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# The Role of Sensory Emotions in Increasing Willingness to Read in EFL Learners

El papel de las emociones sensoriales en el aumento de la voluntad de leer en los aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera

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## Abstract

It seems that one of the factors contributing to language learners' interest in reading comprehension texts is the sensory emotions they may have for reading topics. In this study, the association between language learners' sensory emotions towards some topics and their willingness to read (WTR) about them was examined. To do so, 201 intermediate and upper-intermediate English as a foreign language (EFL) learners were asked to complete a newly-designed scale measuring their sensory emotions, frequency of exposure, and WTR regarding 18 topics from various fields. Structural equation modeling (SEM) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to analyze the data. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 participants regarding their emotions and WTR towards topics. The results showed that the higher the level of sensory emotions towards a topic, the higher the WTR. In the end, the findings were discussed in the context of language education and implications were provided.

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Keywords: sensory emotions; willingness to read; text; topic; EFL learners

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## Resumen

Parece que uno de los factores que contribuyen al interés de los estudiantes de idiomas en los textos de comprensión de lectura son las emociones sensoriales que pueden tener para leer temas. En este estudio, se examina la asociación entre las emociones sensoriales de los estudiantes de idiomas hacia algunos temas y su disposición a leer (WTR) sobre ellos. Para ello, se ha solicitado a 201 estudiantes de inglés intermedio y de nivel intermedio superior (EFL) que completen una escala recientemente diseñada que mide sus emociones sensoriales, la frecuencia de exposición y el WTR en relación con 18 temas de diversos campos. Se emplean modelos de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM) y análisis de varianza (ANOVA) para analizar los datos. Además, se han realizado entrevistas semiestructuradas con 21 participantes con respecto a sus emociones y WTR hacia temas. Los resultados han mostrado que cuanto más alto es el nivel de las emociones sensoriales hacia un tema, más alto es el WTR. Al final, los hallazgos se han discutido en el contexto de la educación lingüística y se han proporcionado implicaciones.

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Palabras clave: emociones sensoriales; disposición a leer; texto; tema; estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera

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## Introduction

Since reading is crucial for both academic achievement and general life skills (McGeown, 2013), it is of special importance among the four main language skills. In fact, in most English as a foreign language (EFL) situations, the ability to read in a foreign language is all that students ever want to acquire (Richards & Renandya, 2002). In order to be involved in reading, it seems that learners are first required to be willing to read a text, and therefore, to develop a willingness to read (WTR). In this regard, Brown (2001) accentuates the role of love in reading which can lead to reading skill achievements. Moreover, learners are more motivated to read when they are allowed to exercise their choices in reading texts (Cox, Guthrie, Metsala, & Wigfield, 2000; Dornyei, 2003; Gambrell, 2011). Thus, selection of texts is of great importance in producing such interest in learners. Nuttall (as cited in Berardo, 2006) listed three criteria for selecting a text for reading *readability* (amount of new vocabulary and grammatical

structures), *exploitability* (how a text can improve learners' reading competence), and *suitability of content* (material that is interesting and satisfies learners' needs).

It is believed learners' emotional engagement makes learning easier and more comprehensible (e.g. Kwon, Kupzyk, & Benton, 2018; Pietarinen, Soini, & Pyhalto, 2014). Moreover, emotions play a determining role in the foreign language learning process (Imai, 2010; Lopez, 2011). The major purpose of this study is to introduce sensory emotions as a new criterion to select reading texts. Emotions which are evoked by senses are termed *emotioncy* in the literature. In the following sections, a brief account of the background of the study is provided.

## Theoretical Framework

### Willingness to Read (WTR)

The construct of willingness to communicate (WTC) was first introduced by McCroskey and Baer (1985), who defined it as the intention to begin communication once free choice is given. According to MacIntyre (2007), when people are given the opportunities to communicate, some choose to express themselves and some remain silent. WTC has been extended to the field of second language (L2) as well. It indicates the psychological readiness to communicate in the L2 when there is an opportunity to do so. Willingness to read (WTR), a construct closely related to WTC, is an intrinsic desire or will to read based on several reasons including involvement, curiosity, gaining knowledge, etc. (Gambrell, 2011). In spite of the myriad of research on L2 WTC, not many of them have addressed learners' WTR in L2.

WTR is specifically important because much of our learning process occurs through reading. Studies have shown that students who are motivated to read would read more (Cox et al., 2000). In this regard, Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks and Perencevich (2004) assert that learners who read for enjoyment are more motivated to read than those whose sole purpose is education. Moomaw (2013) states that unmotivated students are disengaged from reading, and as a result, their reading comprehension lowers. He also believes that willingness to read increases the amount of reading, and the amount of reading in turn increases reading comprehension. Overall, in order for learners to become lifelong learners, they are required to be deeply engaged in reading (Johnson & Blair, 2003).

### Emotioncy

In 1997, Greenspan presented the functional emotional theory which is an amalgamation of the two notions of function and emotion. Since learning a language is a meaningful function and aim for children, they are highly motivated to learn it. He claimed that affective symbols are the most basic language we use through the learning process. This process contains language evolution from affective transformation to further transformations namely participating in social interactions, getting involved in communication, understating others' intentions and creating meaningful symbols. In essence, there is a gradual movement from the pre-symbolic stage to language. Once the child gains the ability to develop symbols, it is time to create meaningful concepts of language.

