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# Grade 11 Students’ English Language Reading Anxiety and its Relationship to Academic Strands and Reading Comprehension Level: Basis for Enhancement Program

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Comprehension, which is universally understood as the goal of reading and the penultimate “global reading skill,” has been a prime source of inquiry and interest among scholars and experts. However, certain factors which may be caused by an individual’s level in and perception of reading could make comprehension elusive. One of the many unearthed causative factors which could debilitate students’ progress in reading comprehension is anxiety. This study examined the reading anxiety (RA), and reading comprehension (RC) levels of 164 Grade 11 STEAM, ABM, and HUMSS students from Silliman University enrolled in Reading and Writing Skills subject during the school year 2019-2020. Using an adaptation of Zoghi’s English as Foreign Language Reading Inventory (EFLRAI) instrument and practice reading tests from the TOEFL® iBT Reading Practice Questions (2009), the study investigated whether students’ academic strands influence their RA levels and whether or not a relationship exists between their RA and RC level.

Results revealed that all strands have a moderate level of RA and a satisfactory level in RC (STEAM-Intermediate level; ABM & HUMSS- High level). Data analysis also disclosed that there is no significant difference between students’ academic strands and their RA level. Finally, RA and RC were found to have a significant positive relationship albeit a weak correlation. This suggests that anxiety does not always have a detrimental effect on students’ RC, but it can be used to students’ advantage. To address this, the researcher proposes a reading enhancement program to equip students with relevant reading strategies and activities that will normalize their anxiety levels.

**Keywords:** reading anxiety, reading comprehension, academic strands, reading enhancement program

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a vital skill that is considered by most to be the highway of progress and lifelong learning. Humans make sense and draw inferences from the different stimuli around the environment. Therefore, making sense and drawing inferences are inherent traits in each individual; these are traits or characteristics on which the nature and foundation of reading are built. For whatever purpose, whether it be for pleasure or information, reading ultimately serves as the “practical management of the world about us” (Jennings, 1965, as cited in Hermosa, 2002). It is also defined as “...a complex ability to extract or build meaning from a text” (Grabe, 2014, p.8). Other key terms which are inextricably linked to the definition of reading are experience, thought processes, ideas, background knowledge, and comprehension (Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt, & Kamil, 2003; Shoenbach, Cziko, Greenleaf, & Hurwitz, 2000). Thus, what makes reading sophisticated and complex as compared to other macroskills are its intricate processes. Making things more complex is the inevitable influence of the affective domain, specifically anxiety, on L2 (second language) learners when reading English academic texts.

Reading anxiety and other possible sources have not been thoroughly investigated in an ESL context, specifically in the Philippines. In this case, further exploration should be conducted since reading anxiety is relevant in ESL contexts. Furthermore, the current educational situation in the Philippines, particularly the Senior High program, can serve as another fertile ground for research concerning reading anxiety since it stratifies students according to academic strands and requires them to enroll in reading-related subjects. Thus, the present study investigated the relationship between Grade 11 students’ academic strands, reading anxiety, and reading comprehension levels in Silliman University Senior High School, Dumaguete City, particularly in the core subject, *Reading and Writing Skills (RWS)*. The said subject was indispensable in determining students’ reading anxiety level in English academic reading since it consists of activities (i.e., “critiquing a chosen sample of a particular pattern of development”) and learning competencies (i.e., “distinguishing different patterns of organization”) which were deemed potential triggers of reading anxiety.

Results from the analyses were then used as a basis for a reading enhancement program. Novel research ventures must use overall findings

to produce a program or enact specific pedagogical actions to improve the research environment in focus. The proposed enhancement program aimed to foreshorten Grade 11 ABM, HUMSS, and STEAM students' reading anxiety in their RWS classes and improve reading comprehension level by teaching them reading strategies, orienting them about textual genres, and equipping them with other essential skills (i.e., critical reading) needed for academic reading. Additionally, RWS teachers can use the results of this study as a guide in modifying the curriculum guide or recreating the activities in the said subject by targeting areas where anxiety is most induced, such as the texts/reading materials and the activities.

