An Investigation into the Effect of Reader Response Approach on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Retention and Test Anxiety

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Abstract—The present study aimed to investigate the effect of the reader-response approach on EFL (English as foreign language) learners' reading comprehension, retention of vocabulary and test anxiety. To achieve this goal, out of a sample of sixty EFL learners who were selected to participate in the study 52 were assigned into two groups. During the study, a reader-response approach was used as the treatment, and the quantitative data were collected through the anxiety questionnaire, reading and vocabulary tests. MANCOVA was run to compare and determine the performance of the two groups. Based on the findings, the reader-response approach in teaching English to EFL learners, does not improve the reading comprehension and vocabulary retention of EFL learners. Furthermore, no significant differences were observed in the level of vocabulary acquisition and the reading comprehension of both groups. It was also found that the reading response approach contributed to the decrease in the experimental group's test anxiety.

Index Terms—test anxiety, reader-response approach, reading comprehension, incidental learning, short stories

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a common sense that English language learning has become really important for the people living in the 21 century. English Language includes four principal different skills of listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Among the skills, reading, according to Gu (2003), "is the most important of the four language skills for ESL/EFL learners" (p.10). Accordingly, a great attention must be paid to learning this skill. Furthermore, there are some components such as vocabulary that pave the way for learners' success in reading.

Although according to Nation, learning vocabulary helps students to listen, speak, read, or write better (2001), learning that in foreign learning (FL) has been ignored for a long time. So these days a lot of researchers, teachers and others involved in FL learning are paying special attention to EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition (Zu, 2009).

There are also some barriers and factors that deteriorate and disturb FL acquisition and reading comprehension. As Chang (2007) states, learners' emotions, feelings, and psychological conditions are considered as important issues in FL acquisition. Moreover, Krashen (1982), declared that some of the factors such as discomforting emotions and uneasy feelings such as anxiety may disturb FL acquisition. Additionally, Chang (2007), concludes that test anxiety "with its controversial role in language learning, has been extensively explored and has received considerable attention"(p.3).

So in order to tackle these problems in and to make the process of FL learning more enjoyable, the approaches and the methods used in the process of English language teaching has paid particular attention to learners' demands (Selcuk, 2009). This is why using literature is considered as a promising tool for language learning purposes. Furthermore, there are different advantages for the use of literature in EFL courses. Utilizing English literature in teaching English to EFL learners, enables students to express their emotions, feelings, and personal ideas freely in an intellectual environment (Selkuk, 2009) and this may decrease their anxiety.

In literature there are various approaches, one of the approaches to literary analysis, which was defined by Louise Rosenblatt is called reader-response approach. "reader-response is a new methodology for teaching literature; an essentially reader-based methodology that attended directly to what real readers thought of the literature they were reading"(Flood & Lapp,1988,p.62). Furthermore, "in reader response approach, learners' emotions, feelings and their individual ideas are crucial in teaching reading, and learners' reading skills and their comprehension increase with the

help of reader response approach"(Selcuk, 2009, p.3). In the same line, Marlene (2000) asserts that the advantages of using reader-based approaches to literature are, increasing the students' motivation, the students' levels of response and improving their reading ability.

Since most of the studies have in the area of reader response theory have dealt with the issue in the first language context (Farahian & Khatib, 2013), the study of the theory in the EFL context deserves more attention.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In Iran as EFL students mostly have problems with reading comprehension and vocabulary retention which is a basis for that. Furthermore based on assessing system in Iran, students are under pressure and face anxiety due to scoring system that may affect their reading comprehension, and vocabulary retention performance. Various types of studies have been concerned about the effect posed by test anxiety on individual's performance. Hill and Wigfield (1984) stated that the issue of the relationship of anxiety and performance is a complex and important one. In order to examine the relationship between test anxiety and students' performance, Cassady and Johnson (2002) conducted a study. The findings revealed that high test anxiety group performed poorer than the average and low test anxiety groups. Again, this result clearly stated that test anxiety has the debilitating effect and negatively affects students' performance.

