AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT'S READING ANXIETY AND IT'S EFFECT ON READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah kecemasan yang merupakan faktor psikologi negatif dapat mempengaruhi pemahaman membaca siswa dan juga menentukan perbedaan yang signifikansi antara siswa tingkat kecemasan tinggi dan siswa tingkat kecemasan rendah. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukan perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua kelompok tersebut. Rataan nilai kelompok siswa tingkat kecemasan tinggi adalah 62.37 sementara untuk kelompok tingkat kecemasan rendah adalah 83.81. Berdasarkan hasil analisis Mann-Whitney, didapatkan nilai p 0.005 yang menunjukan bahwa kelompok siswa tingkat kecemasan rendah memiliki nilai yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan kelompok siswa tingkat kecemasan tinggi. Hasil analisis Linear Regression menunjukan nilai r^2 (0.319), yang berarti kecemasan membaca juga ikut berperan dalam pencapaian pemahaman membaca siswa. Karenanya, guru sebaiknya berupaya mengurangi kecemasan siswa agar pencapaian mereka lebih maksimal.

This research aimed to find out whether a negative psychological affective factor known as anxiety could really affect students' reading comprehension and to determine the difference in reading comprehension between students with higher level of anxiety and those with lower level of anxiety. The results show that the students' reading comprehension significantly differs between the two groups. The mean score of higher level of anxiety students was 62.37 while the mean score for lower level of anxiety students was 83.81. Based on the analysis by using Mann-Whitney U Test, it shows that lower level anxiety students have higher score in reading comprehension than those with higher level of anxiety as the computation resulted in p value at 0.005. The next analysis by using Linear Regression resulted in r^2 (0.319). This number shows that reading anxiety may give contribution to the overall students' reading comprehension achievement. Therefore, teacher should lessen the student's anxiety to maximize their achievement.

Keywords : effect, reading anxiety, reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Language anxiety, a complex psychological construct, is regarded as an affective variable in the language learning. It means that language anxiety has also become one of the factor involved in the success of language learning, either it is in positive or negative way. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis also stated that affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety play a facilitative role in second language acquisition. To be precise, he said that learners with low anxiety have less affective filter to block their language acquisition.

Students feel anxious regardless of their preparation of learning that language; like wondering about what other might think of them when they perform their English, the familiarity of the topic used in English learning, how low their achievement could be, etc. Whatever the cause, whatever the level of anxiety, we can be sure of one thing: anxiety will affect students' performance, as Saito & Samimy (1996) had stated in their research about language anxiety and performance at three different levels. This is why learning other language could be hard for them.

Their pattern of thinking that regarding learning English is a hard thing to be done might be resulted from their consideration that they have to learn to make sentences, have to become accustomed to the sounds of the language, have to remember a lot of vocabulary and have to learn the pronunciation of words as well. These numbers of worries itself already make them lose their spirit to learn English and then arousing their anxiety of English. When all these thoughts accumulated, they will surely walk the path of a failure.

One is regarded succeed in learning a language if he could perform that language well enough to be understood by other people. It means that skills like speaking, listening or writing become more important than reading. In school itself, less attention has been paid in reading, and sometimes considered as a passing by activity. This statement is supported by Bernhardt (1991) who says that reading used to be regarded as an individual activity that happens within a person's brain, and reading did not require the interaction that speaking did. This kind of misleading assumption about 'reading is less important' could hinder students' progress in learning reading and halt their advance in acquiring appropriate information from reading source in time.

Within the field of research itself, lots have been done in terms of listening, speaking or writing. Reading might has its own numerous researches too. But compare to the other three language skills, it lost its number. This fact is also based on that less problem was found on reading unlike other skills.

Based on those considerations, this research aimed to find the significant difference in reading comprehension between the students with higher level of reading anxiety and those lower level ones and also to find the significant influence of students' reading anxiety on reading comprehension?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early studies on foreign language anxiety had an obvious focus on the language skill of speaking (e.g., Aida, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Phillips,

1992; Young, 1986) and the foreign language anxiety study related to other language skills such as reading, listening and writing have not drawn researchers' attention until very recently (Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999; Saito et al., 1999; Vogely, 1998). Maybe it is because in speaking, anxiety could be seen clearly at the time the learner performing their speaking.

Saito was doing her research by investigating students of Russian, French and Japanese in English class. Later she found that FL reading anxiety varied depending on the target languages and seem to be related to the specific writing system. Another finding in her research that students' reading anxiety levels increased with their perceptions of the difficulty of reading in their FL and that their grades decreased in coherent with their levels of reading anxiety. Her findings could be different if the subject of the research uses the first language without specific writing system or symbol like Indonesian.

