THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS ANXIETY AND ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the relationship between students' anxiety and their English descriptive reading comprehension at SMAN 7 Pekanbaru during the 2024–2025 academic year. The research employed a quantitative correlational design, involving 35 eleventh-grade students selected as the sample. To collect the necessary data, two research instruments were used: the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) questionnaire, which was administered to measure students' levels of anxiety while reading in English, and a 40-item descriptive reading comprehension test, which was designed to evaluate the students' understanding of English descriptive texts. The data obtained were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation formula. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.319, which falls into the category of a low or weak positive correlation. Additionally, the significance value (p) was 0.062, which is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the result indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between students' reading anxiety and their descriptive reading comprehension. These findings suggest that anxiety may not be a major factor influencing reading comprehension in this context, and other variables—such as vocabulary mastery, reading strategies, or motivation—may contribute more substantially to students' reading performance.

Keywords: Anxiety, Reading Comprehension, Descriptive text

HUBUNGAN ANTARA KECEMASAN DAN PEMAHAMAN MEMBACA BAHASA INGGRIS SISWA

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara kecemasan siswa dengan kemampuan membaca deskriptif dalam bahasa Inggris di SMAN 7 Pekanbaru pada tahun ajaran 2024–2025. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain korelasional kuantitatif, dengan melibatkan 35 siswa kelas sebelas yang dipilih sebagai sampel. Untuk mengumpulkan data yang diperlukan, digunakan dua instrumen penelitian: kuesioner Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS), yang diberikan untuk mengukur tingkat kecemasan siswa saat membaca dalam bahasa Inggris, dan tes pemahaman membaca deskriptif yang terdiri dari 40 item, yang dirancang untuk mengevaluasi pemahaman siswa terhadap teks deskriptif bahasa Inggris. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan rumus korelasi Pearson Product Moment. Analisis tersebut mengungkapkan koefisien korelasi (r) sebesar 0,319, yang termasuk dalam kategori korelasi positif rendah atau lemah. Selain itu, nilai signifikansi (p) sebesar 0,062, yang lebih besar dari taraf signifikansi baku 0,05. Oleh karena itu, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada hubungan yang signifikan secara statistik antara kecemasan membaca siswa dengan kemampuan membaca deskriptif mereka. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kecemasan mungkin bukan faktor utama yang memengaruhi pemahaman membaca dalam konteks ini, dan variabel lain—seperti penguasaan kosakata, strategi membaca, atau motivasi—mungkin berkontribusi lebih besar terhadap kinerja membaca siswa.

Kata Kunci: Kecemasan,Pemahaman membaca,Teks deskriptif

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental component of language learning and plays a crucial role in academic success. As emphasized by several scholars, reading not only facilitates the acquisition of knowledge but also fosters critical thinking and comprehension of complex concepts. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), reading proficiency becomes particularly significant as it enables students to engage with a wide range of

information in English and perform well academically.

However, the process of reading comprehension in a second language can be significantly affected by emotional factors, especially anxiety. Language anxiety is a common phenomenon that influences learners' performance across various language skills. Many students experience anxiety when facing English texts, fearing misunderstanding, making mistakes, or failing to meet expectations. This emotional barrier can disrupt concentration and reduce reading effectiveness, thereby impeding academic achievement.

Previous research has explored the connection between anxiety and language performance, including studies on the correlation between anxiety and reading comprehension. While some findings confirm a negative correlation, others suggest the relationship may vary depending on individual and contextual factors. Nevertheless, there remains limited research specifically targeting high school students in non-Western educational contexts, particularly in Indonesia.

Given the importance of understanding how anxiety affects English reading comprehension, this study aims to investigate the relationship between student anxiety and their reading performance among second-grade students at SMA Negeri 7 Pekanbaru. By examining this correlation, the study seeks to contribute to the development of more effective language teaching strategies that can support students in overcoming anxiety and improving their English reading skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety is a psychological condition marked by feelings of uneasiness, fear, and apprehension, which can significantly affect cognitive functioning, particularly in academic settings. In foreign language learning, anxiety plays a critical role in shaping students' performance. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) introduced the concept of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), which encompasses communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. These anxiety dimensions have been shown to negatively influence students' confidence and hinder language skill development, including reading comprehension.

