

Examining the Reading Anxiety Phenomenon of Arab EFL learners

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Abstract: The anxiety phenomenon has been widely acknowledged as one of the most important psychological phenomena. Theorists and second language researchers claimed that anxiety and language learning are associated. Thus learners who portray low levels of anxiety allow more and better input into the brain, increasing their language learning performance. However this may not be the case for many learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). They face challenges of learning new vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and reading in the target language. In reading, most of the texts require critical synthesis, evaluation and interpretation to comprehend the authors' point of views. These reading experiences may increase students' levels of anxiety if they are unprepared for such demands. As a result, learners become tense and continue to experience high levels of anxiety as they suffer from poor performance in their studies. The objective of this paper is to examine the reading anxiety phenomenon experienced by a group of Arab students in their learning of English as a foreign language (EFL). Data was collected from 34 postgraduate Arab EFL students using the FLRAS (Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale) and focus group interviews. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and tabulated in the form of mean frequency to answer the research questions posed. Findings revealed that cultural content, vocabulary, grammar, topic and lack of self-confidence were factors that impact students' reading anxiety. The paper concludes with a discussion on the implications and suggestions for teaching reading within an EFL context.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Reading Anxiety, Arab EFL Learners, Reading Anxiety Factors, Correlation

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language researchers and scholars have recognized the continued existence of anxiety and its potential of significantly interfering with the process of language learning and production (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991; MacIntyre, 1995a; Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999; Sellers, 2000; Horwitz, 2001; Kuru-Gonen, 2005; Kuru-Gonen, 2007; Li, Wu, & Wang, 2007; Zheng, 2008; Andrade & Williams, 2009). According to Rachman (2004: 3) anxiety is “a tense, unsettling anticipation of a threatening but vague event; a feeling of uneasy suspense. It is a negative affect so closely related to fear that in many circumstances the two terms are used interchangeably”. He argues that anxiety and fear are an amalgamation of tension and unpleasant anticipations. While most discussions on foreign language (FL) anxiety have centered on the difficulties caused by anxiety with respect to oral performance (Saito et al., 1999), there has not been much research conducted to investigate the phenomenon of FL reading anxiety among postgraduate students in the academic contexts as FL reading anxiety research has only started recently.

According to Na (2007) and Batiha, Mustaffa, and Noor (2018) many fundamental questions have not been sufficiently answered yet. Moreover, a number of studies have addressed the phenomena of language learning anxiety in general and reading anxiety in particular; however, none of these studies have looked at Arab learners in advanced level (Saito et al., 1999; Sellers, 2000; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Kuru-Gonen, 2005; Kuru-Gonen, 2007; Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010; Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin, & Rahman, 2013; Al-Sawalha, 2016). Sila (2010: 89) claims that “Replication of the study with different groups of language learners and in different learning contexts is necessary to understand the extent to which the results can be generalized for foreign language students”. Thus this study aims at investigating the factors that contribute the most in provoking FL reading anxiety in particular from the perspective of Arab postgraduate students in UKM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Conception of FL Reading Anxiety

In terms of foreign language (hereafter FL) learning, it can be said that the first study that verified the existence of foreign language reading anxiety as a phenomenon related to but distinct from general FL classroom anxiety is the study by Saito et al. (1999). In their pioneering study, they claim that among the four language skills, reading might be the language skill less prone to effects of anxiety, because it occurs (especially silent reading) “privately with unlimited opportunity for reflection and reconsideration” (Saito et al., 1999: 202). They hypothesized two aspects of FL reading anxiety namely; (1) unfamiliar writing system, and (2) unfamiliar cultural materials.

Regarding unfamiliar writing system, the reader will immediately experience anxiety once s/he tries to decipher a script in hand since the reader will face challenges while processing the text. “The less the learner can depend on the reliability of a specific system of sound-symbol correspondences, the more anxiety he or she would be expected to experience in the act of reading” (Saito et al., 1999:203).

