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FOREIGN LANGUAGE READING ANXIETY AMONG THEOLOGY DEPARTMENT STUDENTS: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND ALLEVIATING STRATEGIES

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Abstract
The study investigated factors contributing to English for Theology students' Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) and their strategies to alleviate it. This study was the continuation of a quantitative study involving 63 Theology student participants which found that their FLRA was significantly correlated with their reading achievement negatively. It was also conducted to fill the void in the FLRA literature in the Indonesian university context especially in Theology department necessitating learners to read a lot of passages in English, possibly quite anxiety-provoking for learners. Four selected participants from the previous quantitative study were interviewed and the data were analysed using Thematic Analysis. The study found that low self-confidence, lack of peer support, low self-perceived language competence, low motivation, and unfamiliar vocabulary increased learners' FLRA. Teachers' various methods, emphasising group activities were found to reduce their FLRA whilst whole-class reading activities tended to increase their FLRA. Furthermore, the uses of various reading strategies taught in class to comprehend texts were reported to reduce their FLRA to a certain extent depending on the degree of success of learners in using the strategies. Implications, limitations, and suggested directions for future studies were mentioned in light of the study's findings.

Keywords: FLRA, contributing factors, alleviating strategies, Thematic Analysis

Introduction

In second language (L2) instruction, anxiety has been acknowledged as a part of learners' individual differences (IDs) affecting learners' ultimate second language (L2) attainment (Dornyei, 2005). L2 learning process which is quite often very tedious (Dornyei, 2005) often poses a psychological threat to learners (Ortega, 2009). Reasonably, anxiety has been considered one of the most consistent factors influencing L2 learning (Subekti, 2018a).

Though discussion on L2 learners' anxiety has been predominantly conducted in speaking contexts especially after the release of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), more

anxiety studies have been conducted in reading contexts after the release of Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) developed by Saito et al. (1999), acknowledging that reading can also be anxiety-provoking to L2 learners and this feeling affects their learning negatively (see Daley et al., 2014; Zikuda et al., 2013). This anxiety in reading is often referred to as Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) derived from FLRAS questionnaire through which the construct is often measured and various factors can contribute to this such as those from learners themselves and their learning environment.

There are several factors of FLRA from within learners and these factors seem to be inter-related. The extent to which learners believe in their language ability affects their reading anxiety (Bakx et al., 2019). Bakx et al. (2019) mentioned that when learners have a positive perception of their language ability, they will likely enjoy reading more and develop reading behaviours. Positive perception of language ability can stem from learners' positive experiences when using L2 (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018) whilst negative perception likely stems from lack of self-confidence (Sultan, 2012) and unpleasant experiences in using L2 (Subekti, 2019). These negative experiences, for example lagging behind their friends, could also trigger learners' inferior feelings (Kabir, 2018) and this negative feeling can increase learners' apprehension in learning (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Furthermore, learners' vocabulary mastery could also be an important component affecting learners' reading anxiety as low vocabulary master affects reading comprehension (Cetinkaya, 2011; Chou, 2011). As learners comprehend the texts less, they will be less motivated to continue reading (Zarei, 2014) and become more apprehensive towards reading activities in the future because they are not engaged in the reading process (Yamac & Sezgin, 2018). In contrast, when learners are engaged in the reading process, it helps them to build good reading behaviour through continuous practices (Daniel et al., 2017; Khoirunnisa & Safitri, 2018).

Furthermore, learning environments such as classmates, teachers, and classroom activities could also affect learners' FLRA, albeit perhaps indirectly. Oliviana and Hayati (2017) in the Indonesian Junior High School context found that positive peer support promotes learners' self-confidence facilitating better reading comprehension. It is in line with Furrer et al.'s (2014) idea of the important role of classmates to enhance learners' academic engagement. They further stated that learners can enjoy their learning process more when they know their classmates are supportive. In comparison, when learners do not find support from their friends during the learning process, for example being laughed at when making mistakes, they tend to be more apprehensive and anxious (Subekti, 2018a). This may especially be the case in the Asian context culturally considering "saving face" paramount in society (Joe et al., 2017). Being ridiculed could also be unpleasant experiences for learners and learners may tend to avoid such embarrassment by withdrawing from risk-taking activities important in L2 learning. Furthermore, to improve learners' reading comprehension, teaching learners various reading strategies can help them to deal with their problems in reading, facilitating better reading comprehension. Furrer et al. (2014) and Khoirunnisa and Safitri (2018) are also in agreement that teachers' role is important to encourage learners in using reading strategies effectively for better reading comprehension. With a better understanding of reading passages, learners