The following research questions were answered:

1. What are the reading anxiety levels of Grade 11 SUSHS from the different academic strands?
2. What is the reading comprehension level of Grade 11 SUSHS students?
3. Is there a significant difference between Grade 11 students' reading anxiety level and their academic strands?
4. Is there a significant relationship between Grade 11 students' reading anxiety level and their reading comprehension level?

## **HYPOTHESES**

The following hypotheses were tested in the duration of the study:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference among Grade 11 students' reading anxiety and academic strands.

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant relationship between Grade 11 students' reading anxiety level and reading comprehension level.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Effect of Reading Anxiety on Reading Comprehension**

Reading problems are by default perceived as a burden or, even worse, a handicap. For this cause, teachers, parents, and researchers endeavor to determine the underlying causes that may have caused students to struggle during reading. Some studies that aimed to discover the nature of reading

anxiety and its correlation to reading comprehension revealed that research outcomes vary from time to time. Even then, research that would render different results compared to previous studies still poses pedagogical implications. Such was the study of Rajab et al. (2012). The researchers reported that reading anxiety does not always implicate low or poor reading performance/comprehension. They recruited 91 senior college students enrolled in either a science or non-science course.

In the Philippines, Cabansag (2013) explored the correspondence between gender, language, and reading anxiety, and reading comprehension. The study employed 65 BA English students who answered the FLCAS (Liu's version) and FLRAS questionnaire (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to get students' anxiety levels, t-test to determine the difference between genders, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation applied to recognize the relationships between variables. Reading anxiety levels, language classroom anxiety levels, and gender were independent of each other. This again conforms to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and Kuru-Gonen's study (2009). Moreover, reading anxiety had no significant relationship to reading comprehension.

Mohammadpur and Ghafournia (2015) sought to continue past studies conducted by Hayati and Ghasemi (2008) and Jafarigozar and Behrooznia's (2012) investigative study on the interrelation between reading comprehension and reading anxiety levels in the Iranian context. The researchers, however, interchanged the order of data administration. First, students (BA General English) were asked to answer a TOEFL preparation test (Barron, 2010) consisting of 50 multiple-choice items. Students were then divided into high, intermediate, and low proficiency levels. Following the test was the answering of FLRAS. Finally, data from the two main sources were subjected to statistical analyses.

The analyses exhibited a significant negative correlation between students' anxiety and reading comprehension levels. In other words, participants from the low proficiency level are more vulnerable to reading anxiety. This result rendered invaluable pedagogical implications because language and reading teachers should find appropriate means to reduce students' apprehensions in second language reading. Doing so would entail a cardinal difference in students' performance inside and outside the classroom (p. 212).

Other studies, however, show that reading anxiety significantly affects reading comprehension, as in the case of Yi Tien's (2017) research. He examined 98 university-level EFL students' reading anxiety levels and their correlation to background variables such as gender and time allocated to reading English texts. Results indicated that the amount of time spent reading English texts has a significant relationship to the FLRA level. Although gender is independent of students' anxiety levels, t-test analysis still revealed that females tend to have higher anxieties than males. Moreover, the correlation between results from the reading proficiency test and anxiety levels was insignificant.

Presented were studies on reading anxiety in ESL/EFL contexts and factors affecting reading comprehension. Some studies pointed out that age, gender, or college course do not always have a negative effect on reading anxiety. However, inconclusive results between the variables mentioned above and their relationship to reading anxiety and reading comprehension still provide enough room for further investigation. More importantly, most studies previously discussed usually occurred in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context.

As previously mentioned, studies on L2 reading anxiety in the Philippines are at a disadvantage. The relationship between the said construct and other variables still needs further observation. That being the case, the present study seamed the following gaps in reading anxiety by applying three approaches or steps. First, the researcher employed a different set of participants, the reason being most studies on L2 reading anxiety usually employed tertiary level and junior high school students. Students from the Senior High School level, particularly Grade 11 students, were, therefore, investigated. Second, academic strands as an independent variable were investigated. Past studies have looked into the possible effect of tertiary students' course choice and whether it significantly influences their reading anxiety level. Choosing the said variable contextualized the study according to the current academic landscape of the Senior High Curriculum in the Philippines. More importantly, applying academic strands as an independent variable could help identify which group (ABM, HUMSS, STEAM) experiences anxiety the most and provide answers why they feel apprehension during Reading and Writing Skills (RWS) classes possibly brought about by the nature and complexity of the reading texts teachers provide and the preceding or succeeding tasks