Grounded in Greenspan’s model of first language acquisition, Pishghadam, Adamson and Shayesteh (2013) proposed an emotion-oriented approach toward language learning called Emotion-Based Language Instruction (EBLI). They claimed that individuals’ reactions toward an entity are a result of idiosyncratic emotions they hold for that entity. In light of EBLI, Pishghadam, Adamson et al. (2013) suggest that emotionalizing language improves L2 learning, saying that “throughout first language acquisition, word (semantic aspect of language) and world (pragmatic aspect of language) are acquired simultaneously” (p. 9). In contrast, when learning an L2, individuals already hold the world but lack the related word. Therefore, students learn the words which already exist in their first language. Once they make an emotional connection with the word, they can link a stronger and deeper meaning in an L2. However, if learners have little or no emotional connection with the word, the learning procedure would turn into a difficult process.

Under the title of EBLI, Pishghadam, Tabatabaeyan et al. (2013) coined the term *emotioncy* claiming that every individual holds a particular degree of emotion toward each entity in a language. Based on this perspective, each entity carries a degree of emotion for individuals, which is referred to as emotioncy (emotion + frequency). Individuals’ emotioncy depends on whether they have heard about, seen, touched, or experienced that entity and also the level of frequency of exposure to that concept. Table 1 recapitulates the different kinds of emotioncy in a hierarchical order.

Table 1  
*Emotioncy types*

Kind	Experience
Null emotioncy	When an individual has not heard about, seen, or experienced an object or a concept.
Auditory emotioncy	When an individual has merely heard about a word/concept.
Visual emotioncy	When an individual has both heard about and seen the item.
Kinesthetic emotioncy	When an individual has heard about, seen, and touched the real object.
Inner emotioncy	When an individual has directly experienced the word/concept.
Arch emotioncy	When an individual has deeply done research to get additional information.

*Note.* Adapted from “Conceptualizing Sensory Relativism in Light of Emotioncy: A Movement beyond Linguistic Relativism,” by Pishghadam, Jajarmi and Shayesteh (2016)

Emotioncy levels can range from *Avolvement* (Null emotioncy), to *Exvolvement* (Auditory, Visual, and Kinesthetic emotioncies) and *Involvement* (Inner and Arch emotioncies). Thereby, a special level of emotion can be generated based on the information that each individual receives through their different senses. Figure 1 illustrates the different levels of emotioncy.

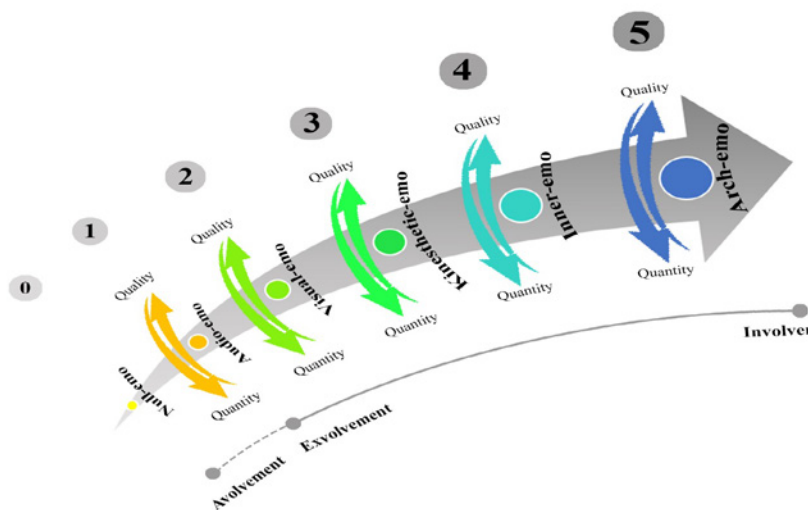


Figure 1. Emotioncy levels. Adapted from “Emotioncy in Language Education: From Exvolvedment to Involvement” by Pishghadam (2015)

It is assumed that learning takes place when a learner moves from exvolvedment to involvement. In other words, involved learners appear to comprehend the item thoroughly as a result of engagement; therefore, they talk more and use a wider range of vocabulary. In contrast, exvolved learners show rote learning strategies; consequently, they talk less and have a limited range of vocabulary. In fact, learners with higher levels of emotioncy are more involved in learning in general (Pishghadam et al., 2016). In this respect, Pishghadam and Shayesteh (2016) believe emotional engagement makes learning meaningful which in turn can facilitate this process. Between the words *banana* and *chopstick*, for instance, an African child learns *banana* faster and easier because s/he has touched, smelled, and tasted it. However, this process is not the same for *chopstick* since s/he may have only heard about or seen it. Therefore, according to Pishghadam, Adamson et al. (2013), the lexical emotional level students hold to different vocabularies can influence their learning considerably.

## Purpose of the Study

There have been few studies regarding WTR (e.g., Gambrell, 2011; McGeown, 2013; Wigfield et al., 2004). Moreover, the literature seems void of studies concerning WTR in EFL contexts, in which reading texts is one of the few opportunities for exposure to the new language. At the same time emotioncy, as a newly-developed concept, has not been much scrutinized. Considering the emotional engagement of learners towards reading topics, no study has examined the possible relationship between emotioncy and WTR. In light of the theoretical background presented above, the study addresses the following questions:

1. Does the newly-designed scale measuring emotioncy and WTR enjoy psychometric properties?
2. Is there any significant relationship between levels of emotioncy and WTR in EFL learners?
3. Are there any significant differences among frequency of exposure and emotion scores with respect to emotioncy levels in EFL learners?
4. How do EFL learners feel about the topic of their own selected reading texts?