Anxiety-provoking threats become higher when students are asked to speak in front of others. More, under the test-oriented educational system, most students may have developed test anxiety in particular when tests were constantly required. In reviewing the contradicting and inconsistent findings on test anxiety and reading anxiety of students' performance, one can see a lack of relevant evidence to situations encountered by Asian ESL/EFL learners. Because most studies focused on speaking skills, there is still a need to investigate the issue in the field of reading. Accordingly, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of reader-response approach on EFL learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary retention, and test anxiety, and the following questions are posed:

1. Does applying Reader-response approach in teaching short stories to intermediate EFL learners have a significant effect on their reading comprehension?

2. Does applying Reader-response approach in teaching short stories to intermediate EFL learners have a significant effect on their vocabulary retention?

3. Does applying Reader-response approach in teaching short stories to intermediate EFL learners have a significant effect on lowering their test anxiety?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design

The present research was a quantitative study having one independent variable and three dependent variables.

B. Participants

In this study through convenient sampling, 52 participants were selected out of 60 female EFL students at intermediate level of proficiency. Participants for this study were Iranian students studying English Language at Safir English language school, Kermanshah branch. The participants had an age range of 18 to 28 years old. All participants had passed an entrance exam to be eligible to be admitted in Safir language school.

C. Instrumentation

Four following instruments were used to serve the purpose of the research study.

1 The PET test

In order to have a homogenous level of English proficiency and reading comprehension a validated test, PET exam, retrieved from *www.oup.com*, was administered ahead of the treatment as a means of homogenizing the participants in terms of their language proficiency, PET exam, which is an Intermediate level qualification test that demonstrates the ability to communicate using English for everyday purposes was launched by the University of Cambridge Local Exam Syndicate (UCLES) in 1943. The test consists of four modules, reading, writing, listening, speaking. The reading and writing paper has eight parts and 42 questions that takes 90 minutes. The listening paper has four parts comprising 25 questions and takes 30 minutes. The Speaking paper which has four parts takes 10 minutes to administer and is conducted face-to-face, with two examiners. The speaking part in this study was done by two examiners, who have passed various courses regarding the method of interviewing students in Safir language school, central branch in Tehran. Moreover, the reading part of the PET test was also used as the pre-reading test (See Appendix A) .The overall score of the test was 100 and those whose scores were between 70 to 89 were considered as an intermediate level. So the participants whose scores were not between 70 to 89 based on PET test were excluded. Another version of PET(2005) reading module which was different in comparison to homogeneity test was used as the post-reading test (see Appendix D), with 35 questions similar to the pre-reading test , was utilized to observe any probable variations in the participant's reading comprehension after the treatment.

2 The Vocabulary Test

As the pre-experimental vocabulary test, a vocabulary test (see Appendix B), consisting of 40 words, all extracted randomly from the short stories, Gulliver's Travel by Jonathan Swift and Little Women by Louisa May Alcott, that were supposed to be read in each group during the course were prepared. Regarding the validity of the vocabulary test, since

it was teacher made test, to understand whether the vocabulary retention test was valid, it was given to three experts in the field and they were asked to check the content of the test. It was confirmed by these three experts that the test really checked the construct it intended to assess.

3 Anxiety Test

The students also received, a pre-experimental test-anxiety questionnaire to explore their anxiety. The scale was Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale (CTA) (Cassady & Johnson, 2002) (see Appendix C). According to Cassady and Johnson (2002), the Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale achieved internal consistency with coefficient correlation of .91. Based on the factor analysis, all items maintain a part-whole correlation of r=.35 or greater. The Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale had a total of 27 items. The total scores ranged from twenty seven to one hundred and eight (R=108-27). As such, higher scores indicated a higher level of cognitive anxiety among the test-takers, particularly while taking tests. If any statement was incomprehensible, the students were allowed to ask questions for clarification, and the allotted time for this test was 35 minutes. The same anxiety- questionnaire was used as the post-anxiety test after the treatment.

