

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' READING ANXIETY LEVEL IN ENGLISH READING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research attempts to find out the levels of reading anxiety experienced by the students and the strategies they used to reduce the anxiety. In collecting the data, the English Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Inventory (EFLRAI) questionnaire was used to investigate the level and potential causes of reading anxiety among 36 second semester students of English Education Study Program of Bale Bandung University. Moreover, in assembling students' strategies in reducing the reading anxiety data, the researcher constructed a semi-structured interview for 12 students of them. Based on the study results, the students belong to moderate level in the overall top-down, bottom-up, and classroom reading anxiety, revealed students experienced feelings of discomfort or nervousness in reading English text, yet continue to complete reading tasks, which indicating they managed it with sufficient strategies to reduce the anxiety, such as rereading, scanning, vocabulary guessing, memorizing vocabulary, breathing, prayer, and affirmations. Thus, although the students experienced feelings of discomfort or anxiety in reading English text, they could manage their anxiety effectively that allow them to persist and accomplish the reading tasks.

Keywords: Reading anxiety level, Top-down reading anxiety, Bottom-up reading anxiety, Classroom reading anxiety

INTRODUCTION

Reading is essential for personal growth and information acquisition. This idea is supported by Smith, et al. (2000) as cited in Rahayu, et al.' (2022) statement that "Reading is essential for gaining knowledge, developing critical thinking skills, achieving personal success, and contributing to society". Thus, reading is a crucial subject for students to learn because it allows them to acquire new information and expand their knowledge.

However, English Foreign Language (EFL) learners usually face anxiety while reading English texts, which can significantly impact their language competence. Anxiety is a negative emotion that impairs learning (Kuru-Gonen, 2007, p. 1036). The research also investigated reading anxiety as a critical issue that might disrupt the learning process and serve as a strong predictor of success in reading the target language. This is in line with Rianawati (2024), stated that a large number of English students have reading anxiety, which limits their involvement and participation in reading activities.

Reading anxiety is defined as a negative feeling like fear, worry, or phobia that affects reading performance because anxiety produces physical and cognitive reactions. (pp. 433–434).

The writer chooses this topic based on observations of the conduct of students who felt anxious in class when the teacher asked them to read English texts. The writer's interest in the subject of anxiety when reading texts in English was a key consideration in selecting this topic. Furthermore, the limitations of research that particularly addresses students' reading anxiety levels and strategies to reduce them encourage the writer to explore more into this possibility. The writer expects that the findings of this research will contribute to raising awareness of the necessity of overcoming anxiety when reading English texts, as well as how a teacher may use the right strategies to help students deal with reading anxiety.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research questions of this research will be arranged as follows:

- 1) What are the levels of reading anxiety experienced by students in English reading class?
- 2) What are the strategies employed by the students to reduce their anxiety in English reading class?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading anxiety has different levels among different EFL learners indicating that the more reading strategies a learner employs, the lower the Foreign Language reading anxiety level they will experience (Mudra & Mckinnon, 2022). It means that reading anxiety level refers to the degree of anxiety that learners experience when they engage with reading texts in a foreign language (Zoghi and Alivandivafa, 2014). According to Zhuman (2025), reading anxiety level is a distinct emotional factor that negatively influences reading comprehension, processing speed, strategic reading behaviors, and overall academic achievement in a second or foreign language context. Therefore, understanding the level of reading anxiety is essential, as it provides a clearer picture of how anxiety influences students' reading performance and overall language learning. By identifying the levels and sources of anxiety, educators and learners can implement more appropriate strategies to reduce its negative effects and foster more effective reading comprehension. In this research, the term is used to indicate not only the presence of reading anxiety but also its intensity that learners experience when they engage with reading texts in English.