## Methodology

### Phase 1

#### Participants and Setting

The study took place in Mashhad, a city in northeastern Iran. The participants comprised 201 EFL learners at different private language institutes with different university majors including 44.8% engineering, 17.1% basic science, 12.2% humanity, 11.0% medicine and biology, 5.0% management, 4.4% accounting, 3.3% law, 2.2% physical education. However, 10% was missing. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling including both males (36.8%) and females (63.2%) whose age ranged from 18 to 59 years. Their final score in their previous term in the language institute they had studied ranged from 63 to 100. The distribution of their levels of proficiency involved 63.7% intermediate and 36.3% upper intermediate. The participants willingly took part in this study and they were ensured that their responses would remain anonymous.

#### Instrumentation

To collect the required information, a scale consisting of 18 topics was given to the participants. The topics comprised Easter, acupuncture, laptop, autism, pilates, fast food, economical rent, electric guitar, Telegram, Borsch soup, war, valentine's day, money laundering, caviar, holy shrine of Imam Reza (a sacred, religious figure whose shrine is located in the city where the study took place), lipomatic, stock market, and tax. The topics were so selected in order to range from avolvement to exvolvement and involvement. Each topic of the questionnaire measured four components including an emotioncy scale to rate participants' familiarity with the topic, participants' emotion toward the topic based on the emotioncy scale, participants' frequency of exposure with the topic based on the emotioncy scale, and participants' WTR the topic. Regarding emotioncy, the 6 Likert-scale points were as follows: not familiar (0 point); heard (1 point), heard and seen (2 points); heard, seen, and touched (3 points); heard, seen, touched, and used (4 points); and heard, seen, touched, used, and researched deeply on (5 points). The 5 Likert-scale points on the emotion scale were: very bad (1 point), bad (2 points), neutral (3 points), good (4 points), and very good (5 points). With respect to the frequency of exposure, the 5 Likert-scale points were: not much (1 point), little (2 points), somewhat (3 points), much (4 points), and a great deal (5 points). Concerning WTR, the 5 Likert-scale points were: not much (1 point), little (2 points), somewhat (3 points), much (4 points), and a great deal (5 points). The scale

was designed in Persian, the participants' mother tongue, so as not to have any comprehension problems.

### Procedure

The scale was distributed to learners at different private language institutes (see Appendix A for sample item). The instructions were thoroughly explained to them. It took about 10 minutes for each participant to respond.

The data were entered into SPSS version 22.0. The reliability of the scale was verified by Cronbach's Alpha, which was .86. To examine the validity of the scale, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used. Next, Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient was run to find the relationships between each emotion score and its subsequent WTR. A model was proposed and validated through SEM to examine the role of emotion levels as predictors of WTR. In order to investigate whether there is any significant difference among three groups of avolvement, exvolvement, and involvement, a one-way ANOVA was performed. Further, ANOVA for the frequency of exposure and for emotion was performed to have a better view of the differences among each group.

## Phase 2

### Participants and Setting

Twenty one participants were selected based on purposive sampling and were interviewed. All the interviewees were entirely willing to participate. The language learners were all studying English at different language institutes in Mashhad. They included 18 females and three males. Their overall mean age was 25 ranging from 16 to 31 years. Based on the class they had registered in, their proficiency levels were intermediate to upper intermediate. All the learners were university students as well, studying different majors.

### Instrumentation

An interview guide was prepared to boost the flexibility and systematization of the qualitative phase of the study (Dornyei, 2007). Thereby, three questions were designed regarding the participants' topics of interest to read (see Appendix B). The researchers added complementary questions in the course of the interview.

### Procedure

To collect the required data, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted in Persian (participants' mother tongue). In the semi-structured interview, there is a set of pre-prepared guiding questions, but the format is open-ended and the interviewee is encouraged to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner by being directed and guided (Dornyei, 2007). The interviewees were assured of the confidential nature of this study and were told that with their consent, their voices would be fully recorded for later transcription and analysis. Overall, the recorded interviews were about 145 minutes. The interviews were transcribed. Then selections were made from the transcripts and translated into English.

# Results

## Phase 1

### Validity and Reliability of the Scale

To validate the scale, its two main components, i.e. emotioncy and WTR were considered separately. In order to examine the validity of the emotioncy subscale, CFA was used. To check the model fit, the goodness of fit indices were used. The model with all factor loadings can be seen in Figure 2.

