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An Exploration of Foreign Language Anxiety and Its Effect to Reading Comprehension

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A B S T R A C T

Foreign language anxiety commonly appears in reading, it causes the brain to engaged with unpleasant feelings that it become difficult to seize new information. Thus, this research aimed to classify the levels of students' reading anxiety and to find the significant difference in reading comprehension between students with higher level of reading anxiety and lower level of reading anxiety. A descriptive design was employed to conduct this research. The data were collected from the first-year students of English Language Education at a Private University in Riau using adapted Questionnaires from Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Inventory (EFLRAI). The result of this research revealed that 8 or 14% of the students are categorize as low anxious level, then 39 or 66% of the students are categorize as medium anxious level and 12 or 20% of them are classified as high anxious level. Furthermore, according to the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test analysis, it figured out that students with lower levels of anxiety outperform the students with higher levels of anxiety in terms of reading comprehension, with a p value of 0.011.

Keywords: A*nxiety, foreign language, reading*

INTRODUCTION

Language, as a tool for communication that is used all over the world, must be learned as a piece of general knowledge in this fast-paced era. Even if there are certain differences in customs, culture, traditions, and area, English is utilized as a common language. Because English has many similarities, it has been regarded as a global language by speakers of hundreds of different languages (Srinivas Rao, 2019). English also plays an important role in the intellectual, social, and emotional development of students, assisting them to success in learn all of their lessons (Parmawati, 2018) as well for students in Indonesia.

In learning English, Reading as one of four skills that needs to be developed both inside and outside classroom can also be mentioned as one of the most common ways to capture some information (Marleni, 2017). Satriani (2018) mentions that reading is one aspect of language skills that is essential in life, both at school and at university. Moreover, reading requires several aspects such as specification and ability. Then, the readers need to know the language rules to be able to read properly in order to gain the information from reading materials (Ayu et al., 2021).

In addition, reading is important for learning in a modern academic situation (Etfita, 2016) and it is also essential when learning English as a foreign language. It can support

learners in extending their knowledge because they can obtain a lot of information through reading (Dewi et al., 2020). Bria et al., (2019) add that reading becomes one of the most emphasized English basic skills in the context of traditional foreign language teaching and learning; even today, reading is still regarded as the most important English skill for instruction in many foreign countries. After reading, the reader's understanding of numerous sorts of texts, the reader must have high focus and text ability so that the pupils can obtain information and understand the text (Sinuraya et al., 2021).

It is a difficult task to stimulate the attention of all learners in reading. Although many children are habituated to reading, other students do not enjoy reading even when they are given the freedom to choose the title and genre of the book (Tiara et al., 2021). Moreover, some of them do not understand what they are reading so it causes the students feel anxious when they are reading. Students experience anxiety about what others will think of them when they perform their English, the familiarity of the topic used in English learning, how low their achievement may be, and so on (Santoso et al., 2013). Students experience anxiety regardless of their preparation for learning that language (Sutarsyah, 2017). For example, they are concerned about what others will think of them when they perform their English, the familiarity of the topic used in English learning, how low their achievement may be, and so on (Santoso et al., 2013).

Furthermore, anxiety in reading is a personal phobia associated with the act of reading (Aisyah, 2017). Anxiety, which makes the students harder to learn then the students feel anxious when they read some material from lecturer, book, and other resources. Anxiety is seen as an emotional impediment to second language acquisition (Yanti & Hardi, 2019). Thus, it is important to overcome reading anxiety since it can impair their ability to learn. Moreover, anxiety has been shown to have a detrimental effect on learning and achievement. It can block learners from achieving learning objectives

According to Yoon (2012), anxiety is a psychological symptom that occurs when people are nervous in new situations. This cannot be quantified because it is deeply associated with human feelings and emotions such as nervousness, tension, frustration, and uneasiness. A normal human emotion that can be triggered by any internal or external change, uncertain situation, or feeling of uncertainty Then Huang (2012) also mention that anxiety is described as a subjective feeling of stress, fear, anxiety and worry associated with automatic nervous system arousal. That is, when people are confronted with an unfamiliar situation, it is natural for the majority of them to experience the same feelings, namely nervousness and tenseness, which can also be interpreted as anxiety.

Moreover, Booth & Tekeş (2019) argue that anxiety consists of two components: worry and emotionally. Worry or cognitive anxiety refers to negative perceptions and cognitive worries about oneself, the situation at hand, and potential consequences, and emotional or somatic anxiety concerns one's understanding of the physiological-affective elements of anxiety experience, which are signs of automatic arousal and uncomfortable feelings, such as nervousness, stomach upset, heart ache, tension and sweating. A type of anxiety can occur in a variety of conditions. Dixon (2019) in his book claims there are a variety of symptoms of anxiety in our such as body, mind, and actions that display signs of anxiety.

