Effects of Different Culturally-Based Materials on EFL Learners' Reading Anxiety, Reading Self-Efficacy, and Reading Proficiency in Project-Based Classes

Farnoosh Karimi
Ph.D. Candidate, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

Zohreh Nafissi
Assistance Professor, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

This article sets out to examine the effect of utilizing different culturally-based materials on EFL university students' foreign language reading anxiety, reading comprehension self-efficacy, and reading proficiency within project-based classes. The research was carried out with two classes of intermediate freshmen majoring in English Language Teaching. The comparison group had to present their projects based on the reading passages of the book "Active" (L2 culturally-oriented texts) and the experimental group had to deliver their projects based on their L1 and L2 culturally-based reading texts designed by the researcher. Reading comprehension self-efficacy scale, foreign language reading anxiety scale, and the reading section of the Michigan Test (1998) were administered to students as pre-tests and post-tests at the beginning and at the end of one academic year consisting of two project-based reading courses. ANCOVA was utilized for analyzing the data. The results indicated that although in both groups significant improvements were observed regarding the three aforementioned variables, it was the experimental group that showed significantly less degrees of anxiety, compared to the comparison group. However, no differences regarding reading self-efficacy and reading proficiency were observed between the two groups. The findings of this study suggest that EFL teachers, material developers and syllabus designers can take advantage of cultural familiar texts when generating their own learning materials.

Corresponding author: Zohreh Nafissi (z.nafisi@alzahra.ac.ir)

INTRODUCTION

In English as a Foreign Language context (EFL), reading comprehension is by far one of the main skills EFL learners need to extend their knowledge of English. By definition, "Reading" signifies the ability to read, process, and understand the meaning of texts, a process affected by a myriad of factors like students' proficiency levels, reading skills, reading strategies along with teachers' methodologies among others (Mangubhai, 1990).

Second language scholars have associated reading comprehension with some affective factors such as reading self-efficacy and reading anxiety (Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2011; Zimmerman, 2000). By reading self-efficacy, researchers have argued that EFL students' beliefs and confidence in their own reading abilities might presumably influence their performance in reading comprehension skills. In so doing, if expectations are not satisfied (i.e., students do not gain optimum scores), this may lead to reading anxiety among those suffering from lower self-efficacy scores. The confounding situation here is to make it clear if reading comprehension skills have any direct association with reading anxiety or self-efficacy. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986, 1997), one of the factors affecting EFL students' self-efficacy is their physiological state. In order for students to possess high levels of self-efficacy, their bodily stress, anxiety, fatigue, pain, and emotional arousals must be decreased. Otherwise, these elements may leave EFL learners vulnerable to low self-efficacy and weak performance (Martinez, Kock, & Cass, 2011; Prat-Sala & Redford, 2012).

Foreign language reading anxiety, which is defined by Jalongo and Hirsh (2010) as the nervousness associated with reading task, can be caused by many sources. In EFL contexts, researchers such as Al-Shboul, Sheikh Ahmad, Sahari Nordin, and Abdul Rahman (2013), Zhang and Kim (2014), and Zhao, Guo, and Dynia (2013) have postulated that 'unfamiliar cultural material' can be considered as one of those sources. Concerning this factor, it is believed that the more culturally unfamiliar a text is to the reader, the less understanding will occur, and the higher levels of anxiety he/she will experience during the course of reading. Within the milieu of culture teaching for enhancing reading skills, there have recently been some claims that integration of L1 culture into EFL textbooks and educational curricula can play facilitative roles in successful reading comprehension (Al-Shboul,

Sheikh Ahmad, Sahari Nordin, & Abdul Rahman, 2013; Carrell, 1988; Ketchum, 2006; Saito, Garza, & Horwitz, 1999; Zhang & Kim, 2014; Zhao, Guo, & Dynia, 2013). In fact, such investigators have proposed that when relevant cultural schemas are not activated during reading and processing a text, some misunderstanding, mistakes, reading difficulties, and anxiety will take place for students. Thus, it has been suggested by the aforementioned researchers that in order to help EFL students gain higher levels of reading comprehension, efficiency, and achievement in ELT classes, it is better for EFL teachers to teach reading comprehension skills based on localized or nativized texts.

In line with anxiety reduction measures, in this research, the researcher aimed to practice culture un/familiarity through a methodological framework termed by Lier (2007) as "Project-based learning". From among a plethora of well-established approaches widely practiced today, project-based learning is a method through which modeling can be practiced. This style of learning, being mostly based upon students' cooperation in groups, involves fulfilling a series of tasks or activities in order to achieve different goals, namely a presentation, a paper, or some other academic accomplishments. Owing to the fact that in project-based learning, students are approximately engaged in collaborative pursuits, as Lier (2007) remarks, they are provided with opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills via observing their peers in action. In other words, effective participation in projects and group collaborations along with peer observation involving a wide range of effortful and successful projects can entice EFL students to enhance their beliefs in their capabilities with regard to language areas and skills, a fact that may consequently lead to lower levels of language anxiety (Meyer, 1997; Schunk, 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW
Culture Learning
Many investigators and scholars suggest integrating culture learning as a fundamental part into second or foreign language learning curriculum (Brown, 2007; Choudhury, 2014; Christiansen & Silva, 2016; Kramsch, 1998; Schulz, 2007; Tomalin, 2008; Wang, 2008). In other words, one of the chief reasons behind foreign language teaching today is to enhance EFL students' intercultural communicative competence, which is the capability to interact efficiently with native speakers of another language

and culture (Gulbinskienė & Lasauskienė, 2014). As Mounford and Wadham-Smith (2000) believe, such communicative capability is incomplete without cultural awareness (as cited in Saluveer, 2004), which is elaborated as the knowledge and information obtained not only about the other culture, but also about one's own culture (Serna Dimas, 2016). Actually this awareness involves the ability to find out one's own cultural standpoint (i.e., the ability to reflect on one's own cultural identity, beliefs, and values) and make a comparison between one's own culture and that of the interlocutor's.

Although surveys, histories, poems, interviews, biographies, posters, adverts, etc. are considered as different sources, textbooks have been of utmost use up to now for cultural teaching. In one classification, Newby (1997) and Shafiee Nahrkhalaj (2012) mention two categories for the textbooks used for foreign language teaching:

(1) International/Global textbooks: These are the books which are generally produced by native speakers and for the international market with an emphasis specifically put on broad trans-cultural topics; therefore, they do not possess any culture specificity or relevance to the majority of its audience (e.g., Headway or Active Series).

(2) Local/Locally produced textbooks: These kinds of books are usually produced by non-native speakers or in collaboration with native speakers and based on the national curriculum recommended by the Ministry of Education of a particular country. Through providing cultural materials both on L1 and L2 cultures, the aim of these books is to make EFL students acquainted with L2 culture through their local lens and to help them gain an intercultural awareness regarding both L1 and L2 cultures.

As Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, and Colby (1999) state, "no longer thought to be value-neutral, textbooks and other materials used in language learning generally present a certain way of looking at the world, that is, through the cultural lens of the author" (p. 39). It is believed that most EFL textbooks, which are usually labeled as globally designed books, mainly reflect the cultural elements of UK and USA, specifically speaking (Toprak & Aksoyalp, 2015). That is, most of the books available in the International World Market for teaching English as a foreign language have been written just from British or American native authors' mono-cultural viewpoints without any consideration of non-native speakers and local cultures at all (Seidlhofer, 2005).

Nowadays, it is mostly expected from EFL and ESP textbooks to consist of a variety of inter-cultural (glocal or localized) topics and texts, based on both native and non-native cultures, in order to raise EFL students' intercultural awareness and help them become effective interactants in different communicative contexts (Ashraf, Motallebzadeh, & Kafi, 2013; Toprak & Aksoyalp, 2015).

The Effects of Cultural Familiarity on Reading Comprehension and Anxiety

It is a frequently voiced claim that integration of L1 culture into EFL textbooks and educational curricula can play facilitative roles in successful reading comprehension or achievement (Carrell, 1988; Ketchum, 2006). One of the reasons that can explicate this fact is Schuman's "Schema Theory". According to Al-Issa (2006) and Brown (2001), schemata are actually the background or previously owned knowledge, feelings, experiences, principles, ideas, judgments, and the like that a reader brings to a text or printed page. Generally, there are three major types of schema or schemata, namely, formal or textual, content, and cultural, which are in close relationship with reading comprehension. "Cultural schema" refers to the cultural background knowledge which is necessary for understanding a text and the intentions of its writer. It encompasses the kind of knowledge that is obtained through being a member of a particular group or society and contains the total set of beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, behaviors, etc. held by that specific group or community (Ketchum, 2006). This construct helps readers rebuild the author's message(s) by predicting, beforehand, the way in which the text progresses or develops (Klapproth, 2004, cited in Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, & Rezazadeh, 2013; Kramsch, 1998).

Ketchum (2006) believes that EFL students' reading comprehension ability will be decreased when they are exposed to a reading text with the cultural orientation different from their own. It is believed that when students face a reading text based on a new content and culture with which they are not familiar, they have to conduct both micro-level textual analysis (such as letter identification or pattern recognition) and macro-level textual analysis (such as activation of prior knowledge and monitoring comprehension) in order to understand the text. Both of these analyses require high degrees of attention, working memory space, and cognitive processing (Brantmeier, 2004). On the other hand, when EFL

learners are exposed to the reading texts based on L1 culture or the content and culture they are familiar with, they would have more attention and memory space for both micro- and macro-level textual analysis. This is due to the fact that the readers would activate and bring the relevant content and cultural background knowledge and schema to the reading task and process. Consequently, reading would require less cognitive processing since macro-level textual analysis is carried out automatically which would, in turn, lead to higher levels of reading comprehension and achievement (Carrell, 1988); in this way, students would become less anxious and, accordingly, more self-efficacious in reading. Thus, it has been suggested by some researchers in EFL educational settings and curriculum designing (e.g., Erten & Razi, 2009; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Rashidi & Soureshjani, 2011) that in order to help students gain higher levels of reading comprehension, efficiency, and achievement in ELT classes, it is better to teach reading comprehension skills based on localized or nativized texts. As Davoudi and Ramezani (2014) note, culturally familiar texts or "localized literature" are "literary texts that depict aspects of the readers' culture such as way of life, way of dressing, food, artifacts and others, which are unique to the readers' culture and are familiar to them" (p. 60). Regarding this issue, Alptekin (2006) has also proposed another term "cultural nativization", which is "sociological, semantic and pragmatic adaptation of the textual and contextual cues of the original story into the learner's L1 culture, while keeping its linguistic and rhetorical content essentially intact" (p. 499). As stated by Alptekin, settings, characters, places, and careers are considered as textual cues, whereas contextual cues encompass culture-specific customs, rituals, beliefs, and values.

Project-Based Learning (PBL), Cultural Teaching and Reading Comprehension Skill

Dema and Moeller (2012) consider "Problem-or project-oriented approach" as a method of teaching culture in which EFL students are encouraged to obtain a deeper understanding of L2 culture through self-directed inquiries. This approach, though seems monolingual by nature, puts an emphasis not only on providing EFL learners with factual information about L2 culture, but also on encouraging them to compare it with their own.

Richards and Renandya (2002) acknowledge that foreign language, generally, and reading skill, specifically, can be best learnt through communicative and student-centered approaches in which EFL students get involved in receiving and sending meaningful information from or to others in authentic interactions and take responsibility for their own learning. These methods and approaches, among which project- or problem-based learning or instruction can be enumerated as an example, encourage students to analyze, criticize, and advocate ideas. Moreover, in the process of experiencing different stages of such learning consisting of (mostly collaborative) planning, researching, writing the first draft, and rewriting (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2005), EFL learners are provided with opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills via observing their peers in action (Lier, 2007). There is a general consensus among many researchers that PBL, which incorporates some form of observational learning or modeling, has the potentiality to generate self-regulated and, consequently, self-efficacious learners in academic settings. In other words, students are active in self-observation and self-evaluation and strongly believe in their own abilities in setting goals, designing the required plan(s) for achieving their goals, and choosing the most efficient skills and strategies for fulfilling their objectives (English & Kitsantas, 2013; Paris & Paris, 2001; Schaffer, Chen, Zhu, & Oakes, 2012; Schunk, 2012; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997, 2007; Zimmerman, 2000). As it was pinpointed previously, heightened levels of self-efficacy can, in turn, lead to lowered levels of anxiety and better achievements in individuals (Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2011).

Additionally, as Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson, and Coulson (1991) assert, in such kind of learning, EFL students are usually required to search different sources other than their teacher to explore a topic (or solve a problem) and make use of not only their existing knowledge, but also the knowledge from other disciplines. In ELT settings, during the inquiry process that learners go through developing solutions, they need to use language to obtain and communicate information, express opinions, and negotiate, as they would in occupational domains. As they document discussions and decisions, consult reference materials, talk to others, or present findings, they learn to listen, speak, read, or write effectively (Abdullah, 1998, p. 3).

Therefore, many researchers have claimed that PBL does have constructive influences specifically on EFL students' reading

comprehension abilities and achievements (Chu, Tse, Loh, & Chow, 2011; Kavlu, 2015; Lindsay & Knight, 2006; Othman & Ahmad Shah, 2013; Schunk & Rice, 1993; Soleimani, Rahimi, & Sadeghi, 2015).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The researches have presented numerous studies on cultural familiarity, project-based learning, and reading variables together with their theoretical foundations which emphasize the influential roles these issues can play in EFL settings. However, the remaining question, which has not been investigated thoroughly up to now, is what role, if any, different culturally-based materials can play in project-based reading classes and what might their effects be on EFL students' foreign language reading anxiety, reading comprehension self-efficacy, and reading proficiency. In this research, culture un/familiarity was applied via project-based learning to study its effect on the reduction of reading anxiety among the target EFL students. To this purpose, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Does cultural familiarity have any significant effect on intermediate TEFL freshmen's foreign language reading anxiety in project-based reading classes?
2. Does cultural familiarity have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate TEFL freshmen's reading comprehension self-efficacy in project-based reading classes?
3. Does cultural familiarity have any significant effect on intermediate TEFL freshmen's reading proficiency in project-based reading classes?