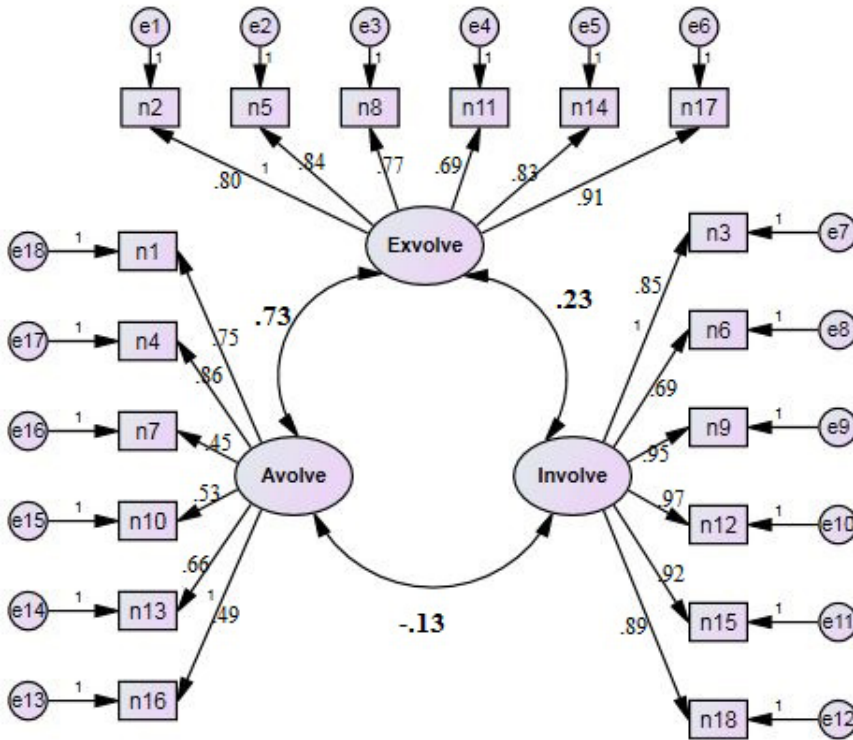


Figure 2. Results of CFA for the relationships among the three groups in terms of emotioncy

The goodness of fit indices can be seen in Table 2. In this study, relative chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were used. To have a fit model,  $\chi^2/df$  should be less than 3, GFI and TLI should be above .90, and RMSEA should be less than .08. As Table 2 shows, all the fit indices are within the acceptable range. Therefore, the subscale enjoys validity.



Table 2

Goodness of fit indices for emotioncy

	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
<b>Acceptable fit</b>			<3	>.90	>.90	<.08
<b>Model</b>	30.290	13	2.330	.969	1.00	.063

Moreover, to examine the reliability of the emotioncy subscale, Cronbach's alpha was used. The reliability coefficient was .86 for this subscale. In addition, involvement, involvement, and avolvement factors had Cronbach's alphas of .80, .85 and .73, respectively, which shows the subscale enjoys high reliability.

In order to examine the validity of the WTR subscale, CFA was used. To check the model fit, the goodness of fit indices were used. The model with all factor loadings can be seen in Figure 3.

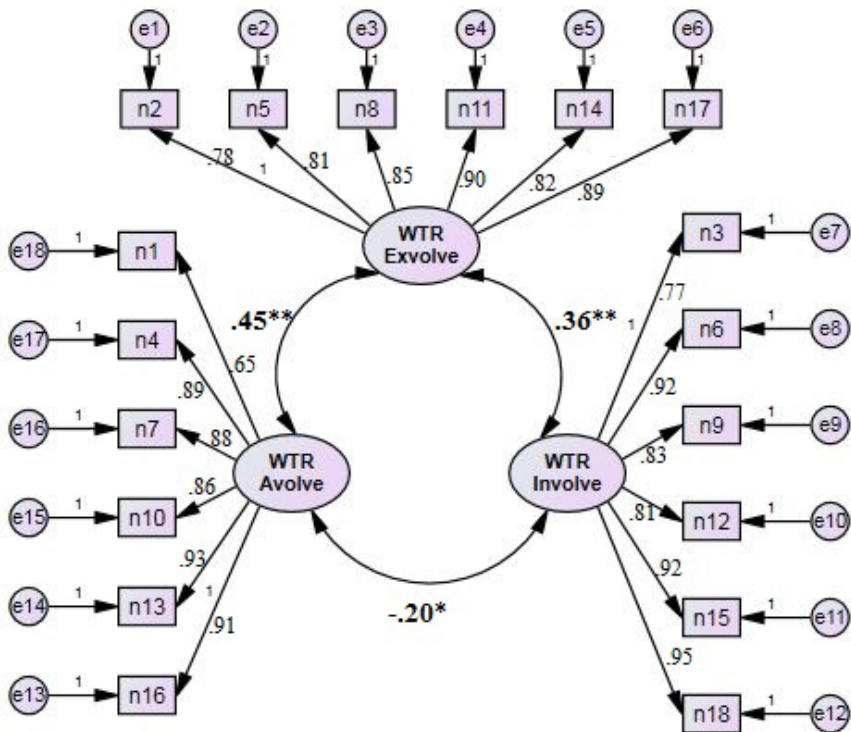


Figure 3. Results of CFA for the relationships among the three groups in terms of WTR

In this study,  $\chi^2/df$ , GFI, CFI, and RMSEA were used. To have a fit model,  $\chi^2/df$  should be less than 3, GFI and TLI should be above .90, and RMSEA should be less than .08. As Table 3 shows, all the fit indices are within the acceptable range. Therefore, the subscale enjoys validity.

Table 3

Goodness of fit indices for WTR

	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
<b>Acceptable fit</b>			<3	>.90	>.90	<.08
<b>Model</b>	13.523	5	2.704	.91	.92	.078

To evaluate the reliability of the WTR subscale, Cronbach’s alpha was used. The reliability coefficient was .77 for this scale. Also, exvolved, involved and avolved factors had Cronbach’s alphas of .86, .92 and .89, respectively, which shows the high reliability of the subscale.

Figure 4 indicates the placement of each topic in each emotioncy level. According to this figure, avolved topics comprised Easter, autism, economical rent, borsch soup, money laundering, and lipomatic; exvolved topics included acupuncture, pilates, electric guitar, war, caviar, and stock market; and finally involved topics covered laptop, fast food, Telegram, valentine’s day, holy shrine of Imam Reza, and tax.