The explanations above show that all experts have almost the same idea of the symptoms of anxiety. So, it can be concluded that anxiety is a state of apprehension affecting the nervous system and the physical condition. Further, anxiety is one of the factors that influences students in reading English. Students who are scared and worried about reading English might be worried.

Foreign language reading anxiety is characterized by apprehension and worry when students are required to read in a language that is not their native language (Rajab et al.,

2012). A study of anxiety in foreign languages conducted by Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi (2019) has shown that anxiety can prevent language learners from acquiring a higher level of proficiency in foreign languages and is negatively linked to learning foreign language. Unlike first-language (L1), the reading of second-language (L2) is more complicated. When L2 readers read second-language texts, they try to interpret unfamiliar scripts, writing systems, and cultural materials. If students find it difficult to process them, they can get frustrated with reading and experience anxieties. (Saito et al., 1999) describe that the anxiety aroused during the L2 reading process is known as reading anxiety.

Anxiety in the second language is higher than in the first language because of self-perception, the reader is more comfortable in the first language than in the second language (Berzegar & Hadidi, 2016). The anxiety experienced by learners worsens when they face reading material in English, particularly their reading difficulties than reading material in first language. They master the first language before they learn English, they know about pronunciation, stress, temp, intonation, word writing, structure, and words. They learn the first language from child. Whereas in the second language, they would learn from the same rule as they did in their childhood, but because of two different languages, which have different meanings, pronunciations, and writing in different appointments, there is uncertainty as to how to apply what they learned in the course of reading

Reading anxiety is inherently more difficult to identify because, unlike speaking anxiety, immediate responses are not required (Al faruq, 2019). Reading anxiety is an emotional and physical symptom that arises during a reading session. Foreign language reading anxiety is characterized by apprehension and worry when students attempt to read and comprehend a foreign language text (Muhlis, 2017). Reading anxiety is an individual phobia of fear, pain, confusion, bad experience, or difficulty. Difficulties in reading also have an effect on students' reading anxiety. Reading anxiety will make the student lose his or her motivation to try again in reading class as a result, giving up on the expectation that he or she will fail again and be prone to quit.

In addition, reading anxiety is a distinct phenomenon of foreign-language anxiety in general, (Muhlis, 2017). In other words, reading is often an oral performance, since the learners demonstrate their individual acts to communicate with the text. So, we concluded that the anxieties, worries, and phobias of the role of reading are a major obstacle to reading success (Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010). Like talking, the student will feel nervous when they communicate with others. But, in the reading process, there is a phenomenon of anxiety among the learners, such that most learners do not know that, during the reading process, anxiety has been established as one of the factors that may impede the reading process. And this anxiety occurs when learners attempt to decode or interpret non-native language text.

In brief, reading anxiety is a unique type of anxiety. in the reading process, there is a phenomenon of anxiety among the learners, such that most learners do not know that, during the reading process, anxiety has been established as one of the factors that may impede the reading process (Rajab et al., 2012). Additionally, Saito et al., (1999) has developed two indicators of reading anxiety, such as unfamiliar writing scripts and unfamiliar cultural background.

Based on the researcher's observation in reading class in the second semester at English language education of FKIP UIR, it seems that some of students in English language education had problem in reading especially during online learning. The researcher got information that the problems caused by some factors of the phenomenon of student anxiety in reading, for example limited vocabulary, lack of reading comprehension ability and the cultural background. Concerning issues above, the researchers wanted to investigate the level of students' reading anxiety and its effect to reading comprehension.

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive quantitative design with questionnaire and reading test as the instruments. The questionnaire adapted from the research by Saito, Horwitz and Garza on Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRAS) and its association with General Foreign Language Anxiety (1999). The research' questionnaire consists of 20 closed questions that focus on students reading anxiety. The researcher made an electronic questionnaire in the form of a Google Form, then distributed it to the 59 of the first-year students of English language education in FKIP UIR. Because this type of questionnaire is a closed questionnaire, students only choose the answers available without having to think about their own answers. The FLRAS questionnaire using 5-point Likert scale that is consists of two kinds of positive and negative statements. According to (Riduwan, 2018), the positive statements ranged from 5-1 with the answer "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." While the negative scale of the statement will range from 1-5 with the answer "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." There are 4 positive statements in the questionnaires numbered 12, 13, 14 and 18. While the negative statements are at number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9, 10, 11, 15,16, 17, 19, 20.

As for the level of anxiety categorization, the scales used for research, consisting of 20 response items, ranged from 1-5, with a total score of 100. The following table is the score for each level of anxiety perceived by students. After getting the score of each student, the data was analysed by using SPSS version 26 to find descriptive statistics which contains means, standard deviations, and percentage. The descriptive statistic numbers was used to determine the categorization of the reading anxiety levels which is divided into three levels of low, medium and high anxiety (Subasi, 2014) as written in Table 1.

