

Text Complexity in An Indonesian EFL Textbook: Is it Aligned with the Emancipated Curriculum Goals?

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Abstract

This study examines the textual complexity of an Indonesian EFL textbook under the Emancipated Curriculum, focusing on lexical density and grammatical intricacy. Ten reading passages from the 10th-grade textbook Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress were analyzed using Halliday's framework for lexical density and Eggins & Castello's framework for grammatical intricacy. The findings reveal a lexical density index of 5.67 and a grammatical intricacy index of 1.78, indicating moderate textual complexity. The moderate lexical density and grammatical intricacy reflect a balance of accessibility and challenge, suitable for senior high school students where English becomes a foreign language. However, the complexity may not fully meet the needs of advanced learners. These findings contribute to discussions on curriculum effectiveness and reading comprehension, offering insights for teachers to select and adapt materials based on students' proficiency levels and learning needs.

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INTRODUCTION

The Emancipated Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) is Indonesia's latest educational framework which is introduced to address the challenges of the 21st century and align with global educational standards (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). The curriculum aims to foster creativity, problem-solving skills, and adaptability among students, preparing them for the demands of a rapidly changing world (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). In the context of English language education, the Emancipated Curriculum prioritizes the development of communicative competence and critical literacy that encourage students to

engage with authentic and meaningful texts. This shift requires textbooks to not only support language acquisition but also provide materials that challenge students to think critically and independently. However, the success of this curriculum depends heavily on the quality and design of instructional materials, particularly textbooks, which remain a primary resource for both teachers and students in EFL classrooms.

In English language learning, textbooks serve as a primary resource for developing reading skills. They provide structured and graded reading materials that align with curriculum goals and students' proficiency levels (Par, 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2023). Textbooks often include activities designed to foster essential reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and inferencing, which are critical for comprehension (Par, 2020). Research indicates that students who actively engage with textbook content demonstrate improved vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension (Santi et al., 2021). Thus, textbooks are indispensable tools for building a strong foundation in reading, enabling students to tackle increasingly complex texts with confidence (Loi & Thanh, 2022).

Despite the central role of textbooks in EFL education, students often struggle to comprehend the reading materials provided. This difficulty arises from several factors, including the complexity of the texts, unfamiliar vocabulary, and dense grammatical structures (Bashir & Scavuzzo in Torres et al. 2023). Texts that are too lexically dense or grammatically intricate can overwhelm students, leading to disengagement and passive learning (Murphy & Torff, 2019). Conversely, texts that are overly simplistic fail to challenge students, hindering their progress and achievement (Nation, 2015; Grabe, 2019).

In the Indonesian EFL context, these challenges are particularly pronounced. Students often lack exposure to the linguistic features of academic discourse, which further hampers their ability to comprehend and produce academic texts (Rinekso, 2021). As a result, many students struggle to meet the reading comprehension goals outlined in the curriculum, highlighting the need for textbooks that are carefully designed to match students' proficiency levels and learning needs.

Lexical density and grammatical intricacy are two key factors that influence the readability and comprehensibility of texts. Lexical density refers to the ratio of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) to the total number of words in a text, while grammatical intricacy refers to the complexity of sentence structures, including the use of subordinate clauses and syntactic variety (Nation, 2013; Grabe

& Stoller, 2019). Both factors play a critical role in determining the difficulty level of a text and its suitability for learners at different proficiency levels.

Texts with high lexical density and grammatical intricacy can be challenging for EFL learners, as they require a strong command of vocabulary and syntax to decode and interpret meaning (Murphy & Torff, 2018). On the other hand, texts with low lexical density and grammatical intricacy may fail to provide sufficient cognitive challenge, limiting students' opportunities for growth (Gunning in Bakuuro, 2024). Therefore, understanding the interplay between these two factors is essential for designing textbooks that effectively support reading comprehension and skill development.

Several studies have examined the role of lexical density and grammatical intricacy in EFL textbooks, particularly in the Indonesian context. For instance, Ananda (2016), Sari (2016), and Mulyanti & Soeharto (2020) analyzed the complexity of reading texts in English textbooks used under the 2013 Curriculum. Their findings revealed that most textbooks contained texts with low levels of lexical density and grammatical intricacy, which did not adequately challenge students or align with their learning needs as their level progresses. This mismatch between text complexity and students' proficiency levels negatively impacted reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall achievement in English classes.