4 Short Stories

The short stories that were chosen to be studied as the supplementary books were Little Women by Louisa May Alcott and Galliver's Travel by Jonathan Swift for both groups. These short stories were chosen from the masterpieces of literature, and it should be stated that the major criteria for choosing the stories, were motivation, and interest they created as well as the proficiency level of the students. Moreover, the stories that were chosen were based on the learners' personal involvement in the stories.

D. Procedure

1. Sampling Procedures

As explained before, 60 female Iranian students took part in the study. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants, the researcher ran a PET test. It should be mentioned that based on the PET exam the students whose scores were between 70 to 89 were considered as intermediate level, so those whose scores were between this ranges were chosen. As such, 8 students were removed from the study. The remaining 52 participants were randomly assigned to two groups of experiment and control group of 26 students.

In both groups, the short stories, Galliver's Travel by Jonathan Swift, and Little Women by Louisa May Alcott were introduced to be read for the following sessions. The treatment for both groups lasted 7 consecutive weeks based on Safir Language Academy's schedule for classes. So, all in all, each student participated for 20 sessions in the classes, and the students had to participate in 3 classes per week. During 18 sessions they were asked to read the chapters that were assigned by the researcher for the upcoming sessions.

This study went through different procedures such as, choosing the subjects, pretest, giving the treatment, and the posttest. In this study, the researcher utilized PET (2004) to make sure about the participants' homogeneity. The test was also used to measure the participants' EFL reading comprehension. The time which was allotted for this test was120 minutes and all student who have attended the test finished just in time. To ease the process of correction by the researcher, an answer sheet was constructed for the participants to mark with pen. Before starting the test and after giving test booklets and answer sheets to students, the researcher explained the instructions in participants' native language which was Persian. After 120 minutes, the researcher recollected the booklets in order to analyze the data.

There out of 60 students, 8 students were excluded on account of their scores which were not between 70 to 89, which is the acceptable range of intermediate level based on PET, and the excluded members were not considered for data analysis. At the end of the homogeneity test there were 52 students who were included in the study. Accordingly, 26 students were randomly assigned to the control group, and 26 students to the experimental group.

Furthermore, the Pet reading comprehension test given to the participants served another purpose as the pre-reading test to consider the students' level of reading comprehension before the treatment and to compare it with the post-reading comprehension test.

As the effect of reader-response approach on students' vocabulary retention and test anxiety were the other concerns of the study. Later on, the session after homogeneity test, before introducing the treatment a pre-anxiety questionnaire was given to the students, in order to measure the participants' level of test anxiety before the treatment. The time which was allotted for the pre-anxiety test was 35 minutes. The anxiety test which was consisted of 27 items was given to the students, and the instructions regarding that were given by the teacher in Persian language which was the students' native language. Besides, the students were allowed to ask any questions owing to clarifications in the items. Participants collectively finished on time which itself suggested the sufficiency of time allotted.

After 30 minutes the participants were asked to put their pens down and put their paper on the ground and take another test which was a pre-vocabulary test. Like the pre-anxiety questionnaire all instructions were explained by the researcher in Farsi and the students were asked to write down the meanings of the words either in Farsi or English on their paper with pen or pencil, they were also informed that the synonyms or antonyms which showed that he participants had understood the meaning of the words were also possible. At the end of the test after 30 minutes which was the allotted time for the test they were asked to submit both tests and the researcher recollected them.

In both experimental and control groups, the short stories were given to the students. Galliver's Travel by Jonathan Swift, and Little Women by Louisa May Alcott were introduced to both groups to be read for the following sessions.

