

Investigating Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Among Indonesian Postgraduate Students in Malaysian University

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Abstract

Postgraduate students are mainly required to comprehend academic writing. This is because they are expected to conduct research based on a specific topic and later publish it in the form of journal articles. As such, it is quite expected of them to constantly read academic materials on a daily basis. Yet, some may struggle at committing themselves to it, especially those whose mother tongue is not English. This study aims to find out the factors, challenges, and solutions of the language reading anxiety faced by Indonesian postgraduate students in Malaysian universities. This qualitative study involved 7 postgraduate students chosen from various departments in Malaysian universities. The data were collected by using a semi-structured interview, where Braun and Clark's thematic analysis was later used to analyze the data. Based on the findings, it was found that there are three factors affecting the students' reading anxiety: vocabulary and grammatical problems, interest in reading topics, and difficulty in understanding texts. It was also found that there are three challenges faced: pronunciation, keeping motivation in reading, and understanding the indirect meaning. These students also suggested some suggestions which are to do reading practices and use Google features regularly. Thus, it can be concluded that Indonesian postgraduate students must practice reading different academic texts more and gain their vocabulary to ease them to understand and comprehend any kind of reading texts, especially in English.

Keywords: Reading Anxiety, Indonesian University Students, EFL, Postgraduate Students, Academic Writing

Introduction

Reading is regarded as an important skill for second or foreign-language learners in academic settings. It is a required ability for students to comprehend reading materials. This is because their academic achievement is partially determined by their ability to read and comprehend written materials. Nevertheless, its definition and roles are varied; some of the highlighted ones include its status as the most critical ability to learn to achieve higher

development and success in all academic disciplines (Anderson, 2004). Reading ability is also an essential quality to gain knowledge from published references. Meanwhile, one perceives it as an ability to develop a credible interpretation of the writer's message and material (Clapham, 2009). Chen and Intaraprasert (2014) add that it is the capacity to comprehend written or printed symbols and it enables students to learn more about the target language and culture, so it can expand one's knowledge. However, foreign language students typically worry and have anxiety when learning such a language, particularly in reading class (Horwitz et al., 1986; Saito et al., 1999). According to Faruq (2019), foreign language learners have challenges acquiring reading skills in a second language (L2) as the target language. It is because numerous elements, such as unfamiliar scripts, writing systems, and cultural material, have influenced foreign language reading. Such as, language learners fear reading, especially in classrooms because they are afraid of making mistakes in front of the class and having their friends laugh. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) explained that anxiety in learning a foreign language has a detrimental impact on cognitive processing and behavior since they both influence each other. According to Krashen (1982), learners with a high level of anxiety may be unable to utilize the understandable input they get for language learning properly. There are various obstacles in foreign language acquisition since there are other aspects to consider, such as language proficiency, and cultural background, especially concerning reading and learner motivation. Texts with unknown cultural characteristics may give students anxiety since they may be unable to comprehend the cultural aspects of the target language (Saito et al., 1999; Mohideen et al., 2020).

Based on a report by UNESCO (2020), Indonesia ranks 69th of 127 countries in reading competence, where only 1 out of 1000 people in Indonesia enjoy reading. In another report, more than 91% of Indonesians between ten and above preferred watching television, with the remaining 17% opting to read other sources such as books, newspapers, and periodicals Badan Pusat Statistik (2018) However, this is not the case when it comes to reading texts in their native language because Indonesians tend to have difficulty understanding foreign languages, especially English where reading involves sentences that are challenging and may cause anxiety (Bernhardt, 2010). Several studies have explored other factors affecting language learners' anxiety (Miao & Vibulphol, 2021). Alsowat (2016) found several factors affecting students' language anxiety: worrying about the consequences of failing, forgetting things they know, and uneasiness during language tests. Not only that, teachers' personalities and behavior, teaching methods, and pedagogical practices in the classroom affected their language learning anxiety. Moreover, Anwar and Louis (2017); Ali and Anwar (2021) found that students' fear of negative evaluation towards language learning affected their language anxiety. The gender of the students and the level of the foreign language they learn affected their language anxiety (Ko-Yin & Xiaoshi, 2019).