While previous studies have provided valuable insights into the complexity of EFL textbooks under the 2013 Curriculum, there is a notable gap in research examining textbooks aligned with the Emancipated Curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning and the development of critical thinking skills, which requires re-evaluating of the linguistic features of textbook materials. Specifically, there is a lack of study on how the lexical density and grammatical intricacy of texts in EFL textbooks under the Emancipated Curriculum especially in English textbook for 10th grade. This gap is crucial because the Emancipated Curriculum represents a shift in pedagogical focus, requiring textbooks to not only support language acquisition but also foster higher-order thinking skills. Without an understanding of how text complexity in current textbooks aligns with these goals, educators and curriculum designers may struggle to provide materials that effectively support students' learning.

Addressing this gap is crucial to ensure that textbooks meet the curriculum's goals and support students' reading comprehension effectively. Thus, this study seeks

to address the following research question: "How do the lexical density and grammatical intricacy of reading texts in EFL textbooks under the Emancipated Curriculum align with students' proficiency levels and curriculum goals?".

By addressing this question, the study aims to provide insights into the design of EFL textbooks that effectively support reading comprehension and skill development for the English curriculum in Indonesian context.

METHOD

This research was conducted in a descriptive quantitative design that emphasized on lexical density and grammatical intricacy in reading passages of the Emancipated curriculum EFL textbook. The researchers followed certain steps to gather data. The initial stage was gathering data by downloading the English textbook for 10th grade provided by Indonesian government. The EFL textbook used in this study was from the Emancipated curriculum, *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress*, published by The Indonesian Ministry of Education released in 2022.

Five important factors were taken into consideration when choosing the textbook for this study. First, the textbook is relevant to the intended audience because it is designed for tenth-grade students and is commonly utilised as a key EFL resource in numerous senior high schools across Indonesia. Second, as an official Ministry of Education publication that reflects government-mandated learning objectives, the textbook is in line with Indonesia's national curriculum goal. Third, its public availability online makes it easily accessible for analysis in both printed and digital version. Fourth, it offers a range of text genres, including descriptive, narrative, expository, recount and procedure texts. Lastly, the textbook incorporates contemporary English usage and teaching methods which make it suitable for analyzing current language trends.

The data were collected through linguistic analysis that allows for a comprehensive examination of the linguistic features and lexical density of English textbooks. This study employs a multi-step method to analyze lexical density in the textbook. First, the researchers thoroughly read and reread the textbook to identify key details from all reading materials. After reading all the texts provided by the textbook, the authors included all texts from each genre to be analyzed, herewith; ten texts were obtained from the textbook for further analysis. Second, ranking clauses are determined from the texts. A ranking clause is an independent clause

that can stand alone as a complete sentence (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), as opposed to embedded or dependent clauses. For example, in the sentence "*The students read the book, and they discussed it in class,*" there are two ranking clauses: "*The students read the book*" and "*they discussed it in class.*"

After identifying ranking clauses, lexical items (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) in each text are recognized and manually numbered based on their classification as grammatical elements. To calculate the lexical density index, a calculation formulated by Halliday (1985) was applied. This formula determines lexical density by dividing the number of lexical items by the total number of ranking clauses. For instance, if a text contains 50 lexical items and 10 ranking clauses, the lexical density would be 5.0. This method ensures a systematic and accurate analysis of text complexity which calculates using the following proportion.

$$\text{Lexical Density (LD)} = \frac{\text{total number of lexical items}}{\text{total number of ranking clause}}$$

According to Halliday (1985), written texts typically have a lexical density of 3–6, depending on their formality. A higher index indicates a more challenging text. If the index is between 1.5 and 2, it indicates a typical text for spoken language. The following is the lexical density index according to Halliday (1985).

LD Score	LD Level
>7	High (Very Dense)
3-6	Medium (Dense)
0-2	Low (Less Dense)

After the calculation is done, the results of the lexical density calculations are presented in tables. To gain a clearer understanding of text complexity, grammatical intricacy was also analyzed. This concept refers to the frequency of clause complexes in a text compared to simple clauses. Eggins (2004) mentioned that the grammatical intricacy is measured as the number of ranking clauses divided by the total number of the sentences in the text. Similarly, Castello (2008) claimed that a higher number of clauses per sentence indicate greater grammatical intricacy, as it reflects more complex syntactic structures and that high ratio of

grammatical intricacy can be used to characterize a text to be in spoken mode. Thus, Grammatical intricacy score is obtained using the following formula (Castello, 2008, p. 97).

$$\text{Grammatical Intricacy (GI)} = \frac{\text{total number of ranking clause}}{\text{total number of sentences}}$$