METHOD
Participants

For achieving the purposes of this study, the researcher worked with two classes of freshmen studying for a BA degree in English Language Teaching at Binaloud University, Mashhad, Iran. Each class consisted of 35 to 40 EFL students, including both males (22) and females (56), whose age ranged between 18 and 22 years. Additionally, not only for selecting an appropriate test of English language proficiency for homogenizing the participants in this study, but also for opting for a

suitable textbook for the comparison group, the teacher pilot studied a group of 30 pupils resembling the participants of the actual study.

Instrumentation

In order to address the aforementioned research questions, three instruments were employed as follows:

Michigan English Test (MET): The MET is a standardized English as a foreign language (EFL) test, aimed at upper beginner to lower advanced levels. After examining and pilot studying a group of 30 students similar to the participants of the present study by the researcher at the beginning of the investigation, the Michigan Test (Evans, 1998) (encompassing 100 items devoted to vocabulary, grammar, and reading parts) with the internal consistency of .89 was found to be an appropriate test of English language proficiency for homogenizing the participants in this study. It should also be mentioned that the reading comprehension part of MET was applied as pre-test at the commence of the first reading course. This test was also used as post-test at the end of the second term to discover the students' gain scores with respect to their reading proficiency. In this study, the internal consistencies for the Michigan Test and its reading section were calculated as respectively 0.82 (Cronbach's alpha, n = 78) and 0.80 (Cronbach's alpha, n = 64).

Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS): The English version of this scale, originally developed by Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999), was used to assess students' level of anxiety over various aspects of reading skill. The 20 items in FLRAS were rated by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) and possessed a good internal consistency of 0.76 (Cronbach's alpha, n = 64) in the present study.

Reading Comprehension Self-Efficacy Scale (RCSS): This scale, developed and validated by Ghonsooly and Elahi (2011) originally in Persian, was applied to assess students' self-efficacy in reading comprehension. It consists of eleven 5-point Likert type items and allows responses to range from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). In the present study, RCSS yielded an acceptable internal consistency of 0.75 (Cronbach's alpha, n = 64).

Data Collection Procedure

To accomplish the objectives of this study, the following procedures were carried out:

Firstly, the Michigan test was administered at the beginning of the first reading course as a tool for ensuring the homogeneity of the participants of the study and also representing their levels of reading proficiency. Through the distribution of the whole test to the students of two reading classes, the participants, whose scores ranged between one standard deviation below and above the mean, were considered homogeneous and therefore selected as the true participants of the study. Afterwards, one class was randomly assigned to the comparison group and the other to the experimental group. Then, the FLRA and RCS questionnaires were administered as pretests as well.

Then, for the purpose of running project-based classes mainly rooted in group collaborations, the designated students in the two classes were randomly assigned into groups of three by the teacher, and this variable was kept constant throughout the study. Both groups were required to pass two reading comprehension courses consecutively during which students were asked to complete their term projects in groups in the form of teaching two reading texts, one developed by the teacher and the other one by themselves, each term (two ninety-minute sessions held for fifteen weeks). In this way, after two terms all groups of participants had delivered four reading projects.

In the initial sessions of the first reading course in each class, the teacher took on the responsibilities to explain project-based learning and its procedures and familiarize students with different ways of using various library sources, search engines, and data bases. She also elaborated on the essential parts of their projects (reading warm up, vocabulary, reading skill, etc.) and allocated grades for each section (the first presentation, based on teacher's prescribed and developed reading, was given 25 points out of 100; however, the second one, prepared by the students themselves, was allocated 35 points). Besides, she taught some reading texts to students in an attempt to familiarize them not only with the specific content that was to be the foci of the course, but also with various teaching techniques along with the components of reading texts.

The study participants had to take part in some group discussions in class, too. Before attending the discussions every session, students were

asked to participate in an independent study outside the class with the intention of planning their project and its presentation mode (especially for their first project), searching sources, finding an appropriate topic, compiling the required information, designing exercises, and planning presentation parts (specifically for their second project) and, generally, accepting the new responsibilities assigned to them. During each class session in the study groups, students were offered approximately fifteen minutes to speak in English in their groups and voice their ideas regarding all the processes they had gone through and the information they had gathered from their independent study for completing their projects under their teacher' supervision. Through spot-checking of every group, the teacher bore the responsibility to provide each group with the necessary consultation encompassing:

-helping students develop effective time management skills through setting some deadlines for completing different stages involved in0 the process of preparing their projects (like planning, researching, etc.),
-ensuring group member's active participation in conducting the project through supervising the fair division of responsibilities among group participants,
-facilitating the appropriate selection and use of resources,
-ensuring the suitability of the topic in question, the compiled information about that topic, and its presentation mode to guarantee the connection between what each group tried to achieve and the learning outcomes they would eventually gain. More often than not, when the text was considered (for all the students in class) as (1) linguistically or grammatically loaded or too simple (recognized through applying the Flesch readability formula), (2) culturally inappropriate, (3) monotonous, or (4) lacking proper exercises, the teacher assisted the students to revise their project and make the required adjustments,
-encouraging group discussions in English mostly through asking some questions individually from each group member and providing the necessary help and support whenever needed to stimulate students practice this language as much as possible in meaningful communication,

-gaining students' feedback and views regarding the quality of their own and their group-mates' performances (individually and as a group), the actions to continue, alter, or adjust to improve group success and progress, and the challenges and problems they faced at each stage they passed through, and finally

-providing scaffolding and guidance whenever misunderstandings or vagueness raised.

Following each presentation, the instructor and all the students were required to discuss different aspects of the presentation along with its weaknesses and strengths. These standpoints helped the instructor to allocate a grade for the different components of each presentation.

Moreover, every course was followed by a teacher-designed achievement test (40 points) to verify the extent of mastery of the materials covered in each class. The overall score of this essay type exam in addition to the overall scores of the two group projects (60 points) comprised a sum of 100 points, later converted to a scale of 0-20 for administrative purposes. Finally, FLRAS, RCSS, and the reading section of the Michigan Test were re-administered in both classes as post-tests to probe the probable differences between the pre-tests and post-tests with respect to foreign language reading anxiety, reading comprehension self-efficacy and reading proficiency per se.

In order to specify a suitable textbook for the comparison class, the teacher pilot studied a group of 30 students resembling the participants of the actual study. She suggested various texts with different linguistic difficulty levels (based on Flesch readability levels, 1984) and required students' comments on the appropriateness of those texts to their proficiency levels. As a result, the "fairly difficult" readability level (Flesch Reading Ease Score of 50-59) was chosen as appropriate for the first reading course. With this presupposition in mind and after consulting ten experienced instructors in teaching reading skill at university, the researcher opted for the book "Active 3" with the Flesch Reading Ease Score of 50-59 based on the first, middle, and last lessons of the book (All the texts, whether assigned by the teacher or selected by the students, in both comparison and experimental classes in the first reading course were to be calibrated at this level of difficulty).

