



***THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PERSONAL IDENTITY AND READING  
COMPREHENSION OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM IN  
UNIVERSITAS RIAU KEPULAUAN***

**KORELASI ANTARA IDENTITAS PRIBADI DAN KEMAMPUAN MEMBACA  
PEMAHAMAN PADA PROGRAM STUDI PENDIDIKAN BAHASA INGGRIS DI  
UNIVERSITAS RIAU KEPULAUAN**

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**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui korelasi antara identitas personal dan kemampuan membaca pemahaman pada mahasiswa semester enam Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Riau Kepulauan. Membaca pemahaman merupakan keterampilan yang sangat penting bagi mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris karena secara langsung mendukung prestasi akademik dan kesiapan profesional mereka. Penelitian terdahulu menunjukkan bahwa faktor psikologis seperti konsep diri dan identitas personal dapat memengaruhi hasil belajar siswa. Dalam penelitian ini, sebanyak 35 mahasiswa dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data diuji normalitasnya dan dianalisis menggunakan teknik korelasi Pearson Product Moment. Hasil analisis menunjukkan koefisien korelasi sebesar -0,176 dengan nilai signifikansi 0,313 ( $p > 0,05$ ). Temuan ini menunjukkan hubungan yang sangat lemah dan negatif serta tidak signifikan secara statistik. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa tidak terdapat korelasi yang signifikan antara identitas personal dan kemampuan membaca pemahaman pada mahasiswa dalam sampel ini. Meskipun literatur sebelumnya menyatakan bahwa persepsi diri dapat memengaruhi keterlibatan akademik, hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan membaca dipengaruhi oleh berbagai faktor kompleks di luar identitas personal. Penelitian lanjutan dengan jumlah sampel yang lebih besar dan beragam disarankan untuk mengeksplorasi hubungan ini lebih dalam.

**Kata kunci:** Identitas Personal; Membaca pemahaman; Korelasi; Pendidikan bahasa Inggris; Pelajar EFL

**Abstract**

*This research aims to investigate the correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension among sixth-semester students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Riau Kepulauan. Reading comprehension is an essential skill for English major students, as it directly supports their academic performance and future professional*

*development. Previous studies have indicated that psychological factors such as self-concept and personal identity may influence students' learning outcomes. In this study, a total of 35 students were selected using purposive sampling. The data were tested for normality and analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation technique. The results show a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.176 with a significance value of 0.313 ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings indicate a very weak and negative relationship that is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension among the students in this sample. Although prior literature suggests that self-perception may affect academic engagement, the results of this study highlight that reading comprehension is influenced by various complex factors beyond personal identity. Further research with larger and more diverse samples is recommended to explore this relationship more deeply.*

**Keywords:** *Personal identity; reading comprehension; correlation; English Education Departement; EFL Learners*

## INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is crucial for academic success, especially for students participating in college-level English programs. In learning English, reading skills play a crucial role, as strong reading comprehension is the foundation for further language development. (Sari et al. 2024) highlights that teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in higher education is a dynamic and multifaceted field, influenced by the widespread global influence of English. Students are constantly required to process vast amounts of written information such as textbooks, journal articles, and academic documents, all predominantly in English. For English majors, the ability to comprehend texts is not just an academic requirement but a foundation for professional readiness. As (Zagoto 2020) explains, reading is more than just recognizing words; it involves deep thinking and the ability to understand the meaning behind the text. Understanding vocabulary and grammar alone is not enough when reading, because learners also need to make logical connections between ideas and information in the text. (Kaya 2015) When students find reading challenging, it can significantly impact their participation in class and the quality of their academic output.

Many students struggle with reading comprehension, often due to limited vocabulary, lack of background knowledge, and difficulty drawing conclusions from the text. Students who are unable to understand the content of a reading text often cannot enjoy reading, which may lead to decreased motivation and engagement with texts. This lack of understanding is frequently linked to insufficient vocabulary knowledge, as unfamiliar words can hinder the overall interpretation of meaning and disrupt comprehension flow. Therefore, students of English as a foreign language (EFL) need to build sufficient vocabulary knowledge to understand texts effectively. Additionally, learners who develop negative attitudes toward a foreign language often have greater difficulty understanding reading materials written in that language (Al-Jarrah and Ismail 2018). A lack of confidence or interest in the language can lead to avoidance of reading task, reduced practice, and slower improvement in comprehension skills. Another common challenge faced by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) is the difficulty in understanding complex sentence structures in reading texts. (Al-Jarrah and Ismail 2018). Complex grammatical forms, such as passive constructions, embedded clauses, and nominalizations, often require higher levels of syntactic awareness, which many learners

have not yet fully developed. Without targeted instruction and practice in understanding such structures, students may miss key information or misinterpret the intended meaning of a passage, further hindering their reading comprehension.

