Reading Anxiety and Comprehension of Grade 8 Filipino Learners

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Abstract. The investigations on the issue of English language reading anxiety have already been conducted in the past two decades. It has now becoming an interest that reading anxiety in English language really does exist. With the use of the English as a Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Inventory (Zoghi, 2012), this descriptive-correlation research attempts to find out the level of reading anxiety and the main causes of its existence among Grade 8 students in Mindanao State University-Integrated Laboratory School, Marawi City. Their reading comprehension performance is also correlated to their reading anxiety level. Results showed that a great majority failed in the test and high level of reading anxiety exists among majority of them. Causes of their reading anxiety are based on three categories: (i) top-down reading, (ii) bottom-up reading, and (iii) classroom reading. Moreover, it was found out that there is a significant negative relationship between students' reading anxiety level and reading comprehension performance. With this, teachers are challenged to solve this reading problem through effective teaching strategies and interventions. It is further suggested that studies should be conducted to explore further this hindrance in English language learning.

Keywords: English Language Learning; Classroom Reading; Reading Anxiety; Reading Comprehension.

Introduction

More than two decades have passed since the inclusion of the affective domain in the reading process. Later on, the involvement of anxiety as an affective variable then entered into the scenario of reading research. Saito, Horwitz, and Garza (1999) coined the concept of foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA).

They conducted their study about FLRA using French, Russian, and Japanese language students. After administering the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) which they made themselves, the outcome revealed that reading anxiety actually exists and that it is distinctively considered as another form of language anxiety. Researches about reading anxiety have been going on until now in order to prove that it influences the reading process (Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999; Sellars, 2000).

The reading process becomes perplex due to factors such as linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and even motivation (Lee, 1999; Sellers, 2000). Moreover, Chen (2007), who conducted a study about Taiwanese students' reading anxiety, mentioned that most of reading anxiety researches was done in the western context. This means that there is an open opportunity to conduct more researches to determine the nature of reading anxiety in the case of the other side of the globe. Kuru Gonen (2007) also said that reading is a macroskill that few researches deal with. He added that "in order to overcome the affective nature of second or foreign language L2 reading difficulties, there is a need to explore language learning reading anxiety in detail."

Second language research has also been delving into the realm of reading anxiety. As Fryer (1988) noted, affective factors are seen to be influencing L2 reading and mediating students' reading purposes and one of these is anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) as a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language reading arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 31).

As literatures were deliberated, there are major sources of reading anxiety. Firstly, Hinton, Miyamoto, and Della-Chiesa (2008) discussed that the creation of reading anxiety undergoes the process of classical conditioning between reading and fear. In detail, an initially neutral stimulus is paired repetitively with a negative unconditioned stimulus (e.g., teacher judgment, peer ridicule). Consequently, the learner develops an association between reading and negative emotions. As an example, in an English class, a child who is still not proficient in reading is called up by the teacher to read a certain passage. Hinton et al. (2008) explained that the task activates the amygdale, the part of the brain which elicits an immediate sense of fright. At the same time, a "slower, cortically driven cognitive appraisal of the situation is occurring: various thoughts converge to a cognitive confirmation that this is a threatening situation," (p. 91) which, according to them, causes a rising sense of alarm. Clearly, this first source of reading anxiety involves the contribution of the social surrounding of the child. The learning and reading environment itself feeds negative emotions which in turn creates a phobia.

Moreover, the second source of reading anxiety is not totally related to the child's social surrounding. It involves the child himself and the reading materials he reads. Based on the Mathemagenic Theory of reading proposed by Rothkopf (1982), in reading, learning is stimulated by attached aids as directions

provided to the readers, questions inserted in tests, purposes and goals, means for achieving goals in the form of text information, and assessment of goal achievement based upon this information. The point is that there are elements of the text that help readers grasp and understand the information conveyed.

