The Relationship between Linguistic Features and Readability of Dini Integrated Curriculum Arabic Textbook in Government-Aided Religious School

Hubungan antara Ciri Linguistik dan Kebolehbacaan Buku Teks Bahasa Arab Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini di Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan

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ABSTRACT

Efforts to strengthen the Arabic language subject can further strengthen the flow of the Dini Integrated Curriculum (KBD) in Malaysia. The mastery of this subject can be measured based on the readability of students' text. This study aims to identify the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah) in Government Aided Religious Schools (SABKs) based on linguistic characteristics. A quantitative survey design was implemented on 694 students in five SABK zones using the proportional strata random sampling technique. The technique has passed the instrument validity and reliability tests. Data were analyzed by text, descriptive, and inferential analyses including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Kuder Richardson 20 test, and Pearson's correlation test. The findings of the study of linguistic features show that word form dominates a high level of uniformity in the text for word category and Balagha for sentence category, while the content category is in the moderate level. The readability of the textbook is at a disappointing level. There is a strong significant relationship between verb sentences and long verb sentences with the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook. The results of the study can also be utilized by authorities to ensure the materials in Arabic textbooks can attract students to continue reading and learning more actively.

Keywords: Readability; linguistic features; al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah; Dini Integrated Curriculum; Government-Aided Religious School

ABSTRAK

Usaha memperkasakan mata pelajaran bahasa Arab berupaya mengukuhkan lagi aliran Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini di Malaysia. Manakala, penguasaan mata pelajaran ini dapat diukur berdasarkan kebolehbacaan teks pelajar. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti kebolehbacaan buku teks bahasa Arab Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini tingkatan empat (al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah) di Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK) berdasarkan ciri-ciri linguistik. Reka bentuk kuantitatif secara tinjauan dilaksanakan ke atas 694 pelajar di lima zon SABK dalam kajian ini menggunakan teknik persampelan rawak strata berkadaran dan telah melepasi prosedur kesahan dan kebolehpercayaan instrumen. Data dianalisis secara analisis teks, deskriptif dan inferensi merangkumi kekerapan, peratusan, min, sisihan piawai, ujian Kuder Richardson 20, dan ujian korelasi Pearson. Dapatan kajian ciri-ciri linguistik menunjukkan tahap keseragaman yang tinggi mendominasi teks adalah Bentuk Kata bagi kategori perkataan, Ayat Balaghah bagi kategori ayat, manakala tahap sederhana dalam kategori isi. Bagi kebolehbacaan buku teks pula berada pada tahap kecewa secara keseluruhannya. Justeru, wujud hubungan positif signifikan yang kuat pada Ayat Kata Kerja dan Ayat Panjang Kata Kerja dengan kebolehbacaan buku teks bahasa Arab KBD tingkatan empat. Hasil kajian juga dapat dimanfaatkan kepada pihak berwajib bagi memastikan penyediaan garis panduan bahan-bahan yang terkandung didalam buku teks bahasa Arab mempunyai daya tarikan yang boleh menarik minat pelajar untuk meneruskan pembacaan dan pembelajaran dengan lebih aktif.

Kata kunci: Kebolehbacaan; ciri linguistik; al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah; Kurikulum Bersepadu Dini; Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan

INTRODUCTION

Efforts to strengthen Arabic language subjects can further strengthen the flow of the Dini Integrated Curriculum in Malaysia. The Dini Integrated Curriculum (KBD) introduced by the Ministry of Education Malaysia is a combination of the existing national curriculum that has been implemented since 2015. This curriculum is based on the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013–2025, stating that MOE is committed to providing high-quality religious education to complement students with the relevant knowledge and skills to succeed in the job market based on strong Islamic values and philosophy. This plan also strengthens the implementation of the national curriculum in religious schools by raising the Dini and Tahfiz Curriculum as the national curriculum as well as incorporating religious elements into the curriculum (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2013).