Unfamiliar scripts and writing system seem to have more immediate impact than those of unfamiliar cultural concepts in the reading process. Firstly, the reader will face the symbols and attempt to decode the symbols into sounds, and then associate those sounds with words, and finally go through the process of building the meaning together (Saito et al., 1999). Anxiety would most likely be anticipated when an individual attempts to decode a text and recognize that his/her decoding has not composed understandable or coherent entity. This means that one’s deficient knowledge of the cultural background underlying the text might lead to misinterpretation of the FL text at hand (Saito et al., 1999). Text could be decoded and explained, but the sense of that text would not be explained if the decoder’s knowledge of the cultural aspects embedded in the text is inadequate to allow him or her to understand the text fully and reach meaningful comprehension.

From this perspective, FL reading anxiety appears to be differentiated from general FL classroom anxiety. As Saito et al. (1999: 203) explain “FL anxiety is relatively independent of the particular native language-target language pairing”. In their study, Saito et al. (1999) found that reading anxiety was varied among the different language scripts, while general classroom anxiety was not. The Japanese language learners were found to be highly anxious, followed by the French and the Russian who were found to be less anxiety-provoked when reading the language script.

According to the previous hypothesis, general classroom anxiety level should appear independent of the target language. Despite that, anxiety is perceived in relation to the difficulties of the target language, and learners of different languages have to express their ideas using unfamiliar phonological, syntactic, and lexical systems. However, previous studies that used foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) have shown extremely constant findings in terms of anxiety level across the target language (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Saito et al., 1999; Na, 2007; Cutrone, 2009; Wu, 2010; Batiha, Mohd Noor, & Mustaffa, 2014; Batiha, Noor, & Mustaffa, 2016). Nonetheless, empirical studies indicated that FL reading anxiety level was found to be affected by the target language (Saito et al., 1999; Sas, 2002; Sellers, 2000; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Kuru-Gonen, 2005; Kuru-Gonen, 2007).

Empirical studies

The body of research in terms of reading anxiety has been expanded after Saito et al.'s (1999) discovery. Some researchers have investigated the relationship between language anxiety and reading anxiety in Spanish language (Sellers, 2000), and incidental vocabulary acquisition, and culturally relevant texts (Sas, 2002). Others address the possible relationships among general foreign language classroom anxiety, foreign language reading anxiety, the specific variables of gender, proficiency and exposure to the target culture (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004) and FL reading anxiety as a phenomenon distinct from other language skills (Brantmeier, 2005).

According to Horwitz (2001) and Batiha et al. (2018) cultural differences are essential and vital when addressing the issue of classroom practice and anxiety. Some classroom practices may be accepted by one group and at the same they may be stressful for other learners with different cultural background because they were exposed to different cultural norms of classroom learning. However, the related literature on the topic was reviewed and consequently a gap was found where scarce research have been carried out to investigate FL reading anxiety phenomena which specifically investigates Arab FL learners. Most of the studies were conducted in western contexts, and a number of the studies did examine FL contexts but not among Arab learners. Thus, there is definitely a gap in the literature requiring a study to be carried out that investigates both the phenomena of FL classroom anxiety and FL reading anxiety among Arab EFL learners and the factors contributing to both the phenomena. Thus, this study aims at investigating the phenomenon of FL reading anxiety in particular, and the factors contributing to FL reading anxiety among Arab EFL learners. Two questions have been formulated to direct the study namely:

1. What are the factors that contribute the most in provoking FL reading anxiety in particular from the perspective of Arab postgraduate students in University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)?
2. How are general FL classroom anxiety and FL reading anxiety in particular correlated?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The current study aimed to investigate FL classroom anxiety and FL reading anxiety among Arab students. Thus, the participants chosen were Arab postgraduate students who are majoring in English language studies. The number of the participants is limited due to the small number of Arab postgraduate students studying at the faculty. The reason for choosing Arab students majoring in English language studies was mainly because the review of literature revealed that there is very few studies that have adequately probed classroom anxiety in general and reading anxiety in particular among Arab EFL learners. Additionally, it was also because these postgraduate students were homogenous sampling. Homogenous sampling is used when the goal of the research is to understand and describe a particular group in depth.