will likely develop a sense of achievement further alleviating their reading anxiety. It may be the reason why several studies found that the uses of reading strategies were associated with learners' lower FLRA (e.g.: Atasoy & Temizkan, 2018; Lien, 2011; Sadeghi & Izadpanah, 2018; Sari, 2017; Tien, 2017; Ulfa, 2015; Zarei, 2014). Moreover, teachers' teaching methods also heavily influenced the quality of learning (Lien, 2011) and for this reason, activities promoting learning should be emphasised (Nejad & Keshavarzi, 2015; Subramani & Iyappan, 2018). Stawiarska (2013) found that even advanced learners felt anxious in reading class and it was mainly due to the post-reading activity such as reporting what they read in front of the class. Concerning creating a psychologically safer environment for learners to learn in a more relaxing way, small group cooperative activities should be more put forward than whole-class or individual activities (Subekti, 2018a, 2020a).

Rationales

Our previous quantitative study (Limeranto & Subekti, 2021) found that Theology students at an Indonesian university experienced FLRA at the medium level on average. The study further found a statistically significant negative relationship between Theology students' FLRA with their reading achievement with the correlation strength being weak r (61) = -.25, $p < .05$. These findings suggested that the issue of FLRA needs further investigation as learners experienced a certain degree of FLRA and their FLRA was significantly correlated with their reading achievement negatively. Furthermore, researching Theology students' FLRA could also be a breakthrough in the field o FLRA because these students will likely be Protestant Christian ministers upon graduation, and thus should read a lot of texts for the preparation for the job (Hussey, 2015). In this process, they may encounter problems in comprehending some texts in foreign languages such as English (Hussey, 2015). To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first qualitative study conducted in the field on learners of these characteristics and thus could offer possible insights for further studies in the field.

Based on the mentioned rationale the present study intends to answer two research questions. First, what factors do Theology students believe contribute to their anxiety in reading? And second, what strategies do ESP for Theology students believe may help reduce their anxiety in reading?

Methods

Research design and data analysis

The present study was the continuation of our previous quantitative study conducted in early 2020 involving 63 Theology students from three English for Theology classes at a university in Java, Indonesia. Using FLRAS questionnaires (Saito et al., 1999), the quantitative study found that the Theology students, in general, experienced a medium level of anxiety (Limeranto & Subekti, 2021). After using the questionnaire results as the basis, this study used interviews which aimed to gather deeper insight on the FLRA phenomenon and to gather valuable information from the views of participants (Aisyah, 2017; Salehi & Golafshani, 2010). An interview is a flexible data collection tool to obtain specific research-relevant information from the research participants (Cohen et al., 2007). The

interviews were conducted in the Indonesian language as the language the participants were most familiar with to allow elaborative responses from the participants. The result of the interviews was transcribed and translated into English. Furthermore, coding was used to organize the data systematically and meaningfully (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis was employed to find occurring themes per the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006)from the fully transcribed, translated, and coded interview transcripts.

Participants and ethical consideration

From the SPSS descriptive analysis of our previous quantitative study (Limeranto & Subekti, 2021), the participants of the study could be categorised into High FLRA, Medium FLRA, and Low FLRA. The present study initially planned to involve six participants, two from High FLRA, two from Medium, and two from Low. However, as the present study was about to start Covid-19 pandemic compelled the implementation of distant-learning at the university and many learners who initially were willing to be involved in further study were unable to do so due to several reasons. In the end, the present study successfully obtained four participants, all males, three with high FLRA, and one with low FLRA. Though the participants involved were not as diverse as we planned it to be, they were deemed sufficient as qualitative methods do not concern an extensive number of participants but the depth and richness of data obtained (Gray, 2014) and this purpose could be reached with the available participants. These four participants were in the fourth semester of their study in the Theology Department and they had obtained three reading classes in their previous three semesters of their study. In their fourth semester when this study was conducted, they were taking their fourth reading class namely English for Theology.

Ethical considerations of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and beneficence were adhered to. The four participants willingly participated in the present study. Written consent forms detailing the study's purpose and participants' rights (Israel & Hay, 2006) were given to two participants who then gave their consent to participate in this study before face-to-face interviews were conducted. As the other two participants were interviewed online, they gave their consent through WhatsApp. During the interview and data analysis process, we knew the participants' real name, however, all of the data reported were made anonymous (Akaranga & Makau, 2016).

