

## THE CORRELATION BETWEEN EFL ANXIETY AND STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION".

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of the current study examined whether there was any significant correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension. In this regard, hopefully, this study provided English language lecturers to recognize the most provoking factor that affect learning a foreign language, such anxiety and helped students to solve language anxiety to become better English language students. This researcher was conducted at Lakidende University, particularly 32 university students of English Language Teaching Department who enrolled in academic year 2018/2019. The data were obtained from students' reading comprehension test and questionnaire that is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and to analyze the data this study applied *Pearson Correlation* analysis. The finding revealed that there was a significant relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension,  $p (.061) < 0.05$ . Meanwhile, the strength of correlation between reading anxiety and students' reading comprehension was categorized "moderate" according to table Guidelines of Interpreting *Pearson's Correlation Coefficient* ( $r = .381$ ). It might be the fact that most of students frequently experienced moderate level of foreign language classroom anxiety in their reading comprehension class.

**Keywords:** Anxiety, Students Reading Comprehension.

## **Rational of the Study**

As one of the language skills, reading plays an important role because reading has become a part of our daily life. Through reading, people are able to gain a lot of knowledge, information, pleasure and problem solutions. Hence, the ability to read a text in many forms will contribute a great deal advantage in our life such as gaining success at school, university or other educational institutions (Murniasih, 2013).

However, in the fact, reading English text is regarded as difficult skill for students in university level. Commonly, students deal with some problems in reading English text, for instance they do not have enough vocabulary mastery, they have low motivation, they have high anxiety, even they have a limited background knowledge (Sari, 2017). Meanwhile, based on the result of observation, most of the third semester students of English department at Lakidende University who programmed Reading II had high anxiety to read English text, it was proved when their English lecturer asks them to read a reading passage in the classroom they feel nervous even fear. Hence, it was difficult for students to comprehend the text.

Anxiety is an affective factor that defined as an uncomfortable emotional state in which student experiences danger, feels powerless, worry, and experience tension not only in specific English skill but also in specific situation. Actually, it is the individual feeling of nervousness, worry; even fear that makes the student have trouble in concentrating, become forgetful, and sweat. Simply, it is anxiety is a kind of fear that may cause a student has a negative feeling in language class. For instance, we have all experienced anxiety to some levels as language students. It happens when we doubt in our abilities of performing a certain task and we feel nervous about our successes in doing the task. Briefly, anxiety is a feeling of nervous, worry, and uncomfortable when student deals with a certain situation, for example when they are in reading classroom and they need to read a long task in front of the classroom.

Anxiety has been found to be correlated negatively with language learning experience. Additionally, it seems to be a key determiner of students' achievement and success in language learning classrooms. In this case, when students have high level of anxiety, they cannot concentrate on learning process and as a result, they might fail in performing a task in. It is in line with affective filter hypothesis theory, anxiety as one of affective factors in language learning has function as a filter which filtrate the amount of input in students' brains. This means that students with high affective filter will lower their intake whereas students with low affective filter allow more input into their language acquisition device. In other words, students with low level of anxiety may comprehend reading text easier and feel comfortable in reading class compare with students with high level of anxiety.

Concerning this issue, the researcher attempts to examine the correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension. Since several of previous studies have focused on examine this affective factor and productive skills, less attention on reading comprehension. There are limited number of studies, if any, which have examined the correlation between this affective factor and receptive skills in EFL context, particularly in Lakidende University. Therefore, it is notably to concern about this issue.

## Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, the researcher formulated a research question as follows:

Is there a significant correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Anxiety as Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen (1982) has been developed a theory relates to anxiety as affective variable, that is Affective Filter Hypothesis. He argues that affective filter is a kind of psychological problem that avoids or helps learners from fascinating available comprehensible input entirely. Actually, he developed this theory in the 1970s and it is still used to describe the learning and language development of English language learners. This hypothesis includes the idea number of constructs namely motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. According to this theory, these affective filter variables have function as a filter that reduces the amount of language input the learner is able to understand. It means that several affective factors in language learning that are like a filter which filtrate the amount of language input in learners' brains (Du, 2009).

Additionally, according to Krashen (1982), anxiety as an affective variable plays a prominent role in language learning. That is, anxiety works as a filter which prevents learners from adopting effective learning practices. In this case, he adds that language learners with high affective filter will lower their intake. On the contrary, language learners with low affective filter allow more input into their language acquisition device. Anxiety as negative emotion prevents efficient processing of the language input therefore this construct must be reduced. Due to learners with high level of anxiety will obtain little input their language intake. On the contrary, language learners with low level of anxiety will acquire more input into their language acquisition. However, Dewaele (2013) states that anxiety also may give positive impact toward students' language learning. In this case when students have moderate level of anxiety, it may motivate them to protection responses, such as fighting, freezing, and fleeing, in response to a threatening event or stimulus.

Briefly, affective factor such anxiety plays prominent role in language learning. On other words, it has noteworthy implications not only for second language teaching but also for foreign language teaching. Therefore, language teachers are suggested to decrease learners' anxiety level and let them feel less stressed and more confident in a comfortable learning environment. In this case, EFL teachers may want to consider providing students with low-anxiety learning contexts, and a more accommodating and most important friendly atmosphere should be maintained to reduce anxiety.