Since students' language proficiency was expected to improve in the upcoming term, the difficulty level of the texts for the next reading course was designated at the "difficult" readability level (Flesch Reading

Ease Score of 30-49). Therefore, the book "Active 4" was selected for the comparison class in the second reading course.

Each term, in the comparison class, from the reading passages available in each book one reading text was randomly assigned for each group by the instructor and another reading passage was selected by the students themselves from external sources (e.g., the Internet, journals, newspapers, other books, etc.). The topic of the second reading accompanied by exercises (developed by the students themselves), with no emphasis on either L1 or L2 culture, had to be relevant to each group's first presentation based on their own interests.

On the other hand, in the experimental class, learners' initial project-based presentations were based on culturally-oriented materials (i.e., a combination of L1 and L2 cultures). Prior to each course, the teacher, having probed various online and library culturally-based sources, chose a number of reading texts for the groups in the experimental class based on the topics available in all cultures (e.g., food, ceremony, sport, etc.) and suggested by researchers of culture teaching (such as Brooks, 1986; Chastain, 1988; Hasselgreen, 2003, and the like) considering students' language proficiency at this level. The texts with "fairly difficult" readability level were selected for the first reading course and "difficult" readability level for the second course. Exercises (such as multiple choice, true-false, completion, etc.) were also developed for each reading text.

Each group of students in this class were also required to deliver two reading presentations each term, one based on L1 culture and the other L2 culture. At the beginning of each reading course, 10 reading texts consisting of five L1 culturally-oriented reading passages in addition to five L2 culturally-based reading texts (all selected and prepared by the instructor) were randomly assigned to the different groups of learners in class by the teacher. The group with, for example, the assigned L1 culturally-oriented text was requested to prepare the content and exercises of another presentation on the same topic based on L2 culture.

Data Analysis

For the purpose of investigating the effect of utilizing different culturally-based materials (as the independent variable) on TEFL students' foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA), reading comprehension self-efficacy (RCS), and reading proficiency (RP) (as the

three dependent variables) within project-based classes, three one-way between groups analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were applied. Also, preliminary checks were conducted beforehand to ensure that no violation of the assumptions of ANCOVA existed. It is important to mention that, through the application of Shapiro-Wilk normality test, no violation of the assumption of "normality" was actually observed in the scores on the dependent variables of the present study.

RESULTS
Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA)
In order to examine the effect of using different culturally-based materials on reducing EFL participants' foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA) in the two classes, a one-way between groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was applied. First of all, ANCOVA assumptions were checked as follows:

Assumption of Homogeneity of Regression Slopes

Table 1: Tests of between-subjects effects/dependent variable: FLRA post

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Corrected Model	1220.382[a]	3	406.794	8.152	.000
.000	Intercept	853.284	1	853.284	17.100	
.292	Group	56.501	1	56.501	1.132	
.000	FLRA pre	868.201	1	868.201	17.399	
.455	Group*FLRA pre	28.174	1	28.174	.565	
	Error	2994.055	60	49.901		
	Total	153790.000	64			
	Corrected Total	4214.438	63			

a. r squared = .290 (adjusted r squared = .254)

One of the assumptions posed for ANCOVA is homogeneity of regression slopes, which concerns the relationship between the covariate and the dependent variable for each of the study groups. What is checked is that there is no interaction between the covariate and the treatment or experimental manipulation (group). As represented in Table 1, since the interaction (Group* FLRA pre) is not significant at an alpha level of .05 and is safely above it (p = .455), we can conclude that the assumption has not been violated.

Assumption of Equality of Variance

Table 2: Levene's test of equality of error variances/ dependent variable: FLRA post

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.706	1	62	.105

As indicated in Table 2, since the Sig. value is .105 and greater than .05, we can infer that the assumption has not been violated and our variances are equal.

Now that checking the assumptions has been completed, we can proceed with the ANCOVA analysis to explore the differences between the two groups to answer the first research question (i.e., Does cultural familiarity have any significant effect on intermediate TEFL freshmen's foreign language reading anxiety in project-based reading classes?). The results obtained from running ANCOVA are as follows:

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for foreign language reading anxiety as a dependent variable

Group	Mean	SD	N
experimental	46.42	7.681	33
comparison	50.39	8.317	31
Total	48.34	8.179	64

As the above table represents, the mean score for the experimental group (46.42) with the standard deviation of 7.681 is lower than the one for the comparison group (50.39) with the standard deviation of 8.317.

Table 4: ANCOVA for the effect of cultural familiarity on the groups' foreign language reading anxiety

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1192.208[a]	2	596.104	12.032	.000	.283
Intercept	825.563	1	825.563	16.663	.000	.215
FLRA pre	941.186	1	941.186	18.997	.000	.237
Group	226.847	1	226.847	4.579	.036	.070
Error	3022.229	61	49.545			
Total	153790.000	64				
Corrected Total	4214.438	63				

a. r squared = .283 (adjusted r squared = .259)

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, having adjusted for pre-intervention scores on the FLRA test, the researcher found a significant difference between the two groups in post-intervention scores on this test, *F (1, 61) = 4.579, p<.05, partial eta squared = .070.* As P-value is less than .05, it can be concluded that the mean score for the experimental group (EG) is significantly lower than the mean score for the comparison group (CG); in other words, the type of reading materials (i.e., L1+L2 culturally-oriented materials) used in the experimental class has been more successful in lowering EFL students' FLRA levels, compared to the global textbook applied in the comparison class. A strong relationship was also revealed between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores on the FLRA test, indicated by a partial eta squared value of .237 (p<.05), making the pre-intervention an appropriate covariate for the model. Also, it can be inferred that the covariate can explain 23.7 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

Reading Comprehension Self-Efficacy (RCS)

In order to investigate the influence of utilizing different culturally-based materials on enhancing EFL students' reading comprehension self-efficacy in the two classes, another one-way between groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used. Firstly, ANCOVA assumptions were checked as it follows:

Assumption of Homogeneity of Regression Slopes

Table 5: Tests of between-subjects effects/dependent variable: RCS post

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	629.925[a]	3	209.975	14.097	.000
Intercept	200.914	1	200.914	13.489	.001
Group	54.181	1	54.181	3.638	.061
RCS pre	618.304	1	618.304	41.512	.000
Group*RCS pre	52.949	1	52.949	3.555	.064
Error	893.684	60	14.895		
Total	128705.000	64			
Corrected Total	1523.609	63			

a. r squared = .413 (adjusted r squared = .384)

As demonstrated in Table 5, since the interaction between the covariate and the treatment (Group* RCS pre) is not significant at an alpha level of .05 and above it (p = .064), we can infer that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes has not been violated.

Assumption of Equality of Variance

Table 6: Levene's test of equality of error variances/dependent variable: RCS post

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.220	1	62	.640

As represented in the above table, because of the fact that the Sig. value is .640 and surely higher than .05, it can be deduced that the assumption of equality of variance has not been violated.