On the other hand, the text can also be spared from this negative association. The readers themselves can also be the reason why they develop anxiety towards reading. The Schema Theory says that in order for readers to understand and absorb new information from the text, there has to be a prior knowledge about the topic. Accordingly, schema is the categorical rules or scripts used to interpret the world and that new information is processed according to how it fits into these rules (Widmayer, n.d.). Furthermore, as applied to reading, Halliday and Hassan (1989) said that schema can be reflected in text structures. Thus, readers utilize schematic representations of text to assist them in interpreting the information from the text. This idea only means that without prior knowledge composing the schema, it would be difficult for readers to understand and integrate new information. The prior knowledge referred to includes the knowledge about the meanings of words in the text as well as the familiarity of the topic in the text. In addition, the schema reflecting how information is presented can also be determined culturally (Widmayer, n.d.). As can be understood in Kaplan's (1966) claim, second language users should be aware of the textual structures of the second language, not only to have sufficient command of it.

Overall, it can be synthesized that the sources of reading anxiety pertain to personality factors and textual factors (Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin and Rahman, 2013). Saito et al. (1999) already pointed unfamiliar writing systems or scripts and unfamiliar cultural background underlying the text as sources of reading anxiety. Birch (2002) also added that limited vocabulary contributes to the difficulties experienced by language learners. Thus, the consequent difficulty to decode words as well as to decode meaning of words definitely provokes reading anxiety. Also, the unfamiliar cultural constructs embedded in foreign texts also stimulate anxiety among readers. As Batista (2005) contended, readers' awareness of the culture reflected in foreign texts affect the way they read and connect with the text. To simply put, a reader who can relate to the text through the lens of his experiences can actually comprehend.

These particular situations regarding the anxiety of students towards reading are posing an alarm for teachers and other concerned individuals without knowing about it. The identification of the precise role of anxiety in the learning process, the way it debilitates the readers, and the way it can be prevented are all of paramount importance. Thus, it was decided to pursue a study regarding the anxiety of students towards reading English texts and its relationship to their reading comprehension performance. Basically, this study would be an additional literature on reading anxiety especially that fewer studies are conducted that deals with this issue in the Philippine context, particularly in the Muslim region. It is conceded that reading is an important macro-skill that students should develop more since it is one of the tools to enhance the other

macro-skills such as writing and speaking. Thus, this study would serve as enlightenment to all concerned individuals that reading anxiety exists and continually affects the performance of students in school. Importantly, Zoghi and Alivandivafa (2012) revealed that reading anxiety also has to be measured using three important dimensions in reading which are top-down reading, bottom-up reading, and classroom reading. So far, in the reviewed literature, no research has dealt with reading anxiety shedding light to the aforementioned dimensions. Thus, it is just high time to conduct a novel research that fills in the space.

Previous Research

Franson (1984) in his study on the affect and L2 readings found that ... "type of motivation for reading a particular text is an important factor influencing the choice of approach to learning, and thus also determining likely levels of outcome," (p. 115). He concluded that students naturally perform better on reading comprehension when there is no expectation of a factual knowledge test. Steffensen, Goatz, and Cheng (1999) included affect as a key variable in a study about readers' nonverbal responses. In three different experiments conducted with students in China, the researchers explored the imagery and emotional responses that readers experienced while reading a text in L1 and L2. Readers completed rating scales for imagery and emotional response ratings as well as free reports. Overall, findings revealed that affect and imagery are present during the reading process and that the "nonverbal representational system is a fundamental component of both L1 and L2 reading" (p. 316).