However, reading comprehension is not a skill that develops in isolation. Students' confidence, motivation, and sense of self also influence their engagement with texts. (Lange 2011) found that confident individuals are generally more focused and persistent in overcoming challenges. This notion extends into academic settings, where students' self-perception can influence their ability to process and comprehend complex material. Those who perceive themselves as capable learners tend to approach academic tasks, including reading, with more focus and determination.

Moreover, personal identity, how students perceive themselves in the context of learning, emerges as a key psychological factor in shaping reading behavior. According to (Nematzadeh and Haddad Narafshan 2020), students' attitudes toward school significantly affect how they respond to reading tasks. When learners feel disconnected or insecure about their place in the academic environment, reading can feel more burdensome and less meaningful. On the other hand, students who have a strong sense of self are more likely to immerse themselves fully in the reading process.

Everyday decisions students make, whether to deeply engage with reading materials or merely skim through them, often reflect how they view themselves as learners. (Elmore and Smith 2018) emphasizes that self-image plays a critical role in decision-making, especially in academic settings. Students with a positive self-concept are more inclined to take ownership of their learning process, which in turn contributes to more effective reading comprehension.

While existing research has often focused on linguistic components of reading, such as vocabulary mastery and grammar proficiency, the emotional and psychological dimensions are equally crucial. (Zagoto 2020) highlights that both emotion and cognition shape the reading experience. A student who is emotionally engaged and mentally present will likely outperform others in reading tasks. This perspective suggests that internal factors, such as identity and self-image, deserve more attention in educational research.

Despite the growing recognition of psychological factors in education, little research has been conducted on how personal identity correlates with reading comprehension among Indonesian university students, especially those learning English as a foreign language. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the relationship between personal identity and reading comprehension within the context of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Riau Kepulauan. From that, the research question of this research is "Is there any significant correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension of English Education Study Program students in Universitas Riau Kepulauan?"

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret written text, which is crucial for academic success and effective language learning. According to Anderson et al. (1985), as cited by (Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri 2016), reading is defined as the process of constructing meaning from written text, which requires the integration of various related sources of information. In line with this, reading comprehension refers to the process of understanding and interpreting the meaning of written text. More specifically, it refers to the ability to understand the meaning of written text, which involves cognitive processes and social influences. (Kusumarasdyati 2023). As quoted from (Iarasaty gina 2015), Snow (2002, p. 11)

defines reading comprehension as the process of exploring and constructing meaning at the same time, through active engagement and interaction with written texts. Furthermore, reading plays a crucial role in second language learning; to improve language learning, students need to understand texts and capture the messages intended by the authors, which makes grammar and vocabulary crucial elements in understanding reading materials. In this sense, reading comprehension is not just about reading text; it requires readers to understand the meaning, ideas, information, and values contained within it (Evenddy, Nurlily, and Marfu'ah 2021).

Based on previous studies, it can be concluded that the challenges faced by students in reading comprehension are not limited to the early stages of education; similar difficulties are also often experienced by learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the higher education level, including students in English language education programs. The researcher concludes that English teachers should implement effective teaching methods that focus on improving students' vocabulary and their understanding of complex sentence structures. Teachers should also create a supportive reading environment to increase students' motivation and confidence in reading English texts.

According to (Brown 2015) there are eight indicators of reading: main idea, expression/idioms/ phrases in context, inference (implied detail), grammatical features, detail (stated detail), excluding facts not written (unstated detail), supporting ideas, and vocabulary in context. The first indicator is main idea, refers to the main message or topic discussed in the text, Next is understanding expressions, idioms, or phrases in context, which requires students to guess the meaning of specific phrases based on how they are used in sentences. Another crucial skill is drawing conclusions or inference, where readers must guess information that is not written directly but implied in the text. Students also need to pay attention to grammatical features, such as verb tenses or sentence structure, that support the meaning of the text. Details are also important, especially when readers need to find specific information that is clearly stated. At the same time, they must be able to rule out unwritten facts, meaning they must understand which ideas do not appear in the text, even if they seem related. Understanding supporting ideas is necessary to recognize statements that explain or provide additional information about the main idea. Finally, students must use context to understand the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary, using clues from surrounding words and sentences. These aspects of reading comprehension require not only linguistic competence, but also strong self-awareness and self-confidence, which may be influenced by the reader's personal identity.

### **Personal Identity**

Personal identity refers to a person's concept of self, including how they see and define themselves over time. Locke's view of personal identity is generally understood as a theory of psychological continuity, mainly because he emphasizes mental development over time. From this perspective, memory plays a central role in shaping and defining a person's personal identity. In line with this, contemporary philosopher Nimbalkar explains in his abstract that John Locke viewed personal identity as something rooted in psychological continuity. According to him, Locke believed that the self was based on consciousness, particularly memory, rather than on the physical substance of the soul or body (Afroza 2023).