The treatment for both groups lasted 7 consecutive weeks based on Safir Language Academy's schedule for classes. So, all in all, each student participated for 20 sessions in the classes, and the students had to participate in 3 classes per week. During 18 sessions they were asked to read the chapters that were assigned by the researcher for the upcoming sessions. After the treatment, in the 20th session of the treatment, the students took another version of reading comprehension PET test .Moreover they were given, the same anxiety questionnaire and vocabulary test as post-tests .The aim was to consider the probable changes in their reading comprehension, vocabulary retention, and test anxiety.

Finally, by analyzing the data which has been gathered from the booklets, the researcher started testifying the research hypotheses.

2. Treatment Procedure

2.1 Procedure in the Control Group

In this group the customary method of teaching literature was perused. In pre-reading activity the students were supposed to read the chapters of the story that were assigned by the researcher, and be familiar with the background of the story as well as checking unknown vocabularies. In this group the debate started with the teacher asking the participants the summary of the first short story, Galliver's Travel by Jonathan Swift. For the first nine sessions the students worked on Galliver's Travel, and for the next 9 sessions, the students worked on Little Women by Louisa May Alcott.

Furthermore, after reading the first short story, Galliver's Travel, analysis of characters, themes, plot, and other literary aspects of this story were discussed by the students, in pairs and groups. Although, all students were involved in the debate by providing answers to some questions regarding the message of the story, theme, and so on, it was the teacher who provided the class with the final correct interpretation and explanation. The course was teacher-centered, although the students were involved in the discussions. At the end of each part of discussion, the teacher expressed the intended meaning and message lying behind every part of the story, and corrected the interpretations of the participants due to the assumption that there was only one correct interpretation of the story To put it in a nutshell, in this group the students were passive owing to the fact that they couldn't change the instructions of the teacher. Besides, they were mere recipients of the teachers' instructions. The same procedure was followed in the next 9 sessions owing to covering the short story, Little Women by Louisa May Alcott.

2.2 Procedure in the Experimental Group

In the experimental group, the treatment was mainly based on the reader-response approach in order to teach short stories, and each short story was read during nine sessions. The major component in this approach was to give the opportunity to students to express their internal thoughts and feelings, while they were dealing with the stories. This means that they were required to read the short stories through their own unique perspective. It should be mentioned that such an approach rendered the class as learner-centered, so the instructor was not at the center of attention. Moreover, she was just the conductor and controller of the discussion.

During the treatment the students were reminded that there was not just one correct interpretation to the stories, and there could be as many correct interpretations as possible. Besides, the students were encouraged to express their point of views based on supporting sentences out of the short stories by flashing back to the stories.

In this group the students were also asked to read the short stories at home based on the specific pages that were assigned by the teacher to be read during 18 sessions. Following Mitchell (1993), after reading the story the students were supposed to contemplate about the following questions:

What struck you about the story?

What kinds of things did you notice?

What would you like to talk about after reading this?

What issues did it raise for you? Were there parts that confused you?

What questions would you like to ask?

Did anything upset you or make you angry?

Is there anything you want to ask about any of the characters?

How did you feel after you read the story?

What made you feel this way? (p.4)

As the next phase of the treatment, the participants discussed the questions with their classmates, and the teacher's role was just the controller of the process. So it maximized the students' interactions in pair works and group works that made them feel relaxed during the process. At the end of the discussion, the participants were asked to express their feeling about the characters and what they would do if they were the characters. They were also asked to find the similarities between the stories and their real life, and discuss it with their partners.

IV. RESULTS

The data obtained from the above-mentioned tests, are presented in the form of separate comparative tables and charts below. These tables contain the mean and the standard deviation of scores obtained from the participants. On account of the fact that pretest or covariate may affect the groups' scores on the posttest and there were three dependent

variables (reading comprehension, vocabulary retention, and text anxiety), the researcher run MANCOVA in order to control or remove the effect of the pretest. The results of all statistical operations are presented below.

