empirical evaluation. The theoretical evaluation was based on the researcher's experience, expertise, and the literature on textbook evaluation. The empirical evaluation was based on data collected from 22 teachers and 313 pupils at 8 different secondary schools in four different provinces. The results showed that the textbook suits the teaching and learning context and culture and it gives much help to both teachers and pupils.

Zawua's (2014)^[40] study assessed contents of selected Junior Secondary School Social Studies Education textbooks used in Kaduna State and implications for curriculum review. Three research questions were formulated for the study. The population of the study comprised all Social Studies teachers in Kaduna state. The sample population was 275 Social Studies teachers in the five Local Government Area of the research study. The result revealed that the textbooks covered the contents of national curriculum of Social Studies. They relate contents to the culture and environment of the learners. It takes in to account the modern method of teaching and caters for the

individual difference among students in their socio cultural background. The result also indicated that the textbooks select vocabulary on the basis of functionality and competence, the language use is within the age range of the learners, the registers used are capable of building and impacting skills, values, attitudes, and desired knowledge of the students, and they demonstrate techniques for handling societal and environmental problems in the learners' background.

Adesoji and Babatunde (2008) [2] conducted a study on gender difficulties in organic chemistry in secondary level. The study was designed to discover the difficulties of students in inorganic chemistry, using stages of problem solving in chemistry. A sample of three hundred and twenty (320) senior secondary SSIII students randomly selected from eight secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State were used. The subjects were made up of one hundred and sixty males (160) and one hundred and sixty females (160). The results showed that more females than males had difficulties in inorganic chemistry, showing influence of gender on achievement in the study of chemistry.

Azizi (2015) [4] carried out an analysis of the readability level of reading texts in *passport to the world 2*. The study was designed to analyze eight reading texts that consist two descriptive texts, three recount texts, and three narrative text. The study used the Flesch Reading Ease Formula based on Cloze Procedure Test. The result showed that five texts is in independent level, three texts are in instructional level, and there is no text in frustrational level.

Materials and Methods

This study adopted the descriptive research design that has to do with the investigation of the readability of two recommended textbooks in SS1 namely: *Senior English Project* and *New Oxford*. The population of this study was all the recommended English language textbooks by the Ministry of Education for all senior secondary school students in SS I. The only instrument used in this study are the texts as passages in the two recommended English language textbooks: *Senior English Project* and *New Oxford Secondary English Course for Senior Secondary Schools*. The three passages were chosen from the beginning, middle and the end of the texts. In determining the readability index of the passages, the researcher made use of SMOG (Simple Measure of Gobbledygook) to calculate the readability index of the recommended textbooks (*Senior English Project Book 1* and *New Oxford Secondary English Course for Senior Secondary Schools*1). Each passage was typed into the dialogue box of the SMOG calculator. The readability calculator gave the results of each passage with a text statistic which includes: the readability (SMOG) index, number of sentences, number of words, number of complex words, percentage of complex words, average words per sentence, and average syllable per word. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentage scores, mean and inferential statistics of t-test.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1

What is the readability index of the recommended English language: *Senior English Project Book 1*?

Readability Index of Senior English Project Book 1

Table 1: Uncle Femi’s Business

SMOG Index	6.3
Number of sentences	9
Number of words	139
Number of complex words	10
Percentage of complex words	7.19%
Average words per sentence	15.44
Average syllables per word	1.38

Table 1 shows that the readability index of passage A is low.

Table 1 shows the text analysis of the passage/text 1a in the recommended English language textbook: *Senior English Project Book 1*. The readability formula (SMOG) used had an index of 6.3. The table indicates that the index is low.

Table 2: text 1b: leaving home

SMOG Index	8
Number of sentences	8
Number of words	146
Number of complex words	15
Percentage of complex words	10.27%
Average words per sentences	18.25
Average syllables per word	1.41

Table 2 shows that the readability index of passage A is low.

Table 3: Text 1c: business matters

SMOG Index	8.3
Number of sentences	5
Number of words	77
Number of complex words	10
Percentage of complex words	12.99
Average words per sentences	15.40
Average syllables per word	1.51

From table 1, the readability index of *Senior English Project Book 1* based on the passages used are: passage A: 6.3, passage B: 8, passage C: 8.3. This shows that the readability index of the recommended English language textbook is low. It also shows that the texts are difficult for the average learners.

Research Question 2

What is the readability index of the recommended English language textbook: *New Oxford Secondary English Course for Senior Secondary Schools 1*?