that accompany a text as well as the overall learning environment. Third, the study utilized a different reading anxiety instrument. In this light, Zoghi's EFLRAI was utilized to test its validity further. Zoghi's EFLRAI instrument also helped specify whether anxiety is: a. reader specific (top-down anxiety) b. text specific (bottom-up anxiety) or c. context specific (classroom anxiety).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theories used in this study were instrumental in anchoring the construct of reading anxiety and its relationship to learners' reading comprehension. Moreover, the theoretical underpinnings warranted that an individual's affective state could still surface even in cognitively demanding situations such as reading in the second language.

Theories were connected to the construct of reading acquisition and the act of reading in a second language. First, the Affective Filter Hypothesis provides a platform wherein the construct of anxiety can be hinged on. The L2 Reading Model was then attached to serve as a basis for the proposition that reading also involves the affective aspect. Second, reinforcing the assumption that anxiety can either have a debilitating or facilitative effect on the readers is the Processing Efficiency Theory. Since reading largely involves an individual's schemata or prior knowledge, the Schema Theory is appended to anchor the top-down and even the bottom-up processes of reading. The reading approaches, namely, bottom-up and top-down approaches, are also connected to the Schema Theory, both of which are huge contributors to the reading process.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

The nature of this study reflects that of Nunan's (1995, p. 6) fourth type of mixed forms research design since it was non-experimental research that utilized quantitative data as the basis for statistical analyses (paradigm 6). Moreover, the mixed form as a research design is practical for this descriptive correlative study since the survey instrument used in gathering data contained a set of variables that contributed to three kinds of reading

anxieties (a. reader-bottom-up anxiety; b. text- top-down anxiety; and c. environment- classroom anxiety).

## **Research Environment**

Since the researcher felt the need to contribute to the betterment of the university she was enrolled in for her master's degree course, the area investigated was Silliman University Senior High School (SUSHS).

SUSHS had a total population of 1,724 students, comprised of 852 students in the eleventh grade and 872 in the twelfth grade during the academic year 2019-2020. The school offers four academic tracks: Academic Career Track, Arts and Design Career Track, Sports Career Track, and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood Career Track. Strands offered under the academic track are Science Technology Engineering Agriculture and Mathematics (STEAM), Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS).

## **Research Respondents**

To make data gathering more facile, the researcher decided to determine the appropriate sample size of the study by class section. Slovin's formula with a 0.05 margin of error was applied to ascertain the number of sections in the study. The calculation yielded 11 sections out of 25. To have valid representation, the 11 sections were proportionately distributed across strands. Hence, eight sections were randomly selected from STEAM, two from ABM and one from HUMSS. The number of students in each section automatically became the final participants of the study. The eight sections from STEAM had 300 students, while the four sections under ABM had 72, and finally, one section from HUMSS had 31, yielding a total of 403 students. However, the unexpected suspension of classes and a week's worth of data gathering had to be canceled. Thus, the researcher was able to gather data from a final total of 164 students out of the supposedly 403 participants: Four sections composed of 120 students from STEAM participated, one section with 23 students from ABM, and one section from HUMSS with 21 students.

## **Research Instruments and Sources of Data**

### **Zoghi's English Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Inventory**

The EFLRAI is a 27-item scale designed by Zoghi (2012) to elicit probable and specific causes of students' anxiety. Each item corresponds with a 4-point Likert-format (1 totally disagree; 2 somewhat disagree; 3 somewhat agree, and 4 totally agree).

Questions are specially constructed to probe variables that directly cause reading anxiety. The survey has five variables: background and cultural knowledge, general reading ability, vocabulary, grammar, and teaching method. Background and cultural knowledge and general reading ability are distributed from items 1-7; vocabulary and grammar from items 8-21; and teaching method from items 22-27. The author of the EFLRAI categorized the variables mentioned above under three general factors: top-down anxiety (reader specific), bottom-up anxiety (text-specific), and classroom anxiety (context-specific). Thus, the possible range of scores for the EFLRAI is "from a low of 27 to a high of 108, with higher scores reflecting greater perceived reading anxiety" (Zoghi, 2012, p. 45).