Indonesian national language is Bahasa Indonesia, which also serves as the national language of instruction in the educational system. Despite English being taught since elementary school, students are generally unaware of its importance as an international language (EIL) due to the lack of explanation about this, besides the fact that English is learned for the purpose of fulfilling the curriculum. Many Indonesian students, including those pursuing postgraduate studies abroad, especially in Malaysia, often experience anxiety when learning English. This sentiment is prevalent among students, reflecting a broader concern about language acquisition and proficiency, particularly in an international academic context, especially in reading. This is not an exclusive phenomenon there are even those who pursue

their postgraduate abroad with anxiety at reading English texts as part of their study program requirements.

Based on results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in Indonesia (2018), 30% achieved at least level 2 reading proficiency where at a minimum, these students can identify the main ideas in medium-length texts to find information based on explicit criteria, although sometimes complex, and can reflect the purpose and form of the text when explicitly directed.

A large number of Indonesian students choose Malaysia for their postgraduate studies, with approximately 10,280 students enrolled there (Statista Research Department, 2022). Unlike many other Asian countries, Malaysian universities primarily use English as the language of instruction. Consequently, proficient reading skills in English are crucial for international students in Malaysia especially for Indonesian students, as they are essential for academic writing tasks like thesis and assignments. This highlights the significance of investigating reading anxiety among Indonesian students studying in Malaysia.

Proficiency in English reading is vital for international students in Malaysia, facilitating academic tasks like final projects, assignments, and dissertations. This study specifically targets Indonesian master's students at the National University of Malaysia, aiming to comprehend reading anxiety among them. Investigating reading anxiety among Indonesian students, particularly those pursuing master's degrees, is crucial. By examining how their academic surroundings impact their anxiety levels, this research offers valuable insights into the dynamics of reading anxiety among Indonesian students studying at the National University of Malaysia.

Researchers are keen to delve into this case, particularly focusing on master's students continuing their studies at the National University of Malaysia, to uncover the underlying causes of their anxiety regarding reading in a foreign language. According to a survey, many college students enrolled in higher education struggle with reading comprehension, hampering their ability to benefit fully from their courses (Abraham, 1955). Given that reading is fundamental to knowledge transfer and growth in academic contexts (Seyabi & Tuzlukova, 2015). Mastering English reading poses significant challenges, particularly for college students studying in a non-native language. Beyond the cognitive effort required for reading in any language, which involves coordinating attention, memory, perception, and understanding processes Kuru-Gonen (2009), foreign language students must contend with additional factors such as language proficiency, cultural background, and learner motivation (Sellers & Lee, 2009).

This research focuses on Indonesian postgraduate students who continue their studies at the National University of Malaysia. In general, there is a need to investigate the problem of reading anxiety among Indonesian students, especially among master students. In Indonesia, the language of instruction is Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, the isolation of reading anxiety among Indonesian students will provide a clear picture of the influence of these students' environment on reading anxiety because they are expected to study and read in English. Thus, the present study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the factors of foreign language reading anxiety among Indonesian students in Malaysian universities?
2. What are the challenges of foreign language reading anxiety faced among Indonesian students in Malaysian Universities?
3. What are the solutions given by Indonesian students in Malaysian universities for foreign language reading anxiety?

Literature Review

Teaching of Reading

Reading is an essential component of learning a second or foreign language. Furthermore, the primary goal of reading is to obtain and seek information. The purpose of reading, according to Zwiers (2004), is to construct the meaning of text, letters, words, and sentences in order to understand and comprehend the reading text. Reading is a fluent process in which the reader combines textual information and background knowledge to construct meaning (Linse, 2005). Students, particularly university students, must be able to read. The ability to read relevant materials critically, analyse, and evaluate knowledge is required at all stages of university education (Bharuthram, 2012).

Regarding these critical literacy responsibilities, Indonesians have the lowest literacy rate in the world, ranking 60th out of 61 nations (Gunawan, 2016). Reading is frequently seen as a boring pastime by university students. She claims that the lack of interest in reading is due to a lack of previous information, an inability to grasp the text's substance, and a complex organisational structure. Various researchers have proposed some ways to improve reading ability. According to Tupan (2004), one approach for pupils to develop their reading skills is for the instructor to provide practical resources for classroom reading activities. In her opinion, authentic content, such as advertisements, might be appropriate reading material for teaching learners to think critically to uncover the underlying message.

