

## **Investigating Students' Reading Anxiety and Their Factors**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to know what are the factors that lead students to reading anxiety in English foreign language and to know what are the level of anxiety. By using qualitative research, the data were obtained from questionnaires of both. This research was conducted with total 30 students at XI IPS 4 of SMAN 2 Indramayu. To get the data, researcher used two questionnaires by Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) questionnaire, contained to 26 statements for the factor reading anxiety and 20 statements for reading level anxiety. After the data was found and it was calculated using the likert scale formula, the data was categorized based the interpretation. The result of this research showed that from the level of reading anxiety was found in the position high level of reading anxiety with score 50% (15 respondent) chose by students, other student 46,7% into medium level reading anxiety (14 respondent), and 3,3% into low level reading anxiety (1 respondent). And the factor that lead students reading anxiety were found fear of making errors as the biggest score 78%. Unfamiliar topic with mean 75%. Unknown vocabulary 74%. Unfamiliar culture 72%. And the lower factor that lead students in reading anxiety were worry about reading effect with mean 70%.

**Keywords:** Factors of reading anxiety, Level of reading anxiety

### **A. Introduction**

Reading skill is the most important skill to achieve modern-day knowledge and it is an important fundamental receptive skill student relies much on for

academic purposes in higher education (Ahmad et al, 2013). Anuar et al. (2020) found difficulties in mastering critical reading, such as lack of motivation, low English proficiency, mental exhaustion, fear of negative feedback, and fear of being wrong. From this list, it can be seen that most difficulties cause anxiety by Perrodin et al., (2022). Complex reading texts and high reading demands in critical reading can increase the likelihood of students feeling anxious in reading. Under the context of English as a foreign language or second language, students' affective factors may contribute to acquiring the target language.

Krashen (1982) has narrowed down the elements based on the frequency of its use in research variables into motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Within the area of anxiety or specifically mentioned as language anxiety, MacIntyre & Gardner (1989) defined it as "the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language." The negative feelings could hinder the process of learning a language. Reading is perceived as a less anxiety-provoking activity in that it is fundamentally an individual task and allows for reconsideration Saito et. al., (1999: 202), there is still a sense of threat, which triggers anxiety in learners of any foreign language. During the learning process, students have reading anxiety, when the teacher asks students to read the text aloud in front of the class, some of them read in a very low voice, they have been reminded to read aloud but still, in a low voice, it seems because students are afraid of making mistakes in reading. The anxiety students when reading feeling such as trembling hands, excessive sweating, trembling voice, and excessive nervousness, looking for the most factors that cause students to feel anxiety about reading and the level of anxiety experienced by these students, but rarely discussed students' reading anxiety level and their factors at senior high school.

Song, (2010, p. 50), stated that reading anxiety could provide many disadvantages for students. They will miss their opportunity to use English to improve their language skills, especially in reading. In addition, anxiety could hinder students from understanding the contents of the reading. It could be seen when students express feelings of frozen, nervous, intimidated, confused, and worried tense during the reading process. Some researchers have researched the

phenomenon of anxiety among learners, but most learners do not realize that during the progress of reading, anxiety has been stated as one of the factors which can obstruct the reading process. The similar research by Kamil &Fitrawati (2023) explained that each students experienced anxiety with different levels. From 30 participants, more than half participants experienced reading anxiety at medium level, as much 60% (20 participants) fell to a medium anxiety level. For the factors, the researcher found that unknown vocabulary theme elicited biggest percentage score in total agreement as the factors that caused anxiety in reading. The other similar research by Abubakar, et, al (2020) reported that the students have some symptoms of reading anxiety commonly recognized by the students, they are the students feel upset when they are not sure whether they understand what they are reading, they often understand the meaning of the word but they still cannot understand what the author intends to say, and the students always translate word by word when they are reading English.

For the factors of reading anxiety Ahmad et al. (2013) said that there are two kinds factor that elicit foreign language reading anxiety, there are personal factors including worry about reading effect, and fear of making error, text features including unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topic and unfamiliar culture. The level of foreign language reading anxiety depends on the particular target language and differ across target languages. The level of reading anxiety for each participants is represented by total score of every item from the questionnaire. The criteria the level of students reading anxiety were categorized into Low, Medium, and High. Departing from the background, this research has two objectives, the first is to know the level of reading anxiety, and the second is to identify the potential factors that lead students feel anxious when they read English text.

## **B. Research methodology**

This study applies a descriptive qualitative method, which aims to find out what factors and levels of reading anxiety are applied by students in one of class XI, especially in reading skills. It means that the study describes the factual and natural data obtained in the field of the research. According to Creswell (2013)

qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.

This research used two questionnaires as instrument. According to Creswell (2012), a questionnaire is a form used in a survey design that participants in a study complete and return to the researcher. Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) questionnaire, containing 20 items statements related to reading anxiety, was used too see reading anxiety level. Menwhile, second questionnaire, containing 26 items statements related to factor of reading anxiety. The kind of instrument with answers response option ranged from Strongly Agree (5), Agree, (4) Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).

