

## **Measuring the Feelings of English Language Anxiety amongst Islamic Education Student Teachers at Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor**

Kalthom Husain, Puziah Abd Wahab, Amirah Aishah Zulkarnain, Haniza Othman, Aida Nasirah Abdullah

### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study was to investigate whether Islamic Education Student Teachers (IEST) reported feelings of language anxiety and inadequacy in their reading comprehension. Quantitative data were collected through administering a questionnaire to determine the levels of anxiety reported by the student teachers. The findings to be discussed are part of a much larger study. A total of 100 IEST took part in the study. The ELST were enrolled in four-year teacher education programs at Faculty of Education in KUIS. Student teachers participating in the study were given an adopted EFLRAI questionnaire containing of 19 items and a four-point Likert-five-point Likert to be completed. The questionnaire aims to elicit the reading and to determine reading anxiety. Respondents were requested to grade each item on the Likert scale according to their personal opinions. The mean score and standard deviation for the 100 respondents were calculated. The findings of the current study indicated that the participants experienced various anxious level in reading materials written English language.

**Keywords:** English Foreign Language, Levels, Reading Anxiety, Education Student Teachers

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reading involves the comprehension process and the ability of the reader to actually interact with the reading text by making its own interpretation on the meaning of the text. Reading anxiety is an anxiety that learners experience while they are reading in their new target language (Zhou, 2017). This can be caused by unfamiliar scripts and writing systems, or cultural material (Saito, Horwitz & Garza, 1999). For example, the Malay script might cause difficulties for an English-speaking student because the two languages do not share a common writing system.

Reading anxiety (henceforth RA) can result in physical and cognitive reactions. Physical reactions may include the release of adrenaline and symptoms such as sweating, feeling shaky, a pounding heart, rapid breathing and stomach ache (Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010). Cognitive reactions may include an overwhelming sense of dread, low self-esteem, feelings of helplessness and expectations of public humiliation (*ibid*).

Anxiety in second language (L2) learning has concerned language educators and researchers for many years. Reading anxiety (henceforth RA) is said to be both personal and situational. Reading competency in L2 are sometimes described as poor, reluctant, or struggling readers (Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010). Research in the area of second language reading anxiety is still limited (Sadiq Abdul Wahed Ahmed Ismail, 2015). On that note, the present study aims in investigating the level of reading anxiety among Islamic education student teachers (IEST) in Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS). The significance of this study would provide insights to language educators to choose and develop reading materials and reading strategies to overcome the anxieties faced by the learners.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Learning Anxiety**

Learning anxiety is generally viewed as the manifestation of feelings of incompetence in doing any task. If this kind of feeling is recurrent, then students may routinely expect to have the same difficulty in all situations and accordingly get nervous even if the task is not very challenging (Sadiq Abdulwahed Ahmed Ismai, 2015). Burden (2004) argued that anxious students have negative self-concepts and they always underestimate their efforts when speaking or conducting any task when they are compared to other students. Anxious learners become more anxious what more when they are assessed or being evaluated and compared with other students. This type of tension might be soften by encouraging various activities such as group work and/or pair work where the students' product is viewed as the outcome of collective cooperative work. Learning anxiety is defined in different ways by different researchers .Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991), for example, define it as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p.31).

### **Foreign Language Society**

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a complex psychological phenomenon that has sound impacts on foreign language learners. Horwitz et. al. (1991:128) define - perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. MacIntyre & Gardner (1994: 283) state that FLA refers to tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language context including classroom because certain aspects of the classroom such as the feeling of being perpetually monitored by the teacher lead to anxiety. Furthermore, FLA is connected to a bunch of psychological, psycholinguistic and behavioural symptoms such as sweating, dry mouth, tense muscles, stuttering, avoiding eye contact with the teacher, and hiding in the classroom to avoid participation (Young, 1992).

### **Gender**

Gender as a variable in second/foreign language reading anxiety has been examined minimally and results have been inconclusive enough that it is difficult to predict whether or not gender plays a significant role in reading anxiety. Some studies have indicated that female learners experience more anxiety in second/foreign language reading (Abu-Rabia, 2004) while other studies have found no significant difference in anxiety levels between male and female learners (Shi & Liu, 2006).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Burns and Grove (2003:195) define a research design as "a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings". Polit et al (2001:167) define a research design as "the researcher's overall for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis". The function of a research design is to ensure that

the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible. Thus the research design adopted in the study is quantitative approach and the data was collected via survey. The instrument was a questionnaire.