While Locke's theory highlights the internal and mental continuity of the self, other scholars emphasize how personal identity is experienced in relation to uniqueness and differences from others. Personal identity describes an individual's awareness of their own uniqueness and individuality, and their perception of differences from others (Nematzadeh and Haddad Narafshan 2020). To further expand this perspective, (Elmore and Smith 2018)

explains that personal identity is part of an individual's self that shows their view of who they are, which basically is similar to self-concept, but is more focused on the aspects that make them different or similar to others depending on the social and cultural context.

In addition to memory and consciousness, personal identity also includes values, beliefs, roles, and experiences that accumulate over time. These elements work together to form a cohesive internal narrative that helps a person understand their life and actions. According to (Bahrami 2018), individuals construct identity through life stories that give meaning and continuity to personal experiences, indicating that identity is not static but continues to be shaped through interaction and reflection.

Furthermore, personal identity is influenced not only by internal processes, but also by external social structures. Cultural norms, family expectations, and group affiliations play a crucial role in how people view themselves and how they choose to act. Erik Erikson (1968), a developmental psychologist, emphasized that identity development is a lifelong process influenced by psychosocial stages, in which individuals must resolve conflicts between personal needs and social expectations to create a stable identity.

In an academic context, especially in language and literacy development, a strong personal identity can contribute to greater motivation, confidence, and perseverance in learning. Students who have a clear understanding of themselves may engage more deeply with texts, connect reading material to their personal experiences, and develop more effective comprehension strategies. However, students who consider themselves good readers may still have difficulty understanding texts beyond their literal meaning, but a positive reading identity can lead them to believe that they do not need to adjust their reading approach or accept additional strategy instruction (Hall 2016). The potential relationship between personal identity and academic outcomes such as reading comprehension is a crucial area of study, as understanding this relationship can help educators support students more comprehensively.

## METHODOLOGY

This study aims to examine the correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension among students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at the University of Riau Islands. To achieve this objective, this study adopts a qualitative approach with a correlational research design.

### Participants

The research participants were sixth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at the University of Riau Islands, selected using purposive sampling techniques. The selection of sixth-semester students was based on the consideration that by this semester, students had completed all levels of reading courses, from basic reading to extensive reading, and were therefore assumed to have an adequate foundation in reading comprehension. Further criteria for participant selection included being an active sixth-semester student in the English Education Study Program and willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

### Data Collection

This study used two main instruments, a personal identity questionnaire and a reading comprehension test. To measure aspects of personal identity, we adopted a questionnaire developed by (Nematzadeh and Haddad Narafshan 2020), a well-known instrument widely used in previous studies on self-concept and identity in academic settings. This questionnaire is specifically designed with 12 items aimed at exploring various dimensions of participants' personal identity. Each item is rated using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates "strongly disagree" and 5 indicates "strongly agree" for positive statements, while the scale is reversed



for negative statements to maintain consistency in interpretation. The selection of this questionnaire was based on its solid track record and proven validity in measuring students' academic self-concept in various educational contexts, providing a strong foundation for the analysis of personal identity in this study.

Furthermore, to measure participants' reading comprehension skills, we fully adopted the test from Deborah Philips' Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test. This book is a widely recognized source and is often used as a standard reference in English language test preparation. The test consists of 48 multiple-choice questions carefully selected from the reading section of the book. The selection of these questions was not only based on the credibility of the source but also because the questions precisely align with the reading comprehension indicators proposed by (Brown 2015). These indicators include the ability to identify main ideas, understand expressions, idioms, or phrases in specific contexts, make appropriate inferences, recognize grammatical features, find explicit and implicit details, identify supporting details, and understand vocabulary in the context of the reading. By using questions from established and widely used publications in English language education, we ensure that this instrument is highly appropriate and representative for accurately and comprehensively measuring participants' reading comprehension skills.

### Data Analysis

To analyze the relationship between personal identity and students' reading comprehension, we conducted a series of systematic and careful statistical procedures. A crucial first step in this analysis was to perform a normality test, which aimed to ensure that the data collected from both variables, namely personal identity and reading comprehension, were normally distributed. Given the relatively small sample size in this study, the Shapiro-Wilk test was chosen as the most appropriate and sensitive method for testing normality. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test provided clear indications: the significance values (p-values) for both personal identity and reading comprehension data were found to be above the critical threshold of 0.05. This finding statistically confirms that the data for both variables are normally distributed. With the assumption of normality of data distribution fulfilled, we can proceed with parametric statistical analysis.

