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An Exploration of Factors Associated with Reading Strategy, Reading Anxiety and Reading Comprehension Ability among English Foreign Language Learners

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Abstract

Most students have problems in reading. Especially, students who have low reading comprehension, limited vocabulary knowledge, and inadequate use of effective reading strategies. In addition, students also feel anxious when reading texts, this is because they have difficulty understanding vocabulary and text elements. This study aims to examine EFL learners' reading strategies and reading anxiety on reading comprehension ability. Correlational research was used by the researcher. The results showed that the correlation of students' reading strategies and reading anxiety to reading comprehension ability, the R-value of 0.418 indicates that the correlation between the independent variables (reading strategies and reading anxiety) to reading comprehension ability is Moderate. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a sufficient correlation between students' reading strategies and reading anxiety on reading comprehension ability.

Keywords: *Reading Anxiety, Reading Comprehension Ability, and Reading Strategy*

Abstrak

Sebagian besar siswa mempunyai masalah dalam membaca. Terutama, siswa yang memiliki pemahaman membaca yang rendah, pengetahuan kosa kata yang terbatas, dan penggunaan strategi membaca yang efektif tidak memadai. Selain itu, siswa juga merasa cemas ketika membaca teks, hal ini disebabkan karena mereka kesulitan memahami kosa kata dan unsur teks. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti strategi membaca pembelajar EFL dan kecemasan membaca terhadap kemampuan pemahaman membaca. Penelitian korelasional digunakan oleh peneliti. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa korelasi strategi membaca dan kecemasan membaca siswa terhadap kemampuan pemahaman membaca, nilai R sebesar 0,418 menunjukkan bahwa korelasi antara variabel bebas (strategi membaca dan kecemasan membaca) terhadap kemampuan pemahaman membaca adalah Cukup. Dengan demikian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa terdapat korelasi yang cukup antara strategi membaca siswa dan kecemasan membaca terhadap kemampuan pemahaman membaca.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan Membaca, Kecemasan Membaca, dan Strategi Membaca

Introduction

Reading is deemed a paramount skill for learners, particularly for EFL students. Debat (2006) underscores the necessity for EFL or ESL students to master this skill effectively. Further emphasizing the importance of reading compared to speaking and writing, asserting that students must adeptly grasp the elements or indicators of reading (Patel & Jain, 2008). Through reading, students not only acquire a wealth of information but also enhance their speaking and writing skills while broadening their ideas and vocabulary.

Furthermore, comprehension is integral to reading, as it enables students to grasp the content and message of texts effectively. Reading and comprehension are inherently intertwined, with both being indispensable to each other. Duffy (2009) asserts that comprehension lies at the core of reading comprehension, as the primary purpose of written language is to convey a message. Failure to comprehend the message renders reading futile. Hence, while students may possess the ability to read the text, their comprehension of its indicators and meaning may be lacking.

However, comprehension is an essential aspect of the reading process that students must grasp. It is not easily mastered by students, particularly those learning English as a foreign language (EFL), due to the differences between their native language and English as a second language (ESL). In essence, EFL learners face challenges in reading as they need to comprehend various linguistic elements, including grammatical structures and unfamiliar vocabulary.

Moreover, survey findings reveal the difficulty of reading for EFL students, such as Indonesian students. According to a survey conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2021, Indonesian students ranked 74th out of 79 countries in reading performance, indicating low ability. Similarly, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2021 positioned Indonesia at 41st out of 45 countries surveyed, with a score of 405. These results underscore the

unsatisfactory reading performance of Indonesian students, necessitating efforts from teachers to enhance their reading skills.

In reality, during the teaching and learning process, students must comprehend the indicators or components of reading comprehension well. Understanding these indicators enables students to automatically grasp the contents of the text. Additionally, students should possess the ability to translate the text into their target language. Moreover, effective reading strategies are crucial for good reading comprehension. With effective strategies, students can understand reading texts more proficiently and comprehend all elements within them.