A. *Homogeneity of Participants*

Running the homogeneity test the researcher chose those participants whose scores ranged from 65 to 75. The logic behind choosing 65 to 75 was that PET regards such a range, as the intermediate level. Furthermore, those participants whose scores were not among this range were excluded from the study.

TABLE 1.
CASE PROCESSING SUMMARY FOR THE PRETESTS AND POSTTESTS IN THE GROUPS

	Cases					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Pre-reading * group	52	100.0%	0	.0%	52	100.0%
Post-reading * group	52	100.0%	0	.0%	52	100.0%
Pre-vocab * group	52	100.0%	0	.0%	52	100.0%
Post-vocab * group	52	100.0%	0	.0%	52	100.0%
Pre-anxiety * group	52	100.0%	0	.0%	52	100.0%
Post-anxiety * group	52	100.0%	0	.0%	52	100.0%

In table 1, the number of cases or participants in the groups who took part in the tests is summarized

B. *Checking the Homogeneity of Slope Regression Lines for Groups*

1. Analysis of MANCOVA

TABLE 2.
TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS

Dependent Variable: post-reading

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	518.708[a]	3	172.903	18.939	.000
Intercept	217.841	1	217.841	23.861	.000
group	15.975	1	15.975	1.750	.192
prereading	433.800	1	433.800	47.516	.000
group * prereading	10.004	1	10.004	1.096	.300
Error	438.215	48	9.129		
Total	32268.000	52			
Corrected Total	956.923	51			
a. R Squared = .542 (Adjusted R Squared = .513)					

According to the Table 4.2, the slope of the regression lines was homogeneous for all groups concerning dependent variable (post-reading) [F (1, 48) =1.096, p > 0.05].

C. *Checking the Linear Relationship between the Groups' Scores on Pretests and Posttests*

Tests of Between-subjects Effects

TABLE 3.
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: POST-VOCABULARY

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1979.829[a]	3	659.943	15.206	.000
Intercept	821.122	1	821.122	18.920	.000
Group	98.731	1	98.731	2.275	.138
Pre-vocab	1708.097	1	1708.097	39.358	.000
group * pre-vocab	93.006	1	93.006	2.143	.150
Error	2083.171	48	43.399		
Total	49316.000	52			
Corrected Total	4063.000	51			
a. R Squared = .487 (Adjusted R Squared = .455)					

As Table 3 shows, the slope of the regression lines is homogeneous for all groups concerning dependent variable (post-vocab) [F (1, 48) =2.143, p > 0.05].

D. *Tests of Between-subjects Effects*

TABLE4.
DEPENDENT VARIABLE: POST-ANXIETY

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	9032.397[a]	3	3010.799	100.264	.000
Intercept	52.427	1	52.427	1.746	.193
Group	63.682	1	63.682	2.121	.152
Pre-anxiety	8677.766	1	8677.766	288.983	.000
group * pre-anxiety	.857	1	.857	.029	.867
Error	1441.373	48	30.029		
Total	175568.000	52			
Corrected Total	10473.769	51			

a. R Squared = .862 (Adjusted R Squared = .854)

As Table 4 illustrates, the slope of the regression lines is homogeneous for all groups concerning dependent variable (post-anxiety) [F (1, 48) =0.029, p > 0.05].

E. Descriptive Statistics on the Posttests

TABLE 5.
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF GROUPS' SCORES ON THE POSTTESTS

	group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Post-reading	experimental	25.69	3.876	26
	control	23.38	4.526	26
	Total	24.54	4.332	52
Post-vocab	experimental	30.23	7.163	26
	control	28.77	10.493	26
	Total	29.50	8.926	52
Post-anxiety	experimental	54.08	14.355	26
	control	58.62	14.219	26
	Total	56.35	14.331	52

Table 5 clearly shows the groups' mean score and the standard deviation on the posttests. According to the Table, the mean scores in the experimental group were 25.69 in post-reading, 30.23 in post-vocabulary, and 54.08 in post-anxiety. Furthermore, the standard deviation scores were 3.876, 7.163, and 14.355 respectively. While mean of the control group were 23.38 in post-reading, 28.77 in post-vocabulary, and58.62 in post-anxiety. Moreover, the standard deviation scores were 4.526, 10.493, and 14.219 respectively.