Saito, Horwitz, and Garza (1999) used samples consisting of participants from three introductory courses (French, Russian and Japanese) and came to the conclusion anxiety in foreign language reading does exist but vary by target language. They mentioned that participants who learned Japanese were most anxious, followed by those who learned French and then Russian. Reading anxiety in learning foreign language was reported to be distinct from oral performance and seemed to be related to writing systems. The difference in study findings from participants who learned French and Russian was attributed to the fact that Russian symbols depend on phonetics but not French. Moreover, they reported that levels of reading and general foreign language anxieties had affected the course grades stating that the higher the level of foreign language reading anxiety, the lower the course grade. In relation to the level of instruction, Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) had stated that the anxiety might appear at some point after the reading had been completed or during interpretations (p. 215). Sellars (2000) used sample consisting of third semester undergraduates studying Spanish and found that a distinct variable in foreign language learning is reading anxiety. While undergraduates who encountered with higher level foreign language learning anxiety was associated with higher level of reading anxiety. Finding on anxiety ratings had indicated that more students were anxious about L2 reading. However, when students read an article from a magazine, Sellars found that there exists a negative relationship between L2 reading comprehension and reading anxiety.

On the other hand, Young (2000) used four different non-literary reading passages (magazines, newspapers, etc.) to examine several interacting variables including anxiety, comprehension, self-reported comprehension, text features, and reading ability in a complex L2 reading. The investigation involved second year undergraduates who studied Spanish. The study revealed that students with higher reading anxiety were reported the have lower level of understanding the L2 text. Young also reported that there exist a significant relationship between L2 reading anxiety and L2 reading comprehension with two of the four passages utilized in the study. Young explained more reading anxiety was reported from students who were asked to read linguistically dense texts compared to text length and text structure. Young also reported that reading anxiety among second year undergraduates studying Spanish was not a good predictor of L2 comprehension.

Horwitz (1988) in his study discovered that the belief that some learners are unable to learn any foreign language did create a negative atmosphere and caused those learners to fail. While learners who were skeptical about the length they would take to master a foreign language were therefore disappointed when they realized that they had made not much progress. Horwitz and Young (1991), McIntyre and Gardner (1991) and Scovel (1978) claimed that findings on language anxiety had shown mixed findings or rather confusing results. For instance, no concrete evidence could be offered from a study by Young (1986) since he initially claimed that the scores from oral interview was low due to anxiety but finally stated that the ability was the main factor affecting the scores. In addition, the administered oral interview was an unofficial test. The study did not indicate any finding on language anxiety in an official testing situation. Furthermore, there is still no explanation on the cause and effect relationship between anxiety and language performance had been given.

Another study conducted by Tsai and Li (2012) had investigated possible relationships between test anxiety, foreign language reading anxiety and English reading proficiency. In this study, a total of 302 EFL college freshmen enrolled in Freshman English were assessed with the Test Anxiety Scale as well as the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale and a reading-proficiency test. Pearson's product-moment correlations and t-Test scores were calculated. This study had shown that: (i) English reading proficiency was found negatively related to test anxiety and foreign language reading anxiety; (ii) Test anxiety was positively correlated with foreign language reading anxiety; (iii) Both t-Test results between Low and High Anxiety Testees and the t-Test between Low and High Anxiety Readers were not significant. Two possible reasons for reaching such results: (i) The sample size could be small or (ii) The use of multiple-choice questions could not detect differences in scores obtained by two groups of participants (the low anxiety and high anxiety) who set for reading proficiency test.

Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin, and Rahman (2013) also conducted a study that aimed to explore and understand the underlying problems and factors that contribute to reading anxiety faced by EFL students at Yarmouk University,

Jordan. This study observed the sources of English language reading anxiety from six informants with different levels of English language proficiency. Semi-structured interviews were also used to collect data from the six informants and diaries from six informants with different levels of English language proficiency. The findings of the study revealed that there were two aspects of foreign language reading anxiety: personal factor and text feature. Under the concept of personal factor there were also two main sources of foreign language reading anxiety, which are: afraid of making errors and worry about reading effects. On the other hand, there were three main sources of foreign language reading anxiety under the concept of text feature, which are: unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topic, and unfamiliar culture. The five main sources of foreign language reading anxiety were arranged according to their occurrences and percentages in the study. In addition, the study of Ghonsooly and Barghchi (2011) sought to explore the possible relationship between reading anxiety and reading proficiency and also between reading anxiety and language learners' use of reading strategies. This study was conducted in two phases. The first phase was quantitative, and the second consisted of a series of case studies using introspection and think-aloud protocols. The FLRAS questionnaire was administered to two groups of pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate Iranian EFL learners, studying in a private language school, in order to measure their foreign language reading anxiety and correlate it with their reading proficiency.