Having ended checking the assumptions, we can now run the ANCOVA analysis to answer the second question posed in the current study (i.e., Does cultural familiarity have any significant effect on intermediate TEFL freshmen's reading comprehension self-efficacy in project-based reading classes?). The results obtained from running ANCOVA are as follows:

Table7: Descriptive statistics for reading comprehension self-efficacy as a dependent variable

Group	Mean	SD	N
experimental	44.97	4.579	33
comparison	44.16	5.298	31
Total	44.58	4.918	64

As the preceding table represents, the mean score for the experimental group (44.97) with the standard deviation of 4.579 is seemingly higher than the one for the comparison group (44.16) with the standard deviation of 5.298.

Table 8: ANCOVA for the effect of cultural familiarity on the groups' reading comprehension self-efficacy

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	576.976[a]	2	288.488	18.590	.000	.379
Intercept	268.880	1	268.880	17.326	.000	.221
RCS pre	566.530	1	566.530	36.507	.000	.374
Group	1.364	1	1.364	.088	.768	.001
Error	946.634	61	15.519			
Total	128705.000	64				
Corrected Total	1523.609	63				

a. r squared = .379 (adjusted r squared = .358)

As represented in Tables 7 and 8, after adjusting for pre-intervention scores on the RCS test, there was no significant difference between the two groups in post-intervention scores on this test, *F (1, 61) = .088, p>.05, partial eta squared = .001*. As P-value is more than .05, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the two groups of study regarding RCS gain scores; in other words, the types of reading materials used in both EG and CG have been successful in elevating TEFL students' RCS levels. There was also a strong relationship between

the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores on the RCS test, as indicated by a partial eta squared value of .374 (p<.05), making the pre-intervention an appropriate covariate for the model. Besides, it can be concluded that the covariate has the potentiality to explain 37.4 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

Reading Proficiency (RP)

For checking the effect of applying different culturally-based reading contents on elevating EFL learners' reading proficiency in the two classes, ANCOVA was again conducted; its assumptions were also examined as it follows:

Assumption of Homogeneity of Regression Slopes

Table 9: Tests of between-subjects effects/dependent variable: RP post

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	228.796[a]	3	76.265	65.181	.000
Intercept	34.585	1	34.585	29.559	.000
Group	1.219	1	1.219	1.042	.311
RP pre	224.138	1	224.138	191.561	.000
Group*RP pre	.772	1	.772	.660	.420
Error	70.204	60	1.170		
Total	7524.000	64			
Corrected Total	299.000	63			

a. r squared = .765 (adjusted r squared = .753)

As illustrated in Table 9, as far as the fact that the interaction between the covariate and experimental manipulation (Group* RP pre) is not significant at an alpha level of .05 and is quite above it (p=.420), we can conclude that the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes has not been violated.

Assumption of Equality of Variance

Table 10: Levene's test of equality of error variances/dependent variable: RP post

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.440	1	62	.510

As shown in the above table, the Sig. value is .510 and above .05, implying the fact that the assumption has not been violated and the variances are equal.

Having terminated checking the assumptions, the researcher initiated the ANCOVA analysis to explore the difference between the two groups to answer the third research question (i.e., Does cultural familiarity have any significant effect on intermediate TEFL freshmen's reading proficiency in project-based reading classes?). The results of ANCOVA analysis are as follows:

Table 11: Descriptive statistics for reading proficiency as a dependent variable

Group	Mean	SD	N
Experimental	10.36	2.234	33
Comparison	10.90	2.119	31
Total	10.63	2.179	64

As the above table represents, the mean score for the experimental group (10.36) with the standard deviation of 2.234 is lower than the one for the comparison group (10.90) with the standard deviation of 2.119.

Table 12: ANCOVA for the effect of cultural familiarity on the groups' reading proficiency

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	228.024[a]	2	114.012	97.988	.000	.763
Intercept	34.991	1	34.991	30.073	.000	.330
RP pre	223.371	1	223.371	191.976	.000	.759
Group	1.090	1	1.090	.937	.337	.015
Error	70.976	61	1.164			
Total	7524.000	64				
Corrected Total	299.000	63				

a. r squared = .763 (adjusted r squared = .755)

As depicted in Tables 11 and 12, after adjusting for pre-intervention scores on the reading test, there was no significant difference between the two groups in post-intervention scores on this test, *F (1, 61) = .937, p>.05, partial eta squared = .015*. As P-value is more than .05, it can be inferred that no significant difference between the two groups regarding RP gain scores actually exists and the kinds of reading materials used in both EG and CG have been successful in increasing EFL students' reading proficiency levels. There was also a strong relationship between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores on the reading test, as indicated by a partial eta squared value of .759 (p<0.05), making the pre-intervention an appropriate covariate for the model. Moreover, it can be deduced that the covariate can explain 75.9 percentage of the variance in the dependent variable.

FLRA, RCS, and RP
To see whether there has been any improvement with respect to the variables under question in each class, the researcher, through running three paired sample t-tests in each group, tried to find a more comprehensive view of the status quo. The resulted data are as follows:

Table 13: Paired samples test for the comparison group

	Mean	SD	95%Confidence Interval of the Difference (Lower-Upper)		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)

FLRA pre-post	3.548	9.241	.159-6.938		2.138	30	.041
RCS pre-post	-1.935	3.829	-3.340- -.531		-2.814	30	.009
RP pre-post	-3.484	.996	-3.849--3.119		-19.481	30	.000

As Table 13 represents, there is a statistically significant decrease in
FLRA scores in the comparison group with the mean decrease of 3.548
and a confidence interval ranging from .159 to 6.938. The calculated eta
squared statistic (.13) indicated a large effect size. In addition,
statistically significant increases can be observed in RCS and RP scores
with the mean increases of -1.935 (with a confidence interval ranging
from -3.340 to -.531) and -3.484 (with a confidence interval ranging
from -3.849 to -3.119), respectively. The estimated eta squared statistics
were (.20) for RCS and (.92) for RP scores, implying large effect sizes.

Table 14: Paired samples test for the experimental group

	Mean	SD	95%Confidence Interval of the Difference (Lower-Upper)	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
FLRA pre-post	7.091	7.354	4.483-9.699	5.539	32	.000
RCS pre-post	-1.909	4.759	-3.597--.222	-2.304	32	.028
RP pre-post	-3.212	1.139	-3.616- -2.808	-16.200	32	.000