Table 1: Participants' Demographic Information

Variable	Frequency	Percent%	Frequency	Percent%
Gender	22 Males	64.7 %	12 Females	35.3 %
Age	25 (20-29)	73.5%	9 (30-39)	26.5 %
Marital status	26 Single	76.5%	8 Married	23.5 %

Instruments

This study applied both the qualitative and the quantitative research methods which comprised three research instruments. They were: 1) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or “FLCAS”, 2) Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale or “FLRAS”, and 3) Semi-structured Focus Group interviews.

The foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) is specifically developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) to measure FL classroom anxiety from the students’ perspective. It consists of 33 items that are answered in a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree to strongly disagree”. Twenty out of these 33 items focus on listening and speaking skills. The Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) has been particularly modified by Saito et al. (1999) to gauge students’ level of FL reading anxiety from their own perspective. It accounts students’ self-report of anxiety over various aspects of reading, their perceptions of reading difficulties in their target language, and the students’ perception of the relative difficulty of reading as compared to other language skills. FLRAS has 20 items which are answered in a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree.”

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two groups of selected participants for verbal data. The respondents for the two groups were selected from the total number of participants who answered the FLCAS and FLRAS. The participants for the interviews were selected based on their willingness to participate in the interviews.

Data Analysis

For the first research question, both the FLCAS and FLRAS were used together; thus, Pearson product correlation coefficient was computed since the question aims at determining the relationship between the two constructs i.e. General FL classroom anxiety and FL Reading anxiety. Next, statistical analysis was performed after the questionnaires were collected. The statistical package used was SPSS version 21 and Microsoft Office Excel 2010 to analyze part of the first and second research questions which were quantitative data. The qualitative data was used to support the quantitative data.

RESULTS

Factors Contributing the Most in Provoking Anxiety in FL Reading

This question sought to find out the factors that contribute tremendously to FL reading anxiety in particular. In this study, semi-structured interview with a focus group was employed to aid the FLRAS findings in eliciting the participants’ perceptions about the factors contributing to their English language reading anxiety. The following table shows the items with the mean scores of 3.00 and above. The items have been listed from the highest to the lowest mean respectively.

Table 2: FLRAS Items with Mean of (3.00) And Above

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
You have to know so much about English speaking country, history and culture in order to read in English.	3.38	1.155
I usually end up translating word by word when I'm reading English.	3.24	1.232
English culture and ideas seem very foreign to me.	3.21	1.388
I get upset whenever I encounter unknown grammar when reading in English.	3.21	1.149
When reading in English, I get nervous and confused when I don't understand every word.	3.21	1.298
I am nervous when I am reading a passage in English, when I am not familiar with the topic.	3.18	1.029
When reading in English, I often understand the words but still can't quite understand what the author is saying.	3.18	1.114
I feel intimidated whenever I see a whole page of English in front of me.	3.15	1.105
When I'm reading in English, I get so confused I can't remember what I'm reading.	3.06	1.369
I get upset when I'm not sure whether I understand what I am reading in English.	3.00	1.255

Kuru-Gonen (2005) claims that it is necessary to investigate the sources of FL reading anxiety in order to provide solutions for problems the students encounter as they read in the target language. When the students are relieved from the anxiety factors and a suitable environment with low anxiety is created for the learners, then they would be helped in becoming effective learners and overcoming classroom anxiety. In the current study, five factors have been identified as anxiety factors, and these are Cultural content, Vocabulary, Topic, Grammar, and Self-confidence. In the following subsections, each factor is discussed exhaustively.

1. Cultural Content

Different cultures mean different ways of being, different beliefs, and different ways of expression. The culture of Muslims is certainly different from other cultures. Arabs' culture is affected by their religion (Islam), the same way the culture of the English people is affected by their religion and ways of being. However, this study found that the majority of the learners (mean 3.38) agree that it is necessary to know about the history and cultures of English speaking countries in order to understand English written texts (item 1). They lament that the English culture and ideas are unfamiliar to them (item 3), which adds to the difficulty of the reading process. Moreover, they express being affected by the authors' different way of thinking. They can understand the words, but sometimes the author's purpose is still not clear to them (item 7). This is supported by Mikulecky (2008) who states that the reader needs to apply many strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author intended. The qualitative data supports the quantitative data results as shown in the following quotations:

"I think English culture and ideas are important to help you to .hh read actually .hh and especially in the literature, because treat many domains of the life and is present the life in .hhhh nice way so that I think it's (attracted) for the reader" (2, A, L 198-201) [...]