Some researches categorize reading anxiety into three distinct levels— high, moderate, and low— with empirical studies showing that the majority of learners tend to fall into the medium category (Kamil & Fitrawati, 2023; Soomro et al., 2019). A high level of reading anxiety revealed students often experience intense nervousness, worry, and even fear when they are required to read in English. This is supported by Rianawati et al. (2024), who found that learners frequently reported feelings of anxiety, embarrassment, and confusion, particularly when confronted with unfamiliar vocabulary or texts, reinforcing the strong link between high reading anxiety and negative emotional responses. In moderate level, students experience reading anxiety characterized by feelings of discomfort or nervousness, yet continue to complete reading tasks, which indicating a manageable form of anxiety that does not fully impede task completion (Muhlis, 2017). It indicates students may become anxious when faced with difficult or unfamiliar vocabulary, but they can still attempt strategies such as guessing meaning, checking a dictionary, or asking peers (Rahayu et al., 2026). A low level of reading anxiety revealed that students rarely feel nervous or worried during reading activities. According to Aisyah (2017), learners with low levels of reading anxiety usually perform better academically because their emotional state does not hinder their focus or understanding. It indicates although students may still encounter unknown words or difficult grammar, they are less likely to feel overwhelmed. Instead, they see reading challenges as opportunities to learn and practice.

Reading anxiety has to be measured using three important dimensions in reading which are top-down reading, bottom-up reading, and classroom reading (Zoghi and Alivandivafa, 2012). According to Guimba and Alico (2016), top-down reading anxiety is the type of anxiety that arises when students cannot recognize the main idea or important details, frequently due to unfamiliar cultural references in the reading material. Soomro et al. (2019) stated that bottom-up reading anxiety is the anxiety triggered by textual features at the word and sentence level— such as vocabulary difficulties, idiomatic expressions, or complex grammatical structures. Classroom reading anxiety is the anxiety experienced in classroom reading situations. According to Kuru-Gonen (2005), factors such as being required to read aloud in front of peers, fear of teacher correction, and time pressure during reading activities can trigger discomfort and reduce confidence. In this study, these three types of reading anxiety will serve as the primary aspects to be examined in order to identify the reading anxiety level experienced by second semester students of English Education Study Program of Bale Bandung University and to provide a clearer understanding of how such factors influence their reading experiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

Deliberating to the objectives of this research, the design of this study is qualitative research which aims to find out the levels of reading anxiety experienced by the students and the strategies they used to reduce the anxiety. It means that the study describes the factual and natural data obtained in the field of the research. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.

This study conduct on 42 second-semester English Education students in English reading course at the English Educational Study Program, Faculty of Teachers Training and Education Sciences at Bale Bandung University, in the 2024/2025 academic year. Two classes, 2A and 2B, each with 18 students, and 6 35 students of 2C. The researcher used 36 students from 2A and 2B as the sample of the research.

In this study, two instruments will be utilized to collect data: a questionnaire and interview. The EFL Reading Anxiety Inventory (EFLRAI) questionnaire developed by Zoghi (2012) has been proven to be a valid and reliable instrument for measuring reading anxiety in EFL contexts. It was used in the major study that had been planned for further refinement and evaluation. A sample of 251 non-English major students enrolled in the same university participated in the major study. It demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 (Zoghi, 2012). Further validation was provided by Zoghi & Alivandivafa (2014), who employed both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to support the instrument's structural integrity. In addition to the questionnaire, this study employs interviews as a qualitative research instrument to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and strategies to reduce reading anxiety.

To collect data of students' reading anxiety level, all students is given a questionnaire of an English version of EFLRAI by Zoghi (2012). It has 23 item statements about reading anxiety which were rated using a Likert-scale with the following options: totally disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and totally agree (4). The statements are divided into three reading anxiety categories which are Top Down Reading Anxiety (1-6), Bottom-Up Reading Anxiety (7-17), and Classroom Reading Anxiety (18-23). To avoid misunderstanding in filling out the questionnaire, the researcher translate the questionnaire into Bahasa Indonesia. After filling out the questionnaire, the researcher selects 12 students in total three different levels of anxiety get an interview exploring their efforts to reduce reading anxiety. Collecting data is aimed to get the data that analyzed to answer the research problems of this study both students reading anxiety level and their efforts to reduce it.

