

STUDENTS' EFL ANXIETY IN LEARNING READING IN ACEH, INDONESIA

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Abstract: *This research examines students' foreign language anxiety in the English education of state institute of Islamic studies Langsa, Aceh, Indonesia which includes reading anxiety. Furthermore, this research also explores the factors that cause the emergence of anxiety experienced by students when learning a foreign language and explores their efforts to manage this anxiety. This research uses mix-methods with a sequential explanatory model. A total of 130 students at all semesters as the subject in this study. A questionnaire is given for them to obtain the quantitative data, besides, 30 students get an in-depth interviews as the additional data to find the causes of anxiety. Consequently, the results of questionnaire showed that Efl students experienced anxiety in learning reading a medium category (54.8%). While the result of in-depth interviews is among the factors that cause anxiety are cognitive factors, namely inadequate mastery of language supporting elements, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, worry factors about getting negative assessments from the surrounding environment, low interest and motivation in foreign languages, assessment factors, and lecturer factors. Among the symptoms of anxiety experienced when learning a foreign language are shaking, heart palpitations, tension, confusion, cold sweats, panic, depression, and difficulty breathing. Not all EFL students make efforts to suppress anxiety, but some of them make preparations in the form of notes before showing the language, practice the language with friends and family, and follow several YouTube channels related to language learning.*

Keywords: *Reading Anxiety, Foreign Language Anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

The main goal in learning English is to build language skills, one of which is reading skills. Reading is a receptive skill in the written mode (Aydogan, 2014). In addition, Harmer (1991) stated that reading is one of the receptive skills that need the eyes to receive the messages and the brain to process the messages. According to McDonough and Saw (1993), reading is the most important foreign language skill. Reading becomes important for students to enrich their knowledge which is needed by them. However, reading in a foreign language is also more difficult due to several factors, including language skills, cultural background, and affective factors such as student motivation and anxiety that must be considered. Most students find it difficult when they read English texts. Although, they have studied English while at school. They still have difficulty understanding the English text, especially understanding the meaning contained in the text. One of the main aspects that can be an obstacle to learn a foreign language is the effective area, especially anxiety.

In the context of a foreign language, Sadighi and Dastpak (2017) translate that anxiety as an emotional factor that can affect the emergence of a person's negative perception in learning a language. This can have a serious impact on a person's learning development. First, the academic impact; where feelings of anxiety can affect student performance so that it does not develop. Second, the cognitive or mental impact, namely anxiety; interferes with attention and memory in the learning process. The emergence of feeling worried, a disorder in thinking, and confusion. Third, social impact; students tend to compare themselves with smarter friends, which makes them lose their enthusiasm and even withdraw from activities in the classroom.

The majority of learners of English as a foreign language in higher education experience symptoms of anxiety in language learning. Based on the researchers' observation, the majority of students tend not to actively participate in language classes, most students do not dare to take the initiative to answer questions using the target language, have difficulty expressing opinions, and students are rarely interested in improving their English skills by reading books, articles, journals, or others media related to English learning. Therefore, the researchers try to find out the objectives of the research, namely; the level of anxiety of students in reading skills and examine the causes of anxiety in reading skills.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Anxiety

Nur and Rini (2009) define anxiety as an unpleasant subjective experience of worry or tension in the form of feelings of anxiety and emotion experienced by a person. Meanwhile, experts classify anxiety into trait anxiety and state anxiety. As defined by Hawari (2001), the characteristics of this innate anxiety are anxiety, worry, restlessness, lack of confidence, nervousness, stage fright, often blaming others, uneasiness, irritability often complaining, irritability indecisive and hesitant in taking decisions, and is often hysterical when emotional. Whereas, MacIntyre (1999) defined that momentary anxiety as anxiety experienced by someone

temporarily, namely feelings of anxiety when someone is faced with an event that makes them anxious, and this anxiety is subjective.