With much connection to previous studies, Gonen's (2007) study shed considerable light on the L2 reading anxiety phenomenon by investigating the L2 reading anxieties of students of different proficiency levels. A total of 225 students enrolled in the English Preparatory School Program in Anadolu University, Turkey are the subjects of this study. Participants were chosen from three different proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) to reveal whether reading anxiety changes with proficiency level. Participants were given the FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope,1986) and the FLRAS (Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale, developed by Saito, and Garza and Horwitz, 1999) at different times to reveal whether anxious students' experience is related to general language learning anxiety or reading in L2. Correlation analyses were applied and the results ($r = .52$, $n = 225$, $p < .01$) indicated that the anxious students felt is specific to L2 reading and there are differences among students from different proficiency levels in terms of reading anxiety. Thus, further investigation needs to cover the possible reasons of this difference in order to shed more light on the issue of L2 reading anxiety.

Research Methodology

Using the descriptive-correlation research design, this study was conducted to investigate the reading anxiety level of 78 randomly selected Grade 8 students in MSU-ILS, Marawi City, Philippines and its relationship to their profile and reading comprehension performance. To measure the reading anxiety level of the respondents, an English version of EFL Reading Anxiety Inventory by Zoghi (2012) was adapted. This has 23 item statements about reading anxiety which were rated using a Likert-scale with the following options: totally disagrees (1),

somewhat disagree (2), somewhat 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). A reliability test was conducted and it proved that the instrument is reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.864 for the entire instrument. In fact, in Zoghi and Alivandivafa's (2012) reliability test, overall Cronbach's alpha of the EFLRAI was 0.79. To determine the level of reading anxiety of the respondents, the mean of their responses was computed and was interpreted using the following table. As shown below, the reading anxiety levels range from low anxiety very high anxiety, with their corresponding mean ranges.

Table 1
Mean Ranges with Corresponding Descriptive Interpretation and Reading Anxiety Level

Mean Range	Interpretation	Reading Anxiety Level
1.00-1.74	Totally Disagree	Low Anxiety
1.75-2.49	Disagree	Moderate Anxiety
2.50-3.24	Agree	High Anxiety
3.25-4.00	Totally Agree	Very High Anxiety

Table 2
Grading System Used to Interpret Reading Comprehension Test Scores

Transmuted Grade (%)	Description
98-100	Excellent
93-97	Very Good
87-92	Good
81-86	Fair
75-80	Passing
74 and below	Failed

To determine the strength and significance of the relationship of the respondents' reading anxiety and reading comprehension performance, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. Three reading passages were used to determine the reading performance of the respondents adapted from the book of Senn and Skinner (1992) and from the unpublished thesis of Salilin and Umpar (2012). There were a total of 18 items; 4 item each of the first and second passage, while 10 items for the third passage.

Findings and Discussion

It reveals that the lowest score is 1 in which only one (1.3%) respondent scored such. Also, only one (1.3%) respondent scored 13, which is the highest. The score of the largest portion of the sample, composed of 17 (22.4%) respondents, is 8.When their scores were transmuted to percentage, it was found out that 52 (68.4%) respondents failed in the test while only 24 (31.6%) had a passing and fair performance (Table 3). Therefore, a great majority of the respondents did not

perform well in the test. The mean score of 7.43 (70.64%) clearly speaks that in average, they failed in the test. It is alarming that a great number of respondents did not perform well in the reading comprehension test. Based on the results, the highest rating is only fair. In connection to this, the cognitive development theory of Piaget (1983), which says that those who belong to the formal operation stage are analytic and highly able to read, is not true to all learners in all contexts. It can already be presumed that there is a certain intervening factor affecting learners' comprehension performance as shown by their reading comprehension test scores.