Table 1. The Result of Students' Questionnaire

No.	Indicators	Statements	Likert's Scoring			
			Totally Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally Agree
			1	2	3	4
1.	Top-Down Reading Anxiety	When I cannot recognize minor ideas (details) of the text is worrying to me. (<i>Saya merasa cemas saat tidak bisa menangkap/memahami ide atau detail dalam teks.</i>)	0 (0%)	1 (2.8%)	23 (63.9%)	12 (33.3%)
2.		I worry when I cannot get the gist of the text although no new vocabulary items or grammatical points exist in the text. (<i>Saya khawatir jika tidak bisa menangkap inti dari teks, padahal tidak ada kosa kata atau grammar yang asing di dalam teks.</i>)	0 (0%)	2 (5.6%)	25 (69.4%)	9 (25%)
3.		I am nervous when I cannot spot the main idea of a certain paragraph. (<i>Saya merasa cemas jika tidak bisa menemukan ide pokok dari suatu paragraf.</i>)	0 (0%)	2 (5.6%)	30 (83.3%)	4 (11.1%)
4.		It is worrying to me when the ideas expressed in the text are culturally unclear. (<i>Saya merasa cemas karena perbedaan budaya membuat teksnya terasa asing.</i>)	3 (8.3%)	20 (55.6%)	13 (36.1%)	0 (0%)
5.		I do not feel at ease when the title of the text is unfamiliar to me. (<i>Saya tidak merasa nyaman jika judul teksnya terdengar asing bagi saya.</i>)	2 (5.6%)	25 (69.4%)	8 (22.2%)	1 (2.8%)
6.		I get upset when I lack the previous knowledge about the ideas expressed in the text. (<i>Saya merasa kesal ketika tidak memiliki pengetahuan sebelumnya tentang ide-ide yang dibahas di dalam teks.</i>)	2 (5.6%)	10 (27.7%)	22 (61.1%)	2 (5.6%)
7.	Bottom-Up Reading Anxiety	I get upset when I cannot figure out the meaning of a word that I feel I have seen before. (<i>Saya merasa kesal ketika tidak bisa menebak arti dari kata yang sepertinya tidak asing bagi saya.</i>)	1 (2.8%)	6 (16.7%)	17 (47.2%)	12 (33.3)
8.		It bothers me when I encounter a lot of words whose meanings are unclear. (<i>Saya merasa terganggu jika menemukan banyak kata yang artinya tidak jelas.</i>)	0 (0%)	11 (30.6%)	22 (61.1%)	3 (8.3%)

9.		I feel worried when the unknown word is difficult to pronounce. (Saya jadi khawatir jika ada kata asing yang sulit diucapkan.)	2 (5.6%)	12 (33.3%)	18 (50%)	4 (11.1%)
10.		I get upset when I come across idioms that are unfamiliar to me. (Saya merasa kesal jika menemukan idiom yang asing bagi saya.)	3 (8.3%)	8 (22.2%)	21 (58.4%)	4 (11.1%)
11.		I get confused when the word that I know has a different meaning in the sentence. (Saya merasa bingung jika ada kata yang sebenarnya saya tahu, tapi artinya berbeda di kalimat itu.)	0 (0%)	4 (11.1)	22 (61.1%)	10 (27.8%)
12.		When a certain sentence is grammatically unfamiliar is worrying to me. (Saya panik ketika ada kalimat yang bentuk grammarnya asing.)	0 (0%)	10 (27.8%)	22 (61.1%)	4 (11.1%)
13.		I feel upset when the tense of a certain sentence is unclear to me. (Saya merasa kesal jika tidak mengerti bentuk 'tense' dari sebuah kalimat.)	1 (2.8%)	8 (22.2%)	21 (58.4%)	6 (16.6%)
14.		I worry when I am unable to recognize different parts of speech such as adjective, adverbs, or connective words. (Saya cemas jika tidak bisa membedakan jenis kata seperti kata sifat, kata keterangan, atau kata penghubung.)	1 (2.8%)	9 (25%)	17 (47.2%)	9 (25%)
15.		I am nervous when a certain sentence is long and has a complex structure. (Saya merasa gugup jika menemukan kalimat yang panjang dan strukturnya rumit.)	0 (0%)	9 (25%)	14 (38.9%)	13 (36.1%)
16.		I get confused when what I know about a grammatical point does not make any sense. (Saya merasa bingung jika penjelasan grammar yang saya tahu tidak nyambung dengan arti kalimatnya.)	0 (0%)	3 (8.3%)	28 (77.8%)	5 (13.9%)
17.		It bothers me when a passive voice is used in a sentence. (Saya merasa terganggu jika ada kalimat yang berbentuk pasif.)	6 (16.6%)	19 (52.8%)	11 (30.6%)	0 (0%)
18.	Classroom Reading Anxiety	It makes me feel uneasy when the teacher corrects my pronunciation or translation mistakes. (Saya merasa tidak nyaman ketika guru mengoreksi pengucapan atau terjemahan saya yang salah.)	19 (52.8%)	16 (44.4%)	1 (2.8%)	0 (0%)
19.		It upsets me when the teacher chooses uninteresting texts to read in class.	5 (13.9%)	25 (69.4%)	5 (13.9%)	1