SABK students have previously used the religious curriculum (al-Azhari) in the components of Islamic education and the Arabic language. As various problems have arisen during the implementation of the al-Azhari curriculum, KBD has become an alternative in balancing this curriculum and its implementation was done in stages from form 1 to form 5 starting in 2015 (Siti Afifah Munirah, Ummu Dhabitah & Kamarulzaman 2017). KBD has entered its sixth year of implementation since 2015 but still needs more research to improve students' readability in Arabic reading materials. This is coupled with grievances of students who face difficulties in understanding the content of Arabic texts due to the new curriculum (Mohd Hazli & Maimun Aqsha Lubis 2018).

As for linguistic features, various problems arise in terms of readability. This is shown in a study by Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2017) which divides linguistic analysis into three levels of the high, medium, and low. This study found that the level of use of linguistic features of Arabic textbooks is at a low level for simple sentences, and medium level for complex sentences and noun sentences, followed by a high level for complex sentences. Common and frequent words are at a high level in all forms; however, abstract words are at a low level and not in sequence. Conjunctions and discourse markers are at a high level in form one textbook and are at a moderate level in forms two, three, four, and five textbooks. The average sentence length is at a high level for all forms. A study by Zulazhan (2012) found that in terms of linguistic features, the frequency and familiarity of words are the highest dominating features of the text. Prepositional words, in the word category, are the lowest dominating feature of the text. In terms of sentence category, complex sentences are used more than simple sentences in each text and as a whole (Zulazhan 2012).

Noorafini, Saini, and Muhammad Suhaimi (2017) also add that most students, who do not have basic knowledge, have difficulty mastering Arabic. This can be seen through the content of Arabic language lessons which is difficult to understand in terms of pronunciation and reading, writing, and connecting letters, vocabulary, and grammar. This coincides with Kern (2000), stating that in learning language, students usually know the words read, but they are unable to comprehend the content.

The problem of readability is also seen from the preparation of text, which does not follow the cognitive level of students, and has caused students' comprehension of reading material to be at a low level. Comprehension of the text depends on the level of readability of the text. The mastery of limited vocabulary causes students to not be able to construct simple conversational sentences, causing the level of readability of their Arabic textbooks to be at a disappointing level based on the Early Arabic Strategic Plan Report 2016–2020, Sekolah Agama Menengah Sultan Hisamuddin Sg Bertih, Klang, Selangor. Kamarulzaman (2010) emphasizes linguistic knowledge as a more dominant determinant that can influence students' readability. Therefore, the linguistic features used in the reading texts should be taken into account in terms of suitability with the level of knowledge of the target readers to help them understand more deeply (Zamanian & Heydari 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic features, according to Fry (2002) and DuBay (2004), are a language system consisting of sounds, words, and sentences. This system includes the pronunciation and intonation, how words are combined to form various other forms, the order, the length of grammatical sentences, and how words are combined to form meaningful sentences as well as the way meaningful sentences are arranged into text. Kamarulzaman (2010) states that linguistic features are the elements of a language found in the measured reading text. In the context of readability, several

elements of the language have been identified by readability researchers, involving elements of words or vocabulary, syntax or sentence structure, and density of content and concepts.

The readability of the textbooks should be adjusted according to the competence of the readers and the content depending on the way the readers adjust the linguistic features that refer to the frequency of common and frequent words, abstract words, simple sentences, complex sentences, noun sentences, average sentence length, as well as conjunctions and discourse markers (Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri & Nik Mohd Rahimi 2017). The mismatched linguistic features found in the texts and the language level of the readers can also affect their level of motivation to continue reading and deepen the Arabic reading texts although the readers are aware of the importance of reading Arabic reading materials (Ahmad Sabri 2008). Linguistic features in reading materials must be able to improve the suitability of the texts with students' reading skills to ensure an effective reading process especially in Arabic (Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri & Nurul Iman 2021).

Reading, according to Rumelhart (1977), is an interactive process involving the interaction of many factors. The reader is considered an active person. The reader plays an important role in establishing meaning in reading and the purpose of reading is to understand the text read and the content. Text readability refers to an individual's reading skills to appreciate and comprehend a text read depending on the way of writing, percentage, and frequency of difficult words based on word combination in text and text length (Al-Tamimi et al. 2014). According to DuBay (2004), readability refers to things that make the text easier to read. Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2017) also state that readability is an interactive process between the reader and the text.