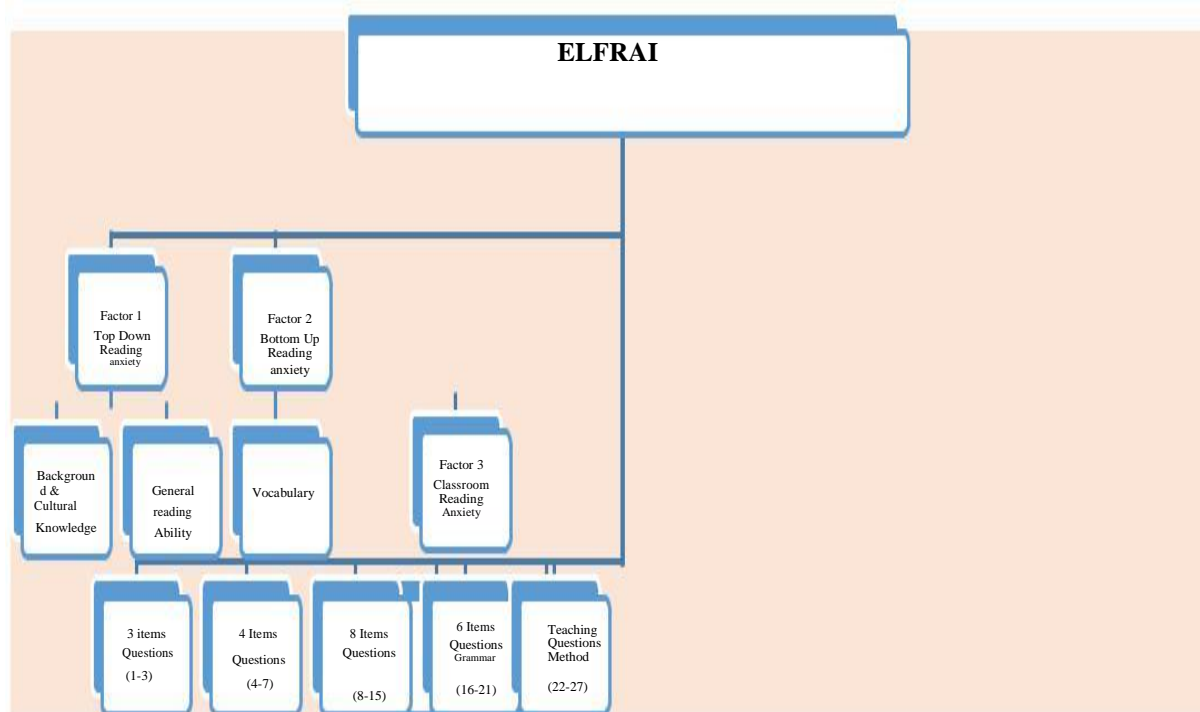
## Subjects

A total of 100 students from two semesters in academic year 2017 at Faculty of Education at KUIS participated in this study. These students signed up for Reading Comprehension Course offered by Centre for Core Studies in KUIS. Purposive sampling was done to gather required data to accomplish the purpose of the study. They were all undergraduates and they were freshmen. Of the 100 students, there were 70 (% 70) were females and 30 (% 30) were males. They were chosen because the basic concern of the study was to investigate the anxiety associated in reading L2.

## Instrument

The instrument used to obtain the required data in the study was adopted from ELFRAI Reading Anxiety developed by MasoudZoghi (2012). However some of the items were reconstruct to enhance clarity in the items. ELFRAI is rescaled to a four-point Likert scale namely very anxious, moderately anxious, less anxious and not at all anxious.

Figure 1: MosaudZoghi (2015) Reading Aniqty Instrument



Three major categories (i.e. factors) related to EFL reading anxiety were labelled as below:

- Top-down Reading Anxiety (TRA) / Factor 1- 7 items
- Bottom-up Reading Anxiety (BRA) / Factor 2- 8 items
- Classroom Reading Anxiety (CRA) / Factor 3 -6 items

## Procedures

The ELFRAI a four-point Likert scale were administered to respondents in two separate days. The questionnaires were administered to the freshmen on the two day and lasted in 45 minutes in every session.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis describes the procedures for processing and analysing the data. If appropriate, describe the specific instruments of analysis used to study each research objective, including mathematical techniques and the type of computer software used to manipulate the data. The data was analysed using Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) Version 22. Descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage were used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained in the study is shown in the following figures and tables. Figure 2 and 3 depict Reading Anxiety levels by gender.