The following steps were used to determine grammatical intricacy. First, deciding the number of ranking clauses in every sentence. Second, totalling the sentences in the text. Finally, making proportion from the total ranking clause in the text to the total sentences in the text. A higher score of grammatical intricacy indicates more complex sentences with multiple clauses, while a lower intricacy suggests simpler sentence structures. Below is a summary of description that illustrates the levels of grammatical intricacy following the frameworks from Eggins (2004) and Castello (2008):

Table 1. Grammatical Intricacy Index Descriptor

Level of Intricacy	Description	Example
Low	Simple sentences with one independent clause (no subordinate clauses).	"The cat sat on the mat."
Moderate	Compound sentences or sentences with one or two subordinate clauses.	"The cat sat on the mat, and it purred softly."
High	Complex sentences with multiple subordinate clauses or embedded clauses.	"The cat, which was black and white, sat on the mat, purring softly as it fell asleep."

RESULT

This study aimed to analyze the text complexity of an EFL textbook aligned with the Emancipated Curriculum by examining the lexical density and grammatical intricacy of all the texts in the textbook. The texts, taken from the English textbook *Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress* for Senior High School Grade X, represent various genres: descriptive, personal recount, procedure, expository, narrative, and recount text. The findings are structured according to the research questions, focusing on the levels of lexical density and grammatical intricacy, as well as the similarities and differences between the texts. After conducting a deep analysis, the writers found the statistics as the result of the calculation of each text, as follows.

Table 2. Lexical density and Grammatical Intricacy index in the textbook.

Text	Text's Genre	Title	Lexical Density (LD) Index	Level	Grammatical Intricacy (GI) Index	Level
Text 1	Descriptive	Cristiano Ronaldo	4.33	Medium	1.33	Low
Text 2	Descriptive	The Paralympic Heroes	7	High	2	Moderate
Text 3	Personal Recount	Watching A Football Match	6.38	High	1.75	Moderate
Text 4	Procedure	Simple Tips for Healthy Eating	5.48	Medium	1.19	Low
Text 5	Expository	Why Should Graffiti be Considered Art?	6.56	Medium	2.06	Low
Text 6	Expository	Graffiti is Always Vandalism	7.42	High	1.67	Moderate
Text 7	Narrative	Little Red Riding Hood	3.47	Medium	1.32	Moderate
Text 8	Narrative	Little Red Riding Hood (POV: The Wolf)	2.37	Low	3.19	High
Text 9	Report	Daily Journal	7.4	High	2.2	Moderate
Text 10	Report	Healthy Meal	5.67	Medium	1.17	Low
Overall Lexical Density Index: 5.60				Overall Grammatical intricacy Index: 1.78		

Lexical Density Across the Texts

As can be observed from Table 2, the total lexical density index for all the texts was 5.60. Lexical density for the texts can be classified as moderate to high in terms of vocabulary complexity. This suggests that the texts generally use language that is accessible to students while still providing some challenge. The Report Text (Daily Journal) had the highest lexical density at 7.4, followed closely by the Expository Text (Graffiti is Always Vandalism) at 7.42. These genres typically require specialized or formal language, which explains the higher density of lexical items. For example, the Daily Journal included technical terms such as "adolescence," "malnutrition," and "psychological cost," while the Graffiti is Always Vandalism text used persuasive vocabulary like "glorifies," "compelling," and "advocate." In contrast, the Narrative Text (Little Red Riding Hood - POV: The Wolf) had the lowest lexical density at 2.37, likely due to its conversational tone and use of simpler vocabulary to facilitate storytelling. For instance, phrases like "Hey, Lil Hood" and "Whateva" were prevalent, reducing the overall lexical density. Similarly, the Procedure Text (Simple Tips for Healthy Eating) and Report Text (Healthy Meal) exhibited moderate lexical density scores of 5.48 and 5.67, respectively, reflecting their instructional and informative nature.

Grammatical Intricacy Across the Texts

The analysis of grammatical intricacy, which measures the complexity of sentence structures, showed an overall index of 1.78, indicating a moderate level of syntactic complexity. The Narrative Text (*Little Red Riding Hood - POV: The Wolf*) had the highest grammatical intricacy at 3.19, reflecting its creative and unconventional narrative style, which often requires the use of multiple clauses and complex sentence structures. For example, sentences like "As soon as I entered, the grandma was so scared she jumped into my mouth" demonstrate the use of subordinate clauses to provide detailed and engaging descriptions. On the other hand, the Procedure Text (*Simple Tips for Healthy Eating*) and Report Text (*Healthy Meal*) had the lowest grammatical intricacy at 1.19 and 1.17, respectively, as they primarily use simple and compound sentences to convey clear and factual information. For instance, sentences like "Water is the healthiest drink on the planet" are straightforward and lack complex subordination. The Descriptive Text and Personal Recount Text exhibited intermediate values of 1.33 and 1.75, respectively. These texts used a mix of simple and complex sentences to balance readability with descriptive richness. For example, the *Cristiano Ronaldo* text included sentences like "He can jump up to 78 cm in the air; this jumping height is much more compared to any basketball player," which combine descriptive and comparative elements.