Findings and discussion

The pseudonyms of the four participants were Jack (Male/M), Adit (M), and Boy (M) (High FLRA), Ray (M) (Low FLRA).

Research question 1: What factors do Theology students believe contribute to their anxiety in reading?

The present study found five themes on the contributing factors of learners' FLRA. These themes could be observed in Table 1.

Table 1. The emerging themes of factor that could contribute to participants' FLRA

Theme 1	Low self-confidence and lack of peer support increased learners' reading anxiety.
Theme 2	Low self-perceived language competence increased learners' reading anxiety.
Theme 3	Unfamiliar vocabulary increased learners' reading anxiety.
Theme 4	Motivation influenced learners' reading anxiety.
Theme 5	Teachers' methods could either reduce or increase learners' reading anxiety.

Theme 1. Lack of self-confidence and lack of peer support increased learners' reading anxiety.

Lack of self-confidence and fear of making mistakes were reported to instil reading anxiety by three participants with high FLRA. Jack, for example, reported that he experienced a lack of self-confidence whilst reading texts. He remarked:

> *I feel anxious when I do not understand the reading content or the core of the reading. I am afraid if I do not master the reading content, it will impair my reading performance.* [Jack, High FLRA]

This finding was in line with some authors' statements (e.g.: Daley et al., 2014; Zikuda et al., 2013) on the important role of learners' emotions in learning. Zikuda et al. (2013), for instance, stated that learners' negative emotions such as fear, sadness, or disappointment, in turn, influence their reading comprehension negatively. As seen in Jack's comments, he acknowledged that his fear may negatively affect his reading comprehension (see also Daley et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Jack also mentioned that he was afraid of mispronouncing words. As he reported, it was due to the unpleasant experience of being ridiculed by his classmates when making mistakes. Regarding this, he stated:

> *[..] I am so afraid of mispronouncing a word. I ever experienced it [mispronunciation] when I did my presentation ... I made mistakes of mispronouncing many vocabularies and some of my friends laughed at me. It made me feel embarrassed.* [Jack, High FLRA]

The finding that learners felt anxious due to friends' unsupportive behaviours of laughing at them when they made mistakes may be related to the results of Oliviana's and Hayati's (2017) quantitative study in Indonesia. Oliviana and Hayati (2017) found that positive peer support is one of the good ways to promote students' self-confidence and risk-taking behaviours in reading. Though not specifically in reading anxiety literature, additionally, Subekti's (2018) study in the field of speaking anxiety in the Indonesian context also found that students tend to be afraid of making mistakes when talking in English because they were

afraid of being ridiculed by their classmates. The relatively same finding on anxiety across two different language skills, reading, and speaking, in the same education context, may suggest the paramount role of peer support in L2 learning. It may especially be the case for some Indonesian young adult learners, belonging to typical Asian culture, which considers "face" very important (see Joe et al., 2017).

Ray, a student with low FLRA, in comparison, despite feeling afraid of making mistakes to a certain extent, seemed to have a more positive view about the possible positive roles of peer support in creating a safer and supporting atmosphere for all students to keep learning. He commented:

> *Sometimes, I feel afraid of making a mistake in pronouncing some words, however, I think it is normal. My friends will help me when I make a mistake. In my opinion, we have to help our friends when they make a mistake or do not understand something related to reading. It is because the friends' role can influence someone's engagement in the learning process* [Ray, Low FLRA]

Ray's comment may reflect Furrer et al.'s (2014) reiteration on the important role of peers, besides that of teachers, to enhance learners' academic engagement. Students' learning can be more enjoyable when they can build a good relationship with one another, for example, they can support each other during the learning process (Furrer et al., 2014). Ray's positive attitude towards peer support may also explain why he had low FLRA. As seen in his comment, he believed that his classmates would help him if he made mistakes.

Theme 2. Low self-perceived language competence increased learners' reading anxiety.