“yes of course language and culture they come always together strongly and cannot separate between culture and language if we need to acquire culture we need to acquire language and if we need to acquire language we need to acquire culture and vice versa I mean.” (2, B, L 206-209) [...]

The participants demonstrate that knowing the culture is important to understand the text in hand. They claim that written texts contain many aspects of life and thoughts. They maintain by saying that culture and language are two components that complete each other, and thus, understanding one aspect is necessary to understand the other. The result of this study seems to agree with Kuru-Gonen (2005) study, wherein cultural content was found to be a factor that provokes anxiety among the EFL learners. Furthermore, Saito et al. (1999) in their groundbreaking study suggest two aspects of FL reading anxiety which are unfamiliar writing system and unfamiliar cultural content.

2. Vocabulary

Kuru-Gonen (2005) argue that difficult or unfamiliar vocabulary affects the students' performance in reading in a FL, and thus incites their feeling of anxiety. For this group of selected Arab English FL learners, unknown vocabularies were found to be greatly interfering with the students' performance in reading and elevating their feeling of anxiety. The majority of the students' state that they encounter difficulties when it comes to vocabulary, and they usually translate the whole text in order to get the correct meaning (mean 3.24, item 2). Generally, they express being uncomfortable and confused when they do not get the meaning of every word for the text in hand (mean 3.21, item 5). These learners expect to understand every word they read as they are postgraduate students doing their master degree, and in their perception any unknown or unfamiliar vocabulary is inappropriate for their level.

In the focus group interviews, the majority of the participants agree that vocabulary is crucial in reading to reduce or elevate anxiety level. These learners argue that difficult vocabulary negatively affect their performance in reading comprehension, and thus, incite feeling of anxiety. Moreover, unidentified meaning of some words cause feeling of frustration to some of these learners. Words with difficult and unfamiliar pronunciation also cause frustration to these Arab learners. In their study Hago and Khan (2015) found that Arab students made errors using consonants and consonant clusters in English language where some of these errors appeared frequently. Some sounds were substituted with others for example: /p/ by /b/, of /ŋ/ sometimes by /n-k/ or /n-g/, /z/ by /dʒ/, /v/ replaced by /f/. Apart from that, some studies (Batiha et al., 2014; Batiha et al., 2018) reported that new vocabularies create complexity to English language learners that then lower their level of confidence. The effect on their level of confidence hinders their attempt to use the foreign language and thus elevate their level of anxiety. Consequently, it can be said that lack of familiarity with the vocabulary is a factor that stimulates anxiety for this group of Arab EFL learners.

“...really when I face new word I it's (up) for me and (it's main in the text) I have some problems I need to know the meaning of it” (2, A, L 221-222) [...]

“...of course if I'm familiar with the vocabularies I'll be good, and I'll read more but if the vocabularies are not understandable I'll be frustrated” (2,D, L 37-39) [...]

“Yes .hh I can evaluate myself in excellent, but the most challenge thing that I faced is the .hh wrong in pronunciation so I must be .hhhhh assure from the pronunciation of the word” (2, B, L 139-141) [...]

The results of the analyses of both qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate the importance of vocabulary knowledge on the students’ reactions. The data seem to be consistent with previous studies that highlighted the importance of vocabulary as a predictor of performance (Ipek Kuru-Gonen, 2005; Sas, 2002). It is also attributed to the lack of schemata among the learners. The saved vocabulary in the mind is schemata that are used to match with the text in hand so that it can be deciphered and interpreted easily. The impact of the lack of vocabulary emphasized the feeling of anxiety while reading in the target language. In addition, difficult and unknown vocabulary (vocabulary with no schemata) definitely incites more anxiety among these Arab FL learners.