F. The Results of MANCOVA

TABLE 6
BOX'S TEST OF EQUALITY OF COVARIANCE MATRICES[A]

Box's M	F	df1	df2	Sig.
5.409	.843	6	18113.208	.537

a. Design: Intercept + pre-reading + pre-vocab + pre-anxiety + group

based on this table that tests the null hypothesis which the covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal within groups. The observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups [B $_{(6, 18113.208)}$ = 5.409, p > 0.05]. So, this important requirement of running MANCOVA is fulfilled (see Table 4.15). When all the requirements of MANCOVA (the normal distribution of the data, the linear relationships between the scores of groups in the pretests and posttests, the homogeneity of the slop of regression lines for all groups, and the equality of variances across groups) were fulfilled, the researcher ran MANCOVA, the results of which are reported as follows.

TABLE7.
MULTIVARIATE TESTSB SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE IN LINEAR COMBINATION OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES BETWEEN THE GROUPS

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.243	4.813[a]	3.000	45.000	.005	-243
	Wilks' Lambda	.757	4.813[a]	3.000	45.000	.005	-243
	Hotelling's Trace	.321	4.813[a]	3.000	45.000	.005	-243
	Roy's Largest Root	.321	4.813[a]	3.000	45.000	.005	-243
Pre-reading	Pillai's Trace	.475	13.578[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.457
	Wilks' Lambda	.525	13.578[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.457
	Hotelling's Trace	.905	13.578[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.457
	Roy's Largest Root	.905	13.578[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.457
Pre-vocabulary	Pillai's Trace	.451	12.321[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.451
	Wilks' Lambda	.549	12.321[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.451
	Hotelling's Trace	.821	12.321[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.451
	Roy's Largest Root	.821	12.321[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.451
Pre-anxiety	Pillai's Trace	.867	97.905[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.867
	Wilks' Lambda	.133	97.905[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.867
	Hotelling's Trace	6.527	97.905[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.867
	Roy's Largest Root	6.527	97.905[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.867
Group	Pillai's Trace	.501	15.073[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.501
	Wilks' Lambda	.499	15.073[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.501
	Hotelling's Trace	1.005	15.073[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.501
	Roy's Largest Root	1.005	15.073[a]	3.000	45.000	.000	.501

Multivariate Tests[b]
a. Exact statistic
b. Design: Intercept + prereading + prevocab + preanxiety + group

As it can be seen in Table 7, the treatment has a crystal clear effect, which means that the the independent variable had a positive effect on the dependent variables [$F_{(3, 45)} = 15.073$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.501$].

TABLE8.
LEVENE'S TEST OF EQUALITY OF ERROR VARIANCES[A]

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
post reading	.034	1	50	.855
Postvocab	.011	1	50	.918
Postanxiety	21.114	1	50	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.
a. Design: Intercept + prereading + prevocab + preanxiety + group

Based on Table 8, the variances of groups' scores on two of the dependent variables (post-reading and post-vocab) were equal [$F_{(1, 50)} = 0.034$, $p > 0.05$] and [$F_{(1, 50)} = 0.011$, $p > 0.05$]. However, concerning the third dependent variable, that is, post-anxiety, the variances of groups' scores were not equal [$F_{(1, 50)} = 21.114$, $p < 0.001$]. Since the number of participants in the groups were equal (56 in each group), according to Pallant (2007), this inequality could be ignored.