Two participants with high FLRA, Adit, and Jack, reported that their anxiety was also stemmed from feeling inferior on their language ability. They commented:

> *Sometimes, I feel my friends' works are better than mine. They can get a good score ... I cannot.* [Adit, High FLRA]
> *I keep feeling anxious in reading class. I am just afraid if I cannot follow what is taught in the classroom.* [Jack, High FLRA]

Regarding Adit's and Jacks' excerpts on their inferior feeling, when learners find themselves having lower ability than others, this inferior feeling may occur (Kabir, 2018). They also tend to be more anxious when they perceive their competence to be lagging when compared to that of their peers' (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Students' low self-perceived language competence could also be caused by their lack of self-confidence in their capability to learn and achieve a specific goal (Sultan, 2012) and any unpleasant or upsetting experiences when using the language (Subekti, 2019).

In comparison, Ray, the participant with low FLRA, seemed to be confident enough with his language ability. He reported that he focused on his reading skill betterment by using reading strategies. He stated:

> *I never feel inferior with my friends' ability because I always try to survive by myself to find my way to read a lot and to develop my reading skill by using some reading strategies.* [Ray, Low FLRA]

Ray's comments that he tried to work on solutions to improve his reading skills resembled one of the findings of Bakx et al.'s (2006) quantitative study in the Netherlands on the role of learners' high self-perceived competence in improving their reading behaviours to reduce their reading anxiety. Besides, as could be observed in his comments, his confidence in his language ability was closely related to how much he enjoyed reading and how he could solve his learning problems (see also Bakx et al., 2019). As low self-perceived language competence could be attributed to unpleasant experiences when using the language, high self-perception on language ability could be caused by positive experiences (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2018). Hence, it may be worthwhile creating a safe environment where learners are braver to risk-taking behaviours on the understanding that they have both the supports of their peers and teachers, through small group cooperative activities, for example (Subekti, 2020a), thus possibly creating series of pleasant experiences in using L2.

Theme 3. Unfamiliar vocabulary increased learners' reading anxiety.

Jack reported that failing to find the meaning of vocabulary in reading made him feel apprehensive to continue reading. Regarding this, he commented:

> *The main obstacle is vocabulary. I use a dictionary and Google Translate to find some difficult vocabulary. Sometimes, I try to guess the meaning from the previous sentences and the sentences after. I always do so when I find difficulty in mastering the vocabulary but sometimes, I feel that fail to do so. It makes me feel bored [lose interest] and I no longer want to read that text.* [Jack, High FLRA]

In contrast, Ray commented that he did not feel anxious when he found difficult vocabularies. He stated that vocabulary was only one of the stepping stones in reading and unfamiliar vocabularies could be solved by learning it regularly. He reported:

> *I always enjoy it and take it easy when I find some difficult words in a text. It is just a stepping stone in reading. So, when I find any difficulty, I always keep calm and try to use Google Translate or dictionaries to find out the meanings. The point is we have to learn the vocabulary continuously.* [Ray, Low FLRA]

The present study's finding that facing unfamiliar vocabulary was anxiety-provoking may be related to Chou's (2011) quantitative study in Taiwan finding that vocabulary knowledge affected reading comprehension significantly (see also Cetinkaya, 2011). Hence, low vocabulary mastery compromised learners' understanding of reading passages and this may instil apprehension, making them give up reading further. Reading strategies are believed to be a way to

comprehend texts despite unfamiliar vocabulary and learners who use reading strategies to comprehend the reading passages, tend to be less anxious in reading (Atasoy & Temizkan, 2018; Lien, 2011; Sari, 2017; Tien, 2017). However, as seen in Jack's and Ray's comments, Jack made efforts in using reading strategies to understand reading passages he was reading but to little avail whilst Ray successfully used similar strategies with more fruitful results. Hence, it was perhaps not only a matter of using reading strategies but to what extent learners could use these strategies successfully that eventually influenced their reading anxiety in which a more pleasant and successful experience in dealing with L2 will likely improve their self-perceived language competence (Subekti, 2020b) and decrease their anxiety.

Theme 4. Motivation influenced students' anxiety in reading.