		(Saya merasa kesal jika guru memilih teks yang tidak menarik untuk dibaca di kelas.)				(2.8%)
20.		It worries me when the teacher calls on me to translate a piece of an English text into our first language. (Saya merasa cemas jika guru menyuruh saya menerjemahkan bagian dari teks Bahasa Inggris ke Bahasa Indonesia.)	6 (16.7%)	17 (47.2%)	10 (27.8%)	3 (8.3%)
21.		I am nervous when the teacher uses English as a medium of instruction and hardly ever makes use of our first language. (Saya merasa cemas jika guru selalu mengajar menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dan jarang menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia.)	7 (19.4%)	19 (52.8%)	6 (16.7%)	4 (11.1%)
22.		When the teacher asks me reading comprehension questions is worrying to me. (Saya merasa cemas jika guru bertanya tentang apa yang saya pahami mengenai teks yang dibaca.)	5 (13.9%)	11 (30.6%)	17 (47.2%)	3 (8.3%)
23.		It bothers me when the teacher calls on me to read out. (Saya merasa tidak nyaman jika guru menyuruh saya membaca teks dengan suara keras.)	10 (27.8%)	22 (61.1%)	1 (2.8%)	3 (8.3%)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire results demonstrate a significant tendency of students to experience anxiety in top-down (1-6) and bottom-up aspects (7-17), and more varied in the classroom category (18-23). An overview of recognizing students' levels of reading anxiety in the each types of reading is provided below:

Table 2. Students' Top-Down Reading Anxiety Level

No.	Indicators	Total Scoring	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1.	When I cannot recognize minor ideas (details) of the text is worrying to me.	119	3.30	0.51	High Anxiety
2.	I worry when I cannot get the gist of the text although no new vocabulary items or grammatical points exist in the text.	115	3.19	0.51	High Anxiety
3.	I am nervous when I cannot spot the main idea of a certain paragraph.	110	3.05	0.40	High Anxiety
4.	It is worrying to me when the ideas expressed in the text are culturally unclear.	82	2.27	0.60	Moderate Anxiety
5.	I do not feel at ease when the title of the text is unfamiliar to me.	80	2.22	0.58	Moderate Anxiety

6.	I get upset when I lack the previous knowledge about the ideas expressed in the text.	96	2.66	0.66	Moderate Anxiety
	Grand Mean	100.33	2.78	0.70	Moderate Anxiety

As revealed by the results in Table 2, students experienced a high level of top-down reading anxiety when they faced: (i) inability to recognize minor ideas, (ii) difficulty getting the gist despite familiarity with vocabulary and grammar, (iii) and inability to spot the main idea of a paragraph. These findings align with Grabe and Stoller's (2011) assertion that successful top-down processing relies heavily on efficient identification of main ideas and supporting details, and when this process fails, comprehension suffers and anxiety increases.

Meanwhile, moderate level of anxiety was observed in indicators related to (i) cultural unfamiliarity, (ii) unfamiliar titles, and (iii) lack of prior knowledge. This supports the statement of Guimba and Alico (2016), stated that anxiety arises when students cannot recognize the main idea or important details, frequently due to unfamiliar cultural references in the reading material. It means that although students feel anxious when faced the difficulties in comprehending the general ideas of English reading texts, they did not lose motivation to complete the task.

The overall results indicate that students generally experienced a moderate level of top-down reading anxiety ($M = 2.78$). It revealed that students experienced discomfort or nervousness related to: (i) inability to recognize minor ideas, (ii) difficulty getting the gist despite familiarity with vocabulary and grammar, (iii) and inability to spot the main idea of a paragraph, (iv) cultural unfamiliarity, (v) unfamiliar titles, and (vi) lack of prior knowledge, but they did not lose motivation to complete the task, and attempted strategies to reduce the anxiety.