TABLE 9.
TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS FOR THE EFFECT OF GROUP ON THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Post-reading	538.314[a]	4	134.579	15.110	.000	.563
	pos-tvocab	2062.929[b]	4	515.732	12.119	.000	.508
	postanxiety	9105.279[c]	4	2276.320	78.179	.000	.869
Intercept	postreading	76.343	1	76.343	8.571	.005	.154
	Postvocab	325.433	1	325.433	7.647	.008	.140
	postanxiety	.984	1	.984	.034	.855	.001
prereading	postreading	378.201	1	378.201	42.463	.000	.475
	Postvocab	17.258	1	17.258	.406	.527	.009
	postanxiety	4.048	1	4.048	.139	.711	.003
prevocab	postreading	29.016	1	29.016	3.258	.077	.065
	Postvocab	1473.961	1	1473.961	34.637	.000	.424
	postanxiety	73.659	1	73.659	2.530	.118	.051
preanxiety	postreading	.069	1	.069	.008	.930	.000
	Postvocab	163.346	1	163.346	3.838	.056	.076
	postanxiety	8750.730	1	8750.730	300.539	.000	.865
group	postreading	17.181	1	17.181	1.929	.171	.39
	Postvocab	21.504	1	21.504	.505	.481	.011
	postanxiety	1310.328	1	1310.328	45.002	.000	.489
Error	postreading	418.609	47	8.907			
	Postvocab	2000.071	47	42.555			
	postanxiety	1368.490	47	29.117			
Total	postreading	32268.000	52				
	Postvocab	49316.000	52				
	postanxiety	175568.000	52				
Corrected Total	postreading	956.923	51				
	Postvocab	4063.000	51				
	Postanxiety	10473.769	51				

As it is depicted, there was not a prominent difference between the performances of the groups on the post-reading [$F_{(1, 47)} = 1.929$, p> 0. 016, $\eta^{2 = 0.039}$] and post-vocab [$F_{(1, 47)} = 0.505$, p > 0. 016, $\eta^2 = 0.011$] (see Table 4.18). However, there is a significant difference between the performances of the groups on the post-anxiety [$F_{(1, 47)} = 54.002$, p < 0.001, $\eta^2 = 0.489$]. It should be noted that based on Boferroni's correction p-value should be compared as:

$$\alpha' = \frac{\alpha}{3} = \frac{0.05}{3} = 0.016$$

TABLE 10.
ESTIMATED MARGINAL MEANS

Dependent Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
postreading	experimental	25.138[a]	.598	23.935	26.340
	control	23.939[a]	.598	22.737	25.142
postvocab	experimental	30.170[a]	1.307	27.542	32.799
	Control	28.830[a]	1.307	26.201	31.458
postanxiety	Experimental	51.114[a]	1.081	48.939	53.288
	control	61.579[a]	1.081	59.404	63.753

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: prereading = 21.60, prevocab = 22.06, preanxiety = 62.33.

Based on the Table 10, the experimental group's adjusted mean scores on post-reading, post-vocabulary, and post-anxiety are 25.138, 30.170, and 51.114 respectively; while those of the control group are 23.939, 28.830, and 61.579 respectively. Since the control group's adjusted mean score (61.579) on the post-anxiety was very higher than that (51.114) of the experimental group, this implies that independent variable (reader-response approach) lowered the participants' test anxiety in the experimental group. The reason underlying this interpretation is that, higher scores indicated a higher level of cognitive anxiety among the test-takers, particularly while taking tests (Cassady & Johnson, 2002).

Addressing the First Research Question

The first question explored "whether reader response approach in teaching short stories to Iranian EFL learners' can improve their reading comprehension?" The results of the current study revealed that, there was not any significant difference between the performance of the participants in experimental and control group after the treatment. At the result, reader-response approach did not make the reading comprehension ability of the Iranian EFL students better. Furthermore, this approach did not impair the reading comprehension ability of these learners.