According to Chall (1974), the three aspects interrelated in the readability concept are interest, readability, and ease of understanding. A study by Marohaini (1999) states that readability is the ability and level of difficulty of reading material to be understood by the reader. All the knowledge possessed by a person is described in one unit known as schemata, which is incomplete and constantly evolving. As new information is received or learned, the schemata will change, shape, and rearrange. New information will expand the existing schemata. Three principles are underlying the schemata theory. In the

first principle, the meaning of a text can be formed through the existing knowledge possessed by the reader. In the second principle, understanding a text does not only depend on the linguistic knowledge of the reader but also requires an interactive process between past knowledge and the text being read. In the third principle, in terms of text interpretation, the received information will be arranged and compiled along with the existing schema (Hohzawa 1998).

Kamarulzaman and Hassan Basri Awang (2009) state that readability is the easy or difficult level of a text to be understood by certain readers reading a certain text for a certain purpose. Existing knowledge and experience possessed by the reader can influence the level of readability. When readers are familiar with the text containing known information from the previous lessons, then it is easier to read and understand. Level-based readability studies are very important to identify the potential of a reading text and its impact on the reader. Efforts to re-evaluate the reading material to re-process the text from the source to a more easily understood reading text are very important. The level of readability can also improve the level of reading ability of a reader, as both processes are carried out at the same time.

The level of readability of the text is inferred based on the level, type, characteristics, and description of the form of reading (Marohaini 1999; Kamarulzaman 2010). For independent reading level, the text type is considered as easy or simple. Students of this level have excellent word recognition comprehension and accuracy, a smooth reading rate, and are likely to have fewer errors in all aspects. As for the level of teaching reading, the type of text is considered comfortable. Students with this level have a good comprehension of reading material, good word recognition accuracy, and moderate reading fluency rate, but there are still some words that need to be analyzed more carefully in reading activities. Frustrating level readers are more likely to regard the text as too difficult or difficult. Students of this level have a poor level of comprehension in reading and there are too many words to be analyzed before the reading activity begins.

The study by Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2017) shows that the use of average sentence length has a significant relationship with the level of readability of Arabic texts. Complex sentences, common and frequent words, conjunctions, and discourse markers have a significant negative relationship with the level of readability of the text. However, there are study

variables that show an insignificant relationship with the level of readability of the text such as simple sentences, noun sentences, and abstract sentences. Word mastery has a strong and significant relationship with reading skills especially in terms of comprehension (Pringprom & Obchuae 2011; Baleghizadeh & Goblin 2010). The use of clauses and long sentences is one of the linguistic features that contribute a significant relationship to the readability of the text (Guthrie 1972). This is because readers who are at a low level will have difficulty understanding a text if there is no connection between ideas due to limited knowledge of linguistic features. Based on the discussion of previous studies on the linguistic characteristics of readability, this study specifically aims to;

1. Identify the level of linguistic features of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook.
2. Identify the level of readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook.
3. Identify the relationship between linguistic features and the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative survey design to empirically determine the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*). A cross-sectional survey was selected and the distribution of cloze tests was involved to obtain information on the readability of textbooks. The study population consisted of form four students who take KBD Arabic language subject at SABK, represented by a total of 694 students in five zones; North, South, West, East, and East Malaysia, and proportional strata random sampling technique was employed and had passed the validation and reliability tests.

Text analysis was used to identify the linguistic features in the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*). The text analysis method was chosen as the subject of the study was the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook, namely *al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*, which was the Arabic reading text used. The text analysis can give a true picture of the linguistic features in the text studied as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen in Kamarulzaman (2010). The text analysis method is a systematic and objective method for collecting, categorizing, and analyzing the frequency of use of linguistic features in each textbook sample according to different levels. The linguistic features include categories of words, sentences, and content that can contribute to the readability of textbooks.

