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DEVELOPING A WORDLIST FOR PRIMARY SCIENCE TEXTBOOKS IN DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

Dual Language Programme (DLP) refers to the use of English as a medium of instruction in the teaching of science and mathematics subjects in primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. It also an initiative programme to give students more contact to English language; thus, that will help improve develop English proficiency among students. The implementation of the program in a school is optional, which means the decision to have a DLP in a particular school is left to the school headmaster and parents, as parent groups played a critical role to bring back English as a medium of instruction in the national school system. However, one of main issues in the implementation of DLP is students' linguistic readiness to learn in English, particularly students in primary school. There are no clear guidelines on students' linguistic readiness in the selection criteria for admission to the programme. Thus, this study examines the readability of the textbooks used in primary school to understand the level of difficulty of the language. The preliminary study showed that a significant number of words and terminologies used in primary Year 1 science textbook are of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B2 and higher, and this suggests the difficulty in learning science in terms of language. Hence, this study proposes is to generate a wordlist for science textbooks in DLP in primary schools based on CEFR readability difficulty levels. All units or topics from the science textbooks for each grade level (Year 1 to Year 6) were selected, processed and analysed. This paper discusses how the language used in science textbooks was analysed using the readability reference manager Text Inspector to generate the wordlist. Text Inspector is a web tool to measure the readability of the vocabulary based on the Lexis: EVP (English Vocabulary Profile) in accordance to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The findings highlight the sample list of words based on the CEFR readability levels of the science textbooks. The wordlist is beneficial to create the awareness and help science teachers to identify words that may pose difficulty for students to comprehend the lesson as well as in designing assessment tasks, and to those involved in textbook/learning material writing.

Keywords: Dual-Language Programme, science, readability, wordlist, CEFR