3. Grammar and Language Structure

In her study, Kuru-Gonen (2005) found moderate amount of anxiety was felt by the students who came across difficult linguistic structures in the FL. Similarly, the current study also found that some learners consider grammar and linguistic structure as an anxiety provoking factor to them. Their responses in item 4 depict the learners’ feeling of confusion and distress when it comes to unfamiliar grammar items while reading (mean 3.21). This indicates that the students were concerned about grammar and language structure while reading in the English language. Moreover, the qualitative data yielded support to the FLRAS results as indicated in the quotations below.

“Of course grammar and vocabulary and .hhhh make of the sentence that (add) some of sense if the grammar is not correct or I don’t understand the grammar I’ll not understand the rest of the sentence so you cannot separate grammar and the sentence if the sentence is grammatically correct you’ll get it, but if not of course you’ll not” (2, B, L 59-63) [...]

“I think understanding grammar is (central) point when study reading that is very important grammar and also vocabulary” (2, D, L 70-71) [...]

The feedbacks above indicate the obstacles the students’ face when they come across difficult or unknown grammatical structure in English. They repeatedly state the importance of grammar to facilitate the comprehension process when reading. Some English grammar items are not available in the Arabic language and vice versa. For example, in the Arabic language there is no perfect tense. Some other difficult grammar items might be misinterpreted or unfamiliar to some EFL learners, which in turn add further complexity to the comprehension process when reading. However, difficult and unknown grammar and problem with language structure experienced by this group of participants have been acknowledged in previous studies (Kuru-Gonen, 2005; Li et al., 2007) in which a certain amount of anxiety was experienced when learners encounter difficult grammar items while reading. This kind of difficulty might be ascribed to one’s lack of schemata. Prior knowledge or schemata has been described as “the abstract structure of knowledge” (Li et al., 2007: 18). Language structure or grammar is part of one’s required mastery of the language. In short, this study shows that these learners encounter obstacles while reading because of grammar difficulties which resulted from their lack or knowledge.

4. Topic (Schema)

With respect to topic, the majority of the respondents reported that topic of the text in hand has a vital impact on their feelings while reading in English as a foreign language. The participants of the current study mostly perceived difficult or unknown topics affect their reading process. They claim that familiar topics will facilitate their understanding of the transcript; in contrast, unfamiliar topics will definitely hamper their comprehension and cause anxiety. Their responses to item six “I am nervous when I am reading a passage in English, when I am not familiar with the topic” were approximately agree or strongly agree with the mean of 3.18. For item ten “I get upset when I’m not sure whether I understand what I am reading in English”, the mean score is 3.00. The participants in the interview data state that familiar topics will generally contain schema and vocabulary familiar to them and thus, this will help them to comprehend the written text as presented in the following excerpts:

“I’m feeling if I’m reading something in my area I’ll be interesting and .hhh and if it’s unfamiliar topic I’m worried” (2, D, L 47-48) [...]

“I feel comfortable when I read something related to my area .hhh but vice versa I’m not comfortable when I read something unrelated to my area” (2, E, L 49-51)

Topics which are difficult or uninteresting have been constantly considered as an anxiety provoking-factor (Kuru-Gonen, 2005). The excerpts above showed the significance of the familiarity of the topic in EFL reading. The participants agreed during the interviews that understanding the topic in reading in English is important, and will definitely help to reduce anxiety, as unfamiliar topics will result in disinterest or apprehensive feelings about the text they read. Familiar topics mean that they could use their previous schemata where the learners can organize the new information around his/her previous knowledge. Unfamiliar topics on the other hand, would mean no schemata is available for them where organizing the newly received information and this will be difficult since no previous knowledge is available to assist them in the comprehension process. When schema is unavailable, a lot of explanations are required to make the related picture clearer so that it can be interpreted and deciphered easily (Ajideh, 2003). Thus, it can be concluded that difficult or unfamiliar topics will provoke anxiety while reading in English for this group of selected participants. This finding appears to match previous studies (Kuru-Gonen, 2005) in which they verified the importance of topic as a major factor that could reduce or increase an individual’s feeling of anxiety while reading in the target language.