Elliot, et., al (1996) grouped anxiety levels into high, medium, and low levels of anxiety. Anxiety at moderate and low levels had a positive influence on students' performance in language learning. For instance, having a little anxiety motivates them to study, prepare everything related to learning, and set learning targets. Meanwhile, anxiety at a high level can interfere with student learning behavior. For instance, have no passion for learning, depressed and apathetic. Although most people realize that what they perceive when they are anxious tends to be irrational, anxiety is still unavoidable.

Foreign Language Anxiety

Language learning involves cognitive and affective aspects of a person. Anxiety is related to affective factors, namely stress, fear, nervousness, confusion, doubt, insecurity and worry when a person is faced with language activities that he feels unable to complete it (Humphries, 2011). Furthermore, Young (1991) stated that foreign language anxiety is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Anxiety in this context is translated as a feeling of tension and worry experienced by someone when they are in a situation where they have to use a foreign language, be it when speaking, listening, reading, or writing. Meanwhile, Wibowo & Raihan (2019) states that writing is one of the most difficult skills for students to be understood. Horwitz (1986) asserted that the feeling of depression experienced by learners when they are unable to communicate in a foreign language can lead to fear of trying to speak in a foreign language on other occasions.

In the context of learning a foreign language, anxiety is one of the dominant obstacles experienced by every learner. In general, language anxiety is divided into two. First, anxiety is caused by situational factors (McIntyre, 1995). This situational anxiety occurs in social situations in everyday life such as being a speaker at a forum, interviewing for jobs, and interviewing officials. Second, anxiety is only appears in certain learning situations in the classroom. In line with Radnofsky (2001), Brown stated that anxiety can contribute adversely to dysphoria and euphoria. The majority of individuals tend to view anxiety as a detrimental factor that should be avoided. However, the notion of facilitative anxiety or euphoric tension holds that a little worry, a little fear, of a task to be done is a positive thing. It can keep a person alert and alert.

Reading Anxiety in Foreign Language

Reading anxiety in a foreign language is the anxiety experienced by language learners during the process of reading in a foreign language, where this anxiety is also closely related to the mastery of special skills in reading. Soenardi (2018) explains that reading anxiety is very rarely identified because the process is not interactive like when someone speaks using oral communication.

According to Shi & Liu (2006), factors that make reading texts in English difficult which then contribute to anxiety include; various characteristics of foreign language texts, such as foreign spellings, coding of the smallest units of written language (graphemes) and phonemics, discourse and syntactic characteristics and cultural backgrounds.

In Al-Sohbani's finding (2018) examined students' anxiety factors in reading foreign language texts. He summarized that among the difficulties in reading that trigger

anxiety are uncertainty, pronunciation of words in English, unfamiliar reading themes, difficult words, reading aloud, using word-for-word translation, history, and culture of the English language that is difficult to understand. Foreign language, difficult grammar, English letters, and symbols that are different from the learner's native language. Similarly, the research was conducted by Al-Shboul, et.al., (2013). This study concluded that foreign language anxiety in reading is caused by two factors, namely individual factors and criteria for reading texts. Individual factors that trigger anxiety in reading are fear of making mistakes, and worrying about the impact of reading the reading. Meanwhile, the anxiety triggered by the characteristics of the text is difficult vocabulary, complicated reading topics, and foreign culture.

The Present Study

In response to the research gap identified in the literature, the present research investigated the roles of language anxiety (LA) and reading anxiety (RA) in language classes. It discussed the issues of how LA and RA were related, how students' levels of anxiety can affect different levels of LA and RA, and whether the causes of students' anxiety can affect their reading performance. Particularly, this research investigated the following two research questions "How is the level of anxiety of students in the English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Langsa in reading skills? What causes anxiety in reading skills?"

METHOD

Research Method

This research used mix-methods with the sequential explanatory model. The sequential explanatory model combination research method is a combination research method that combines quantitative and qualitative research methods sequentially (Sugiyono, 2018). This research used a pattern in descriptive analysis. Nasir (1999) explained that the descriptive analysis specification aims to create a description of the facts, nature, and relationships between the phenomena studied. Foreign language anxiety is a complex phenomenon that must be thoroughly explored. Therefore, this research used a mixed-methods approach.