Furthermore, anxiety emerges as a significant factor contributing to students' lack of interest in reading. Barzegar & Hadidi (2016) highlight anxiety as a crucial obstacle in the reading-learning process. Bernhardt (2011) supports this notion, emphasizing that anxiety or nervousness while reading can undermine students' confidence, particularly when grappling with unfamiliar content. Consequently, students experiencing difficulty comprehending text content, possessing limited vocabulary, struggling with translation, and lacking understanding of reading comprehension indicators tend to experience heightened reading anxiety. This heightened anxiety manifests as reduced confidence, increased nervousness, and heightened apprehension when engaging with reading materials.

In reality, many students encounter challenges in reading, especially regarding reading comprehension, limited vocabulary, and ineffective reading strategies. Additionally, students often experience anxiety while reading due to difficulties in understanding text elements and vocabulary. The researcher also identifies various mistakes made by students, such as solely reading English texts when assigned, lacking a personal reading schedule, and neglecting to address weaknesses in reading comprehension. Despite being aware of their low reading comprehension, many students fail to make efforts to enhance their reading abilities, possibly due to a lack of awareness regarding effective improvement strategies.

METHODS

In this study, the researcher employed a correlational approach. According to Creswell (2011), descriptive correlational research aims to elucidate the natural relationships between variables. Its primary objective is to ascertain correlations between variables such as X and Y, or even among multiple variables. The study population comprised 151 students from the second, fifth, and sixth semesters. To gather data, the researcher utilized a total sampling technique, involving all students enrolled in the English Department across these semesters.

Data collection involved the administration of both a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire. The reading comprehension test, designed based on Harmer (2000) indicators of reading comprehension, consisted of multiple-choice questions drawn from three texts, with each test comprising 20 questions. Expert judgments were sought to validate the test items, and a trial run was conducted to assess their reliability. Additionally, a questionnaire was utilized to gauge students' reading anxiety and strategies. As per Creswell (2011), a questionnaire consists of a series of questions or statements to which respondents provide answers. The questionnaire employed in this study featured close-ended questions, enabling respondents to select from predetermined options. The statements were presented in written form in Indonesian. To analyze the data and determine whether correlations existed among reading anxiety, reading strategy, and reading comprehension ability, the researcher employed the multiple linear regression formula.

RESULT

a. How is EFL learners' reading strategy in reading comprehension at the English Department?

In this study, the independent variable (X1) pertains to the students' reading strategies. Data regarding students' reading strategies were obtained

through a reading strategies questionnaire administered to students in the English Department. The distribution of students' reading strategy scores is presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Distribution of Students' Reading Strategies Frequency

INTERVAL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	CATAGORIES
153-185	-	-	Very High
120-152	86	56.9	High
87-119	51	33.8	Medium
56-86	14	9.3	Low
30-55	-	-	Very Low
Total	151	100%	

From Table 1, it is evident that 86 students (56.9%) fell within the interval of 120-152, indicating high reading strategies. Additionally, 51 students (33.8%) fell within the interval of 87-119, signifying medium reading strategies. Furthermore, 14 students (9.3%) were within the interval of 56-86, representing low reading strategies. Consequently, it can be concluded that the majority of students (56.9%) exhibited high reading strategies out of the total 151 students.

b. How is EFL learners' reading anxiety in reading comprehension at the English Department?

The independent variable (X2) refers to students' reading anxiety. Data about students' reading anxiety were collected through a reading anxiety questionnaire. The distribution of students' reading anxiety scores is outlined in table 2:

Table 2: Distribution of Students' Reading Anxiety Frequency

Score	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	Level
68 – 80	25	16.6	High Level
56 – 67	98	64.9	Moderate Level
20 – 55	28	18.5	Low Level

According to Table 2, 25 students (16.6%) scored within the interval of 68-80, indicating a high level of reading anxiety. Moreover, 98 students (64.9%) scored within the interval of 56-67, denoting a moderate level of reading anxiety. Additionally, 28 students (18.5%) scored within the interval of 20-55, reflecting a low level of reading anxiety. Consequently, it can be inferred that the majority of students (64.9%) experienced a moderate level of reading anxiety out of the total 151 students.

c. How is EFL learners' reading comprehension in the English Department?