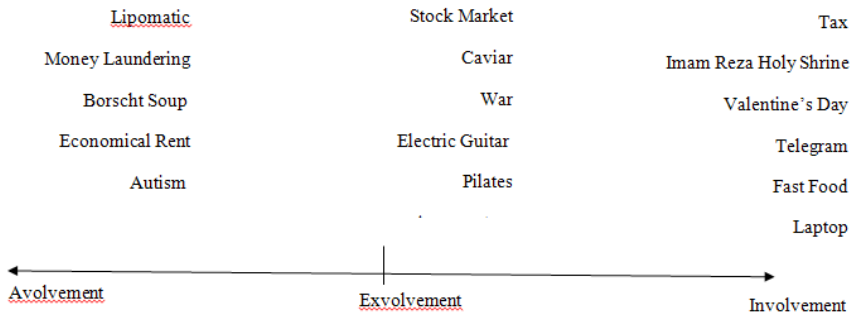


Figure 4. Placement of each topic in each emotioncy level

Relations between Emotioncy Levels and WTR

In order to examine the relation between emotioncy and WTR, Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient formula was employed. The relation between each emotioncy level and its WTR was examined. Results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Correlations between emotioncy levels and WTR

	Involvement	Exvolved	Avolved
Total- WTR	.51**.	.13*	.06

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As Table 4 indicates, there was a positively significant relationship between involvement and WTR ( $r = .51, p < .05$ ). Also, there was a significantly positive correlation between exvolvement and WTR ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ). However, no significant relationship was found between avolvement and WTR ( $r = .06, p > .05$ ).

In order to examine the role of emotioncy levels as predictors of WTR, a model was proposed and tested. Based on this model, emotioncy levels predict WTR among EFL learners. The overall proposed model can be seen in Figure 5.

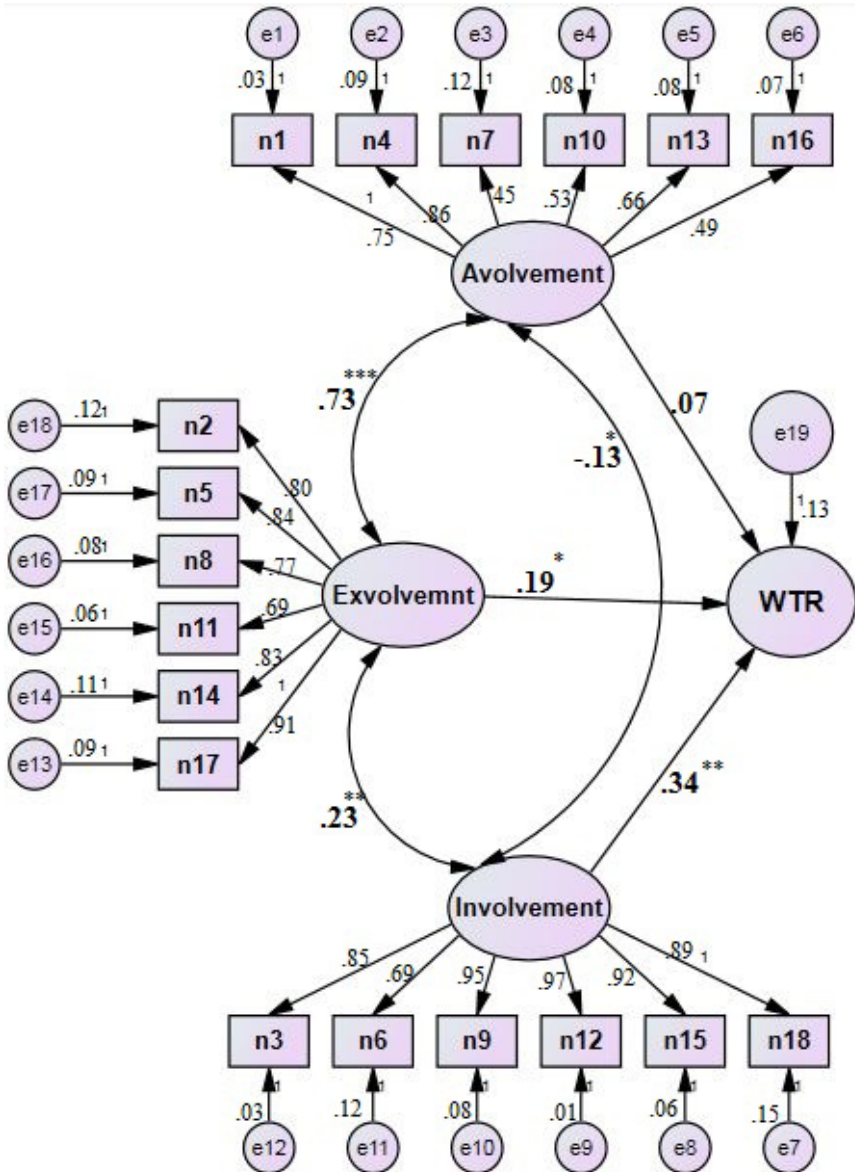


Figure 5. Emotioncy levels as predictors of WTR among EFL learners

The goodness of fit indices were all acceptable (see Table 5). As can be seen in Figure 5, involvement is a positive predictor of WTR ( $\beta = .19, p < .05$ ), and in the same way, involvement is a positive predictor of WTR ( $\beta = .34, p < .05$ ). However, involvement is not a significant predictor of WTR ( $\beta = .07, p > .05$ ).