The Participants

A total of 130 students of the English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Langsa for the 2019/2020 academic year semesters 2, 4, 6, and 8 with an age range of 17 – 24 years became the population in this study. In this research, the researchers used two types of taking the sample; probability sampling and non-probability sampling. It applied a non-probability sampling technique with saturation sampling so that all students in the population were selected as samples. Through saturation sampling, a total sample obtained is 109 students. In the next stage, the researchers selected data sources that can provide information to complete the quantitative data. Thus, the data sources or respondents in this research were selected purposively, namely the subjects who knew detail about what was being asked. Researchers selected 30 respondents for interviews from all students in the English Language Education Study Program.

Instruments

In this research, there were two instruments used in collecting the data: a questionnaire and an in-depth interview. The questionnaire is a data collection technique where the participants or respondents fill out questions or written statements given by the researcher. In the questionnaire stage, the researchers presented a reading anxiety questionnaire in a foreign language, namely the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS), which consisted of 20 questions. Meanwhile, Sugiyono (2016) defines an interview as an activity carried out between interviewer and interviewee to obtain more comprehensive information on the problems studied. In this research, the researchers used semi-structured interviews, which type of interview is included in the depth interview category. The researchers interviewed students of The English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Langsa to find out deeply information related to students' anxiety in reading skills.

Data Analysis

In the first stage, the researchers processed quantitative data by collecting the result of the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) questionnaire then be computed using descriptive statistics. According to Husaini Usman, descriptive statistics or statistics in a narrow sense is an arrangement of numbers that provides an overview of the data presented in the form of tables, diagrams, histograms, polygons, si-frequencies, ozaiv, placement measures (median, quartiles, deciles, and percentiles), measures of central symptoms (arithmetic mean, measurable mean, harmonic mean, and mode), standard deviation, standard number, normal curve, correlation, and linear regression. Research conducted on the population (without taking the sample) will use descriptive statistics in the analysis. Then, the second stage is using qualitative data analysis by taking data from interviews with 30 respondents taken from representatives of 3 to 4 students from each unit in each semester.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reading Anxiety Level in Foreign Language of English Language Study Program Students IAIN Langsa

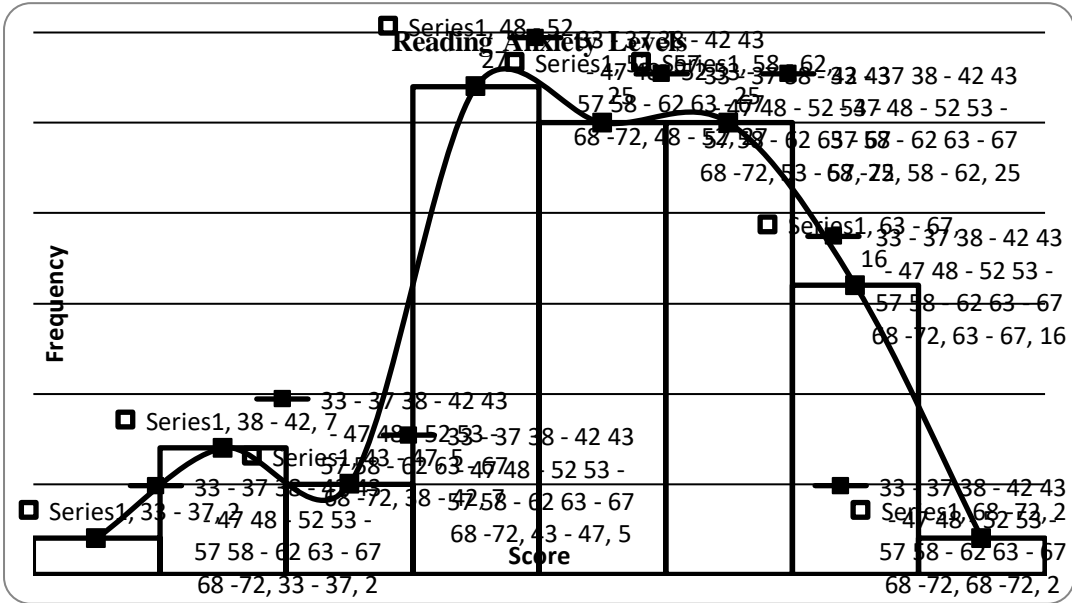
The researcher used Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS). Total of 20 questions/statements for reading anxiety in a foreign language. All questionnaires have 5 answer choices with a score of (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Undecided (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree. The questionnaire was distributed to all English Language Education students who were declared active in the 2019/2020 academic year. The rate of return of the questionnaire was assessed as 50%, of the 198 people sent to fill out the questionnaire there were 109 recorded responses, the questionnaire distribution technique was an online system using a google form.