In order to conclude the questionnaire's result, the result of Table 2 answer the Research Question 1, showed that second semester students of English Education Study Program of Bale Bandung University experienced moderate level in the overall top-down ($M = 2.78$, $P = 36.05\%$), bottom-up ($M = 2.86$, $P = 37.09\%$), and classroom reading anxiety ($M = 2.07$, $P = 26.86\%$). It means that students experienced feelings of discomfort or nervousness, yet continue to complete reading tasks, which indicating a manageable form of anxiety that does not fully impede task completion. It also indicates students experienced reading anxiety but they managed it with sufficient preparation and support.

Table 3. Students' Bottom-Up Reading Anxiety Level

No.	Indicators	Total Scoring	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
7.	I get upset when I cannot figure out the meaning of a word that I feel I have seen before.	112	3.11	0.78	High Anxiety
8.	It bothers me when I encounter a lot of words whose meanings are unclear.	100	2.77	0.59	Moderate Anxiety
9.	I feel worried when the unknown word is difficult to pronounce.	96	2.66	0.75	Moderate Anxiety
10.	I get upset when I come across idioms that are unfamiliar to me.	98	2.72	0.77	Moderate Anxiety
11.	I get confused when the word that I know has a different meaning in the sentence.	114	3.16	0.60	High Anxiety

12.	When a certain sentence is grammatically unfamiliar is worrying to me.	102	2.83	0.60	Moderate Anxiety
13.	I feel upset when the tense of a certain sentence is unclear to me.	104	2.88	0.70	Moderate Anxiety
14.	I worry when I am unable to recognize different parts of speech such as adjective, adverbs, or connective words.	106	2.94	0.79	Moderate Anxiety
15.	I am nervous when a certain sentence is long and has a complex structure.	112	3.11	0.78	High Anxiety
16.	I get confused when what I know about a grammatical point does not make any sense.	110	3.05	0.47	High Anxiety
17.	It bothers me when a passive voice is used in a sentence.	77	2.13	0.68	Moderate Anxiety
	Grand Mean	103	2.86	0.68	Moderate Anxiety

In the bottom-up reading anxiety (Table 3), students also experienced a high levels of anxiety related to (i) recognizing known words with different meanings, (ii) difficulty recalling familiar words, (iii) long and complex sentence structures, and (iv) grammatical inconsistencies with prior knowledge. These findings align with Soomro et al. (2019) stated that bottom-up reading anxiety is the anxiety triggered by textual features at the word and sentence level—such as vocabulary difficulties, idiomatic expressions, or complex grammatical structures. High levels of anxiety revealed that students often struggle to concentrate when they were required to recognizing known words with different meanings, difficulty recalling familiar words, long and complex sentence structures, and grammatical inconsistencies with prior knowledge.

Moderate anxiety was found in most other indicators, such as (i) encountering unclear vocabulary, (ii) unfamiliar idioms, and (iii) grammatically unfamiliar sentences. This is consistent with the findings of Sellers (2000) and Zhao et al. (2013), who emphasize that unknown vocabulary and grammatical complexity can hinder comprehension and increase cognitive load, thereby elevating anxiety levels. Moderate level of anxiety indicates that students have a feelings of discomfort or nervousness when faced unclear vocabulary, unfamiliar idioms, and grammatically unfamiliar sentences, but can be managed with sufficient preparation and support.

Interestingly, the relatively lower mean score for anxiety related to passive voice, suggests that this grammatical form may be less intimidating to students compared to other syntactic challenges. This could be attributed to prior exposure in language classes, as previous studies have shown that familiarity with certain grammatical structures reduces reading anxiety (Zhang, 2019).

The overall results indicate that students generally experienced a moderate level of bottom-up reading anxiety ($M = 2.86$). It revealed that students experienced discomfort or nervousness when they faced: (i) recognizing known words with different meanings, (ii) difficulty recalling familiar words, (iii) long and complex sentence structures, and (iv) grammatical inconsistencies with prior knowledge, (v) encountering unclear vocabulary, (vi) unfamiliar idioms, (vii) grammatically unfamiliar sentences, and (viii) passive voice, but they did not lose motivation to complete the task, and attempted strategies to reduce the anxiety.