**Table 1. Normality Test**

|                       | Shapiro-Wilk |       |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------|
|                       | Statistics   | Sig.  |
| Personal Identity     | 0.962        | 0.255 |
| Reading Comprehension | 0.946        | 0.085 |

Given the normality of data distribution, Pearson's product-moment correlation was then chosen as the most appropriate statistical method to analyze and measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between personal identity and reading comprehension. The Pearson correlation coefficient will provide a quantitative indication of how closely these two variables are related. The entire data analysis process, from the normality test to the correlation calculation, was conducted using the leading statistical software, SPSS version 27, which ensures accuracy, efficiency, and reliability in every statistical calculation performed.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of the Pearson correlation analysis between Personal Identity (PIQ) and Reading Comprehension (RC) of 35 students from the English Education Study Program at

Universitas Riau Kepulauan shows a negative correlation coefficient of -0.176. This indicates a very weak and negative relationship between the two variables.

The significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) is 0.313, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the correlation is not statistically significant. Therefore, based on this data, we can conclude that there is no significant correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension among the participants in this study.

**Table 2. Correlation Result**

|                       |                     | Personal Identity | Reading Comprehension |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Personal Identity     | Pearson Correlation | 1                 | -0.176                |
|                       | Sig. 2-tailed       |                   | 0.313                 |
| Reading Comprehension | Pearson Correlation | -0.176            | 1                     |
|                       | Sig. 2-tailed       | 0.313             |                       |

This result suggests that students' personal identity, as measured in this study, does not have a significant influence on their reading comprehension performance. This finding is somewhat contrary to expectations laid out in the introduction, where previous research (e.g., Zagoto, 2020; Nematzadeh & Narafshan, 2020; Oyserman) suggested that students who possess a strong sense of identity and confidence are more likely to engage meaningfully with reading tasks. There are several possible explanations for this result: (1) individual differences in learning styles, motivation, or reading strategies may play a stronger role than personal identity alone, (2) the way personal identity was measured in this context might not fully capture the psychological and emotional aspects that impact reading comprehension, (3) the sample size (N=35) is relatively small, which may limit the statistical power of the findings.

Moreover, the weak negative correlation (-0.176) could imply that some students with higher self-perception may not necessarily perform better in reading tasks—possibly due to overconfidence, lack of reading habit, or external factors such as academic stress or language barriers. In contrast to prior assumptions, this study highlights that reading comprehension is a complex skill that cannot be predicted solely by internal psychological factors like personal identity. Cognitive factors (such as vocabulary size and grammar knowledge), environmental factors (teacher support, learning materials), and emotional readiness may all interact in ways not captured by this correlation.

Although previous studies have shown a potential link between self-concept and learning performance, this study did not find a statistically significant correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension among students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Riau Kepulauan. Future studies may consider larger samples, qualitative approaches, or multi-factorial analysis to explore this relationship more deeply.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate the correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension among students in the English Education Study Program at the University of Riau Islands. The analysis revealed a very weak negative correlation with a Pearson correlation value of  $r$  equals 0.176 between the two variables. However, the correlation was not statistically significant, as indicated by the significance value of  $p$  equals 0.313 which is greater than the standard threshold of 0.05. This means that there is no meaningful or reliable relationship

between students' personal identity and their reading comprehension performance within the sample of this research.

These findings suggest that students' sense of personal identity, which refers to how they view and define themselves in relation to others and their surroundings, does not have a clear or strong influence on their ability to comprehend written texts. Although personal identity is a key element in psychological and emotional development and may affect students' confidence, motivation, and overall academic engagement, its direct impact on reading comprehension appears to be minimal in this context. Reading comprehension itself is a complex skill that depends on a wide range of cognitive and linguistic factors, including vocabulary mastery, syntactic knowledge, prior knowledge, reading strategies, and the ability to make inferences.

It is possible that personal identity may influence reading indirectly through other factors such as self-confidence, academic motivation, or emotional resilience, but these aspects were not examined in this study. Therefore, while personal identity remains an important concept in educational psychology, its connection to reading comprehension may not be straightforward or easily measurable.

Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples across different academic levels and institutions in order to increase the generalizability of the findings. Researchers should also consider exploring other psychological or affective variables such as self-efficacy, academic self-concept, or anxiety, which may have a stronger and more direct relationship with reading comprehension. Furthermore, examining how personal identity interacts with these variables could offer a deeper understanding of how students' psychological characteristics shape their academic performance.

In conclusion, this study found no significant correlation between personal identity and reading comprehension among the participants. Nonetheless, understanding students' psychological profiles remains important, and future studies are needed to explore the broader context in which personal identity may play a role in learning outcomes.

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