The Results of Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS)

The descriptive analysis of the FLRAS results shows that the scores are in the range of 33 – 70. The mean is 54.1 and the standard deviation is 7.5, the mode is 52 and the median is 55. The frequency distribution of the FLRAS data can be seen in table 1. The highest score is 70 and the lowest score is 33. Range 37, with the number of classes 8 and 5 intervals. The results will be presented in the form of a histogram and polygon shown in graph 1.

Table 1. The Frequency Distribution of FLRAS

Class Limits	Class Boundaries	Mid point	Tally	Frequency	Percentage
33 – 37	32,5 - 37,5	35		2	1,83
38 – 42	37,5 - 42,5	40		7	6,42
43 – 47	42,5 - 47,5	45		5	4,58
48 – 52	47,5 - 52,5	50		27	24,77
53 – 57	52,5 - 57,5	55		25	22,93
58 – 62	57,5 - 62,5	60		25	22,93
63 – 67	62,5 - 67,5	65		16	14,67
68 – 72	67,5 - 72,5	70		2	1,83
				109	100



Graph 1. Histogram and Polygon of FLRAS

Furthermore, the reading skill categorization process is carried out to determine the level/level of language anxiety possessed by students by calculating using the mean and standard deviation of each skill to then be arranged in category tables using a five-scale category formula, namely:

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M + 1.5 SD

M + 0.5 SD

M – 0.5 SD

M – 1.5 SD

- Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) Categorization

M = 54.8

SD = 7.5

$54.8 + 1.5 (7.5) = 66.2$

$54.8 + 0.5 (7.5) = 58.6$

$54.8 - 0.5 (7.5) = 51.0$

$54.8 - 1.5 (7.5) = 43.4$

Table 2. Reading Anxiety Category

No	Interval	Category
1	66 and above	Very high
2	58 - 65	High
3	51 - 57	Medium
4	43 - 50	Low
5	43 and below	Very Low

Furthermore, the mean of reading skills shows the level of anxiety in English language students in general and the reading skills tested. The data above shows that reading anxiety (tested by FLRAS) has a moderate category/level (M = 54.8, SD = 7.5).

From the results obtained from the tables and graph data presented above, it can be concluded that the level of anxiety in reading foreign language for students of the English Language Education Study Program is in the medium category.

Item analysis of reading anxiety level (FLRAS)

In this stage, data were analyzed on each item of the questionnaire statement. The item analysis of each item in the questionnaire is calculated by the average score with the total ideal score or the highest score for all items $5 \times 109 = 545$ and the lowest score is $1 \times 109 = 109$. Then the average value will be found on a scale of 100 from the item. So from this calculation, the results for reading anxiety (FLRAS) are as follows:

1. Anxious when not sure whether to understand the English text that is read or not.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	10	50
Agree	4	51	204
Undecided	3	17	51
Disagree	2	19	58
Strongly disagree	1	2	2

Total		109	365
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So, the total score is $365/545 \times 100\% = 66.97\%$ with the category agree.

2. When reading the English text, students know the meaning of the vocabulary in it but find it difficult to understand what the writer wants to convey.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	6	30
Agree	4	44	176
Undecided	3	28	84
Disagree	2	31	62
Strongly disagree	1	0	0
Total		109	352

So, the total score is $352/545 \times 100\% = 64.59\%$ with the category agree.