### **TOEFL® Reading Practice Questions (2009)**

Another source of data was students' reading comprehension scores. The test of comprehension adopted was the TOEFL® Reading Practice Questions (2009). The test is composed of three reading passages adopted from college textbooks. All passages cover various topics that fall under three main categories: historical, exposition, and argumentation. This ensures that the test will serve as an instrument to "...assess how well students can read the kind of writing used in an academic environment" (p. 37).

Each passage is followed with 12-14 questions in multiple-choice forms, insert text questions and prose summary questions. Insert text questions require students to choose which sentence fits best in a particular paragraph, whereas prose summary questions require test takers to select three among five sentences that express significant ideas from the passage. Multiple choice and insert text questions are worth one point, while prose summary questions



are worth two points. Thus, the highest score for the entire test is thirty (30) points.

### **E-mail Interview**

The final source of data was that of students' reflections and insights from an e-mail interview instead of a Focus Group Discussion. Zhao (2009) points out that email interviews can be beneficial to researchers since they could help "obtain feedback in a short time" without having to transcribe answers (p.136).

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

Data collected were analyzed using percentage, weighted and simple mean, Kruskal-Wallis (H) test, and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. The percentage was used to present the respondents' distribution in terms of their level of FL reading anxiety and reading comprehension scores. Weighted mean was also needed in determining their level of reading anxiety, while simple mean was used to arrive at students' RC levels. Kruskal-Wallis test, on the other hand, was utilized to ascertain the extent of association between the respondents' reading anxiety level and their academic strands. Moreover, Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to determine whether a significant relationship exists between their RA and RC levels. The said tool is commonly used in the behavioral sciences to extract correlation between two predetermined variables. It was specifically used in this study since the data are not normally distributed and are in the ordinal level of measurement. In specifying the respondents' RA level, the following mean ranges were used as bases:

In determining the RC level of the respondents, scores were interpreted using the TOEFL® (2009) Performance Descriptors for reading.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Reading Level</b>
22-30	High
15-21	Intermediate
0-14	Low

Finally, responses from the e-mail interview were descriptively interpreted and subjected to Key Word Analysis. Words or phrases that directly relate to a specific type of RA were highlighted. For example, words related to top-down RA were highlighted yellow, blue for bottom-up RA, then green for classroom RA. The KWA was also used to determine which RA type is the most prevalent based on the word or phrase that recurred the most to validate the finding drawn from quantitative analysis regarding the RA type with the highest aggregate mean. To provide evidence on the descriptive interpretation, the researcher integrated the actual responses from the e-mail interview, succeeding the statistical analysis for each research question. Data from the interview gave substance to quantitative data and helped unearth other reading anxiety sources that have not been included in the survey.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The researcher initially intended to gather data from 403 students under 11 sections equally distributed in the STEAM, ABM, and HUMSS strands as determined through sampling. However, due to the abrupt suspension of classes following the COVID-19 outbreak, a week's worth of data gathering had to be canceled. Thus, in totality, the researcher gathered data from 164 students out of 403 from six sections.

The researcher initially planned to administer a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with 12 students randomly selected from the academic strands to triangulate the results. However, due to the outbreak of the virus, face-to-face interactions had to be canceled as well. Thus, the researcher resorted to an email interview.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Reading Anxiety Levels of Grade 11 SUSHS Students**

Students' reading anxiety levels were obtained using an adapted version of Zoghi's (2012) EFLRAI. All answers were subjected to statistical interpretation, particularly simple and weighted mean. The grand aggregate values for each academic strand disclosed that Grade 11 students had

a moderate level of anxiety. As has been construed, such a level does not necessarily pose a threat to students. Although relatively the same in anxiety level, there were specific areas in which strands almost or had reached a high anxiety level, particularly concerning vocabulary and grammar and classroom activities. The results from the Key Word Analysis also reflect neutrality in that some students are attested to not feeling anxious when reading English academic texts. More importantly, all three types of RA were manifested in the responses. It revealed that answers related to top-down RA have the least occurrences (six times). However, words and phrases explicitly indicating bottom-up and classroom RA have about the same number of occurrences (ten times). This result validates the finding that both (bottom-up and classroom) RA types are the most anxiety-inducing based on the answers from the ESLRAI.