The reading test was administered to the sample subjects, utilizing Multiple Choice test items. The highest score achieved on the test was 95, attained by one student. Conversely, the lowest score recorded in the initial test was 20, obtained by another student. The table below presents the distribution of scores obtained by 151 students in the reading test.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of student's reading comprehension

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
students' score	151	20	75	72,57	12,894
Valid N (listwise)	151				

From the table above, it is observed that the mean score for students' reading comprehension ability was 72.57, with a standard deviation of 12.894. This suggests that students' proficiency in reading comprehension averaged at a moderate level.

d. Is there any correlation between EFL learners' reading strategy, reading anxiety, and their reading comprehension ability in the English Department?

Multiple Linear Regression was employed to explore the relationship between students' reading strategy and reading anxiety with their reading comprehension ability. The model summary table reveals an R-value of 0.418, suggesting a moderate correlation between the independent variables (reading strategy and reading anxiety) and reading comprehension ability. Consequently, it can be inferred that there exists a moderate correlation between students' reading strategy and reading anxiety with their reading comprehension ability. The details are presented in the table below:

Table 4: Regression Correlation

Regression Correlation									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	,418 ^a	,047	,000	14,955	,047	,996	2	40	,378
a. Predictors: (Constant), Reading Anxiety, Reading Strategy									

Discussion

Reading holds paramount importance for second or foreign-language learners within academic settings, serving as a fundamental skill necessary for comprehending textual materials. Anderson (2004) asserts that proficiency in reading is pivotal for achieving academic advancement across various disciplines. According to Clapham (2009), reading skill entails the ability to construct coherent interpretations and extract information from written messages. Furthermore, Chen and Intaraprasert (2014) emphasize that reading facilitates the acquisition of information related to the target language and its associated culture.

For university students, possessing adept reading skills is indispensable for engaging with academic materials and textbooks, especially those about modern science and technology from diverse fields such as

literature, social studies, and science (Habibi et al., 2017). These skills serve as foundational requisites for accessing contemporary knowledge essential for higher education (Al-Shboul et al., 2013; Habibi et al., 2017).

Despite the significance of reading, reports by UNESCO in 2012 highlight concerning trends in Indonesia, where the reading index stands at 0.001 (Kemdikbud, 2016), indicating a lack of interest in reading among the population. Moreover, anxiety emerges as a notable hindrance to the reading process for second and foreign-language learners (Barzegar & Hadidi, 2016; Saito et al., 1999). Nervousness associated with reading tasks has been acknowledged (Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010), with anxiety potentially impacting learners' language acquisition and reading performance (Bernhardt, 2011; Gonen, 2007; Mohammadpur & Ghafournia, 2015; Zin & Rafik-Galea, 2010). Gender differences have also been explored as a factor influencing reading anxiety, with previous studies indicating varying levels of anxiety between male and female language learners (Hayati & Gahssemi, 2008; Sabti et al., 2016). However, research on gender differences in reading anxiety within the Indonesian context remains limited (Aisyah, 2017; Kulsum, 2018).

Moreover, this study suggests that employing effective reading strategies can enhance students' reading comprehension and overall performance. Effective strategies enable students to approach texts strategically, facilitating deeper understanding and comprehension. Numerous studies have emphasized the pivotal role of reading strategies in enhancing comprehension and efficiency, particularly in learning English as a foreign language.

A variety of reading strategies can aid readers in navigating texts effectively, including rapid idea acquisition, word analysis, and identifying key concepts. These strategies not only assist readers in initiating their reading but also in comprehensively summarizing and evaluating texts post-reading. Selecting appropriate strategies tailored to specific reading tasks is crucial for fostering effective and independent reading habits. In conclusion, applying reading strategies enhances the effectiveness of reading across

diverse text types, thereby empowering students to read with greater efficiency and comprehension.

CONCLUSION

In the research examining the correlation between students' reading strategies and reading anxiety with their reading comprehension ability, the model summary table showed an R-value of 0.418. This value indicates a fair (enough) correlation between the independent variables (reading strategy and reading anxiety) and reading comprehension ability. Therefore, it can be inferred that there exists a fair (enough) correlation between students' reading strategies and reading anxiety with their reading comprehension ability.

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