Anxiety is generally categorized into state anxiety, which is situational and temporary, and trait anxiety, which is a more stable aspect of personality (Ormrod, in Muyasaroh et al., 2020). Peplau (in Muyasaroh et al., 2020) further identified four levels of anxiety—mild, moderate, severe, and panic—each with increasing cognitive and physiological disruption. Various internal and external factors can trigger anxiety, including negative self-perception, hypersensitivity to perceived threats, misattribution of bodily signals, and low self-efficacy (Nevid, 2013).

Reading comprehension, on the other hand, is a fundamental cognitive skill involving the ability to derive meaning from written texts. It includes identifying main ideas, making inferences, drawing conclusions, and integrating textual information with prior knowledge (Budiharso, 2014; Babapour et al., 2019). Reading is not a passive activity but a dynamic, interactive, and strategic process (Rahim, 2018). Techniques such as skimming, scanning, intensive reading, and extensive reading (Grellet, 1981) are used to facilitate deeper comprehension and engagement with texts.

A significant body of research has explored the relationship between student anxiety and reading comprehension, particularly among EFL learners. Sellers (2000) found that students with higher levels of FLCA performed worse on reading comprehension tasks. Similarly, Wulandari (2017) and Hafiza et al. (2024) reported a negative correlation between anxiety and reading performance, with the latter study demonstrating a strong correlation (r = 0.668) among eighth-grade students. These findings highlight the detrimental impact of anxiety on students' cognitive processing and academic outcomes.

Sari (2016) emphasized the role of unfamiliar writing systems and cultural content in elevating reading anxiety among second language learners. Mardianti et al. (2021) categorized reading anxiety into top-down, bottom-up, and classroom-related types, noting that vocabulary difficulties—an aspect of bottom-up anxiety—were the most common and impactful. However, not all studies found significant relationships. Djoewono (2020) reported no significant correlation between reading anxiety and comprehension in high school students, suggesting that factors such as motivation, reading strategies, and teacher support may mediate the relationship.

In summary, the literature indicates a predominantly negative relationship between student anxiety and reading comprehension. While contextual and individual differences may influence the strength of this relationship, the general trend supports the idea that higher anxiety levels are associated with lower reading

performance. Addressing student anxiety through effective classroom strategies, emotional support, and anxiety-reducing interventions is therefore essential to enhance students' reading comprehension and overall academic achievement.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design, which is appropriate for investigating the degree and direction of a relationship between two measurable variables—in this case, students' anxiety and their English reading comprehension. By utilizing this design, the study aimed not only to identify whether a correlation exists but also to determine the strength and nature of the relationship between the two variables.

The population of the study included all eleventh-grade students enrolled at SMA Negeri 7 Pekanbaru during the 2024/2025 academic year. This comprised a total of 323 students distributed across nine different classes. Due to practical considerations and the need for a representative sample, the cluster random sampling technique was employed. This method involves selecting entire groups or classes rather than individual students, which helps ensure feasibility while maintaining a level of randomness. Based on this technique, Class XI-5, consisting of 35 students, was randomly selected to serve as the sample for this study.

To obtain accurate and relevant data, the study utilized two primary research instruments: a questionnaire to assess students' anxiety levels and a reading comprehension test to measure their proficiency in understanding English texts. The anxiety questionnaire was adapted from the well-established Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) developed by Saito, Horwitz, and Garza (1999). The adapted version contained 40 items, each rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). To ensure that all students fully understood the questions and could respond accurately, the instrument was translated into Bahasa Indonesia. This translation was carefully reviewed to preserve the original meanings of the items while making them accessible to participants who might have limited English proficiency.