There are eleven (11) linguistic features in this study based on categories of words, sentences, and content as shown in Table 1. The determination of linguistic features to be analyzed was based on the findings of previous studies in the construction of formulas and studies on factors contributing to text readability. Each selection of word, sentence and content categories used in this study in terms of calculation procedures and category definition was discussed, reviewed, and validated by the study supervisor and experts in the field of Arabic linguistics. Its reliability was tested based on the quantity or frequency of use in Arabic reading of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*).

TABLE 1. Selection of linguistic features of the study

Category	Linguistic features
Word (4)	1. Word usage and recognition
	2. Word meaning
	3. Word construction
	4. Word form
Sentence (6)	1. Sentence familiarity
	2. Sentence form
	3. Sentence structure
	4. Sentence meaning
Content (1)	Task words in the text

The construction of the cloze test instrument was also used to obtain data from students related to the reliability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*). The cloze test was used to indicate the suitability of the reading material with a person's level of reading ability and a more accurate procedure than the readability formula (Torres & Roig 2005). This test benefits the direct interaction between the measured reading material and the reader at one time (Marohaini 1999; Rye 1982). The reading texts in the KBD Arabic textbook were tested on form four students only using three sets of cloze tests. The data from this test provided a clearer picture of the actual level of the overall readability of the textbook based on the ability of students to interact with the texts in the textbook. Data were analyzed by text and descriptive and inferential analyses including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Kuder Richardson 20 test, and Pearson's correlation test.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the findings and discussion for each study objective on the linguistic features and their relationship with the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*) are discussed.

LEVEL OF LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF KBD LEVEL FOUR ARABIC TEXTBOOK

This discussion answers the first objective, which is the level of linguistic characteristics of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*). There are three categories in eleven (11) aspects of linguistic features, words, sentences, and content. The analysis of findings to determine the level of use of linguistic features in the first research question is based on the calculation of the level score range which is divided into three; low, medium, and high, as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), which has been used in the study of linguistic features in readability by Ahmad Sabri (2017) as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Total score} - 1}{\text{Total of levels}} = \text{Level range}$$

CATEGORY OF WORDS

The discussion of the category of words is based on the findings in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Linguistic features by word category

n (Text)	Word category							
	Word usage and recognition		Word meaning		Word construction		Word form	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
1	21/ 140	15	24/ 140	17	34/ 140	24	12/ 140	9
2	21/ 179	12	25/ 179	14	24/ 179	13	19/ 179	11
3	28/ 280	10	30/ 280	11	33/ 280	12	24/ 280	9
4	16/ 158	10	13/ 158	8	13/ 158	8	8/ 158	5
5	12/ 94	13	19/ 94	20	17/ 94	18	5/ 94	5
6	3/ 77	4	10/ 77	13	9/ 77	12	6/ 77	8
7	14/	8	11/ 164	7	32/ 164	19	12/ 164	7

... continued

8	13/254	5	14/254	5	31/254	12	14/254	5
9	2/93	2	4/93	4	16/93	17	3/93	3
10	6/195	3	8/195	4	20/195	10	5/195	3
11	12/142	8	11/142	8	31/142	22	10/142	7
12	15/195	8	19/195	10	22/195	11	28/195	14
13	7/147	5	6/147	4	17/147	12	17/147	12
14	8/167	5	8/167	5	31/167	19	16/167	10
Mean		7.71		9.29		14.93		7.71
Standard deviation		3.93		5.14		4.84		3.34

The first category of words is measured based on the elements of word usage and recognition, word meaning, word construction, and word form. The results of word usage and recognition show an average score of 8 percent. This shows that only a small number of non-words are used. More words distributed in the 14 texts found are words learned and known by students. The minimum and maximum percentage distances are 2 percent to 15 percent, which gives a mean value of 7.71 and a standard deviation of 3.93. The calculation of the level score range is divided into three; low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000). It can be concluded that only text 1 and text 5 are at a high level while other texts are between medium and low levels.