Table 3
Reading Comprehension Test Results

Score	f	%	Transmuted Grade (%)	Description	Mean Score	Transmuted Grade	Qualitative Description
1	1	1.3	52.78	Failed			
2	1	1.3	55.56	Failed			
3	2	2.6	58.33	Failed			
4	8	10.5	61.11	Failed			
5	8	10.5	63.89	Failed			
6	6	7.9	66.67	Failed			
7	9	11.8	69.44	Failed	**7.43**	**70.64**	**FAILED**
8	17	22.4	72.22	Failed			
Total	**52**	**68.4**					
9	6	7.9	75	Passing			
10	7	9.2	77.78	Passing			
11	8	10.5	80.56	Passing			
12	2	2.6	83.33	Fair			
13	1	1.3	86.11	Fair			
Total	**24**	**31.6**					

The three succeeding tables present the level of reading anxiety of students in the three reading approaches such as top-down reading, bottom-up reading, and classroom reading. As revealed by the results in Table 4, majority of students are highly anxious most especially when they: (i) cannot recognize minor ideas (details) of the text; (ii) cannot get the gist of the text; and (iii) cannot spot the main idea of a certain paragraph. These findings mean that the students' high reading anxiety is caused by the lack of understanding and synthesizing details and main ideas of the text. It cannot be denied that text details are very important in comprehending the whole text and students also reported high anxiety when the main idea is not identified. These anxieties are clearly related to each other since details are keys to internalize the whole thought of the text. The idea then is that if identifying details and main ideas is not achieved, reading anxiety may exist. Analyzing this leads to the belief that cognitive functions of students are hampered by anxiety as they attempt to comprehend a certain text. Thus, this could be the reason why they fail in the reading comprehension test since they hardly understand the reading passage.

Moreover, students' high anxiety is attributed to another aspect involved in the reading activity which is background knowledge. In particular, students reported to be having anxiety when: (i) the ideas in the text are culturally

unclear; (ii) the title of the text is unfamiliar; and (iii) they lack previous knowledge about the ideas expressed in the text. Clearly, it can be construed that familiarity matters in the reading activity. This idea is strongly related to the concept of 'schema' which refers to the categorical rules or scripts used to interpret the world and that new information is processed according to how it fits into these rules (Widmayer, n.d.). The Schema Theory says that in order for readers to understand and absorb new information from the text, there has to be a prior knowledge about the topic. Furthermore, as applied to reading, Halliday and Hassan (1989) said that schema can be reflected in text structures. Thus, readers utilize schematic representations of text to assist them in interpreting the information from the text. This idea only means that without prior knowledge composing the schema, it would be difficult for readers to understand and integrate new information. The result of the test also showed that a great majority (68.4%) failed. A connection between these results can then be made. Aside from insufficient comprehension, familiarity could affect students' ability to understand easily since their 'schema' is quite limited, which then results to reading anxiety.

Table 4
Students' Top-Down Reading Anxiety Level

Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1. When I cannot recognize minor ideas (details) of the text is worrying to me.	76	3.10	0.60	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.	76	3.01	0.79	High Anxiety
3. I am nervous when I cannot spot the main idea of a certain paragraph.	73	3.00	0.67	High Anxiety
4. It is worrying to me when the ideas expressed in the text are culturally unclear.	76	2.97	0.61	High Anxiety
5. I do not feel at ease when the title of the text is unfamiliar to me.	74	2.89	0.59	High Anxiety
6. I get upset when I lack the previous knowledge about the ideas expressed in the text.	76	2.87	0.64	High Anxiety
Grand Mean	**72**	**2.97**	**0.65**	**High Anxiety**