3. Feeling restless because you cannot remember what you read.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	4	20
Agree	4	33	132
Undecided	3	22	66
Disagree	2	47	94
Strongly disagree	1	3	3
Total		109	315

So, the total score is $315/545 \times 100\% = 57.8\%$ with the category undecided.

4. Feel intimidated whenever you see English texts in front of yourself.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	4	20
Agree	4	14	56
Undecided	3	20	60
Disagree	2	61	122
Strongly disagree	1	10	10
Total		109	268

So, the total score is $268/545 \times 100\% = 49.17\%$ with the category undecided.

5. Nervous when reading texts in English whose topics are foreign to themselves.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	4	20
Agree	4	32	128
Undecided	3	29	87
Disagree	2	38	76
Strongly disagree	1	6	6
Total		109	317

So, the total score is $317/545 \times 100\% = 58.17\%$ with the category undecided.

6. Confused when finding unknown English grammar while reading discourse in English.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	7	35
Agree	4	55	220
Undecided	3	25	75
Disagree	2	21	42
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Total		109	373

So, the total score is $373/545 \times 100\% = 68.44\%$ with the category agree.

7. When reading, nervous and confused when finding words that do not know the meaning.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	9	45
Agree	4	48	192
Undecided	3	17	51
Disagree	2	33	66
Strongly disagree	1	2	2
Total		109	356

So, the total score is $356/545 \times 100\% = 65.32\%$ with the category agree.

8. Very disturbed when finding unspoken words while reading.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	10	50
Agree	4	51	204
Undecided	3	15	45
Disagree	2	31	62
Strongly disagree	1	2	2
Total		109	363

So, the total score is $363/545 \times 100\% = 66.61\%$ with the category agree.

9. Usually, translate word by word when reading text in English.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	5	25
Agree	4	54	216
Undecided	3	18	54
Disagree	2	29	58
Strongly disagree	1	3	3
Total		109	356

So, the total score is $356/545 \times 100\% = 65.32\%$ with the category agree.

10. It is difficult to remember what is being read if some letters or symbols are not recognized in the reading.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	6	30
Agree	4	56	224
Undecided	3	28	84
Disagree	2	19	38
Strongly disagree	1	0	0
Total		109	376

So, the total score is $376/545 \times 100\% = 68.99\%$ with the category agree.

11. Anxious about learning new symbols to be able to read the text in English.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	4	20
Agree	4	33	132
Undecided	3	33	99
Disagree	2	35	70
Strongly disagree	1	4	4
Total		109	325

So, the total score is $325/545 \times 100\% = 59.63\%$ with the category undecided.

12. Enjoy reading text in English.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	29	145
Agree	4	56	224
Undecided	3	20	60
Disagree	2	3	6
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Total		109	436

So, the total score is $436/545 \times 100\% = 80$ with the category agree.

13. Feel confident when reading texts in English.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	19	95

Agree	4	47	188
Undecided	3	36	108
Disagree	2	6	12
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Total		109	404

So, the total score is $404/545 \times 100\% = 74.13\%$ with the category agree.

14. When accustomed to reading, reading texts in English is not difficult.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	41	205
Agree	4	57	228
Undecided	3	6	18
Disagree	2	4	8
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Total		109	460

So, the total score is $460/545 \times 100\% = 84.4\%$ with the category strongly agree.

15. The hardest part of learning English is reading.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	4	20
Agree	4	11	44
Undecided	3	14	42
Disagree	2	66	132
Strongly disagree	1	14	14
Total		109	252

So, the total score is $252/545 \times 100\% = 46.24\%$ with the category undecided.

16. It is easier to learn to speak English than to read.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	17	85
Agree	4	38	152
Undecided	3	29	87
Disagree	2	19	38
Strongly disagree	1	6	6
Total		109	368

So, the total score is $368/545 \times 100\% = 67.52\%$ with the category agree.

17. I do not mind reading silently at all, but it will be more satisfying if you read the English text aloud.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
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Strongly agree	5	31	155
Agree	4	46	184
Undecided	3	17	51
Disagree	2	14	28
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Total		109	419

So, the total score is $419/545 \times 100\% = 76.88\%$ with the category agree.