Hsu (2004) conducted his research about reading anxiety and reading comprehension of 125 junior military college EFL students and found that anxious students tended to recall less content of the text than less anxious students. Similarly, Sellers (2000) also investigated the possible relationship of language anxiety to reading comprehension with 89 Spanish as a foreign language university students. The results revealed that reading anxiety was related to, but distinguished from, language anxiety. The students with high reading anxiety and language anxiety could recall less content of the article. This is likely the outcome

of the research that the writer expected by considering that anxiety is a negative factor rather than positive.

It could be said that those previous studies on anxiety and L2 learning center on the discussion of the relationship between language anxiety and language-skill-specific (i.e., speaking, listening, writing, and reading) anxiety, and also their roles in L2 learning. They suggest that listening, reading and writing anxiety, is related to, but can be distinguished from, language anxiety. Most of them find that there is a negative relationship between language anxiety and L2 performance. Also, language-skill-specific anxiety and performance are negatively correlated, meaning that students with higher listening, speaking, writing, and reading anxiety tend to have lower listening, speaking, writing, and reading performance respectively.

According to Seligman (2001), anxiety (also called angst or worry) is a psychological and physiological state characterized by somatic, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. It is the displeasing feeling of fear and concern. The root meaning of the word anxiety is 'to vex or trouble'; in either presence or absence of psychological stress, anxiety can create feelings of fear, worry, uneasiness, and dread. However, anxiety should not be confused with fear, it is more of a dreaded feeling about something which appears intimidating and can overcome an individual. Anxiety is considered to be a normal reaction to a stressor. It may help an individual to deal with a demanding situation by

prompting them to cope with it. However, when anxiety becomes overwhelming, it may fall under the classification of an anxiety disorder.

Along with Seligman's own definition, Spielberg(1983) previously defined anxiety as a subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Since it is a subjective feeling of nervousness and worry, individuals will surely experience different levels of anxiety depending on their personal situation.

Compared with the large amount of studies regarding language anxiety (Young, 1991; Horwitz, et. al., 1986; Aida, 1994), there is relatively little attention drawn to reading anxiety. The studies between language anxiety and language skills have mostly related to the oral performance. Most anxiety studies in a language learning situation appear to be associated with the oral aspect (Horwitz et. al, 1986; Young, 1991; Daly, 1991; Philips, 1992). This may be because, as mentioned earlier, of the fours skills, speaking is probably considered the most stressful for second language learners.

Along with this view, Saito's et. al., (1999) study indicated foreign language anxiety is a type of specific reading anxiety that is distinct from foreign language classroom anxiety. In addition, the finding of Seller's (2000) study concluded that different target languages may not have similar levels of reading anxiety. Seller's (2000) study suggested that when language proficiency is combined with reading ability, the finding would be more predictive for lower grade levels.

Of the four skills, reading can be regarded as especially important because reading is assumed to be the central means for learning new information. Freese (1997) points out that some students encounter problems when reading. They read the paragraphs in the text but are still unaware of what they have read. Unlike these students, Carrell and Grabe, (2002) claim that proficient readers can employ different reading skills when reading different texts or reading for different purposes. For instance, they search for the information in a manual by scanning for the key words. Reading the newspaper, they skim headlines to see if they want to read in more detail. For studying, they read carefully to integrate information, so various reading skills are employed in different situations. From this perspective, the nature of reading is complex.

METHODS

There were two things that have been investigated in this research. The level of students reading anxiety was investigated by using questionnaires. In this research, a set of specific questionnaires developed by Saito (1999), Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) was used to determine who the variables were. As for measuring students' reading comprehension, two sets of reading comprehension test with one text and 20 items for each were developed based on their hand book and school syllabus. The participants of this research were the students of the first grade at SMPN 2 Bandar Lampung of the even semester in the learning year of 2011/2012 where class 7.1 as the try out class and students of 7.3. The procedure of this research was conducting the try out first in

try out class in order to test the instruments then was followed by conducting the real test. The real test consisted of FLRAS questionnaires test at first followed by reading comprehension test. The data were then gathered and analyzed.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The questionnaire test was done to classify the sample into groups based on their level of reading anxiety. The test consisted of 20 items and was administered in 10 minutes. The reliability of the questionnaire itself is 0.766. And it is a good number of alpha for reliability.