According to Bakri in Laurensia et al. (2021) data analysis is reviewing, sorting, and classifying data to formulatenworking hypotheses and raise them into conclusions or theories in research findings. The data analysis in this research belong to qualitative data analysis. The data analysis was taken from questionnaires students XI IPS 4 SMAN 2 Indramayu in reading anxiety.

Data analysis is needed to answer research questions. That covers the factor of anxiety felt by students in reading English. The data is analyzed manually by Likert Scale microsoft excel. This is the data analysis how to get know the level students reading anxiety:

1. Count the score from the questionnaires.
2. Count the mean
3. Count the SD
4. And count the category of reading anxiety level with the formula.

### **The Formulation category of Reading Anxiety**

Low	Mean - SD
Medium	Between Low and High
High	Mean + SD

And the data analysis to what are the factor that cause students anxiety in reading.

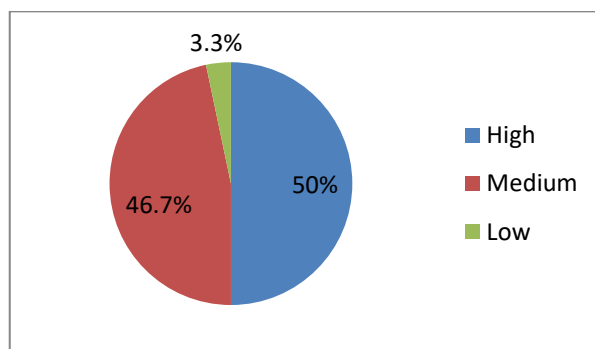
1. Count the score from the questionnaires.
2. Count the score from an aspect
3. Count the score from a statement

## **C. Result and Discussion**

### **1. Result**

This section presented the relevant data of the research question which is students' reading anxiety level. It provides participants' response towards 20 questionnaires items. The level of foreign language reading anxiety depends on the particular target language and differ across target languages. The level of reading anxiety for each participants is represented by total score of every item from the questionnaire. The criteria the level of students reading anxiety were categorized into low, medium, and high. The level of reading anxiety is an emotional and physical symptom that occurs when reading, this level of anxiety can be seen on a scale. The participants with high, medium, and low reading anxiety were determined by adding and subtracting the standard deviation to the mean score.

### The Distribution of Reading Anxiety



The potential factors of reading anxiety were analyzed from students' answer toward 26 items developments questionnaire by Ahmad et al. (2013).

### The Dominant Percentage of the Potential Factors of Foreign Language Reading Anxiety

Items	Themes	Percentage	Category
1-6	Unknown Vocabulary	74%	Agree
7-10	Unfamiliar Topic	75%	Agree
11-15	Unfamiliar Culture	72%	Agree
16-20	Fear of Making Errors	78%	Agree
21-26	Worry about Reading Effect	70%	Agree
Total Score		74%	Agree

The result showed in five themes and two aspects, the aspects are text features and personal factors and for the themes are unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topic, unfamiliar culture, fear of making errors, and worry about reading effect. Total score showed that from five themes categories students factors reading anxiety have 74%, which mean for most students agree to felt that. Fear of making errors were the prime choice that students chose, with total score

78% students agree for the main factor is fear of making errors. Under unfamiliar topic it was found that students agree with score 75% it was second position. In unknown vocabulary there were 74,% who students agree with the statements in unfamiliar topic. The position between unknown vocabulary and unfamiliar topic is only very slightly different, this means that the second and third position is unfamiliar topic 75% and unknown vocabulary 74%. Subsequently, unfamiliar culture with percentage 72% was applied in the fourth position, and the fifth position that students agree was worry about reading effect with percentage 70% students agree the factor that lead reading anxiety.

#### **The Percentage of Unknown Vocabulary**

<b>No</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Category</b>
1.	When I am reading in English, I get very upset and worried whenever I encounter strange vocabulary.	68%	Agree
2.	I focus on words in reading English texts because if I know the terms, I can understand the text	77%	Agree
3.	I feel anxious in reading English when I encounter series of three strange words	65%	Agree
4.	I enjoy reading a text in English when I know its translation	91%	Strongly Agree
5.	I do not like to read an English text that has lots of difficult words	73%	Agree
6.	When I am reading in English, I feel upset and anxious if I encounter strange vocabulary	70%	Agree

#### **The Percentage of Unfamiliar Topic**

No	Statements	Percentage	Category
7.	I enjoy English reading when I understand at least some portion of the text	85%	Strongly Agree
8.	I do not prefer reading unfamiliar topics, particularly in the English language	63%	Agree
9.	The most things I like to read in English are short stories because they have easy words, and their topics are common	75%	Agree
10.	I feel anxious when I am reading a topic in the English language which I have no idea about	76%	Agree