Table 5

*Goodness of fit indices for emotioncy levels*

	$\chi^2$	<u>df</u>	$\chi^2/\underline{df}$	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
<b>Acceptable fit</b>			<3	>.90	>.90	<.08
<b>Model</b>	6.612	3	2.204	.971	.995	.067

In order to examine whether there is any significant difference among the three emotioncy levels in terms of WTR, frequency, and emotion, one-way ANOVA was run. The obtained results are presented below (Table 6):

Table 6

*Results of One-Way ANOVA*

		Sum of Squares	<u>df</u>	Mean Square	F	Sig.
WTR	Between Groups	1458.428	2	729.214	29.635	.000
	Within Groups	14763.751	600	24.606		
	Total	16222.179	602			
Frequency	Between Groups	14380.262	2	7190.131	812.762	.000
	Within Groups	5307.920	600	8.847		
	Total	19688.182	602			
Emotion	Between Groups	15675.386	2	7837.693	845.277	.000
	Within Groups	5563.403	600	9.272		
	Total	21238.789	602			

As Table 6 indicates, the results of the one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference in WTR among Avolvement, Exvolvement, and Involvement:  $F(2,600) = 29.635, p = .\leq 0.05$ . Furthermore, the effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .08. Since Cohen (as cited in Pallant, 2013) categorizes the effect size .01 as a small effect, .06 as a medium effect and .14 as a large effect, the obtained value would be considered a medium effect size.

Additionally, according to Table 6, the results of the one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference in frequency of exposure among the three levels:  $F(2,600) = 812.762, p = .\leq 0.05$ . The effect size was .73 which in Cohen's (as cited in Pallant, 2013) terms would be considered a large effect size.

Regarding emotions, as can be seen in Table 6, the results of the one-way ANOVA illustrated a significant difference among the three groups:  $F(2,600) = 845.277, p = .\leq 0.05$ . The effect size was .73 which according to Cohen (as cited in Pallant, 2013) would be considered a large effect size.

To reduce the chances of Type I error, the Scheffe's post hoc test was used to show the place of the differences among the three groups in terms of WTR. The results are presented below (Table 7).

Table 7

*Scheffe's test for the differences of WTR among the three groups*

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<u>Avolvement</u>	<u>Exvolvement</u>	-.06965	.49481	.989	-1.2322	1.0929
	<u>Involvement</u>	-3.33333*	.49481	.000	-4.4959	-2.1708
<u>Exvolvement</u>	<u>Avolvement</u>	.06965	.49481	.989	-1.0929	1.2322
	<u>Involvement</u>	-3.26368*	.49481	.000	-4.4263	-2.1011
<u>Involvement</u>	<u>Avolvement</u>	3.33333*	.49481	.000	2.1708	4.4959
	<u>Exvolvement</u>	3.26368*	.49481	.000	2.1011	4.4263

As for WTR, post hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for Involvement (M = 20.278, SD = 4.798) was significantly different from Exvolvement (M = 17.014, SD = 4.886). Likewise, the mean score for Involvement was significantly different from Avolvement (M = 16.945, SD = 5.188). However, the mean scores for Exvolvement and Avolvement did not differ significantly (To summarize: Involvement > Exvolvement > Avolvement).

Since equal variances were found for the two groups, the Tukey post hoc test was used for both frequency and emotion. The results are presented below (Table 8).

Table 8

*Tukey's HSD test for the differences of frequency and emotion among the three groups*

	(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Frequency	<u>Avolvement</u>	<u>Exvolvement</u>	-.06965	.49481	.989	-1.2322	1.0929
		<u>Involvement</u>	-3.33333*	.49481	.000	-4.4959	-2.1708
	<u>Exvolvement</u>	<u>Avolvement</u>	.06965	.49481	.989	-1.0929	1.2322
		<u>Involvement</u>	-3.26368*	.49481	.000	-4.4263	-2.1011
	<u>Involvement</u>	<u>Avolvement</u>	3.33333*	.49481	.000	2.1708	4.4959
		<u>Exvolvement</u>	3.26368*	.49481	.000	2.1011	4.4263
Emotion	<u>Avolvement</u>	<u>Exvolvement</u>	-3.14428*	.29669	.000	-3.8414	-2.4472
		<u>Involvement</u>	-11.56716*	.29669	.000	-12.2643	-10.8701
	<u>Exvolvement</u>	<u>Avolvement</u>	3.14428*	.29669	.000	2.4472	3.8414
		<u>Involvement</u>	-8.42289*	.29669	.000	-9.1200	-7.7258
	<u>Involvement</u>	<u>Avolvement</u>	11.56716*	.29669	.000	10.8701	12.2643
		<u>Exvolvement</u>	8.42289*	.29669	.000	7.7258	9.1200

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As for frequency of exposure, post hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for Involvement ( $M = 21.1940$ ,  $SD = 3.58011$ ) was significantly different from Exvolvement ( $M = 12.7711$ ,  $SD = 3.19802$ ). In the same way, the mean score for Involvement was significantly different from Avolvement ( $M = 9.6269$ ,  $SD = 1.86951$ ). Also, the mean score for Exvolvement was significantly different from Avolvement (To summarize: Involvement > Exvolvement > Avolvement).