The second instrument was a reading comprehension test consisting of 40 multiple-choice questions, all based on descriptive texts commonly found in the school curriculum. The test was specifically designed to evaluate key aspects of reading comprehension, such as the ability to identify main ideas, locate specific details, draw inferences, and determine the author's purpose. These aspects were chosen because they reflect the core competencies expected of students at the senior high school level.

The data collection process was conducted in a structured and systematic manner. Both instruments—the anxiety questionnaire and the reading comprehension test—were administered directly to the selected participants in a classroom setting under the supervision of the researcher. Instructions were given clearly, and students were allotted sufficient time to complete both assessments.

Following data collection, the responses were compiled and analyzed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, implemented via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30. This statistical method was selected because it is appropriate for assessing linear relationships between two continuous variables. The results of the analysis were displayed in the form of statistical tables, which included correlation coefficients (r-values) and significance levels (p-values).

In interpreting the results, the study followed standard guidelines for correlation strength: values close to 0.00 indicate a negligible relationship, values between 0.10 and 0.29 suggest a low correlation, between 0.30 and 0.49 a moderate correlation, between 0.50 and 0.69 a substantial correlation, and values above 0.70 indicate a very high correlation. These classifications provided a meaningful framework for discussing the findings, which will be elaborated on in the subsequent section of this report. Through this approach, the study sought to provide a clearer understanding of how students' emotional states—specifically anxiety—may influence their performance in reading comprehension tasks in English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the research, several findings were obtained. Since the total sample size in this study was 40 and the data were collected randomly, the data were considered to be normally distributed. Therefore, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the relationship between the two variables.

Based on the data obtained, they were process through SPSS. The result was describe by the table

following

Table 1`. *Analysis the result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Formula Correlations*

	Students Anxiety	Reading Comprehension
Pearson Correlation	1	.319
Sig. (2-tailed)		**.062**
N	**35**	**35**
Pearson Correlation	**.319**	**1**
Sig. (2-tailed)	**.062**	
N	**35**	**35**

Based on the correlation table above, the results indicate that there is no significant correlation between students' anxiety and their reading comprehension. This is shown by the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.062, which is greater than 0.05 (> 0.05), meaning the correlation is not statistically significant.

However, the Pearson Correlation coefficient is 0.319, which indicates a low correlation between the two variables. According to the interpretation guidelines, a correlation coefficient ranging from 0.20 to 0.40 represents a low level of relationship. This suggests that although there is a tendency for students with higher anxiety to have slightly better reading comprehension scores, the relationship is weak and not strong enough to be considered statistically meaningful The number of respondents involved in the correlation test was 35 students, which provides a reasonable sample size for this kind of analysis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the 2024–2025 academic year, 11th-grade students at SMA N 7 Pekanbaru participated in a correlational study aimed at investigating the relationship between students' anxiety and their reading comprehension in English. The primary objective of this research was to determine whether students' levels of anxiety had a statistically significant impact on their ability to comprehend English texts. Based on the results of the analysis, the data revealed that students' anxiety had no significant correlation with their reading comprehension performance.To collect accurate data, the researcher distributed an anxiety questionnaire and administered a reading comprehension test to 35 students. The results showed that most students experienced moderate levels of anxiety, while their reading comprehension abilities were generally high, with an average score of 69.29. A Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the two variables. The correlation coefficient was 0.319, and the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.062, which is greater than the alpha level of 0.050.

Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis was rejected. These results indicate that students' anxiety levels do not significantly influence their reading comprehension skills. Moreover, the coefficient of determination revealed that anxiety contributed only 10.2% to students' reading performance, suggesting that other factors had a greater effect. It can be concluded that anxiety was not a determining factor in students' reading comprehension at SMA N 7 Pekanbaru during the 2024–2025 academic year.

Based on this findings,it recommended that, teachers should still foster a supportive classroom environment to minimize unnecessary stress although anxiety was not found to significantly affect reading comprehension. Emphasis should be placed on enhancing other contributing factors, such as motivation and reading strategies. Providing structured tasks, timely feedback, and encouraging peer interaction can help students improve their comprehension and confidence.

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