

The Role of Native Language, Gender, and Personal Interest in Their Reading Literacy of Persian Texts in a Group of 4th year of Elementary Students

Zabihollah Khanjarkhani¹, Ahmadreza Nasr², Alireza Fooladi³, Abbas Ebrahimi⁴
and Zekrollah Morovati¹

¹Shahid Chamran University, Ahvaz, Iran

²University of Isfahan

³University of Hormozgan

⁴Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences

ABSTRACT

The purpose of presented study is surveying the relation of native language, gender and personal interest of a group of 4th year of elementary students in Urmia Province in their capability of reading literacy of Persian text. The descriptive study method in correlative style has been used, in this study. All ht students of Urmia province in 4th year of elementary school were the statistical population of this study which 356 students was chosen according to Cochran formula with the method of Proportional multi-stage randomness sampling from the two regions of education department. Data collecting was done with a Persian text reading test and a questionnaire of personal interest. Collected information has been analyzed with the method of one-way variance analysis, *The Independent Samples T Test* and multiple regressions. The results showed that there is not a significant difference between Turk, Kurd and Persian students in reading Persian materials while there is a significant difference between male and female students. It was also shown that the predictive variables of gender and personal interest are the predictive of capability of reading literacy of Persian text respectively and the variable of native language does not affect this capability.

KEY WORDS: capability of reading literacy of Persian text, Native language, Personal Interest, 4th year of elementary students

INTRODUCTION

The language, in addition to collaboration and communication, is a tool that not also helps the individual to know the outer world, but also in adjustment his behaviors and enables him to describe him/her and world which he/she lives in. So the role of language is important because it is a toll for contemplation and social communication. Maher [1] was quoting hallahan and kaufman: language is the most fundamental medium, that most of social and educational learning of the children, come off via this tool in school. Hence difficulties of reading and learning could be the reason of side problems in other learning. Studies have shown that inability to read is one of the main reasons of dropouts and social disorders. In addition, reading is known to be an important reason for advancing and an also it is an enjoyable element for the person [2]. Karimi [3] also shows that students with high reading skills are generally successful learners, referring to his findings. Also accordingly, *PIRL Evaluation* findings showed that students with high reading skills have better academic achievements in comparison with those who haven't an appropriate reading skills although there were some exceptions. Since the official language of education in our country is Persian, a group of learners in different part of the country without any background in Persian language, enter educational environment and trying to acquire knowledge and maybe lack of dominance on Persian, affect the other aspects of their learning process and make the comprehension harder for them [4].

Purposes of language growth are mostly purposes of educational process in preschool and elementary school which they have their sub purposes like providing opportunities for communication with children and adults by developing the skills of spoken and writing language, helping the children to have a proper conversation with children and adults and growth of other language skills. so we have to see how gender and personal interest affect reading skills beside language because if they do, and the affection be significant, a special teaching method and activities should be applied and also the way of making students interested is important too. Since growth of oral capabilities and inference of texts and if generally speaking, symbols, make the person to pass the barriers for learning more and more, he/she also needs a fluent speech to think and speak. Dialogs are used to express feelings, needs, communication and life would be intolerable for humans if they could not communicate and understand each other (in written or oral form or with symbols) [5].

Learning a language in its complete form is almost impossible, because there are nuance points, even in person's native language that you can't talk about them. We have to admit that if we want to teach a language, we have to teach that part which is with accordance with needs, talents and individual differences of the learner in a special period of his/her life [6]. Lots of variables can affect the reading ability so the effects of native language, gender, personal interest and students

attitudes toward reading Persian text was studied in presented research to determine how these variable affect reading ability and how many percent of reading ability variance can be determined on these three variables. The general belief is if a students learn to read in a non-native language (i.e. the language that students hear for the first time at home and learn it naturally) he/she will face more difficulties in reading [7] because the structure of two language are usually different and the individual has learnt the phonological, structural and semantic rules and this fundamental knowledge may cause retroactive inhibition (learning that cause person to forget what was learnt in the past). Some studies showed that learning to read in native language provide the person with the opportunity of self-correction and anticipation and using additional information to recognition of the word. But this opportunity is not completely available for second language reading learners because they have less control over their second language. Based on this fact it can be predicted that bilinguals confront more difficulties in decoding and comprehending the words [8]. Durgunoglu [9] believes that some of the bilinguals face the second language just when they are studying and bilingualism in this shape cause an unbalanced or disordered bilingualism. While for monolingual children, reading and writing is the sequel of their natural speaking and listening and the child should only master reading and writing in school, this is true about the Iranian (Persian) Students because they have to learn phonetics, meanings and writing symbols of the Persian language. When a person start to learn he second language seriously with reading and writing ,in fact he/she practices both language defectively i.e. practices native language in the form of listening and speaking and Persian language in the form of reading and writing. Possibly this defection is compensating as he/she grow and the person master the listening and speaking form of the language but studies show that in comparison with those students who their native language are Persian such children do not have the proper performance at the beginning of their education [10]. Accordingly Mansoornia [11] expressed that the highest percent of failures in elementary school (more than 50%) are related to first and second grade of elementary school which learning the language is the most important variable. Base on this, some believes that learning to read in second language may act as an obstacle to master the reading. Evidences show that such bilinguals have fewer problems in recognition of the words. Most of their problems are in comprehension. Result of the studies about fluency in reading and writing in bilinguals implied that the group who using their first language in home and school and society, faced difficulties because of non-domination of the elements of speech in the second language and being unable to understand and distinguishing the phonemes of speech and this can cause change of the meaning or misunderstanding of the text. Unlike the above mentioned, there are studies that show bilingualism cause growth of language and semantic knowledge and also growth of person's symbolic system [11]. Romain [7] believes that learning to read and write is second language is depend on the Educational-cognitive language which it's root and foundation is in first language, and it is the dimensions of phonology, semantics and structures of native language that individuals learns before entering the school.