### By Gender

Figure 2: Reading Anxiety Level among Males

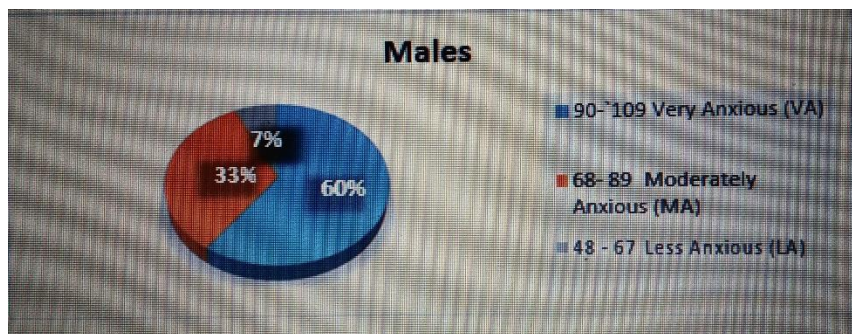
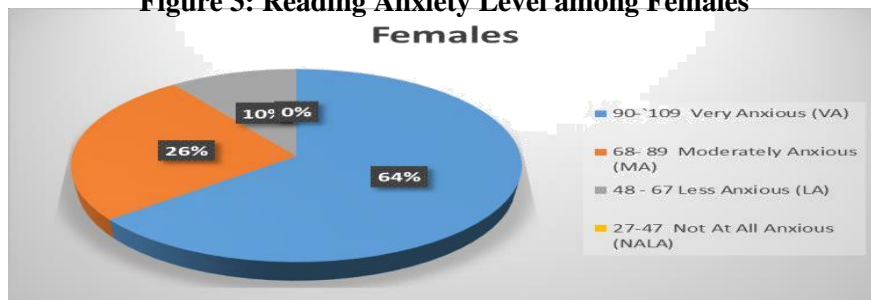


Figure 3: Reading Anxiety Level among Females



## Comparison of Reading Anxiety Level among Gender

**Table 1: Comparison on Males and Females Reading Anxiety Level**

Scores	Reading Anxiety Level	Males	Females
90-109	Very Anxious (VA)	18 (60%)	45 (64%)
68- 89	Moderately Anxious	10 (34%)	18 (26%)
48 – 67	Less Anxious	2 (6%)	7 (10%)
27-47	Not At All Anxious	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
		70 (100%)	

Results shows that both genders are reporting experiencing anxiety level with reading L2 materials. 60% (Males) and 64% (Females) were severely categorised under very anxious (VA); 34% (Males) and 26% (Females) were identified as moderately anxious whilst 2% (Males) and 7 % (Females) were identified as less anxious. Reading anxiety is contributed by factors such as background and cultural knowledge and general reading abilities. Horwitz et al. (1991) suggested, there are two basic options for the language teacher in dealing with second or foreign language anxiety namely, help students cope with the anxiety-producing situation and make the learning context less stressful.

### CONCLUSION

As reading anxiety impedes comprehension, language educators and researchers must work hand in hand to minimise the challengers. A carefully selected materials with relations to learners' schemata and appropriate reading teaching strategies must be given preferences in executing reading skills. This would help to lessen reading anxiety and make learning fun.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

### **KALTHOM HUSAIN**

Faculty Of Education  
Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS)  
[kalthom@kuis.edu.my](mailto:kalthom@kuis.edu.my)

### **PUZIAH ABD WAHAB**

Centre Of Foundation Studies  
Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS)  
[kalthom@kuis.edu.my](mailto:kalthom@kuis.edu.my)

### **AMIRAH AISHAH ZULKARNAIN**

Centre Of Foundation Studies  
Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS)  
[kalthom@kuis.edu.my](mailto:kalthom@kuis.edu.my)

### **HANIZA OTHMAN**

Faculty Of Information Technology  
Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS)  
[kalthom@kuis.edu.my](mailto:kalthom@kuis.edu.my)

### **SAIDA NASIRAH ABDULLAH**

Faculty Of Management And Leadership  
Universiti Pertahanan Malaysia  
[kalthom@kuis.edu.my](mailto:kalthom@kuis.edu.my)

