

ВПЛИВ ТРИВОЖНОСТІ НА ПЕРЕВІРКУ НАВИЧОК ЧИТАННЯ СЕРЕД ТИХ,
ХТО ВИВЧАЄ ІНОЗЕМНУ МОВУ

**THE IMPACT OF TEST ANXIETY ON READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS
AMONG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Test anxiety can interfere with the students' ability to perform adequately and prevent students from demonstrating their knowledge on examinations. Some students have the skills and knowledge to do very well in testing situations, but their excessive anxiety can explain the differences in reading comprehension performance among learners and has a tremendous effect on foreign language reading. This paper aimed to explore the effects of test anxiety on ELL learners' reading test performance.

In second language acquisition, reading comprehension (RC) has been regarded as a passive skill. Reading comprehension involves processing ideas generated by others that are transmitted. Reading comprehension involves highly complex cognitive processing operations. Teaching English language learners (ELL) how to read is a vital issue in our current educational policy and practice. While many students do well in literacy, several ELL tend to exhibit lower academic achievement especially in reading. When second language (L2) readers read second language texts, they are trying to decode unfamiliar scripts, writing system, and cultural materials. If encountering difficulty in processing them, they may get frustrated with reading, and experience anxiety. Text anxiety is prevalent among students of all academic levels. It can make school very unpleasant and intimidating to the self-esteem. Students with severe test anxiety typically display a lack of self-efficacy and motivation in the classroom. Test anxiety is now defined as the tendency to be overly and anxiously preoccupied with test performance, rather than focusing one's attention on the test. Test anxiety is not only manifested cognitively, but socially, emotionally, and physiologically as well. Asking students whether they became tense during reading tests, suggested that those who claimed to be apprehensive while reading, scored lower on a reading test than those who claimed to concentrate. Anxiety, a complicated phenomenon, is a kind of emotion so the issue of anxiety in second language (L2) learning has concerned language educators and researchers for many years. However, most of the research centers on the discussion of listening, speaking, and writing. Little attention has been paid to reading. Therefore, the present study attempts to explore the role of anxiety in L2 reading.

Specifically, when reading for study, participants read at a slow pace and emphasized cognitive processes and strategies such as inferences, paraphrasing, and rehearsal of text information. In contrast, when reading for entertainment purposes, participants read at a fast pace and engaged in cognitive processes and strategies such as generating associations and formulating opinions about content or writing. As one might expect, when reading for study, readers recalled more text units than when reading for entertainment. It appears that college

student readers tailor the types of cognitive processes and strategies they use depending on the reason for reading, and the pattern of cognitive processes that these readers engage in during reading has an effect on the retention of text information [1, p.44].

Different factors may influence learners' reading comprehension and lead to reading problems; for example, features of the reading text, characteristics of the writer, and learner strategies. In addition affective factors can compound reading comprehension problems. Too much anxiety about a test is commonly referred to as test anxiety. Anxiety, as perceived intuitively by many language learners, negatively influences language learning and has been found to be one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education [2].

To adjust processes to fit the purpose for reading, readers must keep in mind the purpose for reading as reading proceeds. This type of reading involves the maintenance of global information during the reading process. Less-skilled readers have difficulty maintaining and activating global information, such as themes, during the reading process. One assumption is that less-skilled readers do not have the resources available to maintain global, thematic information. Likewise, less-skilled readers may not have the resources to maintain other types of global information, such as reading purpose, during reading. Given that reading purpose has an impact on the types of cognitive processes and strategies students engage in, the results of this study have implications for reading instruction. It may be useful to teach students how to tailor reading to meet specific learning goals. For example, reading instruction could include what categories of reading strategies are most effective for different types of reading, such as when the learning goal is to evaluate poetry as opposed to when the learning goal is to prepare for an essay exam.

It is valuable for students to learn that different cognitive processes and strategies yield different results in terms of comprehension and retention of text information and that certain types of reading require unique patterns of processes. Perhaps even more important, educators should be aware that some classes of less-skilled readers may be naturally disposed to use less effortful, and less beneficial, reading strategies when studying for classes [2, p.112-115].

The findings of the current study underline the need for further investigations concerning anxiety and foreign language reading. This study investigated only the intermediate level of proficiency. Two other levels, elementary and advanced levels, can be examined in further studies. Teachers are recommended to use topics and reading materials which are interesting for students to reduce test and reading anxiety. Also, it is suggested that teachers provide a low anxiety classroom environment for students to learn reading in a foreign language and train them how to recognize and treat anxiety and consider it as a real psychological issue which does not reflect laziness or lack of capability of the students.

References:

1. Burns, D. J. (2004). Anxiety at the time of the final exam: Relationships with expectations and performance. *Journal of Education for Business*, 119-124.
2. Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21(1), 112-127.