Nurain and Norhayuza (2019) state that a text that has common and frequent words in the vocabulary list will make the text easier to understand and read. These findings are also in line with studies conducted based on Arabic texts by Ahmad Sabri (2017), Kamarulzaman (2010), Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2017), and Zulazhan (2012). Each finding for the measurement of word usage and recognition shows that it is at a high level and the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook is mostly easy to learn, master, understand, and read by students. This finding is also supported by Hirsh and Nation (1992) who found that 98 percent of common words in a text help comprehend a text without assistance, as unfamiliar words used in a text can reduce the reader's level of text comprehension.

The measurement of word meaning distribution (concrete and abstract) in 14 topics of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook shows an average score of 9 percent. This value indicates that the majority of the meanings of the words found in the 14 texts are clear to read, carry a clear meaning, and are easily understood by students. The minimum and maximum text percentage distances between 4 percent and 20 percent show a mean value of 9.29 and a standard deviation of 5.14. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of texts are in the low-level group, as in text 4, text 7, text 8, text 9, text 10, text 11, text 13, and text 14. These findings are in line with the study by Ahmad Sabri (2017) and Kamarulzaman (2010). However, the use of abstract words is seen to have a slightly higher value in the study text by Zulazhan (2012). All three studies show that the percentage of word meaning in textbooks is low and shows that most texts use words with clear meaning so that they are easy to be understood and read by students. More difficult words in a text can result in more abstract ideas and be the cause of the reader's difficulty in reading activities (Newbold & Gillam 2010).

The distribution of the word construction element, involving derivative and rewarding words, contributes to the overall average score of 15 percent and is the highest percentage of scores compared to word usage and recognition, word meaning, and word forms in 14 topics of the KBD Form Four

Arabic textbook. This also reflects that the use of derivative and rewarding word constructions in the text is low and the rest shows the basic word constructions in KBD Form Four Arabic textbook. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of the text is at a moderate level (text 2, text 3, text 5, text 6, text 7, text 8, text 9, text 12, text 13, and text 14). Minimum and maximum text percentage distances between 8 percent and 24 percent show a mean value for derived words of 14.93 and a standard deviation of 4.84. These findings are in line with studies by Kamarulzaman (2010) and Zulazhan et al. (2011). The word form element involves clause-shaped words contributing to the distribution of the overall average score of only 8 percent. This finding is in line with a study by Kamarulzaman (2010) who also shows that the percentage of word forms involving single words and clauses in the text is low compared to non-clause words as well as words that are easily identified by students.

Therefore, it is found that the readability criterion in terms of words category with the most uniform distribution in 14 topics of the KBD Form

Four Arabic textbook is word form. The average word form per text is 8 percent. This means that 92 percent of the words in the text consist of single words and are easily identified by students. The minimum and maximum percentage distances between 3 percent and 14 percent show a mean value of 7.71 and a standard deviation of 3.34. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of the text is at a moderate level (text 1, text 2, text 3, text 6, text 7, text 11, text 13, and text 14). This finding is in line with Kamarulzaman (2010) who shows that the word form element is the most uniformly distributed linguistic feature in the text. On the other hand, the word meaning represents the least uniform word category in the 14 topics of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook. This finding is in line with the findings of a study by Ahmad Sabri (2017) who shows that abstract words are linguistic features that are not uniform in their use in the text.

CATEGORY OF SENTENCES

The discussion for sentence category is based on the findings in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Linguistic features by sentences category

n (Text)	Sentences category (*f*)					
	Sentence familiarity		Sentence form		Sentence structure	Sentence meaning
	Verb sentences	Noun sentences	Verb long sentences	Noun long sentences		
1	12	8	5	3	8	0
2	14	4	9	2	11	0
3	22	10	15	4	19	1
4	8	2	7	2	10	0
5	0	11	0	4	4	0
6	5	4	3	1	4	1
7	7	12	6	8	14	2
8	20	10	11	5	16	1
9	5	8	2	3	5	0
10	10	12	5	6	11	0
11	11	5	6	2	8	4
12	12	8	5	6	11	5
13	7	23	5	7	12	0
14	15	6	7	3	10	2
Mean	10.57	8.79	6.14	4.00	10.21	1.14
Standard deviation	5.96	5.16	3.74	2.11	4.34	1.61