Table 4: Text 2a: sickle cell disease

SMOG Index	6.9
Number of sentences	8
Number of words	137
Number of complex words	11
Percentage of complex words	8.03%
Average words per sentences	17.13
Average syllables per word	1.35

Table 4 shows that the readability index of the recommended textbook is low. This shows that the text is not readable

Table 5: Text 2b: tanning in Nigeria today

SMOG Index	8.1
Number of sentences	9
Number of words	174
Number of complex words	17
Percentage of complex words	9.77%
Average words per sentence	19.33
Average syllables per word	1.41

Table 5 shows that the readability index of the recommended textbook is low. This shows that the text is not readable.

Table 6: Text 2c: environmental pollution

SMOG Index	9.4
Number of sentences	11
Number of words	177
Number of complex words	29
Percentage of complex words	16.38%
Average words per sentence	16.09
Average syllables per word	1.69

From table 6, the table shows the readability index of the passages used in the recommended English language textbook: *New Oxford Secondary English Course for Senior Secondary Schools 1*, are: passage A: 6.9, passage B: 8, passage C: 9.4. This indicates that the readability index of the recommended textbook is low. This shows that the text is not readable.

Table 9: Summary of the T-Test Analysis of The Difference Between the Two Textbooks

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	Df	Sig. (2 tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Senior English Project – New Oxford English Course	-.60000	.50000	.28868	-1.84207	.64207	-2.078	2	.173

Table 4.1 shows that there is no significant difference in the readability indices of Senior English Project and New Oxford English Course ($t = -2.078$; $df = 2$; $p > .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 was not rejected. This implies that the readability indices of the two textbooks are not significantly different, hence, the two textbooks have similar readability levels.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of the results is presented as the readability index

Readability Index of NOSEC Texts

The readability indices of the two textbooks is low. The indices indicated low scores of: 6.3, 8, 8.3, 6.9, 8.1, and 9.5. The findings showed that the average reading level of the secondary stage reading texts used in this study is about the same as reading materials which typically would be used by the native speakers. Based on the SMOG readability index, the *Senior English Project* is appropriate for eighth grade (13-14 years: Test 1a), tenth grade (15-16 years: Test 1b), and ninth grade (14-15 years: Test 1c). The *New Oxford Secondary English Course* is also appropriate for eighth grade (13-14 years: Test 2a), ninth grade (14-15 years: Test 2b), and eleventh grade (16-17 years). The statistics of the index showed in this order, passage 1a is easily understood, passage 1b is easily understood and passage 1c is easily understood; passage 2a is easily understood, passage 2b is

Table 7: Mean Scores for the Recommended English language Textbooks

Passage	Readability Index
<i>Senior English Project (1)</i>	
Passage A	6.3
Passage B	8
Passage C	8.3
Weighted Average	7.53

Table 8

New Oxford English Course	
Passage A	6.9
Passage B	8
Passage C	9.4
Weighted Average	8.1

Acceptable Range= 12

The table above shows the mean distribution of the passages in the two English language textbooks used in this study. The table reveals the readability indices of the textbooks. The table shows that the readability mean scores are below the acceptable range of readability based on the readability formula used.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the readability indices of the two textbooks.

easily understood and passage 2c is complicated to read. The results of passages 1a-2b indicate that the passages are readable, which is in agreement with Omiko (2011) whose work revealed that all chemistry textbooks he examined are readable. Similarly, the findings also support the findings of Adebajo and Ogundepo (2016) [1] while examining the readability of prose passages for Junior Secondary School II students in Oyo State.

The findings revealed that majority of the students read at the frustration level. The findings also corroborate Umoke and Nwafor's (2015) [36] assertion that textbooks should be revised that textbooks should be revised periodically and with simple language to enhance students understanding of the topics. The findings of this study is in accordance with Gyasi's (2013) [11] work whose findings revealed that the readability indices of Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Integrated Science textbooks for senior high schools are difficult to read. However, the findings negate the work of Umoke and Nwafor (2015) [36] whose findings on the readability level of approved Science textbooks were very readable. As Rahmad's (2016) [29] findings support that the reading textbooks used for English in Indonesia was relatively suitable for eleventh grade students.

It is noteworthy to point out that the readability scores for the texts also varied remarkably within each textbook, and that neither of the textbooks followed a systematic pattern in presenting the passages in the textbooks according to their difficulty. This is in agreement with Owu-Ewie's (2014) [28]

findings that the passages he examined were not graded. One would have expected that the passages will be increasing in terms of difficulty as one reads from one unit through to the last unit but this was not the case. It was discovered that some passages in the earlier units were more difficult than those late in the book. The findings also reveal that in the passages selected for the study the difficult text were mixed within the texts. The difficult passages were not placed towards the end of the texts, but rather some were placed at the beginning and some in the middle.