Astika (1992) emphasised the importance of increasing reading abilities through systematic reading instruction processes known as the "interactive approach for teaching reading." Pre-reading exercises, vocabulary study, cohesive devices, a reading selection, and comprehension questions were all part of the interactive paradigm for teaching reading. Astika believes that these five steps of the interaction model may be adapted for both experienced and unskilled readers and that the interactive model can help address the problem.

Reading Anxiety and Foreign Language Anxiety

In general, anxiety is described in a range of emotions (such as worry, fear, uneasiness, and concern over the prospects of dire consequences or situations) (Seinfeld et al., 2016). While some look at it as a subjective experience of discomfort, unease, apprehension, or apprehensive worry Shri (2010), others define it as a subjective experience of anticipation and terror that causes difficulties concentrating, forgetfulness, trembling, and palpitation (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety is divided into three categories: state, trait, and situational where state anxiety is a person's fear at a certain point in reaction to a specific scenario while trait anxiety is described as an individual's propensity to get nervous in any setting, according to (Spielberger, 1983). The latter is the more persistent tendency of feeling anxious and is frequently seen as a personality trait. Situational anxiety refers to distinct types of anxiety constantly occurring in a given scenario (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991). The anxiety brought on by a particular circumstance or event, such as public speaking, exams, or class participation, is known as situation-specific anxiety. In order to situate the appropriateness of this concept into the study, we should further understand the concept of reading anxiety which refers to the sensation of uncertainty, and stress that pupils have when attempting to read and comprehend foreign language content (Muhlis, 2017). Jalango and Hirsh (2010) defined reading anxiety as a particular situational phobia of reading with physical and cognitive reactivity. They further note that bodily signs of worry include sweating, heart beating, weak or weary, fast breathing, headache, stomachache, or vomiting. Anxiety-related cognitive

reactions include severe fear, low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, and fear of public humiliation.

Some researchers discovered that reading anxiety had a detrimental impact on reading performance Sellers (2000); Shi & Liu (2006), hindering comprehension and learning of a second language. According to MacIntyre (1994), if students are apprehensive when reading, their performance suffers, which may lead to poor self-evaluation and more self-deprecating cognition, which further impair their performance. Saito (1999) suggested that teachers should approach it in three ways: (1) prepare their students for the possibility of reading anxiety when introducing reading assignments, (2) introduce reading strategies to reduce reading anxiety, and (3) pay attention to the selection of texts to ensure that students encounter material that is at an appropriate level of difficulty. This is also recommended by Faruq (2019) that teachers employ error correction approaches, engage in small group activities, and focus on themes that pupils are interested in. In terms of foreign language anxiety,

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) explained how foreign language anxiety is developed where during the early development of language acquisition, motivation and aptitude for the target language predominate in determining success. Anxiety has no bearing on competency during the first few exposures to a foreign language because, even if it exists. It is not the type of anxiety related to learning a foreign language that has been explored up to this point. State anxiety is the ideal term to describe anxiety brought on in this situation due to early linguistic experience. After a number of interactions with the second language environment, the learner develops attitudes that are unique to the circumstance, that is, feelings and attitudes about learning a new language. Anxiety over learning a foreign language might emerge if these encounters are unpleasant. Foreign language anxiety may develop into a regular occurrence if adverse experiences continue and the learner starts to anticipate being anxious and performing poorly. That is to say, at the start of foreign language experience, any anxious student would experience a mix of state anxiety, novelty anxiety, and communication fear. Anxiety is not limited to foreign language study. It might also happen in a speaking or mathematics class. However, after several poor encounters with foreign language acquisition, students identify this apprehensive emotion with the subject. Because it is distinctive to foreign language acquisition, anxiety at this time is treated as foreign language anxiety. Horwitz et al (1986) also advocated that foreign language anxiety is seen as a discrete process, which is unique as compared to second language learning.

Another extension to reading anxiety is its context in the classroom which is impacted by the instructional tactics teachers use during class activities (Zoghi, 2012). When the instructor firmly corrects the students' pronunciation, the latter may feel anxious (Guimba & Alico, 2015). As a result, teachers' critical feedback occasionally increases students' reading anxiety and creates an uncomfortable learning environment. When the teacher corrects the students harshly when they read the material aloud, the latter may experience classroom reading anxiety. Similarly when the instructor provides dull literature, the pupils may experience uneasiness. If the instructor corrects the students' faults, the latter may perceive it unfavourably. As a result, the teacher's negative comments may occasionally cause reading anxiety in the reading class.