The second category of sentences is measured based on four elements; sentence familiarity, sentence form, sentence structure, and sentence meaning. Sentence familiarity element is measured in 14 texts representing noun sentences and verb sentences which obtain an almost balanced frequency distribution. The results of the analysis show that noun sentences accounted for the overall average score of the frequency found in 14 texts is as much as 9 sentences per text. The use of sentence structures that begin with nouns in the mother tongue and second language in the text is low. Based on the calculation of the level score range which is divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of noun sentences in the texts (text 1, text 2, text 3, text 4, text 6, text 8, text 9, text 11, text 12, and text 14) have low-frequency distribution. Verb sentences contribute an overall average score frequency of 11 sentences per text. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of verb sentences in the text also has a frequency distribution at low levels in text 4, text 5, text 6, text 7, text 9, text 10, and text 13. These findings are in line with the study by Kamarulzaman (2010) and Zulazhan (2012) who state that the frequency of use of noun sentences is low. A study by Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2017) shows that the use of noun sentences in their study is at a moderate level. Although the frequency distribution of the verb sentences in this study is seen to be higher than the noun sentences, the sentence familiarity can be said to be almost balanced in the frequency distribution of its use in the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook.

The sentence form element is represented by verb long sentences and noun long sentences. Both sentence types have a similar frequency distribution of sentence forms per text in 14 topics of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook. The analysis found that the overall average score of verb long sentences is 6 sentences per text. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of verb long sentences in the texts (text 1, text 5, text 6, text 7, text 9, text 10, text 11, text 12, and text 13) has a low frequency of sentences per text. The results of the analysis also show that the frequency distribution of noun long sentences in 14 texts in total is 4 sentences per text. The value illustrates that the frequency of distribution for both sentence forms, namely verb long sentences and noun long sentences, is low and the use of sentences per text is balanced in the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of noun long sentences in the text has a sentence frequency distribution per text at low levels in text 1, text 2, text 3, text 4, text 5, text 6, text 8, text 9, text 10, text 11, text 12, and text 14. This finding is supported by Kamarulzaman (2010) as the results show that the frequency of distribution of verb long sentences and noun long sentences per the text is low.

The sentence structure element is represented by complex sentences which contribute to an overall average score frequency of 10 sentences per text. Indirectly, the value of this frequency score indicates that the frequency distribution in the 14 texts mostly uses language syntax sentences that are not numerous and easily understood by students. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of complex sentences in the texts (text 1, text 2, text 4, text 10, text 11, text 12, text 13, and text 14) is in the moderate level. This finding contradicts Kamarulzaman (2010) and Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2017) as their studies show that the density of complex sentences in a sentence is quite high and causes some difficulty to students if they are not proficient and do not fully master this syntactic sentence in the lesson texts. Harison (2010) also states that complex sentence structure in a dense text will make it difficult for the reader to understand the information presented more clearly and existing knowledge cannot build comprehension of the reading.

The sentence meaning element represented by Balagha sentence in 14 texts contributes to the low frequency of distribution of 1 sentence per text. There is still the use of a moderate distribution of Balagha in some texts which can cause students who are less proficient on the elements of Balagha to have difficulty in understanding the important content of the textbook. Based on the calculation of the level score range divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the Balagha feature in the text has a low-frequency distribution of use (text 1,

text 2, text 3, text 4, text 5, text 6, text 7, text 8, text 9, text 10, text 13, and text 14). This finding is supported by Kamarulzaman (2010) in his study which shows a low overall frequency distribution of Balagha sentences although some texts have a high distribution of Balagha sentences.

In terms of the uniformity of sentence category distribution, it can be concluded that Balagha sentences have the most uniform frequency of usage distribution in the text. On the other hand, verb sentences have the least uniform frequency distribution. Shafie (1996) in Adli and Mohd Shahrizal (2010) states the Balagha or known as Arabic rhetoric is a knowledge that sees the accuracy of the text in terms of meaning, irregularity in terms of words and meanings, and beautification in terms of literature (aesthetics). However, this finding contrasts the study by Kamarulzaman (2010) who concludes that the use of Balagha sentences in the study text is the least uniform, but the use of complex sentences has the least uniform distribution of sentences, as well as by Ahmad Sabri (2017) where the distribution of complex sentences also shows a high uniformity of sentences.