Omiko (2011) ^[27] is of the view that textbooks are valuable and useful tools for the teachers in which their quality can be determined mainly by its content coverage and its readability level. The readability level of a textbook implies the extent the students use, read and understand it at optimum speed and find it interesting, (Nwafor, 2013). Considerably, the readability level of a text being an important aspect of a textbook should be recognized by teachers among other things. This determines the students' ability to understand and obtain meaning from the text (Omiko, 2011) ^[27].

The learners' cultural background and prior cultural experience is crucial in comprehension of the text because it is an important basis of a criteria selection. Moreover, students with more prior knowledge will comprehend and recollect better. (Brown *et al*, 1997 and Pearson, 1979). Linguistic proficiency should be taken into consideration in literacy selection. A student's language proficiency or the ability to speak and perform in the language affects literacy acquisition. Hence consideration must be appropriate to the level and type of language learner either a first language learner (L1) or a second language learner (L2). A literacy text must be selected according to the learner's literacy background

The readability statistics (SMOG: Simple Measure of Gobbledygook) analyzed the two textbooks under the grade levels of the students who study each of the textbooks. These statistics were mainly used in this study for the purpose of comparing the readability levels of these textbooks. For more informed results, cloze tests were used to relate the readability of the textbooks to the reading levels of the students who are using them. In spite of the high readability indices of the two textbooks shown by the readability indices, the cloze test scores indicated that the two textbooks are very difficult for the students who study them and that very little percentage of the students may profit from the reading passages in the textbooks. The result agreed with the results of the study of Masri (2006) ^[19] which also found that most students were unable to read *Jordan Opportunities* even with the help of the teacher. The result also supports Freahat (2014) ^[9] result that the textbooks used in the secondary schools are on the average three grade levels higher in reading difficulty than the textbooks used in the university in Jordan. Gyasi's (2013) ^[11] study on the readability of Integrated Science also supported the finding that the science textbook was written far above the reading comprehension level of the senior high school students in Ghana.

Odume (2013) ^[24] study on the readability of senior secondary school chemistry textbooks in relation to influence of class level is similar to the findings in this study. The researcher discovered that Bajah chemistry textbook is not readable for SS1 and SS11, as the texts examined in this study is not readable for SS1 students.

Owu-Ewie (2014) ^[28] pointed out that the age appropriate reading materials have been identified as a crucial factor essential to enhancing reading. It is believed that when we select a material which is above the age of the learner, it obstructs reading and the development of good reading skills. The observation is seen the statistics of the SMOG calculation. One of the passages from the texts examined is above the age of the learners.

Research on readability indicates that short sentences in plain English achieve better reading scores than long sentences written in complicated language (Stephens 2000). The analysis showed that some of the sentences used in the *Senior English Project* reading passages were found to be complex, lengthy and complex. The nature of these sentences contributed to the difficult nature of most of the passages. Besides the length, the phrases in the sentences are strung together in such a way that they obscure meaning; they cause processing difficulty. Items which are likely to cause sentence processing difficulty are referred to as "heaviness" (Berman 1984). As Chomsky (1969: 6, as quoted in Essem Educational Limited 2007) puts it, "if two grammatical relations which hold among the words in a sentence are not expressed directly in its surface structure" they pose difficulty of interpretation. Some of the sentences were found to be ambiguous and prone to multiple interpretations. According to Berman (1984), sentence length correlates with difficulty because longer sentences are likely to contain more complex structures such as coordination and subordination.

Conclusion

The study has shown that the readability level of a text is a significant factor that should inform selection and use of textbooks in schools. Based on the finding, the study has provided a better understanding of readability of two senior secondary I English language textbooks that could influence students' achievement in English language in Oyo, Oyo State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, there should be periodic revision of recommended textbooks. This would assist to enrich the content and readability of the textbooks. Recommendation of textbooks should be appropriate by considering those books that have all the attributes of readability (such as size of print, length of sentences, appropriates diagrams and picture, clarity of sentences, among others). All of these parameters would enhance the understanding of the basic concepts. Textbook writers should have training in textbook writing in general and writing for second language learners in particular. Such training should involve how to write age and context appropriate materials. Besides content knowledge in English, textbook writers should be trained in second language learning and acquisition pedagogy, especially in reading and its various components. Ministry of Education, curriculum planners and stakeholders in the selection of textbooks should review textbooks without preference or prejudice before recommending textbooks.

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