Factors of Reading Anxiety

There are aspects that lead towards reading anxiety. According to Horwitz et al (1986), reading anxiety is the anxiety induced by reading literary texts in a second language. When

reading literature in a second language, students have trouble at understanding different scripts, writing systems, and cultural artefacts. They may experience frustration and anxiety when reading if they have trouble comprehending the textual content. Their anxiety is further heightened when speaking and engaging with other learners. Yet, most students are unaware that anxiety has been listed as one of the elements that might hamper the reading process (Garza, 1986).

Jalongo and Hirsh (2010) outlined four signs that students who struggle with reading anxiety could exhibit. First, reading anxiety prevents students from being intellectually curious, which leads to a lack of introspection or reflection. The social and emotional environments in which students are often reared perceive learning and curiosity as dangers. Second, those with high levels of reading anxiety exhibit restraint in their intellectual assertiveness or aggressiveness, which typically calls for reading abilities but refuse to apply them. Their peer group generally affects them. Inhibition of intellectual independence is the third. Students frequently have an attitude which can be categorised as those who are dependent on others (i.e. cannot read by themselves). These students can be distinguished because they need ongoing encouragement and guidance to maintain their reading efforts. Last but not least, students who experience reading anxiety frequently lack confidence in their reading skills. Eventually, those symptoms appear as a psychological indicator of anxiety in reading.

Table 1

Types of students with reading anxiety (Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010)

Types	Description
1	Lacking reflection
2	Have restraints in intellectual assertiveness
3	Inhibiting intellectual independence
4	Lacking confidence

Anxiety can have a significant impact on foreign language learning, particularly reading. As a result, it is vital to identify the factors that influence reading anxiety. According to Zoghi (2012), three factors influence reading anxiety: Reading anxiety can be classified into three types: There are three types of reading anxiety: (a) top-down reading anxiety, (b) bottom-up reading anxiety, and (c) classroom reading anxiety.

Reading Anxiety and using different approaches in reading

When reading, there are generally two more popular approaches employed in teaching – Top-down and Bottom-up. Both equally give challenges to students. According to Zoghi (2012), top-down reading anxiety is a component that impacts reading anxiety apart from reader-specific worry. Readers' background knowledge, cultural understanding, and general reading competence are all connected to top-down reading anxiety. It occurs when students cannot recognize precise details and the primary concept of the text. When the concepts in the texts are culturally ambiguous, the working title is foreign, and they lack expertise about the ideas stated in the text, the learner will get nervous (Guimba & Alico, 2015). Top-down

reading anxiety occurs when children cannot identify individual details and the text's overall concept. Because the students are unfamiliar with the cultural content depicted in the book, they may be concerned.

On the other hand, bottom-up reading anxiety is a component that affects reading anxiety from text-specific related anxiety Zoghi (2012), which includes grammatical and vocabulary-related items. It is brought on when pupils encounter unusual terminology and too complicated grammatical structures in the text. When a word's meaning is unknown, there are many words they encounter, a phrase is grammatically foreign, or the tenses of a particular sentence are obscure, learners may get apprehensive (Guimba & Alico, 2015). This issue may be resolved by choosing reading material, text content, and language difficulty appropriate for the pupils' diverse backgrounds. Students with bottom-up reading anxiety may experience worry when the language in the book is unusual and unintelligible and the grammatical structures are complicated. This issue may be solved by selecting reading material considering pupils' diverse backgrounds. As a result, text content and linguistic difficulty should be appropriate for a teacher's pupils. Bottom-up reading students are often concerned when they: (a) cannot determine the meaning of a word they feel they have already encountered, (b) discover a high number of words whose meanings are unknown, and (c) struggle to pronounce unfamiliar words. Vocabulary is difficult at this point. Knowledge of word meanings and descriptions is a basic necessity for reading comprehension.