**Table 1**  
*Reading Anxiety Level of Grade 11 SUSHS Students*

Types of Reading Anxiety	Academic Strands					
	STEAM		ABM		HUMSS	
	W $\bar{X}$	VD	W $\bar{X}$	VD	W $\bar{X}$	VD
<b>Top-Down</b>						
Background and Cultural Knowledge	2.17	SwD	2.04	SwD	2.30	SwD
General Reading Ability	2.16	SwD	2.03	SwD	2.03	SwD
AGGREGATE MEAN	2.17	SwD	2.04	SwD	2.17	SwD
INTERPRETATION	Moderate Anxiety		Moderate Anxiety		Moderate Anxiety	
<b>Bottom-Up</b>						
Vocabulary	2.14	SwD	2.04	SwD	2.10	SwD
Grammar	2.29	SwD	2.47	SwD	2.41	SwD
AGGREGATE MEAN	2.22	SwD	2.26	SwD	2.26	SwD
INTERPRETATION	Moderate Anxiety		Moderate Anxiety		Moderate Anxiety	
<b>Classroom</b>						
INTERPRETATION	2.42	SwD	2.36	SwD	2.59	SwA
GRAND MEAN	2.27	SwD	2.22	SwD	2.34	SwD
INTERPRETATION	Moderate Anxiety		Moderate Anxiety		Moderate Anxiety	

## Reading Comprehension Level of Grade 11 SUSHS Students

To ascertain participants' reading comprehension levels, the same statistical calculations were applied as in the first research question and percentage and frequency count. The computation revealed that reading comprehension levels across strands were satisfactory. STEAM fell under the intermediate level, whereas ABM and HUMSS were categorized under the high level. Although the difference is small, the range description still shows that both strands belong to the two different reading comprehension levels. This signifies that all groups should be given further instruction in reading English texts to improve reading comprehension level and eventually reach the high reading level should teachers give a comprehension test or assessment. It also signifies that an enhancement program will be instrumental for all three strands.

**Table 2**  
*Reading Comprehension Level of Grade 11 SUSHS Students*

Level	STEAM		HUMSS		ABM	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
0-14 (Low)	19	15.83	4	19.05	4	17.39
15-21 (Intermediate)	51	42.50	5	23.81	6	26.09
22-30 (High)	50	41.67	12	57.14	13	56.52
Total	120	100.00	21	100.00	23	100.00
Mean Score	21	22	23			
Performance Description	INTERMEDIATE LEVEL		HIGH LEVEL		HIGH LEVEL	

Anderson (1991 cited by Alkialbi 2015, p.14) sees the importance of developing and enhancing L2 reading comprehension for both ESL and EFL students emphasizing the crux that "...with strengthened reading skills, ESL/EFL readers will make greater progress and attain greater development in all academic areas."

The researcher was also able to discover through the e-mail interview that most participants do not have enough declarative knowledge on reading strategies. When asked about what reading strategies they use to

mitigate reading anxiety, most of them answered the most common strategy: rereading, while some answers plainly show that their awareness of reading strategies is limited. Thus, a reading enhancement program can serve as a platform for students to be taught essential reading strategies that may eventually aid them in comprehending a text and even decrease their anxiety when tasked with reading materials that are a bit complex. Teachers should undoubtedly be ready to teach students with strategies most crucial for academic reading.

**Table 3***Difference of Anxiety Levels among Academic Strands*

<b>Top-Down Reading Anxiety (Reader-specific)</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Background and Cultural Knowledge	1.66	0.436	No significant difference
General Reading Ability	0.49	0.783	No significant difference
Bottom-up Reading Anxiety (Text-specific)			
Vocabulary	0.75	0.687	No significant difference
Grammar	3.03	0.220	No significant difference
Classroom Reading Anxiety (Teaching Method)	1.87	0.393	No significant difference
OVERALL	0.69	0.708	No significant difference

For the third research question, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if academic strands influenced anxiety levels. After comparing the aggregate mean values of each strand, the result reported having no significant difference between reading anxiety and academic strands. In other words, a student's academic strand has nothing to do with his/her reading anxiety level. That academic major did not directly cause reading anxiety was also revealed in Ru-Tsai and Yen-Lee (2018) and Rajab et al.'s, (2012) studies. The former study employed 202 Taiwanese college students who were pursuing either a science-related or non-science-related course.