Two participants with high FLRA, Jack and Boy, acknowledged that they had a lack of motivation in reading. They admitted that they got bored easily when they read a lot of texts. Jack, for example, mentioned several contributing factors such as unfamiliar vocabulary, complicated grammar structures, and unfamiliar topics which made him think that reading is the most difficult part of learning English. Regarding this, he stated:

> *I get bored easily when I am reading a text because ... some factors such as vocabulary, grammar, and unfamiliar topic when I see too long reading passages ... this makes me feel that the hardest part of learning English is learning to read. I don't feel motivated to continue reading the texts.* [Boy, High FLRA]

In a similar vein, Boy seemed to be intimidated by long reading passages. So, once he was given such passages, he lost interest. He remarked:

> *I always get bored when I read a lot of texts. I feel so reluctant to read the texts.* [Jack, High FLRA]

This reported lack of motivation may be related to these learners' perceptions of their reading comprehension. As they considered themselves unable to comprehend the texts they were reading, the less they were motivated to be engaged in the process of reading (Zarei, 2014). As these learners comprehend texts less, their reading anxiety increased. However, the interactions of motivation in reading, reading comprehension, and reading anxiety may not be seen as simply one sequentially causing the other, but rather they can be in such complex, intertwined causal relationships in which they can influence one another in any directions. For example, Jack's and Boy's perception of poor reading comprehension reduced their motivation, and in turn, this lack of motivation increased their reading anxiety, which further hampered learners' reading comprehension.

Ray's comments on how he enjoyed reading and thus could comprehend texts better may give some kind of support that high motivation and low anxiety allowed better reading comprehension. He stated:

> *To me, reading is easy to learn if you can motivate yourself […] learning to read is not difficult as long as I want to spend my time reading many texts regularly to understand and comprehend the texts* ... [Ray, Low FLRA]

Regarding this, Yamac and Sezgin (2018) stated that learners who had an interest in reading content tended to have a good motivation in reading. It could be seen in Ray's case that he acknowledged reading was easy to learn because he had a good interest in reading and regularly spent the time to read. It could also be related to the formation of reading habits obtained through continuous practice (Daniel et al., 2017; Khoirunnisa & Safitri, 2018) which could generate reading interest, in turn alleviating their anxiety.

Theme 5. Teachers' methods could either reduce or increase learners' reading anxiety.

Participants commented that teachers' supporting teaching methods could reduce their reading anxiety. Jack and Ray agreed that their teachers contributed to reducing learners' anxiety. About their respective teachers' methods in their class, they commented:

> *[When] I do not understand the content of a text, she always explains slowly ... relaxing ... I can understand it easier. She also utilizes Jigsaw learning to help us understand the text.* [Jack, High FLRA]
>
> *She gives me some tips and feedback on how to use reading strategies to improve my reading performance ... using group discussion to discuss [materials] with our friends. Her role affects our quality of reading.* [Ray, Low FLRA]

Adit, in comparison, acknowledged that his teacher's methods increased his reading anxiety. He felt his teacher was not helpful because the learning activities were quite monotonous. Besides, he admitted that the teacher's methods were not interesting to him. Regarding this, he stated:

> *Her role ... does not help me in reading ... her methods were not interesting ... The learning activities are monotonous. The problem is on the lecturer's role ... increase my anxiety. She always asks us to read and answer some questions ... That is one of the monotonous learning activities. I want to learn English by using interesting learning methods such as the use of technology.* [Adit, High FLRA]

Several important points could be taken from the excerpts of these three different students. First, this finding was relatively in line with the finding of Lien's (2011) study in the Taiwanese context in which she found that teachers' teaching methods influenced learners' quality of learning. Secondly, both Jack and Ray mentioned collaborative learning activities such as jigsaw learning and group discussions as activities alleviating reading anxiety and this was in line with

the idea on the role of cooperative learning in small groups to create a safer learning environment, discouraging peer-comparison, stimulating risk-taking learning behaviours, and reducing anxiety (Subekti, 2018a, 2020a). In general, teachers need to design and apply various activities to promote learning (Nejad & Keshavarzi, 2015; Subramani & Iyappan, 2018), and as seen in Jack's and Ray's comments, cooperative activities seemed to be an obvious example. Furthermore, Adit's comment on his dislike of his teacher's teaching methods also merited further comments. The activity of 'reading and answer some questions' Adit mentioned might have been carried out in such an anxiety-provoking way as asking learners to read the passages, giving time to answer the questions individually, and asking individual students to read aloud the answers for each question number, which could be anxiety-provoking as it placed learners in the spotlight with all classmates being the audience. This finding confirmed Stawiarska's (2013) quantitative study in Poland that learners, even advanced ones, felt more anxious in doing post-reading tasks than in doing the reading itself. In other words, the anxiety was higher when they had to report what they had learned from that reading (Stawiarska, 2013). The results of these two studies suggested that teachers should design post-reading activities in a way that is less anxiety-provoking, for example by asking learners to work in small groups rather than doing whole-class activities.

