

In the Name of God
The Lord of the World

1927



Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman

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**Interrelationship among Foreign Language Reading Anxiety,
Reading Proficiency and Text Feature Awareness in the
University Context**

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Hereby, we recommend that this thesis submitted by *Anahita Bordbar* be accepted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (M.Sc.).

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Dedicated to:

My Family

Who Give and Forgive

Whatever I Get and Forget

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Abstract

This study set out to serve three purposes related to the interrelationship of Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA), Reading Proficiency (RP) and Text Feature Awareness (TFA); (1) to investigate the relationship between reading anxiety and reading proficiency of English major university students (2) to determine the relationship between text feature awareness and reading proficiency of English major university students and (3) to investigate the relationship between reading anxiety and the text features awareness of English major university students. It is also sought to determine the influence of gender on these three constructs.

In order to answer the above questions, 74 English major university students enrolled in reading comprehension III at Shahid Bahonar university of Kerman were selected as participants. The subjects were instructed to do the reading test within the time limit and get the questionnaires afterward. The time set for Academic Reading Paper of IELTS was 60 minutes and the administration of 2 questionnaires took approximately 25 minutes. FLRAS and TFAQ have been shown to be reliable and valid, through a pilot study, with alpha coefficient of 0.88 and 0.86, respectively.

The data obtained from the results of the subjects performance on the test and questionnaires were analyzed and interpreted statistically by use of descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment correlation and independent t-test. The results of the descriptive statistics indicated that students are low anxious readers although they

are aware of text feature. The following are some of the final results of analyzing the data by Pearson Product Moment correlation and independent t-test:

No significant relationship was found between reading anxiety and reading proficiency of all respondents. However, a positive significant relationship between reading proficiency and text feature awareness scores of all respondents was revealed. Furthermore, a negative significant relationship between reading anxiety and text feature awareness scores of all respondents was found.

In addition, the results revealed that there is no significant difference between reading proficiency, reading anxiety and text feature awareness scores of male and female respondents.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

English as a Second Language	ESL
English as a Foreign Language	EFL
Foreign Language	FL
Foreign/ Second Language	L2
Foreign Language Acquisition	FLA
Foreign Language Class Anxiety	FLCA
Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale	FLCAS
Foreign Language Learning	FLL
Foreign Language Listening Anxiety	FLLA
Foreign Language Reading Anxiety	FLRA
Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale	FLRAS
Foreign Language Writing Anxiety	FLWA
Native Language	L1
Mean	M
Number	N
Reading Proficiency	RP
Second Language Acquisition	SLA
Second Language Learning	SLL
Significance	Sig
Standard Deviation	SD
Text Feature Awareness	TFA
Text Feature Awareness Questionnaire	TFAQ

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter consists of five main sections. It first provides background of the study basically concentrating on the importance of reading anxiety and awareness of text features. The second section of this chapter explains the statement of the problem. Thirdly, this chapter deals with the objective of the study and research questions, then the significance of the study is accounted for and finally the theoretical framework based on which the research has been conducted.

1.2. Background

Reading, through which we can access the world of ideas and feelings, is the most enigmatic language skill. From among the four language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing, reading comprehension is considered the most important skill, especially for second and foreign language learners (e.g., Alderson, 2005; Brown, 2000). Reading has been investigated from different perspectives by linguists, psychologists, educators and second language researchers. The importance of this skill to language learning

and teaching is to the extent that in one specific period in the history of language learning and teaching an approach called *reading approach* emerged that centered on reading as a tool for language learning (Brown, 2000).

Reading is an important element in learning a second or foreign language for a variety of reasons. In fact as Brusch (1991) stated, "Where there is little reading there will be little language learning" (p. 156).

Bright and McGregor (1970) also maintained that the student who wants to learn English will have to read himself into knowledge of it unless he can move into an English environment. While learners may read a text either in public or privacy, for those who are worried about reciting in front of their peers there exists an important psychological phenomenon in this regard. For them, reading publicly is one way of increasing anxious time with the foreign language.

Furthermore, reading privately in the foreign language for test may even give the learner a new sense of anxiety. Hence, a text with unfamiliar features may enhance anxiety and so, affect the process and product of reading significantly.

With these assumptions, one can easily feel the strong need for further research in this area.

1.2.1. Foreign Language Anxiety

A frequently-stated dichotomy of anxiety consisting of debilitating and facilitating anxiety is considered to be an asset to

performance. Debilitating anxiety, which is the more common interpretation of anxiety, is considered to be detrimental to performance (MacIntyre & Gardener, 1989). Mathews (1996) argued that to attain optimal performance, some degree of negative effect (anxiety) is to be considered necessary. Scovel (1978) also stated:

Facilitating anxiety motivates the learner to 'fight' the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behavior. Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, motivates the learner to 'flee' the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionality to adopt avoidance behavior (p. 139).

Some scholars believe that anxiety should be reduced to the possible extent. However, Scovel (1978) has argued that a clear-cut relationship between anxiety in the classroom and foreign language achievement has not been established and that it is premature to relate anxiety to the comprehensive task of language acquisition. Furthermore, Mathews (1996) proposed that increasing anxiety in non-anxious or less anxious students will produce operational tension. This operational tension will stimulate negatively oriented students to perform better than they would in a low anxiety situation. Nevertheless, since anxiety can have a debilitating impact on foreign language learning, it seems plausible to identify students who suffer from high levels of anxiety.

Reducing this debilitating effect can help teachers provide a non-threatening affective setting which is the cornerstone. The