As Table 14 indicates, there is a statistically significant decrease in
FLRA scores in the experimental class with the mean decrease of 7.091
and a confidence interval ranging from 4.483 to 9.699. The calculated eta
squared statistic (.48) indicated a large effect size. Also, there are
statistically significant increases in RCS and RP scores with the mean
increases of -1.909 (with a confidence interval ranging from -3.597 to -
.222) and -3.212 (with a confidence interval ranging from -3.616 to -
2.808), respectively. The estimated eta squared statistics were (.14) for
RCS and (.89) for RP scores which implied large effect sizes.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the current study was to investigate the effect of utilizing different culturally-based materials on intermediate TEFL freshmen's foreign language reading anxiety, reading comprehension self-efficacy, and reading proficiency in project-based classes. Although no significant differences regarding students' reading comprehension self-efficacy and reading proficiency were found between the two groups of the study, the experimental group outperformed the comparison group with respect to lower levels of foreign language reading anxiety. This finding is aligned with the results obtained from other studies such as Al-Issa (2006), Al-Shboul et al. (2013), Alptekin (2006), Davoudi and Ramezani (2014), Demir (2012), Erten and Razi (2009), Jalilifar and Assi (2008), Ketchum (2006), Liu (2015), Rashidi and Soureshjani (2011), Saito et al. (1999), Tavakoli, Shirinbakhsh, and Rezazadeh (2013), Zhang and Kim (2014), and Zhao et al. (2013). As mentioned beforehand, such researchers maintained that learning and comprehending a second or foreign language will be facilitated in culturally familiar contexts which would help learners relate what they already know about their home culture to what they are reading and trying to learn in English and predict or make sense of what the writer tries to convey. In addition, such investigators remarked that, because of not involving culturally distant items or names to be processed intentionally, culturally familiar or known content will not only reduce the cognitive load imposed by the complex reading procedures on the memory system, but would also compensate for other possible deficiencies such as vocabulary deficiency and, consequently, improve students' understanding, positive attitudes, interest, and motivation in reading and decrease their anxiety levels.

Putting it another way, the finding indicated how foreign language reading anxiety could be monitored and controlled using culturally known texts and reading materials. The main implication could be attributed to this principle that the background cultural knowledge that second language learners bring with themselves to the task of reading and processing a passage can drastically help them in overcoming their psychological barriers towards learning a new language and culture. As El-dali (cited in Asadipiran, 2015) states, the integration of L1 and its culture in EFL educational settings can lower students' stress and anxiety, provide fruitful conditions for learning, bring socio-cultural

factors under concentration, allow students bring all their previous knowledge and experiences into the classroom, and develop student-centered curricula.

Also, as Tseng (2002) comments, becoming deeply aware of L1 culture and constructing natal cultural identity are essential for EFL students in order to learn the target language successfully. Using cultural material topics (such as buildings, locations, festivals, etc.) based on both L1 and L2 cultures can help students learn more about their L1 culture in English, make further progress in communicating through the target language, adapt to the new environment through drawing on and consulting from what they know in their mother tongue, make a connection between what they already possess (L1 culture) and what they want to learn (L2 culture), cross the cultural boundaries, overcome language learning conflicts and anxiety, and construct their cultural identity.

In contrast to what many researchers (Alptekin, 2006; Davoudi & Ramezani, 2014; Demir, 2012; Erten & Razi, 2009; Jalilifar & Assi, 2008; Ketchum, 2006; Liu, 2015; Rashidi & Soureshjani, 2011; Tavakoli et al., 2013; Yousef, Karimi, & Janfeshan, 2014) believe, cultural familiarity did not prove to be much influential in enhancing the reading proficiency of the participants in the experimental group, compared to the comparison group in our study. Putting it another way, though students' levels of foreign language reading anxiety in the experimental group became significantly lower than those of the comparison group after passing two terms, this fact did not result in higher levels of reading self-efficacy and reading proficiency in the experimental class. It is of great importance to note that what was clearly observed in both groups of the study, was significant decrease in students' reading anxiety levels and considerable increase in their reading self-efficacy and reading proficiency scores at the end of the second term. Therefore, the aforementioned results could render three probable implications. First, when students' reading self-efficacy is enhanced, foreign language reading anxiety plays a minor role in their reading comprehension and achievement. As in both classes reading comprehension self-efficacy greatly improved, reading anxiety (especially in the comparison group) did not significantly influence reading proficiency and achievement, being in line with some previous researchers' findings such as Mills, Pajares, and Herron (2006) or Bandura (1997), and in contrast with the research results of Ghonsooly and Elahi (2011), Sellers (2000) and Wu

(2011). Second, in contrast to some investigators' viewpoints (such as Bandura, 1977; Martinez et al., 2011; Prat-Sala & Redford, 2012), lower levels of anxiety would not necessarily result in higher levels of self-efficacy in students. And, finally, when students' reading self-efficacy levels are elevated, their reading comprehension and proficiency are enhanced regardless of their reading anxiety levels.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The researchers in the present study was in search for designing their own culturally-oriented syllabus and reading contents because of the inefficiency of the available global textbooks not only in removing students' psychological barriers in learning a foreign language, but also in being in line with their interests and needs. Moreover, they decided to prepare their own local materials to see to what extent such texts can actually be effective on students' psychological and non-psychological factors. As it was explained and proved in the previous sections, the researchers came to the conclusion that L1 culturally familiar texts possessed influential effects on lowering students' foreign language reading anxiety levels. Accordingly, implications for the current study suggest some vital considerations for the language teachers, especially EFL instructors; they can help foreign language students decrease their FLRA or, possibly, foreign language anxiety through focusing their teaching on texts with culturally familiar contents to students. Such materials are mostly known to be based on the learners' cultural background knowledge and in agreement with their needs and motivational arousals.

Additionally, using globally designed textbooks, which are mainly based on western or L2 culture, is not recommended to educators and instructors in this regard. As Pennycook (2010) and Canagarajah (2005) claim, such books have, in fact, failed in identifying English language as an international language through introducing or, in other words, selling western culture, norms, values, and world views to the rest of the world and withdrawing any attention for local knowledge, constructs, and identities, as the purpose of such hegemony or imperialism is nothing more than degrading and marginalizing such local belongings. Consequently, today, as the number of non-native speakers and world Englishes has abounded, so many voices are heard in pro of establishing local contents in global English language textbooks and not resorting

solely to the fixed western (mainly British or American) norms and standards presented in such books. It is believed that local contexts, genres, and themes not only can raise students' consciousness of their rich cultural heritage and native values and system of beliefs, but may also invigorate meaningful and easier English language learning and performance (Kachru & Smith, 2008).

As implied by the results of the current study and concerning the point that English language as a lingua franca does not belong to one specific culture anymore, it is recommended to EFL teachers to bring their students as close as possible to their local belongings and morals through integrating their cultural themes and contexts into classrooms, particularly in a comparative way with the English language culture. In this way, students will get a chance to personally see (learn) a foreign language through their own lenses, to identify themselves with familiar themes, characters, and plots, to express and talk about their own cultural beliefs and values in English, to gain a more comprehensive awareness and knowledge about their own world views, and to construct or reconstruct their natal identity and to find its unique characteristics in comparison to the one presented through English language culture. These are all the factors which may lead not only to more positive viewpoints on L1 culture, but also to better intercultural competence and efficient communications in both local and international settings. As one of the main concerns of a myriad of investigators and policy makers in the Islamic country of Iran regarding TEFL today is the learners' assimilation to the target culture and, consequently, their alienation from their native culture and identity, integrating L1 materials into English language teaching and learning curriculum would definitely seem invaluable.