CATEGORY OF CONTENT

The discussion for the content category is based on the findings in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Linguistic features by content category

Content category														
N (Text)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
f	74/ 25	72/ 28	122/ 48	65/ 28	80/ 23	40/ 13	88/ 30	135/ 45	64/ 21	155/ 58	75/ 20	144/ 37	95/ 23	90/ 25
/sentences	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Mean = 3.21 Standard deviation = 0.58														

The third category in linguistic characteristics, the content, recorded the frequency distribution of an average score of 3 sentences per text. With minimum and maximum average distances between 2 sentences and 4 sentences per text, the reading mean is 3.21 and the standard deviation is 0.58. Based on the calculation of the level score range setting divided into low, medium, and high as suggested by Preston and Colman (2000), it can be concluded that the majority of content in the text area is at a moderate level. These findings are in line with the study by Kamarulzaman (2010). This means that the difficulty of students to identify and master the content in a sentence depends on the students' skills of the linguistic elements of the language they are learning. This finding is confirmed by Alderson's (2000) statement that the difficulty of a passage is related to the level of content density, apart from the understanding of a reader who is also influenced by the level of existing knowledge.

Thus, it can be concluded that the distribution of elements in the categories of words, sentences, and content in the 14 texts as a whole is almost balanced. This illustrates that the frequency distribution of elements from the categories of words (word forms), sentences (Balagha), and the content in the 14 topics of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*) is adequate and appropriate to students' cognitive level.

THE LEVEL OF READABILITY OF KBD FORM FOUR ARABIC TEXTBOOKS

This discussion answers the second objective of this study, which is the level of readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*) based on the readability score measurement table recommended by Rye (1982).

TABLE 5. A measure of readability scores by Rye (1982)

Answer Score (%)	Readability Level
0 – 74	Frustration
75 – 89	Instructional
90 - 100	Independent

The discussion of the level of readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah* *al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*) is based on the details in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Textbook readability level

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Text A	17.95	4.91
Text B	24.71	8.73
Text C	22.05	7.81
Overall score	21.57	6.46

Table 6 shows the level of readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook through three cloze test texts. Based on the table, the mean readability score of Text B is found to be higher than Text C and Text A, with a mean value of 24.71 or a 25% readability score. Text C shows a mean score of 22.05, or a 22% readability score, while Text A only shows a mean score of 17.95, or an 18% readability score. The overall readability score of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook is 21.57, with a standard deviation of 6.46. Thus, the overall readability score is 22%, which is at a frustrating level.

This illustrates that the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook has reached a level of difficulty that exceeds the students' ability to master and understand the reading material. Indirectly, the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook is found less suitable to be used as reading material for students. These findings are similar to Halim (2012) and Husaini et al. (2014) in terms of the level of readability of Arabic textbooks. The results of the cloze tests found that the overall level of readability remains at a frustrating level, although the values in their study are a little higher than the results of the current study. Meanwhile, the findings by Arifin, Bakar, and Ahmad (2012) relating to the level of readability of Arabic Literature also show that the level of students' readability of the text is frustrating. However, these findings are contrary to Nik Mohd Rahimi, Sarizan, and Wan Normeza (2016) in terms of the level of Arabic

reading comprehension in the cloze test was at an instructional level.

Therefore, the frustrating findings from this readability level analysis are in line with the studies by Kamarulzaman (2010) and Maharoni (1999). Students at this level often found the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook, namely *al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*, too difficult. This means that students at this level have a poor standard of reading comprehension, are not fluent, and need to analyzed too many words before the reading activity begins. In addition, students at this level are also said to not use reading appropriately to the learning task, or reading is done only for diagnosis and can only be done if the students themselves are at a high level and interested in the reading material.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND THE READABILITY OF KBD FORM FOUR ARABIC TEXTBOOK

This discussion answers the third objective of this study, which is the relationship between linguistic features and the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*). The interpretation of the correlation coefficient of the strength of the relationship between the variables is based on the suggestion by Cohen (1988) as in Table 7.