In bottom-up reading (Table 5), students in average are highly anxious when they: (i) cannot figure out the meaning of a word that they feel they have seen before; (ii) encounter a lot of words whose meanings are unclear; and (iii) find it difficult to pronounce unknown words. At this juncture, vocabulary is clearly the issue. Together with details, knowledge of word meanings is a basic necessity in reading comprehension. A lack of vocabulary knowledge could mean a failure in understanding a text since larger ideas can be processed and generated when fundamental information is possessed such as word knowledge,

which is the main principle of bottom-up reading. Thus, having less vocabulary knowledge means having anxiety in reading.

Moreover, students also have high anxiety when: (iv) they come across unfamiliar idioms; and (v) the word they know has a different meaning in the sentence. Still, like the previous one, familiarity is the problem, specifically idioms and connotations. These elements in passages can be said to be cognitively demanding for students, especially those with limited 'schema'. This is so because their meanings are implicit and culturally contextualized which require dissections as well as between- and beyond-the-lines reading. Students' inability to perform these required activities could be the essential reason why they develop high anxiety in reading texts in English. It is also revealed that students are highly anxious when: (vi) a sentence is grammatically unfamiliar; (vii) the tense of a certain sentence is unclear; (viii) they are unable to recognize different parts of speech; (ix) a sentence is long and complex; (x) what they know about a grammatical point does not make any sense; and (xi) a passive voice is used in a sentence. It is undeniable that grammar is quite complex and needs maximum analytical and critical skills because of numerous rules and variations. Included in this aspect are tenses, parts of speech, syntax, as well as voice; all is mentioned in the statements to which students' are highly anxious about. In these findings, lack of knowledge and inability to make use of knowledge about grammar are the main causes of high reading anxiety disclosed by the students. All the more that anxiety in reading would develop as students encounter reading challenges which they cannot even adequately fulfill to begin with.

Table 5
Students' Bottom-Up Reading Anxiety Level

	Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1.	I get upset when I cannot figure out the meaning of a word that I feel I have seen before.	76	3.10	0.74	High Anxiety
2.	It bothers me when I encounter a lot of words whose meanings are unclear.	75	3.04	0.84	High Anxiety
3.	I feel worried when the unknown word is difficult to pronounce.	76	3.00	0.67	High Anxiety
4.	I get upset when I come across idioms that are unfamiliar to me.	75	2.98	0.69	High Anxiety
5.	I get confused when the word that I know has a different meaning in the sentence.	76	2.91	0.68	High Anxiety
6.	When a certain sentence is grammatically unfamiliar is worrying to me.	76	2.83	0.68	High Anxiety
7.	I feel upset when the tense of a certain sentence is unclear to me.	75	2.77	0.83	High Anxiety
8.	I worry when I am unable to recognize different parts of speech such as adjectives, adverbs, or connective words.	76	2.78	0.84	High Anxiety
9.	I am nervous when a certain sentence is	76	2.72	0.70	High Anxiety

long and has a complex structure.				
10. I get confused when what I know about a grammatical point does not make any sense.	76	2.70	0.65	High Anxiety
11. It bothers me when a passive voice is used in a sentence.	75	2.35	0.78	Moderate Anxiety
Grand Mean	**73**	**2.84**	**0.74**	**High Anxiety**

As to classroom reading (Table 6), students disclosed that they are highly anxious when the teacher corrects their pronunciation or translation mistakes. Clearly, for them, correcting mistakes is the most anxiety-inducing situation inside the classroom. It is possible that the teachers' practice of correcting mistakes is not workable or intimidating for the students. It can be that students are afraid of being reprimanded, humiliated, or even discriminated not only by their teachers, but also by their classmates which then makes the situation worst. Aside from the fear of correction, they also have high anxiety when the teacher chooses uninteresting texts to read in class. This is a manifestation that teachers are not responsive to students' needs and interests particularly in reading. More so, it defeats the principle of learner autonomy. Thus, it can be said that students are anxious in reading because they are deprived to choose reading materials suitable, interesting, and stimulating for their level.