### Signs of High Anxiety and Low Anxiety

There are several signs that indicate a student has high anxiety level. Grabe & Stoller (2003) as quotes in Mohd. Zin & Rafik-Galea (2010), "high anxiety includes difficulties in comprehending academic reading text because academic texts are too long and complex, dense with information". Dealing with such texts may make a sense of dread and uncomfortable feeling among the students, in which it may stimulate anxiety reactions each time they are required to read and comprehend the academic

texts. Reading anxiety is a feeling which is related to a feeling of dread, worry when engaging in reading tasks and difficulty in concentrating (Oh, 1990; Saito et al., 1996; Sellers, 2000 as cited in Mohd. Zin & Rafik-Galea, 2010).

Another sign of high anxiety is characterized by worry, hinders comprehension ability which interferes with the readers' working memory, in which it is a crucial component in reading because it is responsible for processing and storing information (Carpenter, Miyake & Just, 1995). The worrisome thoughts causes of low of self-efficacy of one's ability to perform the task causes switching on the attention capacity of the readers on task irrelevant thoughts more than on task-relevant thoughts in which finally disturb the function of working memory. As the result, students with higher levels of anxiety may recall less content of reading materials (Capan and Karaca, 2013).

Briefly, students who have low anxiety, it is signed when they have high level of self-efficacy due to the highest self-efficacy of students may lead to the lowest level of anxiety. In addition, one who has low anxiety; it can be seen by having a good concentration in comprehending the texts, less of worry, and working with well memory when read texts.

## METHOD

This research employed quantitative method research particularly correlation design. It is selected for this study because the researcher proposes to examine the correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension. The researcher conducted a research at Lakidende University, particularly 32 university students of English Language Teaching Department who enrolled in academic year 2018. The researcher utilized two kinds of instruments are used in present study, namely reading comprehension test and questionnaire that is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). In addition, to analyze the data, this study applied *Pearson Correlation analysis*.

## FINDINGS

**Table 4.1 The Result of Classical Assumption Test**

	Tests of Normality		
	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
ForeignLanguageClassroomAnxiety	.937	32	.061
StudentsReadingComprehension	.944	32	.100

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

To determine the data was normally distributed, Probability value (*p value*) of the data must be more than alpha ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The table above displayed the result normality test of foreign language classroom anxiety was 0.061 (*p value* > 0.05). Meanwhile, the result normality test of students' reading comprehension was 0.100 (*p value* >  $\alpha$  0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the data were normally distributed. It meant that it was acceptable to be analyzed through parametric statistic test in form of *Pearson Correlation analysis* in SPSS 24 for windows.

**Table 4.2 The Result of Hypothesis Testing**

		<b>Correlations</b>	
		ForeignLanguage ClassroomAnxi ety	StudentsReadin gComprehensio n
ForeignLanguageClassroom Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	1	.381*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.016
	N	32	32
StudentsReadingComprehe nsion	Pearson Correlation	.381*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.016	
	N	32	32

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

As presented in Table 4.2, a *Pearson Correlation coefficient* was run between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension. According on the table above, it indicated that p value was less than the alpha value at the level significance ( $p < \alpha 0.05$ ). It displayed the result of *Pearson correlation* analysis was .016 ( $.016 < \alpha 0.05$ ). It meant that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was accepted. On other words, there was a significant relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension. Meanwhile, the strength of correlation between reading anxiety and students' reading comprehension was categorized "moderate" according to table Guidelines of Interpreting *Pearson's Correlation Coefficient* (r). This was clearly seen from the values of correlation coefficients reach ( $r = .381$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The present study attempted to answer a question concerned the correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension. In other words, it examined whether a highly anxious students was anxious in reading comprehension class as well or vice versa. The correlation analysis revealed any significant correlation, as the literature indicated a significant correlation between the two variables (Huang, 2012). In this regard, investigating the correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension, a correlation coefficient of foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading anxiety was calculated according to Pearson Correlation analysis. The result indicated that there was a positive correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension was observed, so it can be concluded that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was accepted.

A relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension was consistent with most of the previous studies (i.e. Huang, 2012). However, the present results were again in contrast with existing literature. The literature insisted that there was a negative correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension (i.e. Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012). A clear difference as shown previously, the present study revealed that there was a positive correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension.

Briefly, based on the results of this study the researcher claimed that apparently foreign language classroom anxiety at certain level had a significant function, particularly when students had a moderate level of foreign language classroom anxiety. When students had a moderate level of foreign language classroom anxiety, it encouraged them to learn more seriously and it helped them to make an effort in comprehending the reading passage and preparing themselves to study harder in reading class beside that, lecturer of reading comprehension should be reconsidered about foreign language classroom anxiety as it might helped students' reading comprehension or vice versa.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, data analysis, and discussion of this study, it could be drawn that a statistically significant correlation was found between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension,  $p < \alpha 0.05$  or  $(.016 < 0.05)$ . However, the strength of correlation between foreign language classroom anxiety and students' reading comprehension was .381 or  $(r = .381)$ . It considered as "moderate" correlation between these two variables. It might be the fact that most of students frequently experienced moderate level of foreign language classroom anxiety in their reading comprehension class.

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