Having no significant difference in the level of anxiety among the three groups of respondents (STEAM, HUMSS, ABM) signifies that anxiety is not significantly related to academic strand and that reading anxiety prevails regardless of students' majors or concentration.

**Table 4**

*Relationship between Grade 11 Students' Reading Anxiety Level and Reading Comprehension Level*

<b>RA Type</b>	<b>Spearman rho</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Top-Down RA			
Background and Cultural knowledge	0.12	0.12	Not significant
General reading ability	0.03	0.72	Not significant
<b>Aggregate weighted mean</b>	0.07	0.07	Not significant
Bottom-Up RA			
Vocabulary	0.07	0.38	Not significant
Grammar	0.21	0.01*	Significant
<b>Aggregate weighted mean</b>	0.15	0.06	Not significant
Classroom RA	0.20	0.01*	Significant
Grand weighted mean	0.16	0.04*	Significant

The fourth research question was answered using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient to determine if reading comprehension and reading anxiety have a relationship.

Results indicate a significant positive relationship, albeit a weak one, between reading anxiety and reading comprehension. This postulates that when reading anxiety increases, reading comprehension is also likely to increase. In like manner, if reading anxiety decreases, reading comprehension is also likely to decrease. However, a weak correlation between the said variables indicates that students' anxiety levels have little to no impact on their reading comprehension level. It also means that their performance in the test cannot be entirely attributed to reading anxiety but that other factors yet to be known may have influenced their performance.

The correlational analysis facilitates anxiety that the aforementioned authors considered to be present in a learning situation. Macintyre and Gardner (1989, p. 252) mentioned that facilitative anxiety could be an "asset to students' performance." This concept is directly linked to Krashen's (1982)

affective filter hypothesis that is hinged on the beneficial or detrimental effect of anxiety in a learning condition. Krashen specifically suggested that teachers provide activities that will be motivating enough for students to engage in. Teaching methods and tasks that are too hard or too easy could either heighten a learner's anxiety or weaken his/her motivation to absorb new information. For anxiety to be facilitating, learners in all levels should be provided with  $i+1$  tasks—familiar tasks but a little bit beyond the learner's current level.

Since there is a weak correlation between the variables, the result ultimately suggests that a sufficient amount of reading anxiety does not necessarily increase reading comprehension but could be a potential or influential factor. However, it would be safe to deduce that Grade 11 students of Silliman University Senior High School who participated in the study might comprehend texts better if a sufficient amount of pressure is placed alongside the task. Another interpretation that can be inferred is that reading anxiety has little to no effect on students' overall level of reading comprehension. This means that other internal or external factors contributed to students' reading performance—factors that still need to be investigated in future studies.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, anxiety proved to be a force to be reckoned with inside *Reading and Writing Skills* subject for Grade 11 students and teachers of Silliman University. Both groups should determine to settle in the middle of the spectrum of reading anxiety (neither too high nor low). However, unless teachers continue giving texts that are stimulating, fostering a learner-friendly environment, and teaching reading strategies, anxiety will not remain at a moderate level and will be negatively related to reading comprehension. On a similar vein, students should also resolve to learn reading strategies on their own, take necessary risks during oral reading (Brown, 2001), read texts that are related to their academic strand, and use their anxiety as an ancillary to motivation and their desire to improve and enhance their skill in reading in the second language.