Meanwhile, the researcher was also looking for a teaching approach that would permit learners to be energetic, active, and cooperative with each other, to be agents of what is prescribed in their own classes, to be interested in deep learning and in what they are carrying out in order to achieve their practical goals in learning English language reading skills, to become more familiar with technology and with searching different sources on the internet or in the libraries, and, generally, to develop personal and interpersonal skills. Project-based learning was deemed to provide such an opportunity not only for the researcher as the teacher, but also for the students to be engaged in a kind of meaningful inquiry learning in which searching, reading, using already held or learnt reading skills or strategies and knowledge for

processing new information, and producing a quality end product collaboratively in groups were the prominent features and authentic assets. In such sort of learning students learnt to take initiatives and be responsible for their own learning, experienced fun and excitement and became motivated to learn via discussing with, asking questions from, and observing their peers and receiving and communicating their various viewpoints, and were encouraged to compete with each other in a friendly and healthy environment.

Certainly, through fostering an appropriate classroom environment and providing the necessary support, feedback, and guidelines for their students, EFL teachers can encourage learners to practice project-based learning in classrooms and, consequently, gain the optimal results. Today, it is generally recommended that teachers pay more attention to their learners' psychological and emotional needs and use and design new personal teaching methods for fulfilling those needs and eventually educating more successful EFL learners both inside and outside of classrooms, a fact that would necessitate the existence of teacher education programs to instruct EFL teachers in playing more effectively their roles and achieving their responsibilities in such classrooms. Further researches are also suggested to be focused on investigating the followings:

1. Teachers' difficulties and opinions about designing and teaching local materials to the students of different levels
2. Students' views on or their challenges in learning English based on localized texts in EFL contexts
3. The influence of using different culturally-oriented materials on both teachers' and students' personal factors such as identity, self-confidence, self-esteem, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, etc.
4. The effect of teaching various culturally loaded contents through different communicative and non-communicative teaching or learning methods on students' attainments
5. The application of PBL for teaching different linguistic or non-linguistic skills with a focus on different proficiency levels and age groups in various regions and with different cultures
6. Teachers' and students' viewpoints on and challenges with PBL and its implementation in EFL settings, encompassing all skills
7. The effect of PBL on various personal and interpersonal or psychological and non-psychological factors such as self-concept,

goal orientation, level of burnout, self-handicapping, motivation, academic achievement, fear of negative evaluation, teacher's expectations and feedback, etc.

8. The efficiency of PBL (including its costs and benefits) in comparison with other teaching or learning methods like didactic instruction, strategy-based instruction, or other learner-based approaches

Bio-data

Farnoosh Karimi is a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL at Alzahra University. She received her B.A. degree in English Literature from Hakim Sabzeveri University and her M.A. degree in English Language Teaching from Tehran Azad University.

Zohreh Nafissi is Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Department of English Language and Literature, Alzahra University. She received her M.A. and MPhil from Glasgow University, Scotland, and her Ph.D. in TEFL from Allameh Tabatabai University. Her main research interests are ESP, EAP, teacher education, learner identity, and linguistic imperialism.

References

Abdullah, M. H. (1998*). Problem-based learning in language instruction: A constructivist model (ERIC No. ED423550). Retrieved from http://www.ericfacility.net/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed423550.html

Al-Issa, A. (2006). Schema theory and L2 reading comprehension: Implications for teaching. *Journal of College Teaching & Learning, 3*(7), 41-47.

Alptekin, C. (2006). Cultural familiarity in inferential and literal comprehension in L2 reading. *System, 34*(4), 494-508.

Al-Shboul, M. M., Sheikh Ahmad, I., Sahari Nordin, M., & Abdul Rahman, Z. (2013). Foreign language reading anxiety in a Jordanian EFL context: A qualitative study. *English Language Teaching, 6*(6), 38-56.

Asadipiran, N. (2015). The effect of L1 culture on L2 acquisition: The case from an Iranian context. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities, 4*(3), 83-92.

Ashraf, H., Motallebzadeh, K., & Kafi, Z. (2013). On the relation between English textbooks and Iranian EFL learners' acculturation. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3*(9), 1658-1666.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 2*, 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of comparison*. New York, NY: Freeman.

Brantmeier, C. (2004). Building a comprehensive theory of adult foreign language reading: A variety of variables and research methods. *The Southern Journal of Linguistics, 27*, 1-7.

Brooks, N. (1986). Culture in the classroom. In J. M. Valdes (Ed.), *Culture bound: Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching* (pp. 123-128). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. White Plains, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.

Canagarajah, S. (2005). Introduction. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice* (pp. xiii-xxx). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Carrell, P. L. (1988). Some causes of text-boundedness and schema interference in ESL reading. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine, & D. E. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive approaches to second language reading* (pp. 101-113). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Chastain. K. (1988). *Developing second language skills: Theory and practice*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Janovich.

Choudhury, R. U. (2014). The role of culture in teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. *Express, an International Journal of Multi Disciplinary Research, 1*(4), 1-20.

Christiansen, M. S., & Silva, D. (2016). Teaching culture in EFL classrooms in Mexico: Current practices and pedagogical recommendations. *MEXTESOL Journal, 40*(2), 1-13.

Chu, S. K. W., Tse, S. K., Loh, E. K. Y., & Chow, K. (2011). Collaborative inquiry project-based learning: Effects on reading ability and interests. *Library & Information Science Research, 33*(3), 236-243.

Davoudi, M., & Ramezani, H. (2014). The effects of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature, 2*(8), 58-71.

Dema, O., & Moeller, A J. (2012). Teaching culture in the 21st century language classroom. In T. Sildus (Ed.), *Touch the world: Selected papers from the 2012 central states conference on the teaching of foreign languages* (pp. 75-91). Eau Claire, WI: Crown Prints.

Demir, Y. (2012). The effect of background knowledge and cultural nativization on reading comprehension and vocabulary inference. *Journal of Educational and Instructional Studies in the World, 2*(4), 188-198.

Donnelly, R., & Fitzmaurice, M. (2005). Collaborative project-based learning and problem-based learning in higher education: A consideration of tutor and student roles in learner-focused strategies. In G. O'Neill, S. Moore, & B. McMullin (Eds.), *Emerging issues in the practice of university learning and teaching* (pp. 87-98). Dublin: AISHE.

English, M. C., & Kitsantas, A. (2013). Supporting student self-regulated learning in problem- and project-based learning. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning, 7*(2), 128-150.

Erten, I. H., & Razi, S. (2009). The effects of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 21*(1), 60-77.

Evans, V. (1998). *Revised final tests 1 for Michigan certificate of proficiency in English*. Newbury: Express publishing.

Flesch, R. F. (1984). A new readability yardstick. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 32*, 221-223.

Ghonsooly, B., & Elahi, M. (2011). Learners' self-efficacy in reading and its relation to foreign language reading anxiety and reading achievement. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, 53*(217), 45-67.

Gulbinskienė, D., & Lasauskienė, R. (2014). Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) of EFL students at university level. *Žmogus ir žodis/ Svetimosios kalbos, 16*(3), 150-159.

Hasselgreen, A. (2003). Towards the assessment of intercultural competence. In A. Hasselgreen (Ed.), *Bergen 'Can do' project* (pp. 45-55). Graz: Council of Europe Publishing.