G. Addressing the Second Research Question

The second question was related to whether reader response approach in teaching short stories to Iranian EFL learners' can improve their vocabulary retention. To answer this question, the preset author tested two groups of participants, namely experimental and controlled groups. Based on the results of the current study, it could be concluded that the vocabulary retention of the students who read short stories by utilizing reader-response approach did not improve in comparison to those who read short stories with traditional method. To put it in a nutshell, reader-response approach did not improve the Iranian EFL learners' vocabulary retention.

H. Addressing the Third Research Question

The third question sought the effect of reader response approach on lowering EFL learners' test anxiety. Based on the results of the current study, since the control group's adjusted mean score (61.579) on the post-anxiety was very higher than that (51.114) of the experimental group, this implied that independent variable (reader-response approach) lowered the participants' test anxiety in the experimental group. The reason underlying this interpretation was the nature of scoring the answers given to the items of the questionnaire. That is, getting higher score was the indicative of higher test anxiety.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings which have various advantages for language teachers. Based on the major findings, a reader response approach can be introduced into EFL classroom practices in order to improve EFL learners' involvement in the text, and by doing so enhance their reading comprehension. In addition, the following pedagogical implications are proposed:

Most studies showed that the students with higher level of test anxiety seem to perform lower in comparison to those students with lower anxiety level. As an example, Young (1991) expressed that test anxiety negatively affects students' English proficiency and learning abilities. At the result, it is crucial to make a less threatening and less-anxiety-provoking environment for EFL learners. In fact by applying reader-response approach into the materials which are supposed to be covered by EFL learners.

Vocabulary knowledge is a key fact to reading comprehension and student success. As for EFL learners' vocabulary improvement, a reader response approach was applied, no significant effect was observed. So as vocabulary learning is really important, by applying reader-response approach various methods of teaching vocabulary must be accompanied to make the process of learning vocabulary easier to EFL students.

The first suggestion to researchers is to repeat this study in various courses with EFL learners of various proficiency levels. One can also consider introducing different literally genres. In this way the practicality of reader- response method in teaching various genres of literature can be considered and studied.

Another suggestion to researchers would be to increase the allocated time and number of sessions to achieve optimal result. In this way the students are given the opportunity to become more familiar with reader-response approach and play a more active part in it.

As a suggestion considering the differences between the reactions and responses of male and female students and the level of interest and adaptation to reader-response theory can be beneficial.

For further study, researchers could use advanced reading courses, on account of the fact that various levels can bring about different results.

This study was conducted in Iran with limited number of participants. However, the study would generalizable if conducted in other context with different participants. It would be interesting to seek the effect of the approach in a different sociolinguistic setting applying the same text, and the same approach, so as to explore the results of the applicability and feasibility of the study in different contexts.

In this study, short story genre was applied. However, it would be worthwhile to apply other literary genres such as poetry, novel, and drama to investigate whether those genres are applicable and feasible in the EFL/ESL classroom.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it seems that there is a strong and positive relationship between EFL learners' test anxiety, and reader-response approach. Also, it can be concluded that reader-response approach can lower the EFL learners test anxiety .So it is unquestionable that literature is of great importance in EFL learning since the benefits it serves are numerous as it is a multi-dimensional means to create a safe ground for language learning and teaching. As a finding in the present study, the Iranian EFL students using reader-response approach can indeed give aesthetic response to English short stories without sacrificing the comprehension of the story. To put it in other words, the Reader-response Approach does not impair the reading comprehension ability of the Iranian EFL students. It seems that to improve EFL learners' reading comprehension more reading comprehension practice through the new theory is needed. Perhaps, small group reading using reader response approach as well as individual reading strengthens EFL learners' reading comprehension.

Another issue explored in this study was that whether there was any difference between the amount of vocabulary acquisition in the students who read short students in control group with traditional method and those who read short story in experimental group with reader-response approach. At the result, based on the statistical procedures, the

application of reader-response approach did not lead to improvement of vocabulary retention in the students. The possible explanation for such a result may be the fact that more time is needed for EFL learners to learn and retain new vocabulary items.

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