5. Self-confidence

Self-confidence is usually considered as one of the most important variables that influences learners’ performance. In addition, lack of self-confidence will somewhat hamper the readers’ performance and lead to anxiety (Kuru-Gonen, 2005). For the current study, two items which reflect the impact of self-confidence factor while reading attained high mean score (greater than 3.00). Most of the learners feel discouraged whenever they encounter a whole page written in English (mean 3.15, item 8). They are assumed to read many pages written in English as postgraduate students, but this still causes some confusion and difficulty for them. Moreover, they mostly agreed or strongly agreed (mean 3.6) that they get confused while reading in

English and cannot remember what they have read (item 9). These reflections could lead one to say that these students experienced lack of self-confidence, which in turn led to anxiety and affected their performance in the English class. The yielded interview data seems to be in agreement with the result of the FLRAS items as shown in the excerpt below:

“I can evaluate myself as a good reader about my feeling I think other students perform better than me in reading especially in the pronunciation part” (2, D, L 146-148) [...]

These learners expose their lack of self-confidence that clearly appears in the excerpt above. Some feel that others are performing better than them because their pronunciation is not at a satisfactory level. However, lack of self-confidence negatively affects the reading process and deters the learners' comprehension. Jalongo and Hirsh (2010: 434) clarify the cognitive anxiety reactions toward the act of reading as “overwhelming sense of dread, low self-esteem, feelings of helpless, and expectations of public humiliation”. These learners' lack of self-confidence lead them to think that others will evaluate them negatively while reading, thus, they feel anxious, and consequently do not enjoy reading. When the interview responses is combined with the questionnaire's analysis, it can be concluded that these learners encounter lack of self-confidence while reading in English, and this seems to be matching with Kuru-Gonen's (2005) findings where she revealed the importance of self-confidence as a major factor that contributes to reading performance and elevating anxiety level.

Reading anxiety was identified by Zbornik (2001) as a particular phobia toward the act of reading with physical and cognitive reactions. Cognitive reactions were specifically acknowledged by Jalongo and Hirsh (2010: 434) as an “overwhelming sense of dread, low self-esteem, feelings of helpless, and expectations of public humiliation”. These symptoms are identified in the current study as factors that contribute to anxiety. Most importantly, lack of self-confidence has been acknowledged in this study.

Other causal factors related to inability to perform are factors such as cultural content, vocabulary, grammar, and topic. Essentially, prior knowledge or schemata are responsible for one's lack of mastery of the target language. According to Mikulecky (2008), reading is a combined process of conscious and unconscious thinking in which the reader uses strategies in order to realize the potential meaning the writer has imparted in the reading text. The learner makes such an effort by contrasting and matching his/her schema about the topic with the text in hand. These factors are more likely to be attributed to the students' inability in the target language and this was acknowledged by Saito et al. (1999) in their study as “The less the learner can depend on the reliability of a specific system of sound-symbol correspondences, the more anxiety he or she would be expected to experience in the act of reading”. These readers seem to be immediately experiencing anxiety when they are trying to decipher the English language texts since they face challenges while processing the text due to the lack of schemata to be organized.

Correlation between FL Reading Anxiety and General FL Classroom Anxiety

The second objective of this research is to verify how FL reading anxiety is correlated with the general FL classroom anxiety. The need to distinguish both phenomena is of extreme significance since the current study looks at a new context that investigates the Arab EFL

learning experience. Hence, it is important to discover if these learners perceive reading in the L2 as distinct from general classroom anxiety, or they might feel FL reading anxiety is part of general classroom anxiety. Moreover, to deeply research FL reading anxiety, it must be distinguished as a distinct phenomenon. When FL reading anxiety is separated from the general construct of FL classroom anxiety, factors contributing to both phenomena can be investigated separately. This question has been answered quantitatively and both the FLCAS and FLRAS were used to answer this question simultaneously. Furthermore, Saito et al. (1999) framework to differentiate between the two constructs has been used to find out the relationship between the two constructs. Cronbach's alpha, means average, concurrent and discriminate validity all were analysed to investigate the relationship between these two phenomena. However, the whole findings indicate that FL reading anxiety is a phenomenon related to but distinct from general FL classroom anxiety, which will help to identify the factors contributing to EFL reading anxiety separately from the general conception of FL classroom anxiety. The following sections explain these differences between the two constructs in detail.