18. Satisfied with the current level of English reading ability that has been achieved.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	11	55
Agree	4	24	96
Undecided	3	28	84
Disagree	2	34	68
Strongly disagree	1	12	12
Total		109	315

So, the total score is $315/545 \times 100\% = 57.8\%$ with the category undecided.

19. British culture and ideas are very foreign to me.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	1	5
Agree	4	33	132
Undecided	3	38	114
Disagree	2	36	72
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Total		109	324

So, the total score is $324/545 \times 100\% = 59.45\%$ with the category undecided.

20. Must know the history and culture of English to understand reading in English.

	Score	Frequency	Total Score
Strongly agree	5	16	80
Agree	4	45	180
Undecided	3	16	48
Disagree	2	31	62
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Total		109	371

So, the total score is $371/545 \times 100\% = 68.07\%$ with the category agree.

The Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety in Reading

Based on the results of interviews, most of the respondents admitted that they were disturbed and nervous when they found difficult words in the text so that it affected reading comprehension. These obstacles are generally experienced by language learners when reading texts in foreign languages. Research conducted

by Al Faruq (2019) finds that the trigger for anxiety during reading activities is when students find difficult words in the text. In addition, they are afraid to make mistakes in understanding the discourse. Al-Sohbani (2018) also concludes similarly that the themes of unfamiliar texts, difficult vocabulary, different cultural backgrounds, grammar, and different pronunciations from the learner's native language are factors that contribute to the anxiety experienced by learners in reading English texts.

Furthermore, the anxiety experienced by the participants in this study affected the fear of getting a score that was not optimal. This pressure arises due to their lack of insight to understand discourse in English, inadequate vocabulary enrichment, and inability to apply strategies that can help understanding while reading such as skimming and scanning. This also happens when they are faced with a test or exam situation. This is as stated by Daly (2009) where students feel more anxious when they are in assessment or exam situations. It can be concluded that the factors that cause anxiety in reading are factors from within students which include the level of reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and fear of making mistakes. Another factor arises from the type of discourse read which includes complex text types, complicated vocabulary, and themes and cultural elements in unfamiliar texts.

CONCLUSION

Foreign language anxiety harms a person's confidence in learning a language. In the Horwitz's statement (1986), the feeling of anxiety experienced by learners when they are unable to communicate in a foreign language can lead to fear of trying to speak in a foreign language on other occasions. These feelings also affect the performance of learners such as not being actively involved in learning activities, not being enthusiastic, shame, inferior, and not wanting to practice language both inside and outside the classroom.

Based on the results of FLARS through questionnaire and interview method, the level of foreign language anxiety of students of the English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Langsa was at medium level. The level of foreign language anxiety in reading is also medium.

Moreover, students in the English Language Education Study Program at IAIN Langsa feel anxious when reading because of a lack of insight to understand discourse in English texts, inadequate vocabulary enrichment, and inability to apply strategies that can help understanding while reading such as skimming and scanning. It is related to Al-sohbani's (2018) finding. He summarizes that among the difficulties in reading that trigger anxiety are uncertainty, pronunciation of words in English, unfamiliar reading themes, difficult words, reading aloud, using word-for-word translation, history, and culture of the English language that is difficult to understand.

The factors that cause students' anxiety in reading are factors from the students themselves, such as the level of reading comprehension, vocabulary mastery, and fear of making mistakes. Then, another factor is from the discourse that is read, such as covering complex types of text, complicated vocabulary, and themes and cultural elements in unfamiliar texts. Among the symptoms of anxiety experienced when speaking a foreign language are shaking, heart palpitations, tension, confusion, cold sweats, panic, depression, and difficulty breathing. However, based

on Elliot's, et., al (1996) statement, anxiety at moderate and low levels had a positive influence on students' performance in language learning. For instance, having a little anxiety motivates them to study, prepare everything related to learning, and set learning targets. Anxiety is not always negative. As the result, Anxiety that is faced with positive feelings can turn that anxiety into motivation or encouragement to do something better in improving students' ability in language learning.

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