#### The Percentage of Unfamiliar Culture

No	Statements	Percentage	Category
11.	In reading English, I hardly understand the idea if there is more than one meaning for each word	71%	Agree
12.	When I read English, I often understand the words, but I still cannot quite understand what the writer says	73%	Agree
13.	I usually translate word by word when I am reading English	77%	Agree
14.	It is frustrating in reading English when one word is connected with another to change the meaning	78%	Agree

15.	I most often feel that I cannot understand an English text even though I know every word's meaning	61%	Agree
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#### The Percentage of Fear of making Error

No	Statements	Percentage	Category
16.	I feel anxious in reading aloud in fear of making errors.	81%	Strongly Agree
17.	I feel embarrassed in front of others if I pronounce a simple and easy word wrongly.	77%	Agree
18.	I prefer to prepare too much and search for the phonetic transcript prior to the class if I was expected to read in the class.	73%	Agree
19.	I feel irritated if I encounter a word I do not know how it is pronounced	80%	Strongly Agree
20.	I prefer silent reading rather than reading aloud.	80%	Strongly Agree

#### The Percentage of Worry About Reading Effect

No	Statements	Percentage	Category
21.	When I am reading aloud, I focus on reading correctly rather than focusing on understanding the text.	71%	Agree
22.	In reading aloud in the class, I do not understand the text	63%	Agree

	even though it is easy.		
23.	I enjoy silent reading because I can easily understand the text.	76%	Agree
24.	When I reading aloud in the class, I focus on word accent rather than understanding.	70%	Agree
25.	I get upset when I am not sure whether I understand what I am reading in English or not.	77%	Agree
26.	When reading English, I get disturbed and do not remember what I have read.	62%	Agree

## 2. Discussion

The level of reading anxiety is an emotional and physical symptom that occurs when reading. The participants with high, medium, and low reading anxiety were determined by adding and subtracting the standard deviation to the mean score. In the same line, a high level of anxiety leads to an uneasiness and anxiety, while a low level of anxiety creates positive effects on learning and turns it into an impulsive power in an individual, which makes the effect stimulating and motivating Baki (2017). Foreign language reading anxiety has a negative effect on cognitive and behavioral processes because in language classes, physical, cognitive, and behavioral anxiety are symptoms that influence each other.

The results on this research showed a half of students fell into high level reading anxiety, on high level have several symptoms of high anxiety are frequent and persistent and may include increased heart rate, feelings of panic, and social

withdrawal. Other students fell into low and medium level anxiety with several symptoms, low anxiety symptoms may present as social anxiety or shyness and can be experienced in childhood and adulthood. If left untreated, low anxiety can lead to maladaptive coping strategies or more high mental conditions. And people with medium levels of anxiety have more frequent or persistent symptoms than people with high anxiety, but still have better daily functioning than someone with high anxiety. For example, people with medium anxiety may report experiencing symptoms such as feeling restless, being unable to control their worries, or being unable to relax some days or most days of the week, but not every day.

Furthermore, this researcher found the biggest factors that lead students felt anxiety was fear of making errors, the second position unfamiliar topic, the third position unknown vocabulary, and unfamiliar culture, the last worry about reading effects. And it can be concluded that in this research, one of the factors can result from the judgement or pressure of others that can trigger about fear of making errors. With the fear factor of making mistakes, this causes students to feel embarrassed, their bodies tremble, they sweat coldly, thus triggering and giving rise to feelings of discomfort, fear and negative thoughts.

#### **D. Conclusion and Suggetion**

##### **1. Conclusion**

Based on the finding and discussion an investigating students' reading anxiety and their factors were found the level of reading anxiety in a senior high level school it could be concluded that students experiences in high level reading anxiety with percentage 50%, as much 46.7% in medium level, and 3.3% in the low level. It means, student in that school have symptoms that feel very nervous when reading, they thought about something that might not happen, so that when reading texts in English their hands shake, their bodies sweat, their voices are soft and shaky, and some cover their faces with the books and texts they are reading.

There are several item factors that lead students reading anxiety, the indicates are two aspects text features and personal factors, in text features there are several item such as unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topic, and unfamiliar culture. On

personal factors there are fear of making errors, as much percentage score 78% the dominant factor was fear of making errors, unfamiliar topic with percentage 75%, unknown vocabulary with percentage 74%, unfamiliar culture with percentage 72%, and worry about reading text 70%. Whereas in the current study the largest scores on personal factors with percentage remained in the same position, namely fear of making errors. It is hoped that the findings of this research be able to be used as input to teachers and students in an effort to create an effective classroom environment in reading English texts.

## **2. Suggestion**

This research is expected to provide benefits for future researchers in reading the context of anxiety. This can be a reference for research that has a reading concept. This research focuses on high school students, for further research it can also be used at other levels such as middle school or university. This research only uses questionnaires to collect data, it is hoped that in the future we can also add interviews during data collection.

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