Moreover, students feel anxious when they are called to translate a piece of English text into their first language. This anxiety can possibly be related to students' lack of understanding of the text which makes it difficult for them to translate ideas and interpretations using their native language, which in this case, can be *Meranao*, Filipino, or Bisaya. Their lack of linguistic knowledge in English may also be the root cause of this deficiency. Besides that, oral recitation and test apprehension also contribute to students' reading anxiety since they revealed that they feel anxious when their teacher calls them to read out and asks them questions. The fear to speak in the class is pervasively observable especially in the English subject wherein students are highly encouraged to participate orally. This has been considered a problem as students' performance and ability to acquire competence in the English language is impeded. Thus, it can be construed that students' anxiety is also caused by oral activities required by teachers. Lastly, students revealed that their teachers' permanent use of the English language in the class induces reading anxiety to them. At this point, the medium of instruction is the issue pointed out by students. Since students already suffer anxiety due to challenging reading passages, lack of linguistic knowledge, and limited schema, consistent exposure to English language as medium of instruction may even worsen the problem. In a classroom setting where English is a second or a foreign language, there is therefore a need to make use of the learners' native language in order to lessen, if not eradicate, their anxiety in reading texts written in English.

It is alarming that a large number of them are highly anxious towards English language reading. This finding is found consistent to the findings of other foreign researchers such as Tsai and Li (2012), Al-Shboul et al. (2013), and Ghonsooly and Barghchi (2011). Their assertion, including that of Saito et al. (1999), Young (2000), and Sellar (2000), that reading anxiety exists, is found true

in the case of Grade 8 students in MSU-ILS. This finding means that, since this study is the first in the context of Marawi City, Philippines, reading anxiety has been one of the main reasons why students perform low in reading comprehension. This suggests that actions should be taken to mitigate this reading problem among students since it becomes a potential distraction to their reading comprehension performance. Moreover, it is apparent in the data that the respondents' reading anxiety is mostly text-related, namely, text details, vocabulary, and content familiarity. As can be found in the theoretical framework, Al-Shboul et al. (2013) pointed out that unknown words, unfamiliar topic, and unfamiliar culture are the main text-related elements that trigger reading anxiety.

Table 6
Students' Classroom Reading Anxiety Level

Indicators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1. It makes me feel uneasy when the teacher corrects my pronunciation or translation mistakes.	76	2.92	0.87	High Anxiety
2. It upsets me when the teacher chooses uninteresting texts to read in class.	76	2.81	0.84	High Anxiety
3. It worries me when the teacher calls on me to translate a piece of an English text into our first language.	75	2.72	0.85	High Anxiety
4. I am nervous when the teacher uses English as a medium of instruction and hardly ever makes use of our first language.	76	2.64	0.84	High Anxiety
5. When the teacher asks me reading comprehension questions is worrying to me.	76	2.46	0.74	Moderate Anxiety
6. It bothers me when the teacher calls on me to read out.	74	2.36	0.85	Moderate Anxiety
Grand Mean	**73**	**2.65**	**0.83**	**High Anxiety**

Table 7
Correlation between Reading Comprehension and Reading Anxiety

		Reading Anxiety	Effect Size	Interpretation
Reading Comprehension Performance	Pearson Correlation	-0.348	Medium	Negative Correlation
	Sig. (2-tailed)	*0.002*		*Significant*
	N	76		