Concerning emotions, post hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for Involvement ( $M = 23.6368$ ,  $SD = 4.10274$ ) was significantly different from Exvolvement ( $M = 18.8856$ ,  $SD = 2.73164$ ). Similarly, the mean score for Involvement was significantly different from Avolvement ( $M = 11.2587$ ,  $SD = 1.87690$ ). Moreover, the mean score for Exvolvement was significantly different from Avolvement (To summarize: Involvement > Exvolvement > Avolvement).

## Phase 2

### The Interviews

The results of the interviews are presented in the following and each part is devoted to one interview question.

*What are the three topics you are willing to read about in English classes in the order of their priorities? Why?*

This question sets to achieve two goals. First, the most favorable topics for the learner, and second the type of topics in terms of emotioncy the learners are more willing to read (see Table 9).

The findings indicate that learners are more willing to read when it comes to their personal needs, especially, when they are involved, that is, they have either experienced or done research on the topics. Consequently, not many of them mentioned that they are willing to read a text in which they are exolved. To be exact, from the 63 listed topics, 37 and 26 of them were in the involvement and exvolvement levels, respectively. Interestingly, being involved in a topic was the priority for most of the interviewees (15 out of 21). *I would like to read texts in English about social issues since I have already searched about this topic, but a little mentioned one of the interviewees. I am willing to read about cultures of different countries, said one interviewee, because I have only heard about them.*

When asked the reason for choosing those topics, many of them said that it was so because they were *involved in those topics and therefore need them*. For many of the interviewees the reasons for choosing the topics is due to the fact that when they have already gained the knowledge about the topic in their mother tongue, they are more willing to read about them in English with respect to reading comprehension. Some believed it is simply due to their *interests in the topics*. Some other assumed that although they are exolved in the chosen topics, they *are related to their lives and thus are willing to know more about them*.

Table 9

Frequently mentioned topics in terms of WTR extracted from the interviews

Topic	Percentage	Emotioncy type	Percentage
<b>Major/job</b>	17.45%	Involvement	14.28%
		Exvovement	3.17%
<b>Sociology/psychology</b>	11.10%	Involvement	7.93%
		Exvovement	3.17%
<b>Music/art</b>	9.51%	Involvement	7.93%
		Exvovement	1.58%
<b>Cultures</b>	9.51%	Involvement	1.58%
		Exvovement	7.93%
<b>Life/lifestyle</b>	7.93%	Involvement	3.17%
<b>Sport</b>	7.92%	Exvovement	4.76%
		Involvement	6.34%
<b>Technology</b>	6.34%	Exvovement	1.58%
		Involvement	4.76%
<b>History</b>	4.76%	Exvovement	1.58%
		Involvement	4.76%
<b>Nature/environment</b>	4.76%	Exvovement	0%
		Involvement	4.76%
<b>Others</b>	20.62%	Exvovement	0%
		Involvement	7.93%
		Exvovement	12.69%

*Are you willing to reading the topics with which you are not familiar? Why?*

As a response to this question, from the 21 interviewees, 17 of them said yes. That is to say; they were willing to read unfamiliar topics about which they had not heard. In short, the majority showed willingness in the topics in which they were avolved. Three of them said *it depends on the topic*; that is, they *would continue reading the texts if only they find it interesting enough or if the topic is of their need*. Interestingly, from all the interviewees, only one of them said no to the question. She explicitly mentioned: *I am not willing to read about such topics. I would rather read ones with which I am familiar and have some background information.*

When asked why they were willing to read the texts in which they were avolved, their responses were almost the same: *I would like to read new texts in order to gain knowledge, it is fascinating as well as exiting to read about topics that are entirely new, and I am willing to read novel texts to improve their English proficiency, specifically reading skills.*

*What are the topics you are not willing to read at all in English classes? Why?*

Responses to this question varied to some degree. Nevertheless, from the 24 mentioned topics, political (33.33%), religious (16.66%), and technical (16.66%) topics were frequently brought up (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Frequently mentioned topics in terms of unwillingness to read extracted from the interviews*

Topics	Percentage	Reasons
Politics	33.33%	Personal view, dullness, difficult vocabulary, <u>exvolved</u>
Religion	16.66%	
Science	16.66%	
Others	33.33%	

The reasons for not choosing these topics included *they are dull and not interesting, they contain difficult vocabulary, therefore are difficult to comprehend, they are personal issues and thus different from person to person, and I have only heard or seen them*. The latter is related to being exvolved.

## Discussion

The first aim of this study was to design and validate a scale to evaluate learners' emotioncy levels and WTR regarding specific topics based on the definitions of the constructs which exist in the literature. In order to answer the first research question, the scale was validated through CFA. Moreover, the reliability of the scale was examined through Cronbach's alpha showing that the scale enjoyed high reliability.

Regarding the second question, a model was proposed and evaluated through SEM. The results showed a significant association between the levels of emotioncy and WTR. Among the three levels of emotioncy (avovement, exvolved, and involvement), two of them, i.e. involvement and exvolved, had a positive correlation with WTR, while one, i.e. avovement, had no statistically significant relationship with WTR. This implies that topics with which learners have higher emotioncy, that is, inner and arch, can possibly lead to greater amount of motivation to read. In addition, learners who are exvolved in topics, meaning that they have audio, visual, and kinesthetic emotioncies towards those topics, they are less willing to read about them; however, they are more willing to read in comparison to avolved individuals. These findings are in line with those of previous studies (e.g., McIntyre, 1994; Pishghadam, 2016). With respect to emotioncy, the findings demonstrated that the higher the level of emotioncy, the more probable the learner is willing to read in a second/foreign language. Also, the findings are to some degree in line with Wigfield and Guthrie's (1997) study, which indicated that students who are engaged in reading generally tend to be more willing to read than those who are not.