Research question 2: What strategies do Theology students believe may help reduce their anxiety in reading?

The present study found one theme concerning the second research question, "The use of reading strategies could help reduce students' reading anxiety".

The use of reading strategies could help reduce students' reading anxiety.

All of the three participants with high FLRA seemed to agree with the use of reading strategies they obtained in class helped reduce their reading anxiety. They felt the atmosphere of learning became more engaging because reading strategies could help them in their reading process. They stated:

> *I use KWL [Know, Want, and Learnt], SQ3R [Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review], margin notes and annotating to reduce my anxiety in reading […]* [Jack, High FLRA]
> *I use margin notes to find difficulty in grammar and vocabulary. It helps me to reduce my anxiety in reading*. [Adit, High FLRA]
> *I do scanning, skimming, outlining, seeing a picture, annotating, and then focus on the contents of reading*. [Boy, High FLRA]

The mentioned excerpts suggested that the use of reading strategies could help reduce learners' anxiety. Several authors stated that students who used reading strategies tended to be less anxious because reading strategies could help them to solve some problems in reading tasks (Zarei, 2014; Zeynali et al., 2017). In this case, three participants with high FLRA tended to be less anxious when they used a variety of reading strategies whilst reading (see also Sadeghi & Izadpanah, 2018; Ulfa, 2015; Zarei, 2014). This finding was similar to Lien's (2011) study's finding in Taiwan in which the use of a reading strategy could

overcome learners' reading anxiety and made the learning environment less stressful. Additionally, the present study's finding could also be treated as a qualitative confirmation of Zarei's (2014) quantitative study in Iran finding that students using reading strategies tended to be less anxious. The slightly similar findings among the present study and several previous studies in different education context may indicate that reading strategies are paramount in reading instruction. Hence, L2 reading instruction should equip learners with the necessary strategies to deal with texts before focusing on the ultimate result of reading comprehension. As learners are familiar with strategies, it will be easier for them to deal with other passages in or outside class. As learners develop a positive experience and sense of achievement, they will likely have less reading anxiety.

Conclusion

The present study offers several possible contributions. New findings such as the role of teaching methods and low self-perceived language competence in affecting learners FLRA may pave a way for further studies in the field of FLRA in the Indonesian context. Several other findings, though not new, could serve as replications of findings of previous studies conducted outside Indonesia. Whilst specific to the Indonesian context, this study offers a comprehensive picture, through qualitative perspectives, about FLRA experienced by EAP university students, especially at Theology department, as this study was the first qualitative study on FLRA investigating these segment of learners.

The present study's findings have several implications for L2 reading instruction. Per the finding on the lack of vocabulary as a contributing factor of FLRA, it is suggested that teachers should also teach vocabulary learning strategies in L2 reading classes. The strategies could include guessing from contexts and using vocabulary cards to help them remember the vocabulary. Furthermore, per the finding on the role of teaching methods in influencing learners' reading anxiety, it is suggested that teachers create various learning activities and use various teaching methods to make them involved in the reading process. The uses of cooperative learning activities in which learners are to work together in small groups can be a solution. Small groups can create a safer learning environment stimulating learners to be braver and less afraid to make mistakes. Cooperative learning activities could also minimise the possibility of peer-comparison, and thus minimise learners' feeling inferior.

Despite the mentioned contributions and implications, the study also inherently has limitations. It solely depended on student semi-structured interviews as the only source of data. Hence, the findings solely came from the participants' subjective, in-depth experiences and they were unique to the context of the participants. However, as interpretivism paradigm, seeing 'truths' as experienced by individuals, was employed, the participants' subjective experiences, whilst could be seen as a limitation on the inability of generalisation, should not be seen as a flaw. Another limitation was the study's inability to reach more interview participants from various levels of FLRA due to the Covid-19 pandemic which made some participants of our previous quantitative study unable to be involved in the subsequent qualitative study due to various reasons. The data

obtained could have been richer had these learners participated in the present study.

Lastly, several future studies can be suggested. First, investigating teachers' methods and peer support concerning learners' reading anxiety in more depth can be worthwhile. Such studies could use the combination of class observations conducted several times, teacher and student interviews, and students' periodical reflections on those three aspects. Secondly, as motivation to read was found to influence learners' reading anxiety, it may be strategic to conduct a large scale quantitative study investigating the effect of motivation to read on learners' reading anxiety levels.

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