Table 1. The Formula to Categorize the Score of the Reading Anxiety Levels

Level	Formula	Explanation
Low	Mean + Standard Deviation	The score is higher than this
High	Mean – Standard Deviation	The score is lower than this
Medium	Low > Medium > High	Between low and high score

Furthermore, to find the significant difference in reading comprehension between students with higher level of reading anxiety and lower level of reading anxiey, the researcher used SPSS version 26 with Man-Whitney U Test. According to (Rosie, 2004) Mann-Whitney U test is a non-parametic test. Man-Whitney U Test can be used instead of an unpaired t-test. It's used to see if two samples are from the same population (i.e. have the same median) or if observations in one sample are greater than observations in the other.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First, to find out the students reading anxiety level, the researcher calculated students' score in Reading test manually with a range of score starting from 0 to 100. Then, the score of each student questionnaire was analysed by using SPSS to find descriptive statistics which contains means, standard deviations and percentage. The descriptive statistic numbers were used to determine the categorization of the reading anxiety levels which is divided into three levels of low, medium and high anxiety.

As stated above, the researcher found that the mean score and standard deviation were calculated as M = 59 and SD = 6. According to given formula in Table 2, the students with scores higher than 65 were categorized as low anxious, then the students with scores lower than 53 were categorized as high anxious and the students having scores between 54 and 64 were categorized as medium anxious.

Table 2. The Formula to Categorize the Score of the Reading Anxiety Levels

Level	Formula	Score
Low	59 + 6	>65
High	59– 6	<53
Medium	53 > M >65	54-64

Furthermore, based on the categorize score of the reading anxiety level, the researcher found that 8 or 14% of students are categorize as low anxious. Then, 39 or 66% of students are categorize as medium anxious and 12 or 20% of students are categorize as high anxious. The percentage of students categorize can be seen in Figure 1.
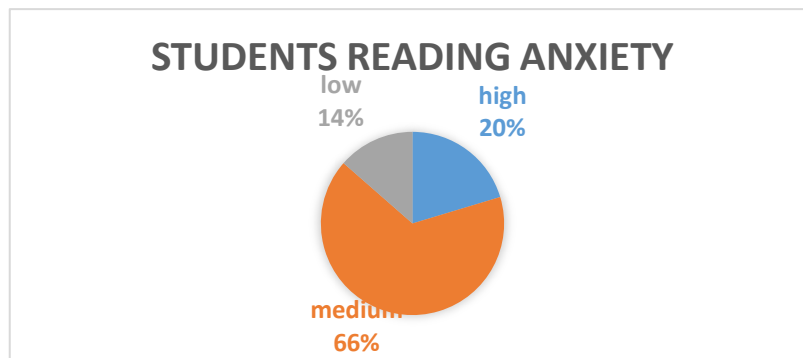

Figure 1. The Percentage of Level of Students Reading Anxiety

After categorizing the level of reading anxiety, the researcher took 8 students who were categorized as low level reading anxiety group and 12 students who were categorized as high level reading anxiety to be compared with students reading comprehension as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Result of the Reading Comprehension Test

	Higher Level Reading Anxiety		Lower Level Reading Anxiety	
No.	Reading Anxiety Score	Reading Comprehension Score	Reading Anxiety Score	Reading Comprehension Score
1	53	67	66	82
2	53	72	67	82
3	53	77	65	90
4	50	72	66	90
5	45	72	66	77
6	49	82	68	82
7	42	82	70	90
8	46	72	67	77
9	48	72		
10	51	77		
11	51	82		
12	53	82		
Total	594	909	535	670
Mean	49.5	75.75	66.87	83.75

Moreover, to reveal the difference in reading score between students with high- and low-level anxiety, the researcher use Mann-Whitney U test as calculated in Figure 2 below:

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test result of Higher and Lower RA

Test Statistics[a]	
	reading comprehension
Mann-Whitney U	16,000
Wilcoxon W	94,000
Z	-2,557
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,011
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	,012[b]

a. Grouping Variable: level

b. Not corrected for ties.

The result of the data in Figure 2 shows that the p value is 0.011 with a level of significance 16.000. (in Mann-Whitney U test, it is that U value). It can be interpreted that there is a statistically significant difference in reading comprehension score between students with a higher level of anxiety and students with a lower level of anxiety. By looking at the means of the data above, it can also state that the students with lower levels of anxiety have better reading comprehension score. The findings of this research is also in line with the research done by Trisnayanti et al., (2020) and Mardianti et al., (2021). They state that the anxiety implied to the students' reading comprehension. The anxiety influences the students' ability in identifying main idea, finding detail information, finding references, and understanding words and phrases.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of this research shows that majority of the students categorized as Medium level of reading anxiety. The researcher found that 14% of students are categorize as low anxious, 66% of students are categorize as medium anxious and 20% of students are categorize as high anxious. The researcher also found that students with lower levels of anxiety performed better on their reading test than those with higher levels of anxiety. The mean reading comprehension score between the two groups provided a significant gap for the writer to generalize their achievement. Because the p value (0.011) was significantly lower than the U value (16.000), The two groups had a statistically significant difference in reading comprehension score.

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