If educational programs of the schools dedicate a part of their program to teaching the dimensions of first language and promote and strengthen native language skills, transference of the skills would be positive and bilingualism won't be an obstacle for the learners anymore. If the educational system, teach the literacy of second language without the proper foundation, so the structural foundation of first language would be an obstacle for acquire language and literacy which reading because of its connection with language skills may be the most vulnerable one to damages. As you can see some of the researches know bilingualism as an obstacle and some other know it as opportunity for improving reading literacy. These researches have been done in different regions and belong to different minorities. Hence we have to analyze the performance of Urmia's Students in reading and see how much they effected with this variable which is the subject of the presented study. One of the other subjects that educational experts and policymakers are interested in is the gender differences in learning process. Difference in performance of different groups of male and female students has been interesting; in all the countries the performance of the female gender was significantly better than boys in PIRIS international test. There was a significant difference between the scores of boys and girls in Iran too. But in Italy this difference was minimum while in Kuwait it was maximum i.e. girls get higher scores. Mohammadi [12] with referring to the studies of Maccobi and Jaklin [13] implies that female's students have better oral capabilities in comparison with male student and showed better performance in assignments which were related to comprehension, reading and language skills. During this research, they have reported the ratio of boys problems in comparison with girls at the age of two to five 2.3 to 1 and at the age of six to ten 3.3 to 1 and at the age of eleven to twenty 4 to 1 in the skills of language respectively, also students which had problems in reading skills were abundant among boys and they reported this ratio 3 to 1 in all ages. We have to see if this difference is common between bilingual students or not, because in PIRIS test, the gender differences was in the ways that decreasing the gap between developed and developing countries. Hence the Urmia City is in a place which is lower than average economic condition of the country so we have to see if this gap is going to increase with moving toward the low-income class of the society or not ?!

On the other hand studies has shown that if the learner has a positive attitude toward learning the second language and feel that he/she needs it, learning would have a critical value and they will have a better performance. The inner attitude can help learning the second language better than any other tool or devices .It is better to for such people to learn second language with keeping their linguistic and cultural identity. A person can be bilingual and not losing his/her identity with having the right motivation and orientation. In fact trying to have better social class is apparently the basic and the best motivation for bilingualism.

In the international PIRIS research, attitudes of all the students toward the reading were generally positive and mostly those who had positive attitudes, had better performance in reading. In international scale, half of the students were agree with the five statements of Enjoying reading and valuing reading in average. Girls had more positive attitudes toward reading in all countries and the interesting point is Iran's first rank in the positive attitudes of students toward reading which

accompany with low performance in reading literacy. Of course this scale is paradoxical only in international scale i.e. high interest and low score; despite of being interested in reading, Iranian children had lower scores in comparison with other countries but when the reason of this interest among the Iranian students analyzed, they see that those who has higher interest in reading get higher scores in reading literacy. Presented study showing the importance of study especially about bilinguals and this study is about the role of native language, gender and personal interest of students in literacy of reading Persian texts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method of research is casual-comparative and the statistical population is all of the students of fourth year of elementary school of Urmia city in the year of 1387 (2008) with the population of 11628. Sampling has been made with the proportional multi-stage random sampling method (Cochran method) with the population of 356 people in the dual region of Urmia’s educational departments i.e. 3 school from each region, each one with two shifts in random selection and regarding to the number of male and female students, samples selected.

RESEARCH TOOL

The following tools had been used for collecting information.

The test of reading Persian text

In this part a piece of a story has been used. This text was extracted from PIRIS international test named “hares” which was in 7 pages with 11 questions and the dedicated time for answering was 1 hour.

Student’s personal interest questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed by experts according to the PIRIS Format. This questionnaire contains questions which evaluate personal interest of the students toward reading and the contents validity was approved by educational experts. Reliability of this questionnaire was calculated with experimental implementation over 100 students and Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was 0.90 which is a proper internal consistency coefficient. The findings of this study have been analyzed in form of tree questions and research data has been analyzed with the method of one-way variance analysis, The *Independent Samples T Test* and multiple regressions.

First question: was there any significant difference between the scores of students in capability of reading Persian text according to their native language?