Table 4. Students' Classroom Reading Anxiety Level

No.	Indicators	Total Scoring	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
18.	It makes me feel uneasy when the teacher corrects my pronunciation or translation mistakes.	54	1.50	0.56	Low Anxiety
19.	It upsets me when the teacher chooses uninteresting texts to read in class.	74	2.05	0.62	High Anxiety
20.	It worries me when the teacher calls on me to translate a piece of an English text into our first language.	82	2.27	0.84	High Anxiety
21.	I am nervous when the teacher uses English as a medium of instruction and hardly ever makes use of our first language.	79	2.19	0.88	Moderate Anxiety
22.	When the teacher asks me reading comprehension questions is worrying to me.	90	2.50	0.84	Moderate Anxiety
23.	It bothers me when the teacher calls on me to read out.	69	1.91	0.80	Low Anxiety
	Grand Mean	74.66	2.07	0.76	Moderate Anxiety

The results of Table 4, revealed that students exhibit a high level of classroom reading anxiety related to: (i) feeling upset when the teacher selected uninteresting texts and (ii) when they were asked to translate a piece of text into their first language. These findings align with Jannah and Juniardi (2025), who reported that a notable proportion of students felt restless when presented with uninteresting reading topics and nervous when asked to translate text into their first language — both recognized as classroom-related triggers of reading anxiety. High levels of anxiety revealed that students often struggle to concentrate when they were feeling upset since the teacher selected uninteresting texts, and they were asked to translate a piece of text into their first language.

Moderate anxiety was reported for: (i) being asked comprehension questions, and (ii) English-only instruction with minimal use of the first language. This supports findings by Liu & Huiliuqian (2015) that unfamiliar instructional approaches and unpredictable questioning can trigger moderate anxiety in EFL classrooms. Moderate level of anxiety indicates that students became anxious when being asked comprehension questions, and facing English-only instruction with minimal use of the first language, but they could still attempt strategies to reduce the anxiety.

On the other hand, low anxiety was reported for (i) being corrected by the teacher and (ii) being called on to read aloud. These findings align with Saentika et al. (2020) stated that when students received teacher correction, their speaking related anxiety was lower compared to when corrected by peers. This suggests that appropriate teacher correction might not raise anxiety and may even ease it by providing clarity and guidance.

The overall results indicate that students generally experienced a moderate level of bottom-up reading anxiety ($M = 2.07$). It revealed that students experienced discomfort or nervousness related to the situation of: (i) feeling upset when the teacher selected uninteresting texts, (ii) when they were asked to translate a piece of text into their first language, (iii) being asked comprehension questions, (iv) English-only instruction with minimal use of the first language, (v) being corrected by the teacher and (vi) being called on to read aloud, but they did not lose motivation to complete the task, and attempted strategies to reduce the anxiety.

Table 5. Types of Reading Anxiety Distribution

Indicator	Mean	Percentage	Frequency	Interpretation
Top-Down Reading Anxiety	2.78	36.05 %	13	Moderate Anxiety
Bottom-Up Reading Anxiety	2.86	37.09 %	14	Moderate Anxiety
Classroom Reading Anxiety	2.07	26.86 %	9	Moderate Anxiety

In summary, the result of Table 5 answer the Research Question 1, showed that second semester students of English Education Study Program of Bale Bandung University experienced moderate level in the overall top-down ($M = 2.78$, $P = 36.05\%$), bottom-up ($M = 2.86$, $P = 37.09\%$), and classroom reading anxiety ($M = 2.07$, $P = 26.86\%$). It means that students experienced feelings of discomfort or nervousness, yet continue to complete reading tasks, which indicating a manageable form of anxiety that does not fully impede task completion. It also indicates students experienced reading anxiety but they managed it with sufficient preparation and support.

Having identified the main sources of students' reading anxiety, it is also important to examine how they respond to these challenges. The result of students' interview answer the Research Question 2 (What are the strategies employed by the students to reduce their anxiety in English reading class?), revealed that students adopt a variety of strategies that aimed at reducing the anxiety.