As the coefficient alphas can take a diverse range of values, Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2012) recommended the following threshold to interpret the values: scales with a coefficient alpha between 0.80 and 0.95 are considered to have very good reliability, those that have values between 0.60 and 0.70 have fair reliability, and values below 0.60 as showing poor reliability. However, the FLRAS has achieved a good internal reliability of .77 which reveals the scale's validity and reliability to yield single construct. These findings are realistic compared with those of the FLCAS (.89) computed on the same sample. Both of the scales achieved acceptable, but different reliability values. In general this indicates the distinction of the two constructs as two different scales to measure two different variables. The following table presents in detail the internal reliability of both scales.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha of both FLCAS & FLRAS

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Items
FLCAS	.904	.899	33
FLRAS	.776	.777	20

The above table prove the initial difference between the two constructs of FL reading anxiety in particular and FL classroom anxiety in general. The difference obtained shows that FLCAS achieved higher internal reliability than FLRAS. However, this difference has not impaired the FLRAS's validity to measure students' responses; certainly FLCAS and FLRAS have achieved different but satisfactory internal reliability values.

The mean and standard deviation of FLCAS ($M= 100.15$, $SD= 38.52$) are similar to previous studies Saito et al. (1999) ($M = 95.2$, $SD = 21.5$), while those of FLRAS ($M= 62.7$, $SD= 24.765$) are slightly smaller than those of FLRAS but still matching to previous studies like Saito et al. (1999) ($M=52.9$, $SD=9.4$). Specifically, on the FLCAS a mean of 100.15 would correspond to an average response of 3.03 on each of the 33 items; whereas the mean response on the FLRAS was approximately 3.13. This suggests that on average, participants reported slightly higher reading anxiety per item than that of general FL classroom anxiety. Additionally, when establishing a scale's overall construct validity, one of the most important

is the concurrent and discriminate validity of that scale. In order to examine FLRAS from this aspect, the relationship between FLCAS and FLRAS was computed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (statistical calculation) and a positive correlation has been verified ($r = .46$, $n = 34$, $p < .006$). For more clarification, the quantity r , called the *Pearson product* or *linear* correlation coefficient, measures the strength and the direction of a linear relationship between two variables. The quantity n refers to the number of participants, and P is the p value that measures how significant the relationship is between the two variables. However, this result seems to be consistent with Saito et al.'s (1999) result in which they revealed the significant difference between the two construct of general FL anxiety and FL reading anxiety with ($r = .64$, $n = 383$, $p < .01$), and Kuru Gonen's (2005; 2007) results with ($r = .45$, $n = 50$, $p < .01$) ($r = .52$, $n = 225$, $p < .01$) respectively.

According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), the direct way to decide whether the relationship is practically significant between two variables is the effect size of a significant result. In terms of concurrent validity, there is a significant correlation between the FLCAS in general and FLRAS in particular. The P -value $< .006$ indicates the significant correlation between the two measures. The concurrent validity obtained means that the correlation between the two measures indicates that learners with high-level of anxiety in general FL classroom tend to have high-level of FL reading anxiety and vice versa.

Although the two measures are related and significantly overlapping, a considerable amount of discrimination has been found. In relation to the discriminate validity, the two scales of FLRAS and FLCAS are interrelated. The correlation coefficient of $r = .46$ means that the two scales share approximately 21% of the total variance while 79% of the total variance are not shared between the two scales. This means that the two phenomena are affected by each other. Thus, students with high level of general FL classroom anxiety are prone to experience high level of FL reading anxiety and vice versa. As a result, this discriminate validity finding supports the distinction of FL reading anxiety and indicates the discrimination of the two phenomena. The following chart explains the correlation between the two variances and how they are correlated.