Jalilifar, A. R., & Assi, R. (2008). The role of cultural nativization in comprehension of short stories in EFL reading contexts. *The International Journal of Language, Society and Culture, 26*, 62-79.

Jalongo, M. R., & Hirsh, R. A. (2010). Understanding reading anxiety: New insights from neuroscience. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 37*, 431-435.

Kachru, Y., & Smith, L. (2008). *Cultures, contexts, and world Englishes*. London: Routledge.

Kavlu, A. (2015). The effect of project-based learning on undergraduate EFL students' reading comprehension ability. *Journal of Education in Black Sea Region, 1*(1), 39-44.

Ketchum, E. M. (2006). The cultural baggage of second language reading: An approach to understanding. *Foreign Language Annals, 39*, 24-42.

Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and culture: Oxford introductions to language studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lier, L. V. (2007). Action-based teaching, autonomy and identity. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 1*(1), 46-65.

Lindsay, C., & Knight, P. (2006). *Learning and teaching English: A course for teachers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Liu, Y. C. (2015). The perception of cultural familiarity and background knowledge on reading comprehension for intermediate EFL students. *International Journal of Language and Literature, 3*(1), 71-75.

Mangubhai, F. (1990). Towards a taxonomy of strategies used by ESL readers of varying proficiencies while doing cloze exercises. *Australian Journal of Reading, 13*(2), 128-139.

Martinez, C. T., Kock, N., & Cass, J. (2011). Pain and pleasure in short essay writing: Factors predicting university students' writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 54*(5), 351-360.

Meyer, D. K. (1997). Challenge in a mathematics classroom: Students' motivation and strategies in project-based learning. *The Elementary School Journal, 97*(5), 501-521.

Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C. (2006). A reevaluation of the role of anxiety: Self-efficacy, anxiety, and their relation to reading and listening proficiency. *Foreign Language Annals, 39*, 273-292.

Newby, D. (1997). Evaluation, adaptation and production of modern language textbooks in lower secondary education. Workshop No. 3/95. Graz, 7-11 May 1995. Graz: ECML.

Othman, N., & Ahmad Shah, M. I. (2013). Problem-based learning in the English language classroom. *English Language Teaching, 6*(3), 125-134.

Paige, R. M., Jorstad, H., Siaya, L., Klein, F., & Colby, J. (1999). Culture learning in language education: A review of the literature. In R. M. Paige, D. L. Lange, & Y. A. Yeshova (Eds.), *Culture as core: Integrating culture into language curriculum* (pp. 47-113). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota. Retrieved from http://www.carla.umn.edu/culture/resources/litreview.pdf

Paris, S. C., & Paris, A. H. (2001). Classroom applications of research on self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychologist, 36*, 89-101.

Pennycook, A. (2010). Rethinking origins and localization in global Englishes. In M. Saxena & T. Omoniyi (Eds.), *Contending with globalization in world Englishes* (pp. 196-210). Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Prat-Sala, M., & Redford, P. (2012). Writing essays: Does self-efficacy matter? The relationship between self-efficacy in reading and in writing and undergraduate students' performance in essay writing. *Educational Psychology, 32*(1), 9-20.

Rashidi, N., & Soureshjani, K. H. (2011).The effect of teaching culturally-based texts on the Persian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' motivation and reading performance. *Journal of Languages and Culture, 2*(8), 141-147.

Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saito, Y., Garza, T. J., & Horwitz, E. K. (1999). Foreign language reading anxiety. *Modern Language Journal, 83*(2), 202-218.

Saluveer, E. (2004). *Teaching culture in English classes* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Tartu, Estonia. Retrieved from http://www.dspace.Utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/10062/922/5/Saluveer.pdf

Schaffer, S., Chen, X., Zhu, X., & Oakes, C. (2012). Self-efficacy for cross-disciplinary learning in project-based teams. *Journal of Engineering Education, 101*, 82-94.

Schulz, R. A. (2007). The challenge of assessing cultural understanding in the context of foreign language instruction. *Foreign Language Annals, 40*(1), 9-26.

Schunk, D. H. (2012). *Learning theories: An educational perspective*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Schunk, D. H., & Rice J. M. (1993). Strategy fading and progress feedback: Effects on self-efficacy and comprehension among students receiving remedial reading services. *Journal of Special Education, 27*, 257-276.

Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (1997). Social origins of self-regulatory competence. *Educational Psychologist, 32*, 195-208.

Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2007). Influencing children's self-efficacy and self-regulation of reading and writing through modeling. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 3*, 7-25.

Seidlhofer, B. (2005). Key concepts in ELT: English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal, 59*(4), 339-341.

Sellers, V. D. (2000). Anxiety and reading comprehension in Spanish as a foreign language. *Foreign Language Annals, 33*(5), 512-521.

Serna Dimas, H. M. (2016). Integrating the intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in a foreign language program: Faculty considerations upon leaving the haven of native speakership. *English Language Teaching, 9*(4), 1-10.

Shafiee Nahrkhalaji, S. (2012). An evaluation of a global ELT textbook in Iran: A two-phase approach. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 2*(3), 184-191.

Soleimani, H., Rahimi, Z., & Sadeghi, H. (2015). Project-based learning and its positive effects on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' reading ability and vocabulary achievement. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies, 4*(1), 1-9.

Spiro, R. J., Feltovich, P. J., Jacobson, M. J., & Coulson, R. L. (1991). Cognitive flexibility, constructivism and hypertext: Random access instruction for advanced knowledge acquisition in ill-structured domains. *Educational Technology, 31*, 24-33.

Tavakoli, M., Shirinbakhsh, S., & Rezazadeh, M. (2013). Effect of cultural adaptation on EFL reading comprehension: The role of narrative

nativization and foreign language attitude. *World Applied Sciences Journal, 21*(11), 1587-1596.

Tomalin, B. (2008). Culture- the fifth language skill. Retrieved from http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/culture-fifth-language-skill

Toprak, T. E., & Aksoyalp, Y. (2015). The question of re-presentation in EFL course books: Are learners of English taught about New Zealand?. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language, 3*(1), 51-104.

Tseng, Y. (2002). A lesson in culture. *English Language Teaching, 56*(1), 11-21.

Wang, X. (2008). Reflection on the notion of culture teaching. *US-China Foreign Languages, 6*(1), 49-53.

Wu, H. J. (2011). Anxiety and reading comprehension performance in English as a foreign language. *Asian EFL Journal, 13*(2), 273-307.

Yousef, H., Karimi, L., & Janfeshan, K. (2014). The relationship between cultural background and reading comprehension. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 4*(4), 707-714.

Zhang, H., & Kim, Y. (2014). Foreign language reading anxiety: Chinese learners of Korean. *Studies in Linguistics, 32*, 21-45.

Zhao, A., Guo, Y., & Dynia, J. (2013). Foreign language reading anxiety: Chinese as a foreign language in the United States. *The Modern Language Journal, 97*, 764-778.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Self-efficacy: An essential motive to learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 25*, 82-91.

پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی ومطالعات فرهنگی

پرتال جامع علوم انسانی