The data shown in Table 7 reveals that there is a negative relationship between reading comprehension performance and reading anxiety (*r*= -0.348). This means that as the reading anxiety increases, reading comprehension performance score decreases. Young (2000) also found out that the higher the reading anxiety; the

lower students rate their level of understanding the L2 texts. Even Tsai and Li's (2012) recent study presented the same results that English reading proficiency is negatively related to reading anxiety. Furthermore, there is a sufficient evidence to show in this study that the relationship between the two variables is significant ($\rho < 0.05$). It is also important to note that the effect size of the correlation is medium, signifying that reading anxiety has a quite considerable role in determining the effectiveness of the reading process. This finding implies that there is a pressing need to address students' reading anxiety by alleviating it in whatever positive ways and means possible. Reading, as we know it, is a macroskill that serves as a tool to develop and enhance other macroskills such as writing and speaking. If students' reading anxiety debilitates their ability to comprehend and learn, then it is just practical to take necessary measures to eradicate it.

Conclusion and Implications

It has been proven that reading anxiety exists, especially that there will always be the involvement of a learner's affective domain even in academic setting where cognitive faculties are much more needed. In fact, this study affirms that reading anxiety comes in three different categories, namely top-down reading, bottom-up reading, and classroom reading. Unfortunately, in the case of MSU-ILS Grade 8 students, it is at a high level. It sends a message that anxiety greatly takes place while students undergo the process of reading a text written in English. Most importantly, reading anxiety is necessarily associated with reading comprehension performance which denotes that, as it elevates, reading anxiety decreases the reading comprehension performance of a reader. Hence, it should be an imperative to address this problem in order to achieve a better reading performance from students.

This study generates various implications especially in teaching reading and assessing reading performance. As found in this study, students generally have high anxiety in all categories of reading. In Top-Down Reading, students cannot recognize text details and gist or main idea. They also find it anxious to be unfamiliar with the culture reflected in the text. At this part, there is a need for reading teachers to facilitate students in terms of determining important details and making connections using these details so as to generate a general idea reflective to the text. Teachers should apply strategies that reinforce the analysis of text details such as presenting pictures, showing diagrams that dissect text information, and the like. Moreover, cultures depicted in reading materials assigned to students should be authentic and relatable in order to not only lessen their anxiety, but also to increase the success of comprehension. In this way, students will be motivated to utilize their 'schema' in creating new ideas from the text. This may also serve as preparatory exercise for future reading activities with a wider scope of cultural depictions.

In Bottom-Up Reading, students feel anxious when vocabularies used in the text are unusual and incomprehensible at their level as well as when grammar structures are perplex. This problem only needs basic considerations in reading

material selection such as language and content. It should be remembered that readers come in different levels such as beginners, intermediate, and advance. Thus, the complexity of the language and content of the text should be suited to the kind of readers a teacher handles. In worse cases, some texts inevitably have difficult vocabularies. Teachers then have to facilitate students' understanding of the text through unlocking those difficult words present in the text.

Lastly, in Classroom Reading, students suffer anxiety when teachers correct their manner of reading the text. Obviously, it would not be negatively perceived by students if teachers appropriately correct mistakes committed. Therefore, there is a need for constructive criticisms and positive feedbacks in this scenario. With these, students would possibly feel being helped by teachers, which is a manifestation of a student-friendly learning environment. Furthermore, students also feel anxious when teachers tackle uninteresting texts. To iterate, content should be considered by teachers, especially those that are suitable to students being handled. Much better if teachers encourage learner autonomy in a reading class which can be done through conducting extensive reading activities and creating a classroom library composed of students' personal choices of reading materials. As to conducting oral recitations, there has to be a limit in terms of the level of questions asked. Basic principle of assessment of learning says that questions for tests should be well-constructed and should address higher-order thinking skills for the enhancement of understanding. This should be observed by teachers most especially that the test is orally conducted. Students should also be informed so that they can prepare themselves and perform advance studying. On the medium of instruction, students' ability to comprehend the English language should be considered. It would be useless for teachers to straightly use English during the class if students cannot comprehend. Since students feel anxious about it, treating them as bilingual learners can be done to facilitate understanding in the English language.

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