Table 1. The mean scores of students in reading Persian text according to their native language

Language	Number of students	mean	Standard deviation
Kurd	125	7.7	4.32
Turk	197	8.23	4.29
Persian	34	8.91	4.37
Total number of students	356	8.11	4.28

According to Table no.1 mean and standard deviation of the scores of Kurd students were 7.7 and 4.23, Turk students 8.23 and 4.29 and Persian students 8.91 and 4.37 respectively. A comparison between average scores of these three groups shows that although there is a difference among the means of the scores of groups (Kurd, Turk and Persian students) there isn’t a significant difference with significance level of 0.291 with $f=1.24$ and coefficient of 0.95.

Second question: is there any difference between the literacy of reading Persian text among boys and girls?

Table 2. The results of one way variance analysis (ANOVA) for analyzing the significance of difference among three groups

Factors	F	Df	Mean Square	Sum of Squares	Significant
Among group	45.49	2	22.74	1.24	0.291
Withingroups	6474.5	352	18.34		
Total	6520	355			

Table 3. Comparison of average scores of boys and girls in reading Persian texts

Gender	Number of students	Mean	Standard deviation	T	Significance
Boy	171	6	3.98	10.07	0.001
Girl	185	6	3.58	10.04	

As you can see in Table 3 average and standard deviation of scores of boys is 6 and 3.98 and girls is 10.04 and 3.58 respectively. A comparison between scores of boys and girls show that there is significant difference of score in reading Persian text.

Third question: Among the variables of native language, gender and personal interest, which one is a better anticipant for the literacy of reading Persian text of students. To answer above question i.e. determining the contribution of each variable in anticipating the reading literacy, the method of multi-stage regression analysis was used.

Table 4. Multiple correlation and Coefficient of Determination of variables: native language, gender and personal interest with literacy of reading Persian text with the method of repetitive entering

Model	MR multiple correlation	RS Coefficient of determination	F	Significance
1	0.46	0.21	29.8	P<0.0001

As you can see in Table no.4 according to the results of regression analysis and repetitive entering multiple variable of Coefficient of determination for native language, gender and personal interest in reading are equal to MR=0.46 and RS=0.21 and F=29.8 which is significant in $p<0.0001$. Regarding to the amount of Coefficient of determination (RS), it was found that 21 percent of reading literacy variance is explained by Predictor variables.

Table 5. Regression equation

Model	Nonstandard coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Significance
	B	SE	beta		
Constant	1.37	1.37		0.99	0.332
Language	0.042	0.32	0.007	0.142	0.887
Gender	3.28	0.45	0.38	7.15	0.001
Personal interest	1.06	0.33	0.17	3.16	0.002

According to the results of regression analysis (Table 5) you can see that among the Predictor variables, native language is not significant but gender and personal interest are respectively predictors of reading literacy significantly. Regarding that gender and personal interest are significant, their interaction was analyzed.

Table 6. Two-way analysis of variance for measurement of personal interest and gender interaction on score

The source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Gender	633.9	1	633.91	50.15	0.0001
Personal interest	828.48	16	51.7	4.09	0.0001
Personal interest*gender	690.18	9	67.68	7.17	0.0001
Total	28681.91	295			

Table 6 means that two variables of gender and personal interest have interactions. Because these two variables affect the literacy of reading individually and the effect of each individual is significance ($p=0.001$). This Table shows that female students have higher and better personal interest than the male students i.e. those who were interested in reading was from female group ($p=0.001$).

Regarding the questions of the study, we will separately talk about the findings of the research. The mean of scores of reading Persian text literacy according to native language: results showed that scores of Persian speaking students was higher than other two groups in average and Turk and Kurd was in 2nd and 3rd place respectively. Despite of the little difference between the scores of triple groups (Turk, Kurd and Persian speaking students) the results of the analysis showed that scores difference is not significance.

The results of this study are consistent with Mansoorinia [11] and Khanzadeh [10] researches. They concluded that although it is possible that the capabilities of bilinguals are different from monolinguals in preschool and elementary school but as time passes, this ability in bilingual students increase and little by little the difference disappears. The mean of scores of reading Persian text literacy regarding to the gender: the results has shown that there is a significant difference between boys and girls in reading literacy (Table 3) and the results of this research are consistent with the researches of Maccobi and Jaklin [13] and Krige *et al.* [14] quoted by Karimi [3]. They concluded that female students have higher language ability in comparison with boys and have better performance in assignment of comprehension, reading and language skills.

The role of native language, gender and personal interest in reading literacy of students: results of regression analysis showed that among the predictor variables, the only variable which is not significant was native language and other two variables, i.e. gender and personal interest is the anticipant of reading literacy respectively (Table 5). This means that girl in comparison with boys have higher scores in reading test which was significance and also those who had higher interest in reading, had higher scores too. Despite of significant effect of these three variables, but they just show 22% of total variance of reading literacy score (Table 4). This means 78% of the variance of student's average gets affected by other factors which have to be studied.

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