Challenge of Reading Anxiety

According to Saito et al (1999), two aspects of reading in a foreign language that can cause anxiety are a new writing system and an unfamiliar culture. Unfamiliar cultural concepts appear to have a less immediate impact than unfamiliar scripts and writing systems, causing the reader to experience anxiety as soon as they attempt to decode the script because the reader would immediately experience difficulty processing the text. Aisyah (2017) explained two factors contributing to foreign language reading anxiety: (1) personal features, and (2) text qualities. Under personal features, there are reading-effect anxiety and error fear, whereas text qualities include new language, foreign themes, and unusual civilizations.

Reading aloud is linked with worried unconditioned stimuli, which causes an adverse reaction, which is why reading texts in a foreign language is associated with anxiety (Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010). Students who read aloud in a foreign language are likely to experience reading anxiety. When asked to read aloud a text in a foreign language, most students find it difficult to hide their anxiety. They still see learning a foreign language as the most challenging skill to master. They were distracted from their reading comprehension by performance anxiety. It is challenging for individuals to communicate their text interpretation if they cannot regulate their anxiety.

The primary was connected between fear and a lack of confidence (Muhlis, 2014). Thus, it may be said that the fear of making mistakes may cause reading anxiety. Numerous research has shown that language anxiety may affect pupils' self-confidence, even though this impact is ultimately seen as good (e.g. Brown, 2007). Unknown vocabulary has been identified as another source of foreign language reading anxiety (Ahmad et al., 2013). According to Rajab et al (2012), unfamiliar terminology may decrease learner comprehension and cause challenges, resulting in anxiety. Gonen (2007) explained that unfamiliar vocabulary in reading foreign language literature appeared to be another source of anxiety where 20% of the text communication units corresponded to students' concerns about learning new terminology while reading English language content.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed qualitative research where the data collected were collected using semi-structured interviews based on a language reading anxiety scale developed by (Zoghi, 2012). According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. This study attempted to gain insight from Master-level students to identify factors and challenges faced.

Research Participants

This study involved Indonesian Master-level students studying at a Malaysian public university. There were seven postgraduate students from different majors at the university selected as the participants for this study. It can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Participants' Demographics

Participants' Initial Name	Major
H I E	Management
G T	Medicine
D H	Law
N S	Economics
A L	Education
A Z	Communication
S T D	Communication

Selecting the students from various majors gave a better understanding related to the problem and experiences of Indonesian students in reading a foreign language. Thus, considering the students' background from various majors helped the researchers get more information about their challenges and factors in reading a foreign language.

Research Instruments

A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted. The interview protocol was based on Zoghi's (2012) Anxiety Scale for Reading Foreign Languages (FLRAS) – a language reading anxiety scale, which consisted of 11 items. There were fourteen interview sessions where each round consisted of fourteen questions. These questions were open-ended to ask the students' experiences with reading in foreign language. The fourteen questions: Part A

consists of three questions focusing on the students' background information; Part B is made up of five questions focusing on what they feel in reading the foreign language; Part C consists of three questions focusing on how they were coping; three questions focusing on their suggestions and opinions to relieve the anxiety in reading English.

To ensure validity of the interview protocol, a content validity was used. Before doing the interview, the interview items were given to an expert who understands the reading anxiety. The expert basically teaches English proficiency, which includes reading skill. However, to ensure reliability, To ensure the validity of the interview protocol, it underwent a content validity process. Prior to conducting the interviews, the interview items were reviewed by an expert in reading anxiety, who also teaches English proficiency. This expert provided feedback on the relevance and appropriateness of the questions. Additionally, to assess reliability, inter-rater reliability was employed. This involved administering the interview protocol to students who were not part of the study, and then comparing their responses with the ratings provided by a lecturer who teaches reading. This comparison helped ascertain the consistency and agreement in scoring between different raters.

Inter-rater reliability was used to know whether the developed interview protocol was reliable. According to Gay et al (2012), inter-rater reliability was done by comparing the results of tests conducted in different times and they were correlated so that it resulted in an agreement about the scores. Thus, the interview was given firstly to the students who were not the participants of this study. Then, a lecturer who teaches the reading subject was chosen as the rater and helped the researchers to compare the scores of the interview results.