## **RECOMMENDED READING ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FOR GRADE 11 STUDENTS OF SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY**

One of the objectives of the present study is to devise a reading enhancement program that will be instrumental in decreasing anxiety and improving reading performance among Grade 11 students to establish their being "strategic readers" when reading English academic texts. Since the study's results revealed that students across strands have moderate levels of anxiety and no significant difference among academic strands' anxiety levels, the program was designed to address issues that are generally present in all three groups instead of designing a specific program for each. It consists of seven objectives (e.g., targeting the teaching of reading strategies, each of which has a set of activities or tasks for practical application). Objectives and activities were selected to target factors that prevalently triggered anxiety which emerged from students' survey answers. These factors are: reader-specific (e.g. inability to activate/insufficient prior knowledge), text-specific (e.g. unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammatical systems) and classroom-specific (e.g. answering post-reading questions). The objectives and activities can be integrated into the lesson plans or existing teaching guides of RWS classes or considered as supplementary aids if the teacher perceives an alarming level of anxiety among students or if he/she sees the need to motivate students to participate actively and apply specific and relevant reading strategies which have been previously taught in the classroom. Applying the reading enhancement program can be done successively or intermittently depending on the teacher's assessment of his/her learners' performance. An example is briefly shown below:

### **On targeting Top-down RA caused by unfamiliar topics/titles**

#### **I. I. Learning/Reading Objective:**

Activate one's prior knowledge by forming predictions before reading to establish students' interest.

#### **I. II. Reading Strategies and Activities:**

**Pre:** Previewing the text (title, headings, figures, etc.). Speculating author's purpose for writing. Ask and answer questions with peers about



their guesses as to what the text is about. Sharing one's knowledge/idea about the text (speed chatting).

**During:** Looking for or validating answers (confirming predictions) to questions given during the pre-reading activity.

**Post:** Connecting new and old information to establish what has been recently learned from the text. Creating a concept map.

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## **PROPOSED READING ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

### **Program Title**

Integration of Reading Strategies and Activities in Existing RWS Teaching Guides/ Lesson Plans.

### **Program Description**

This reading enhancement program is based on the results of the study that explored the existence of reading anxiety and its relationship to Grade 11 students' reading comprehension level. It is focused on decreasing students' reading anxiety to a minimum and tolerable level so as to enhance comprehension when reading and accomplishing activities related to English academic texts. The program is composed of seven objectives and 17 tasks presented according to pre, during, and post reading activities which can be inculcated in RWS lesson plans by way of intervening whenever anxiety is roused due to specific activities/lessons, or as is deemed necessary by the teacher. The tasks selected will be invaluable in the teaching and application of reading strategies.

### **Goal**

The program aims to build "strategic readers" (Grabe, 2014) who are adept with the different reading strategies that will boost their confidence when reading and comprehending complex English academic texts.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Draw on prior knowledge to better comprehend and infer the purpose of a reading passage.
- Recognize rhetorical forms using discourse/cohesive markers.
- Infer an unfamiliar word's definition using its surrounding context.
- Recognize grammatical word classes, tenses, and forms.
- Express one's literal and inferential comprehension with peers.

- Repair miscomprehension or maintain comprehension by referring to minor and major details provided in the text.

### Objectives and activities adapted from the following references

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Pearson Education.

Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Heinle & Heinle.

Grabe, W. (2014). Key issues in L2 reading development. In 4th CELC Symposium Proceedings(pp. 8-18). Centre for English Language Communication.Retrieved from[http://www.nus.edu.sg/celc/research/books/4th Symposium proceedings/2](http://www.nus.edu.sg/celc/research/books/4th_Symposium_proceedings/2)). William Grabe.pdf