TABLE 7. Interpretation of relationship strength correlation coefficients by Cohen (1988)

Correlation coefficient (r)	Strength of relationships
±0.10 - 0.29	Weak
0.30 - 0.49	Moderate
0.50 - 1.00	High

The results of Pearson's correlation test of linguistic characteristics with the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*) are shown in Table 8.

TABLE 8. The relationship between linguistic features and readability

	Linguistic features	r	Sig.	Strength of relationship
1	Word usage and recognition	-0.226	0.438	Weak
2	Word meaning	-0.272	0.346	Weak
3	Word construction	-0.422	0.133	Weak
4	Word form	0.200	0.493	Moderate
5	Verb sentences	*0.580	0.030	High
6	Noun sentences	-0.010	0.973	Weak
7	Verb long sentences	*0.532	0.050	High
8	Noun long sentences	-0.139	0.637	Weak
9	Sentence structure	0.392	0.166	Moderate
10	Sentence meaning	-0.229	0.431	Weak
11	Content	-0.097	0.742	Weak

*$p < 0.05$ (2-tail)

Discussion continues to identify the relationship between linguistic features and the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*) of students in five SABK zones using the Pearson's correlation test (r). In general, there is a significant relationship between linguistic features and the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook students of SABK ($p > 0.05$) on the verb sentence element in sentence familiarity features with a correlation value of r = 0.580, p < 0.05, and on the verb long sentence element in the sentence form feature with a correlation value of r = 0.532, p < 0.05. In line with the findings of a previous study by Kamarulzaman (2010), one of the linguistic features that have a strong correlation is on the verb sentence. This shows that the verb verse, which is not a common sentence form for Malay students or students of different races and languages at the same time, has affected the level of difficulty in reading and understanding Arabic texts. In addition, verb verses contribute to the readability of the text in addition to noun verses (Ahmad Sabri 2017). This finding is reinforced by Guthrie (1972) where long sentences are among the linguistic features that contribute a significant relationship to the readability of the text.

Other linguistic features show that there is a moderate but not significant positive relationship with the readability of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook; the elements of complex sentence (r = 0.392, p > 0.05) and word form (r = 0.200, p > 0.05). The analysis of this study shows that there is no direct relationship between these two variables possibly due to the readability scores obtained by the students being too low. Based on the context of this study, students react negatively to using Arabic words that are often borrowed in Malay. This finding is similar to a study by Ahmad Sabri (2017), Kamarulzaman, Irma Martiny, and Zaid Arafat (2014), and Zulazhan (2012) on the readability of 15 texts from Higher Arabic textbooks and Balagha of form four textbook. It was found that the use of complex sentences is more dominant with uniform usage. Through Duryhim's (1998) study in Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2018), the consistent use of complex sentences contributes to text readability. However, the results of the analysis for this complex sentence reject the study by Kamarulzaman, Ahmad Sabri, and Nik Mohd Rahimi (2017). The findings of the study state that linguistic features especially complex sentences have a significant negative relationship with the readability of textbooks. DuBay (2004) states that linguistic features especially for variables in the categories of words, sentences, and content should be able to reduce the burden before, during, and after students' reading activities in understanding and mastering a text.

It is concluded that 9 out of 11 categories in linguistic features in the reading text have no significant relationship with the readability score of the KBD Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*). Thus, the disappointing level of readability faced by Government-Aided Religious School Form Four students based on this finding has no direct relationship with the level of

use of linguistic features in the reading texts in the textbook. On the other hand, verb sentences have the potential to be used as a basis for measuring the readability of secondary reading texts.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study discusses the results of the analysis of the relationship between linguistic features and the readability of the Dini Integrated Curriculum Form Four Arabic textbook (*al-Lughah al-Arabiah al-Muasirah*) in Government-Aided Religious School. It can be concluded that the production of quality Arabic textbooks requires more interesting and quality modifications by the cognitive level of students. The results of the study can also be utilized by the authorities to ensure the materials contained in Arabic textbooks can attract students to continue reading and learning more actively.

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