Data Collection Procedures

This research employed a two-instrument design, starting with a test, which was then followed by an interview. Before conducting the interview, the researchers provided a reading text to the participants as means of assessing their reading ability. This reading session took 2 hours and was also important to have access to the participants' reading expression directly. The text appears to be well-written and effectively conveys the methodology used to collect data on reading anxiety among Indonesian Master-level students. Additionally, it highlights the importance of direct communication with participants to gather in-depth information. Overall, the text is clear, coherent, and provides sufficient detail about the research methodology. Therefore, the readability of this text is high.

Upon finishing with the reading session, the researchers then interviewed the students to gather the required information about reading anxiety in a foreign language. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data in order to understand the factors that led to reading anxiety using English texts and obstacles experienced by Indonesian Master-level students. The use of a semi-structured interview is considered best since it allowed the researchers to gather insights from Indonesian students who continue their studies in Malaysian universities. The researchers were able to capture more nonverbal data, and more in-depth information could be retrieved since they were in direct and immediate communication with the participants during the interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

Upon completing the interviews, the data were meticulously transcribed and subjected to analysis utilising (Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (TA) framework, 2006). This comprehensive approach consists of six iterative phases: (1) familiarising one with the transcripts, (2) systematically coding the content, (3) clustering codes into meaningful

themes, (4) reviewing themes in relation to the research questions, (5) refining themes with informative labels, and (6) integrating extracted data and analytical narrative while considering existing literature to provide contextualization.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings obtained from the semi-structured interview. The interviews were conducted to gather insights on students’ perspectives about foreign language reading anxiety, particularly on its factors, challenges, and solutions. Table 2 provides the process underwent before the final themes were identified. From 13 initially identified codes, a set of 8 themes were finalised: (1) Vocabulary and grammatical problem; (2) Interest in reading topics; (3) difficulties in understanding reading texts; (4) pronunciation; (5) reading motivation; (6) understanding indirect meaning; (7) positive attitude; and (8) using Google tools.

Table 3
The Emerging Codes, Categories, and Theme

RQ	Codes	Categories	Themes
1. What are the factors faced by foreign language reading anxiety among Indonesian students in Malaysian University?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of knowledge of vocabulary ● Not enjoy the reading ● Confuse ● Unfamiliar topic ● Doesn't understand word order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low vocabulary skills ● Rarely read English text ● Not interesting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vocabulary and grammatical problems ● Interest in reading topics ● Difficulties in understanding reading text
2. What are the challenges faced by foreign language reading anxiety among Indonesian students in Malaysian University?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Difficult to spell the word ● Not accustomed to reading in English ● There is no willingness to read English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unsupportive environment ● No passion and desire to read ● Reading skill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pronunciation ● Reading motivation ● Understanding indirect meaning

<p>3. What are the solutions given by Indonesian students in Malaysian University for foreign language reading anxiety?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read more ● Read aloud ● Ask people who understand ● Listening YouTube music while reading ● Find the meaning using a translator to help understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Practice ● Help from others ● Easy ways to help understand the reading material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive attitude ● Using Google tools
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Table 3 explains how the finalised 8 themes were identified after undergoing the initial coding process where 13 codes were identified after the familiarisation stage. In the third stage, the codes were then scrutinised in order to eliminate any redundancies between the codes, which then formed themes that consist of 9 possible themes. After aligning with the research questions, the researchers were able to finalise the themes into 8 themes that will be discussed in the following sections.

The Factors Faced by Foreign Language Reading Anxiety among Indonesian Students in Malaysian University

In answering the first research question, there are 3 themes found. The first theme obtained was vocabulary and grammatical problems which was one of the factors faced by Indonesian master-level students. The participants experience anxiety in reading due to a lack of vocabulary knowledge and difficulty understanding grammar structure. Include specific lines from the transcription Similarly, Genc (2016) found that the main sources of reading anxiety included uncertainty, English pronunciation of words, unfamiliar topics, unfamiliar vocabulary read aloud, translation word for word, foreign grammar, and letters and symbols in English. Faruq (2019) supported that the students' reading anxiety appears because of influences of material characteristics: new vocabulary and culture. The students' fear of reading can be affected by background and culture, general reading aptitude, vocabulary, and teaching methods (Rahmad, 2020). From these findings, it is known that the major factor in reading anxiety is the mastery of vocabulary and grammar of the foreign language.

