

READING ANXIETY AND WORKING MEMORY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

by:

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Emotions are crucial in learning to read, especially in the early stage of development of children. According to Jensen (2005), emotions facilitate symbol development, create meaning, drive attention, or focus, and have their memory paths. Emotions are important for the symbols used in a child's environment will have more meaning and usability. Emotions assist in some areas of literacy. As readers read, they naturally make emotional inferences to make sense of the characters and plot in the stories (Gygax et al. 2007). Emotion is a critical tool in comprehending print materials since they provide value, meaning, and strategies when solving problems (Eynde et al. 2006).

Anxiety is an affective factor in reading comprehension. Anxiety is described as having the feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry (Spielberger, 1983). There are three types of anxiety namely trait, state, and situation-specific anxiety. Situational-specific anxiety is a type of anxiety characterized by anxious feelings specified with certain situations and can be seen as trait anxiety in a particular context. Some studies revealed that there is a link between situational-specific anxiety and reading proficiency. The link is different or unique when it comes to general anxiety. Reading anxiety has also negative effects on reading comprehension (Macdonald, Cirino, Miciak, & Grills, 2021).

One of the most studied cognitive factors for reading comprehension is working memory. Working memory is composed of complex cognitive processes such as manipulation, maintenance, retrieval, and transformation of visual or verbal input (Chow et al., 2021). Research suggests that there is a positive relationship between working memory and reading comprehension (Georgiou & Das, 2016). Studies also suggest that this is also true

in foreign languages. According to the meta-analysis conducted by Shin (2020), there is a medium-sized relationship between working memory and foreign language reading comprehension.

Attention is likely to be a piece of irrelevant text information when readers experience anxiety. This reduces processing resources during reading and suggests that anxiety decreases working memory capacity, limiting the information readers can retain and process during the reading which leads to detrimental effects on their reading performance (Eysenck, Derakshan, Santos, & Calvo, 2007). Anxiety is associated with reading comprehension through the mediation of working memory. Individuals' experiences and skills related to reading have an impact on their reading. Readers with poor working memory have to give more effort to attentional control which takes up cognitive resources. This poses more challenges in reading comprehension. This increases negative effects on reading, such as reading anxiety, which then leads to lower reading performance (Ramirez et al., 2019).

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