When students failed to grasp the main idea of a text, they often reread it slowly or concentrated on keywords, titles, or repeated words. This demonstrates the application of metacognitive regulation and global strategies. According to Ghaith (2020), metacognitive monitoring, such as rereading and adjusting reading pace, helps students rebuild comprehension while also reducing anxiety. Similarly, Tsai and Lee (2018) as quoted in Keskin (2023) underlined that global methods such as scanning for repeated words or focusing on the title can reduce anxiety by directing attention to the broader meaning rather than specific details. The students' reliance on these techniques implies that they understood the need of both checking their comprehension and employing broader reading strategies to overcome top down reading anxiety.

In relation to vocabulary and sentence structures, students reported guessing meanings from context, checking dictionaries or translation tools, asking friends, and in some cases memorizing vocabulary beforehand. These findings correspond with bottom-up processing strategies and preparation techniques described in earlier studies. According to Ghaith and El-Sanyoura (2019), readers often alternate between contextual guessing and direct vocabulary checking to maintain comprehension when faced with difficult words. The reports of students who memorized vocabulary prior to class also align with Tran et al.'s (2025) findings on pre-teaching in flipped classrooms, which reduced reading anxiety by giving learners prior exposure to key vocabulary. These strategies show that students combined immediate coping actions with longer-term preparation to address bottom-up reading difficulties.

In classroom contexts, students described calming techniques such as deep breathing, prayer, positive self-talk, and focusing on the process rather than the result. Others highlighted the importance of practicing at home, seeking support from friends, or focusing on their own progress. These responses reflect the use of emotion management strategies and the building of self-efficacy. Prior studies have similarly reported that relaxation and mindfulness help learners regulate their emotions during reading (Fumero et al., 2020). Moreover, the role of practice and peer support resonates with the idea that self-efficacy can be developed when students feel more prepared and supported (Mekuria et al., 2024). The findings therefore support previous research suggesting that a combination of affective regulation and social interaction can help reduce classroom-related reading anxiety.

In summary, the result of students' interview answer the Research Question 2, revealed that students adopt a variety of strategies that aimed at reducing the anxiety, such as rereading, scanning, vocabulary guessing, memorizing vocabulary, breathing, prayer, and affirmations. These findings is in line with the answer of Research Question 1, stated the level students experienced in top-down, bottom-up, and classroom reading anxiety was moderate level. It showed that students experienced feelings of discomfort or nervousness, yet continue to complete reading tasks, which indicating a manageable form of anxiety that does not fully impede task completion. It also indicates students experienced reading anxiety but they managed it with sufficient preparation and support.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the levels of reading anxiety experienced by students in English reading classes and to explore the strategies they employed to reduce such anxiety. Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the second-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Bale Bandung University experienced a moderate level of reading anxiety across the dimensions of top-down, bottom-up, and classroom reading anxiety.

This finding suggests that while students experienced anxiety during reading activities, it did not significantly hinder their performance. Instead, they demonstrated an ability to manage their anxiety adaptively, reflecting a balance between emotional challenges and effective coping mechanisms. It revealed that reading anxiety, rather than being a purely negative factor, can serve as a motivational force that encourages students to prepare more thoroughly and engage more actively with English texts.

Furthermore, the interview results revealed that students employed a variety of cognitive and affective strategies to cope with their anxiety, including rereading, scanning, guessing vocabulary from context, memorizing vocabulary, breathing exercises, prayer, and positive affirmations. These strategies demonstrate students' metacognitive awareness in dealing with reading difficulties and their growing potential to become more autonomous and reflective readers.

Substantively, this study emphasizes that success in reading within an EFL context depends not only on linguistic proficiency but also on the management of emotional factors that influence the learning process. Therefore, students should continue to strengthen their self-regulation strategies, while teachers are encouraged to create supportive classroom environments that transform anxiety into positive motivation for reading improvement.

Looking forward, this study provides promising avenues for further exploration. Future research could investigate reading anxiety in online or blended learning environments, or examine the relationship between specific teaching methods and anxiety reduction in reading performance. In addition, studies involving larger and more diverse participant groups would offer deeper insights into how reading anxiety develops and is managed across different proficiency levels and educational settings.

In conclusion, this study not only provides a clear picture of students' reading anxiety levels and coping strategies but also broadens the understanding of the interplay between cognitive and affective factors in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This highlights the importance of fostering both emotional resilience and reading competence to support students' overall language development.

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