The next factor faced by the students is the interest in reading topics. Students stated that interest in reading topics is a factor that can cause anxiety in reading. include specific lines from the interview. The next factor obtained was the difficulty in understanding the reading text. These students admitted that it was difficult to understand the meaning of the reading, which made them feel anxious about reading. Students admitted several factors become obstacles in understanding the reading text, including the language background used and lack of practice in reading foreign languages. When students were given English reading texts, they felt anxious because they did not comprehend the meaning of the reading text. It is proved by the theory proposed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) that students will feel fear when they use a foreign language including in reading. y MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) that students will feel fear when they use a foreign language including in reading. It is because the grammatical rules of their mother tongue are different from the rules of the target language

they use. Thus, they face difficulties when coming to read in foreign language, especially in English.

As a matter of fact, it can be inferred that the environment greatly affects the anxiety of reading English because the students' first language is Indonesian, which the vocabulary and grammatical rules are different from their target language. As a result, it causes anxiety in reading. They continued their studies in Malaysia. In fact, the Malaysian learning environment requires reading in English all the time which is a big influencing factor in reducing some anxiety in reading indicating that reading anxiety is related to the learning process. Even though students can reduce their level of anxiety, it is difficult to eliminate reading anxiety and keep it at a lower level among all students. This may be caused by the idea that every student must read new material in English. Unfortunately, they seldom read English when they were in the undergraduate level.

The findings from the first research question revealed three key themes regarding factors contributing to reading anxiety among Indonesian Master-level students in Malaysian universities. These themes include vocabulary and grammatical problems, lack of interest in reading topics, and difficulty in understanding the reading text. Specifically, participants expressed anxiety stemming from a lack of vocabulary knowledge and grammatical understanding, as well as challenges in comprehending the meaning of English texts due to their linguistic background and limited practice in reading foreign languages. Additionally, the environment, characterised by the necessity of reading in English within the Malaysian academic context, plays a significant role in exacerbating reading anxiety among these students. Despite efforts to alleviate anxiety levels, the persistent need for English reading proficiency remains a challenge.

The Challenges Faced by Foreign Language Reading Anxiety among Indonesian Students in Malaysian University

In answering the second research question, there are 3 themes identified from the transcription. The first theme obtained is pronunciation which is one of the challenges the students faced in reading anxiety. The main reason was that what was written was different from what they read and made them feel anxious when they had to read. They indicate *"When I speak English, I have trouble with pronunciation and grammar. English is quite different from Indonesian, so getting the pronunciation right is tricky. If you say a word wrong, it can lead to big misunderstandings. Grammar, especially tenses, is also challenging for me to understand (R.5)"*. include specific lines from the interview. They also had fear when reading, and some people laughed at their pronunciation, making reading anxiety even more robust. *"I feel not confidence when reading English, especially in front of many people. I'm afraid of making mistakes and feeling embarrassed if I pronounce words wrong. Pronunciation is a big challenge for me when reading English (R.2)* include a line from the interview

The next theme found in the second research question was reading motivation. Three students stated that reading difficulties were caused by a lack of reading motivation and an interest in reading texts in foreign languages. Still, the obligation of learning required them to read texts in foreign languages, which was one of the most challenging aspects of reading anxiety. Motivation was one of the challenges in reading foreign languages. They said that there was frequently no motivation to read books or journal articles due to a lack of vocabulary in English, and students considered it easier to read and understand something in their language.

The last theme that was found was understanding indirect meaning. The students indicated that their high reading anxiety was due to their inability to read the English language. Even though they were at the master level, they did not have foreign language reading skills which affected their reading ability. These students stated that they did not use a foreign language in reading because previously when they were in undergraduate level. They only used the first language entirely which was the Indonesian language. As a result, when coming to the master level, they faced difficulties in reading English texts. Clearly, it was difficult for them to comprehend the reading texts so that it built their anxiety in reading. However, Zhao et al (2013) found that at the advanced level, the level of anxiety decreases. Similarly, a study conducted by Joo and Damron (2015) who showed that a person's level of education can reduce anxiety in reading, but the results of this study are inversely proportional to the statement that students cannot overcome anxiety in reading material in English even though they are already at the master level.