Similarities and Differences Across the Texts

While the texts varied in lexical density and grammatical intricacy, some patterns emerged. All texts maintained a moderate to high level of lexical density, aligning with the Emancipated Curriculum's emphasis on accessibility and student-centered learning. This suggests that the textbook is designed to cater to a wide range of proficiency levels. The grammatical intricacy across most texts was moderate, indicating a balance between readability and syntactic complexity. This ensures that the texts are accessible while still challenging students to develop their reading and comprehension skills. However, there were notable differences between genres. The Report Text (*Daily Journal*) and Expository Text (*Graffiti is Always Vandalism*) stood out for their high lexical density, reflecting their formal and specialized language. These texts are likely more challenging and are suited for advanced learners or specific audiences. In contrast, the Narrative Text (*Little Red Riding Hood - POV: The Wolf*) had the lowest lexical density, emphasizing simpler vocabulary and greater accessibility for younger or less proficient readers. Similarly,

the Narrative Text (*Little Red Riding Hood - POV: The Wolf*) also had the highest grammatical intricacy, reflecting its creative and complex narrative style. This makes the text more engaging but also more challenging for readers. On the other hand, the Procedure Text (*Simple Tips for Healthy Eating*) and Report Text (*Healthy Meal*) had the lowest grammatical intricacy, using primarily simple sentence structures. These texts are highly accessible and suitable for general audiences.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the overall complexity level of the texts in the Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress textbook aligns with the goals of the Emancipated Curriculum, which emphasizes critical thinking and language proficiency. These goals are supported by the textbook's moderate lexical density and balanced grammatical complexity. According to Ure, as cited in Chegeni & Tabatabaei (2014), lexical density is positively correlated with reading comprehension achievement. The moderate lexical density score of 5.60 found in this study suggests that the textbook provides students with a sufficiently advanced vocabulary level. This finding is consistent with the established trend that lexical density increases with higher levels of education (Ure, 1971; Halliday, 1985).

The findings of this study both corroborate and diverge from previous research on text complexity in EFL textbooks. For instance, studies by Ananda (2016) and Sari (2016) found that textbooks under the 2013 Curriculum often featured low lexical density and grammatical intricacy, failing to adequately challenge students. In contrast, this study reveals that the texts analyzed under the Emancipated Curriculum demonstrate moderate to high levels of lexical density and grammatical intricacy, which is a step forward. However, the moderate complexity of some texts may still fall short of fully supporting the curriculum's emphasis on critical thinking and independent learning. For example, while the Report Text (*Daily Journal*) and Expository Text (*Graffiti is Always Vandalism*) exhibit high lexical density, their grammatical intricacy is moderate, suggesting a focus on factual delivery rather than cognitive engagement. This aligns with the findings of Murphy & Torff (2018), who argued that texts with high lexical density but low grammatical intricacy may fail to foster higher-order thinking skills.

The texts were analysed and presented in the table were organized in order from the beginning to the end of the chapter in the textbook. However, the lexical

density indices within each textbook do not follow a consistent pattern of increase. In other words, the texts in the later chapters do not show higher lexical density than those in the earlier and middle chapters. This variation according to Putra & Lukmana (2017) may be influenced by the different genres and topics covered in each chapter.

In a study conducted by Suminih et al. (2024), they found that the high lexical density suggested a higher concentration of relevant content, which usually corresponds with more complexity and variety of language. In line with this, the high lexical density index found in both the Report Text and Persuasive Text in this study assumes the use of specific linguistic features in the texts that ensure their effectiveness and clarity by providing more variety of vocabulary. Vogel (2020) mentions that such linguistic means as evaluative lexis, nominal density, and syntactic structures should be closely scrutinized.