Results of the Study	Reading Objectives	Reading Strategies and Activities	Lesson/s applicable for the Reading Strategy/Activities (from SUSHS RWS Teaching Guide)
<b>Top-Down Reading Anxiety (highest aggregate mean values across strands)</b>			
1. Anxiety caused by unfamiliar topics / titles	Activate one's prior knowledge by forming predictions before reading to establish students' interest.	<p><b>Pre:</b> Previewing the text (title, headings, figures etc.). Speculating author's purpose for writing. Ask and answer questions with peers about their guesses as to what the text is about. Sharing one's knowledge/idea about the text (speed chatting).</p> <p><b>During:</b> Looking for or validating answers (confirming predictions) to questions given during the pre-reading activity.</p> <p><b>Post:</b> Connecting new and old information to establish what has been recently learned from the text. Creating a concept map.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading and Thinking Strategies across Text Types</li> </ul> <p>(Content Standard: The learner realizes that information in a written text may be selected and organized to achieve a particular purpose.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNIT 2A: Critical Reading as Looking for Ways of Thinking (2B.1: Explicit and Implicit Claims in a Text.)</li> </ul>
2. Anxiety caused by writing styles/rhetorical forms	Recognize rhetorical forms using discourse/ cohesive markers.	<p><b>Pre:</b> Skimming and scanning the text. Highlighting discourse and cohesive markers/key words that signal text structure. Discussing with peers as to what rhetorical form the text is written based on the markers.</p> <p><b>During:</b> Marginal note-taking. Writing down the relevance of the discourse marker to a certain paragraph.</p> <p><b>Post:</b> Generating a graphic organizer showing the organizational structure of the text (e.g. comparison-contrast) or demanding a critical or opinionated stance on the text information (i.e. if text is Persuasive, state/write whether or not you adhere to the message of the author.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNIT 2A: Critical Reading as Looking for Ways of Thinking (2A.2: Context of Text Development.)</li> </ul> <p>(Content Standard: The learner understands the relationship of a written text and the context in which it was developed.)</p>

<b>Bottom-Up Reading Anxiety (items with highest aggregate mean values across strands)</b>			
1. Anxiety caused by unfamiliar vocabulary.	Infer an unfamiliar word's definition using its surrounding context.	<p><b>Pre:</b> Scanning the text for unfamiliar words. Writing down guesses for the words' definitions based on affixes (if there are). Alternative: Teacher provides a list of words then students make guesses as to which words will be relevant to the selected text.</p> <p><b>During:</b> Creating a semantic map of the words listed in the pre-activity using context clues (the actual usage of the words in a sentence/paragraph).</p> <p><b>Post:</b> Expanding the semantic map created in the previous activity or providing other contexts in which key vocabulary can be used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading and Thinking Strategies across Text Types</li> </ul> <p>(Content Standard: The learner realizes that information in a written text may be selected and organized to achieve a particular purpose.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNIT 2A: Critical Reading as Looking for Ways of Thinking (2B.1: Explicit and Implicit Claims in a Text.)</li> </ul>
2. Anxiety caused by complex grammatical forms, tenses etc. (significant relationship with RC level)	Recognize grammatical word classes, tenses, and forms and its relevance to the text.	<p><b>Pre:</b> Brainstorming about what tenses/s and grammatical forms the text will have and discussing its purpose and relevance to the passage.</p> <p><b>During:</b> Underlining complex or confusing grammatical forms and connect its usage to the purpose of the text (e.g. passive voice for relaying results in a study).</p> <p><b>Post:</b> Connecting the grammatical form and the information it relayed in the text using any type of graphic organizer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNIT 2A: Critical Reading as Looking for Ways of Thinking (2A.2: Context of Text Development.)</li> </ul> <p>(Content Standard: The learner understands the relationship of a written text and the context in which it was developed.)</p>
<b>Classroom Reading Anxiety (significant relationship with RC level)</b>			
1. Anxiety caused by fear of making (literal, inferential, or pronunciation) mistakes.	Repair miscomprehension or maintain comprehension by referring to minor and major details provided in the text.	<p><b>Pre:</b> Identifying and establishing the purpose for reading.</p> <p><b>During:</b> Connecting text to one's knowledge about the topic in order to establish text-reader relationship. Predicting questions which the teacher will probably raise.</p> <p><b>Post:</b> Sharing with group mates one's understanding of the text and gathering information from others to validate or substantiate inferences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading and Thinking Strategies across Text Types</li> <li>UNIT 2A: Critical Reading as Looking for Ways of Thinking (2B.1: Explicit and Implicit Claims in a Text.)</li> <li>UNIT 2A: Critical Reading as Looking for Ways of Thinking (2A.2: Context of Text Development.)</li> </ul>
	Recognize grammatical word classes, tenses, and forms and its relevance to the text.	<p><b>During:</b> Annotating/markings significant areas in the text to easily recall/find answers so as to re-establish comprehension.</p> <p><b>Post:</b> Summarizing the text in one's own words using a matrix and comparing it with a partner for sharing/exchanging of ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNIT 2B: Critical Reading as Reasoning (2B.2: Determining Textual Evidence.)</li> </ul>