Based on the data collected from the research, it is known that many students agree that reading in foreign language is a challenge. All students agreed that vocabulary and grammar were a big challenge in reading a foreign language because according to them, they were not familiar with English reading, which led to a lack of knowledge of English vocabulary and difficulties in understanding the grammar in the reading text. Therefore, vocabulary and grammar were two of the biggest challenges students faced when reading a foreign language. They also believed that because of the lack of vocabulary mastery, it made them feel anxious in reading.

The Solutions Given by Indonesian Students in Malaysian University for Foreign Language Reading anxiety

In addressing the third research question, which focused on solutions given by the students, the first theme was a positive attitude. Practice reading was one of positive attitude. Practice reading was one of the best solutions given by the students when it comes to reading anxiety. According to them, this method was an effective solution for foreign language reading anxiety. Related to that, Razak et al (2019) found that an English learning environment can help students decrease their reading anxiety because their reading texts are always in English. They will be accustomed to reading English texts. As a result, it reduces their reading anxiety.

The second theme was using google tools. This solution worked well mainly when it came to the students that had anxiety in reading foreign languages because most students lacked vocabulary and grammar. Hence, they need to use google tools such as google translate or Grammarly application that can help them translate the reading materials. Trisnayanti et al (2020) argued that using a better teaching method can be a solution to decrease students' reading anxiety. Obviously, applying the development of technology, such as Grammarly application as it was mentioned in the present study, can be one of the varieties of interesting methods of teaching in reducing reading anxiety.

From all of the findings above, it can be inferred that the reading anxiety faced by the students obviously can be reduced if they always practise reading English texts and apply the reading skills which are bottom-up skill (related to the text) and top-down skill (related to the reader). As a result, it helps them to correlate the different parts of the texts they read. In addition, when reading difficult texts, they can deal with those texts. Overall, it is admitted that reading anxiety is a language learning process.

Conclusion

The study delved into the factors, challenges, and solutions regarding reading anxiety among Master-level Indonesian students in Malaysian universities. Through semi-structured interviews, the researchers identified key themes reflecting the participants' experiences and perspectives. Factors contributing to reading anxiety were predominantly rooted in linguistic barriers, notably vocabulary and grammatical challenges. Additionally, a lack of interest in reading topics and difficulty understanding the text further exacerbated anxiety levels. The academic environment, which necessitates English proficiency, posed significant challenges for students transitioning from the Indonesian language to English as the medium of instruction. Challenges identified included pronunciation issues, lack of reading motivation, and difficulty in understanding indirect meanings in texts. These challenges were compounded by students' linguistic background and limited exposure to English texts during their undergraduate studies. Despite these challenges, students proposed several solutions to mitigate reading anxiety. Adopting a positive attitude towards practice reading emerged as a prominent solution, along with leveraging technology such as Google tools to aid comprehension. These strategies, coupled with improved teaching methods and exposure to English learning environments, could potentially alleviate reading anxiety among Indonesian Master-level students. For the implications, By designing language programs tailored to the specific needs of Indonesian students, institutions can enhance the overall learning experience and academic success of master student. Implementing diverse teaching methodologies, including technology-based tools like Grammarly, not only improves students' reading comprehension but also showcases the institution's commitment to providing innovative and effective learning resources. Moreover, creating a supportive learning environment fosters a sense of belonging and engagement among students, contributing to higher retention rates and overall student satisfaction.

For Indonesian students studying in Malaysian universities, this study directly addresses the challenges they face in achieving English language proficiency. By focusing on vocabulary and grammar proficiency, the study equips students with the essential language skills needed to excel in their academic pursuits and beyond. The incorporation of diverse teaching methodologies ensures that students have access to resources that cater to their individual learning styles, empowering them to overcome linguistic barriers and build confidence in reading English texts. Additionally, reducing reading anxiety through effective strategies not only improves academic performance but also enhances overall well-being and mental health.

This study contributes to the broader research community by emphasizing the importance of ongoing research and collaboration between educators and language experts. By identifying effective strategies for reducing reading anxiety and promoting English language proficiency, the study adds to the body of knowledge in language education and informs future research endeavors. Furthermore, by highlighting the significance of offering language support services and resources, the study provides practical insights for educational institutions seeking to enhance support systems for Indonesian master students.

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