Based on the result of the test, the writer analyzed the score then grouping the sample into three groups. The upper group consisted of the 27% who make the highest scores, the lower group consisted 27% who make the lowest score, and the middle group consisted the remaining 46%. The total score of the questionnaire is 1665 with the mean 61.67. The highest score is 79, while the lowest score was 47. Among 27 students who followed the test, 7 students are classified into higher level reading anxiety group, 7 students are classified into lower level reading anxiety group, and the other 13 are put into medium group

Figure 3. Mann-Whitney U Test result of Higher and Lower RA

Test Statistics[b]

	Reading_Comprehension
Mann-Whitney U	3.000
Wilcoxon W	31.000
Z	-2.784
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.004[a]

Table 1. Result of the Reading Comprehension Test

Higher Level RA			Lower Level RA	
No.	RA Score	RC Score	RA Score	RC Score
1	79	80	49	80
2	77	53.3	48	86.7
3	77	56.7	47	93.3
4	74	53.3	50	86.7
5	70	53.3	49	90
6	68	80	55	63.3
7	67	60	54	86.7
Total	512	436.6	352	586.7
Mean	73.14	62.37	50.29	83.81

The result of the computation showed that *p* value is 0.004 with the level of significance 3.000 (in Mann-Whitney U test, it is that *U* value). From this data, we knew that there is a statistically significant difference of reading comprehension between the students with higher level of anxiety and the students with lower level of anxiety. By looking at the means of the data above itself, we also found that students with lower of anxiety have a better reading comprehension. As for the second question, the writer used *Linear Regression* to measure the effect of reading anxiety.

Figure 4. Linear Regression of Reading Anxiety on Reading Comprehension

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.565[a]	.319	.292	10.63684

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reading_anxiety

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	122.266	14.576		8.388	.000
	Reading_anxiety	-.802	.234	-.565	-3.426	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Reading_comprehension

From the result of the computation above, we know that reading anxiety gave an influence on reading comprehension, as the r^2 is 0.319.

The first finding of this research showed that students with lower level of anxiety gave a better result with their reading test than those who have higher level of anxiety. The mean of reading comprehension score between the two groups itself gave quite a wide gap for the writer to make a generalization of their achievement. Since the *p* value (0.005) was largely less than *U* value (3.000), then the two groups had an overall more than enough significant difference of reading comprehension.

When the writer administered the test, most students of the higher level of anxiety seemed restless. They changed their sitting often more than those with lower level of anxiety. And some of them could not help themselves from looking at their surrounding, searching for an inspiration as they said so when the writer asked them why. Actually, these are the symptoms of anxiety; precisely behavioral and

somatical symptoms. Different condition was showed by the less anxious students. They seemed calm and quiet when they read and answered the questions. Most of the students with less anxiety also got higher score than those with higher level of anxiety.

Another finding of this research derived from the second hypothesis was that anxiety gave quite contribution to the students' reading comprehension. Students with medium level of anxiety were quite the adequate level to comprehend a text as their score in reading comprehension itself was satisfied enough for their level. Medium level of anxiety could only affect a little to their reading comprehension.

In relation with the result of reading comprehension test, the questionnaire of reading anxiety showed that item number 14 was getting the highest score among all items. And all members of students with higher level of anxiety scored it high while only 5 members of lower level anxiety students scored it high. This particular item itself belongs to behavioral aspect. It means that most students agreed that in order to comprehend an English text, one should getting used to read it. The other behavioral aspect items (items number 5, 9, 12) were also getting higher scoring from the students compare to other items on other aspects. On the other hand, items of cognitive aspect of anxiety were getting lower score than other aspects even though most of the questionnaire items were part of it. It might be suggested that though members of higher level anxiety students scored it high, but most of the students in class 7.3 were having a quite medium and low anxiety of how intriguing English could be for them.

A good teacher is not only pushing students to do the work but also wondering why they seem reluctant to do the work. Anxiety, which sometimes regarded as the being behind their reluctance should not take all the blame. It is just one of it. It might be good to say that anxiety is not as annoying as it seems. As a matter of fact, knowing your own level of anxiety might be useful for yourself. Scovel (1978) also pointed out that has quite facilitative effect on language learning. Some certain level of discomfort and unpleasant feeling would keep the students alert. Thus, we could say that anxiety could be radar for someone to act more careful, paying more attention to anything that could trigger their anxiety. If anxiety arises repeatedly around a certain problem, it is often a sign that we need to take a closer look. Students that could overcome their anxiety will surely be able to learn anything, as he has nothing to block his comprehensible input from being used for acquisition (Krashen, 1981).

CONCLUSIONS

1. There is a significant difference of reading comprehension between higher level anxiety students and lower level anxiety students. It also means that students with lower level of anxiety have higher score in reading comprehension than students with higher level of anxiety.

2. Since p value (0.002) is less than α (0.05) in Linear Regression and , it can be concluded that anxiety could really influence students' reading comprehension. R^2 shows that its influence about 30% of the overall score on reading comprehension.

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