In answer to the third research question results have shown that frequency of exposure to a topic can lead to higher levels of emotioncy. It can be interpreted that learners would become more involved when they read more often. Thus, frequency of exposure is suggested to be more emphasized by teachers in a way to increase learners' emotioncy, and emotioncy in turn can aid to increase learners' WTR. Moreover, it seems that learners have better and more positive emotions for the topics in which they are involved, in comparison to the topics in which they are exvolved. Correspondingly, they show no emotion for the topics which they do not know what



they are; i.e. involvement (Pishghadam & Shayesteh, 2016). The findings suggest that learners may become more highly motivated to read when they have better emotions for a topic. Therefore, it is indicated that teachers are required to choose the topics for which learners have more positive emotions. These findings may be in line with those of Pishghadam (2016) in that they both call for more awareness of learners' emotions toward a topic in the EFL classroom.

The purpose of the qualitative phase of the study (the fourth research question) was to investigate the conception of learners' WTR and their feelings toward their selected texts to be read in EFL. The interviewees were asked to name three topics as the most desirable ones to be read in English class. As it was expected, almost all of them chose topics which to some extent represented their own job or field of study, being the topics in which they were involved in; and they had either experienced or done research on. Being involved in a topic was the priority for most of the interviewees. Evidently, learners are more willing to read when it fulfills their personal needs.

In another question, the interviewees were asked if they were willing to read texts with which they were not familiar. Nearly all of them were willing to read topics in which they were involved. It can be related to Piaget's theory of equilibration, in which human beings are willing to know more (De Ribaupierre, 2001). Therefore, the construct of new knowledge happens in a resolution of disequilibrium between the known and the unknown (Piaget, 1960). This finding is in contradiction with what was found in the quantitative phase of the study, which revealed no significant relationship between involvement and WTR. However, the difference is that in the quantitative phase, the topics were pinpointed by the researchers, but in the qualitative phase, no topic was mentioned. Thus, it can be inferred that when learners are given a list of topics which they are involved in, they will not be willing to read about them; but when they can select their own topics, they are actually willing to read topics which they are unfamiliar with. This claim is reinforced by some studies (e.g. Johnson & Blair, 2003; Ülper, 2011) in that students would become more motivated to read and read more often if they were allowed to choose the topics of their own interest.

In order to realize which topics are among the least desired ones, the interviewees were asked to name topics which they were not willing to read in EFL classes, which were political and religious ones. The reason for such choices was because the interviewees believed in the personal nature of these topics. These topics are considered controversial, especially in the context where the study took place. Therefore, they are even avoided by teachers in class and are regarded as *avoided* topics (Pishghadam, Mahmoodzadeh, Naji, & Shayesteh, 2019). Furthermore, technical concepts were among the least desired topics for many of the interviewees. This is partly because of the difficult vocabulary used in such texts, and partly because they are dull. Correspondingly, Gambrell (2011) argues that texts that are too difficult will make the reader give up. One possible justification for difficulty in reading can be attributed to an emotioncy gap (Pishghadam, 2016). Likewise, Pishghadam and Adamson et al. (2013) believe that if learners have little or no emotional connection with the word, the learning procedure will turn into a difficult process.

This study has a number of implications. The first group of implications lies in applying the scales developed. The scales can be used as teacher evaluation instruments in different educational settings. That is, teachers can evaluate their learners' emotioncy levels toward various topics and check their WTR concerning those topics. Other implications are based on the results of the study. The findings of this study benefit the teachers to have more sophisticated and obvious criteria for selecting reading texts

for learners. They are also recommended to consider learners' emotional differences toward different reading topics. Additionally, the outcomes of this study invite learners to be aware of their own emotions toward particular topics. Therefore, they may be able to choose the topics for reading that best suit their needs and interests, and consequently improve their reading competence. Moreover, material designers can benefit from the findings of this study through taking learners' needs into account when designing reading material. Finally, the results of this study provide teacher educators with well-designed principles so that they can guide teachers to choose the most desirable reading topics in class. This study hopes to serve as one of the preliminary steps toward giving learners a richer sense of reading competence along with pleasure.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Sample item of the scale

<b>1. Easter</b>	<b>I don't know what it is</b>	<b>I've heard about it</b>	<b>I've seen it</b>	<b>I've had contact with those who celebrate it</b>	<b>I've celebrated it</b>	<b>I've done research about it</b>
<b>My emotion towards it</b>	Very bad Bad Neutral Good Very good	Very bad Bad Neutral Good Very good	Very bad Bad Neutral Good Very good	Very bad Bad Neutral Good Very good	Very bad Bad Neutral Good Very good	<b>Very bad</b> Bad Neutral Good Very good
<b>Frequency of exposure towards it</b>	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	<b>Not much</b> Little Somewhat Much A great deal
<b>My willingness to read about it in English in the classroom</b>	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	Not much Little Somewhat Much A great deal	<b>Not much</b> Little Somewhat Much A great deal

### Appendix B: Interview questions

1. What are the three topics you are willing to read about in English classes in the order of their priorities? Why?
2. Are you willing to reading the topics with which you are not familiar? Why?
3. What are the topics you are not willing to read at all in English classes? Why?