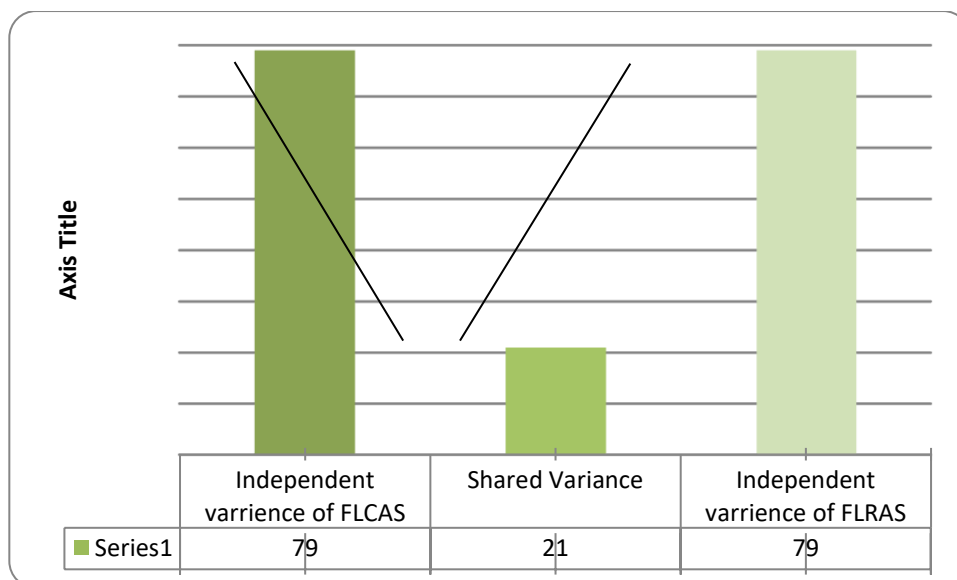


Chart 1: Correlations between FLCAS and FLRAS

The chart above explains how the two variables (FLCAS & FLRAS) correlate and overlap. The independent variance is 79, while 21 of the variance are shared and if the scale level is elevated, the shared variance will also be affected. In short, if the level of reading anxiety increases, it will definitely affect the level of general classroom anxiety by elevating its level and vice versa. Consequently, all deliberated findings demonstrate that FL reading anxiety is a phenomenon related to but distinct from general FL classroom anxiety. Cronbach's alpha, means average, participants' response average, concurrent and discriminate validity all were found to be related between the two constructs, but at the same time a distinction between the two phenomena was revealed.

Though both of the scales achieved different Cronbach's alpha values, both of the values were satisfactory and valid for the objectives of this study. The difference between the two Cronbach's alphas of the two scales refers to the distinction between them. As regards to the mean and participants' response averages, FL reading anxiety has achieved slightly higher figures than FL classroom anxiety. Furthermore, the two constructs of FL classroom anxiety and FL reading anxiety have been identified to be affected by each other, that is to say students with high level of anxiety tend to have high level of FL reading anxiety and vice versa. When calculating the concurrent and discriminate validity of the two scales, it has been found that they share around 21% of the variance, which indicates that 79% of the variance is not shared.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

FL anxiety in general and FL reading anxiety in particular are two important fields that should be investigated since anxiety filters language learning and can serve as a strong indicator of success or failure. Nevertheless, the feeling of anxiety may be associated with the general phenomenon of general FL anxiety or it might be caused by skill specific anxiety. Thus, it is of the essence to decide whether the learners encounter skill specific anxiety or whether the

anxiety is a part of general FL anxiety. The results of the current study show that anxiety as an affective factor negatively affects the students reading in the target language, and FL reading anxiety is a distinguishable phenomenon from the general construct of FL classroom anxiety. Additionally, two main elements of great potential for eliciting anxiety are unfamiliar cultural content and unfamiliar writing system. The current study did not adequately identify the unfamiliar cultural source of reading anxiety as a potential source of FL reading anxiety. Future research should explore how unfamiliar cultural source incurs FL reading anxiety since learners with advanced level are supposed to read different passages with various topics that could include various cultural elements.

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