The narrative text has the lowest score of lexical density index. According to Johansson (2008), texts with low lexical density tend to use more pronouns and auxiliaries than nouns and verbs and the texts are mostly easy to understand. It is justifiable that the purpose narrative text is to entertain the reader (learner), thus simple vocabulary is more preferable than the advanced ones. As Fang (2008) points out, this type of text is suitable to be used for teaching and learning purposes in EFL context. However, the Narrative Text stands out for its high grammatical intricacy (3.19), reflecting its creative and unconventional narrative style. While this makes the text engaging, it may also pose challenges for less proficient readers. This finding is consistent with Christie's (2005) observation that narrative texts often require complex sentence structures to convey detailed descriptions, which can be both a strength and a limitation depending on the reader's proficiency level. Furthermore, the Procedure Text (Simple Tips for Healthy Eating) and Report Text (Healthy Meal) have low grammatical intricacy, prioritizing clarity and simplicity. This aligns with Gunning's (2014) recommendation that instructional texts should use straightforward language to ensure accessibility.

On a similar note, the Grammatical Intricacy (GI) Index of 1.78 found in this study aligns with Christie's (2005) observation that grammatical intricacy varies across genres and depends on the cognitive load imposed on learners. Such a feature would be appropriate for senior high school students who are developing higher-order syntactic awareness (Christie, 2005). However, there are areas for

improvement. For instance, the Discussion Text (Why Should Graffiti be Considered Art?) has a moderate lexical density (6.56) but low grammatical intricacy (2.06), which may limit its ability to engage students in analytical and evaluative thinking. Similarly, the Narrative Text (Little Red Riding Hood - POV: The Wolf), while engaging, may be too complex for some students due to its high grammatical intricacy. This finding is in line with Fadhil et al. (2023) that highlight the need of the English teacher for careful text selection and adaptation to ensure that all students are adequately challenged and supported.

The results align with the objectives of the Emancipated curriculum, which advocates for student-centred pedagogies and the promotion of higher-order cognitive skills, supported by materials that support analytical reading and understanding through a well-combined level of complexity (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). The moderate to high lexical density and grammatical intricacy of most texts provide a balance between accessibility and challenge, which is essential for fostering critical thinking and language proficiency. Furthermore, although the textbook offers a diverse array of genres with differing complexities, additional research might determine whether these texts adequately equip students for the writing and reading requirements of university, which, as noted by Biber in Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2009), generally require a substantial degree of lexical density and grammatical complexity. Further studies should examine the influence of these complexity measures on actual student performance in both reading and writing, as well as determine if some genres present more challenges, particularly for students with varying competence levels (Christie, 2012).

While this study provides valuable insights into the linguistic complexity of EFL textbooks, it has some limitations. First, the analysis focused solely on lexical density and grammatical intricacy, without considering other factors such as cultural relevance, thematic content, or visual aids, which also play a crucial role in text comprehension and engagement. Second, the study did not examine how these linguistic features impact students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills in real classroom settings. Therefore, future research could address these gaps by exploring the relationship between text complexity and student performance, as well as the role of teacher mediation in facilitating comprehension.

All in all, although the Bahasa Inggris Work in Progress textbook mostly corresponds with the objectives of the Emancipated curriculum, it is essential to

guarantee that the included texts adapt to accommodate the varied demands of students across different proficiency levels. As students' progress in their academic journeys, the linguistic challenges they encounter become increasingly complex. Therefore, as Martin (2009) suggests, it is essential for textbooks to reflect this growing complexity to effectively support language acquisition and foster critical thinking skills of students.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if the EFL textbook used for 10th grade was in line with the Emancipated Curriculum through lexical density and grammatical intricacy analysis. The results demonstrate the textbook's effective implementation of the curriculum, with lexical density at a moderate level and grammatical intricacy maintained through qualitative and quantitative balances across various text genres.

The findings have significant implications for teachers and curriculum designers. For teachers, the results underscore the importance of selecting texts that match the linguistic proficiency and cognitive abilities of their students. The moderate complexity of the textbook suggests that teachers may need to supplement classroom materials with additional texts that offer higher lexical density and grammatical intricacy. For instance, teachers could introduce authentic academic articles or opinion pieces to challenge students and develop their critical thinking skills. For curriculum designers, the findings highlight the need to ensure that textbooks include a wide range of text complexities to cater to diverse learner needs. For example, incorporating more texts with higher grammatical intricacy, such as argumentative essays or analytical reports, could better support the development of critical literacy skills.

For future research, it is recommended to explore how textual complexity impacts students' reading comprehension and critical thinking skills in real classroom settings. Additionally, comparative studies could examine textbooks from other countries to identify best practices for designing EFL materials that support both language acquisition and cognitive development. This attempt can contribute to the ongoing improvement of EFL education in Indonesia and beyond.

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