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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ANXIETY IN RECOGNIZING AND READING CHINESE
CHARACTERS ALOUD IN BEGINNING-LEVEL CHINESE
LANGUAGE COURSES AMONG AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT STUDENTS

by
YAFENG KUANG

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of English
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon
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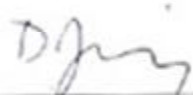
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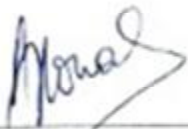
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Yafeng Kuang for Master of Arts

Major: English Language (Linguistics)

Title: Anxiety in Recognizing and Reading Chinese Characters Aloud in Beginning-Level Chinese Language Courses among American University of Beirut Students

Anxiety has been well recognized as one of the factors affecting success in the second language acquisition/ or foreign language learning by a number of researchers. The aim of this study is to explore the anxiety in recognizing and reading Chinese characters at the beginning level among American University of Beirut students in Lebanon. Very few foreign language anxiety studies have been conducted in the context of learning Chinese, and even fewer studies highlight the foreign student's anxiety in learning Chinese, especially in learning Chinese characters in a non-Chinese linguistic landscape. Furthermore, studies related to the language skills, including reading, listening and writing have not attracted attention until recently.

Chinese language reading anxiety is a construct that is relevant to, but distinct from, other foreign language anxiety constructs, especially that Chinese is a tonal language, and the tone information plays a significant role in identifying and recognizing Chinese speech. Beginners who learn Chinese do not start with writing characters, but start with Pinyin, a pronunciation system (or another writing system) that represents Chinese words in Latin letters combining consonants and vowels with tone markers. Moreover, Chinese is a logographic language. At the beginning level, Chinese learners are also required to learn some language skills of recognizing and reading characters. People have difficulty in relating Pinyin to the characters. Chinese characters are highly important since they are used more widely and frequently than Pinyin, both in practical writing and reading. This rather complex situation could cause anxiety among beginning learners of Chinese.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the anxiety in learning Chinese in a non-Chinese context, specifically in Lebanon, and in a non-English-dominating environment. It explores the existence and causes of

language learning anxiety with the aid of the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The target participants in the study are the students who completed beginning Chinese course(s) at AUB.

To investigate the issues which are possibly relevant to the recognizing and reading anxiety, three major questions will be discussed in the study: First, do the students at AUB studying Chinese as a foreign language at beginning level perceive the learning of characters as the most difficult part of the course? Second, does the process of recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud become a major source of provoking students' anxiety in the learning process? Third, how does the process of recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud correlate with certain variables, such as the learner's gender, knowledge of other languages, Chinese courses taken, the purpose for learning Chinese, and the Chinese writing system?

To collect data regarding the above questions, 125 students were invited to participate in an online survey which was conducted at AUB in the spring semester of 2014, and 55 of them completed it. After that, the data was analyzed through SPSS.

CHINESE TRANSLATION OF THE ABSTRACT

(中文摘要)

名称: 贝鲁特美国大学中文初级班学生识别和朗读汉语过程中的焦虑研究

对于很多研究者来说,焦虑是影响学习者的二语习得和外语学习效果的一个重要因素。本文旨在研究黎巴嫩贝鲁特美国大学中文初级班学生识别和阅读汉字文句过程中的焦虑情况。虽然有关语言焦虑的研究有很多,然而,以外国学生(汉语非母语的学生)学习汉语为研究对象的不多,研究外国学生在其本土环境中学习汉语时的焦虑研究也少,探讨外国学生在完全无汉语学习环境中朗读汉语中产生的焦虑的研究更是少之又少。

汉语朗读焦虑虽然与其他语言的焦虑研究既有相通之处,又有其独特之妙,例如,汉语是一种带声调的语言,声调的变化在汉语识别中具有非常重要的意义。虽然汉字在日常生活和实际工作中其实使用的更为广泛和频繁,例如,写作和阅读。然而,外国学生学习汉语时,通常不是先学习汉字,而是先学习拼音。拼音是一种学习汉语时需要用到的一种发音系统(或者说是一种书写方式)。这种系统将拉丁字母以声母和韵母的形式结合起来、同时又附上不同声调的拼写方式。而且,汉语也是一种表意文字。在初级阶段的汉语学习过程中,学习者需要学习一些便于识别和阅读汉字文句的技能和技巧的同时,他们也会发现如何将汉字的拼音和汉字的外形联系起来识别还是一个学习难点,而这个难点也正是造成汉语学习者产生焦虑的一个原因。

本文旨在《外语阅读焦虑评定表》和《课堂内外语阅读焦虑评定表》的启发下,通过研究黎巴嫩贝鲁特美国大学汉语初级班学生在非汉语环境中识别和阅读汉字语句产生焦虑的现象,揭示这种焦虑产生的相关因素及主要原因。

为了达到上述目的,本文将围绕三个重点问题开展研究和讨论:一、把学习汉语当作外语学习的贝鲁特美国大学汉语初级班的学生是否认为汉字学习是汉语学习过程中最难的部分?二、识别和阅读汉字语句的过程是否是学生在学习汉语过程中引起阅读焦虑的一个主要原因?三、识别和阅读汉字语句的过程是否与其它因素,如学生的性别、已学语言的知识背景、汉语学习的课程级别、学习汉语的动机和汉字的书写方式有关?

为了寻找上述问题的答案,本文在“外语朗读焦虑测量表”(FLRAS)和“外语课堂朗读测量表”(FLCAS)的基础上,将和以上三个问题密切相关的因素集中起来组成了一份问卷。这份问卷采取网络调查的方式,2014年春季学期开始时实施并于学期末结束。一共有125名贝鲁特美国大学汉语初级班的学生参加了调查问卷,其中55名学生答完了所有问题。此外,本次研究中的部分数据利用了统计分析软件(SPSS)进行分析和研究。

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Research Background

The concept of “anxiety” is itself multi-faceted and psychologists have differentiated between different types, namely, trait anxiety, state anxiety, achievement anxiety, and facilitative-debilitative anxiety. For decades, foreign language anxiety (FLA) has interested scholars and language teacher, and has been known to be one of the major factors interfering with foreign language learning (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986). Many early articles on language anxiety focused on the nature of FLA as contrasted with, or related to, other anxiety types and the effects of FLA, while later studies put much more attention on sources of FLA and its variation in different social and cultural settings, the relationship between FLA and other learning factors and anxieties in response to specific aspects of language learning skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing (Oh, 1990; Aida, 1994; Phillips, 1992; Young, 1986, Cheng, Horwitz and Schallert, 1999; Saito, Horwitz, and Garza, 1999; Vogely, 1998). More recently, some research discovered that learners or students may experience different levels of anxiety in reading and speaking in the process of learning a foreign or second language (Saito et al., 1999; Shi and Liu, 2006, Liu, and Samimy, , 2012). However, foreign language anxiety in reading Chinese in a non-Chinese language landscape has rarely been studied. Anxiety affects foreign language learning, because it raises the affective filter that prevents learners from

comprehending when the affective filter is lifted, the acquirer may understand what he hears and reads (Krashen, 1985). As for reading, Krashen (1985) claimed that, writing competence comes only from large amounts of self-motivated reading for pleasure and/or interest, however, it is reading that gives the writer the 'feel' for the look and texture of good writing(p.19).Another scholar, Garbe (1986) argued that: there are a number of arguments for stating that reading is a (or perhaps *the*) critical skill needed by second language students for academic success... extensive reading provides the means for developing... a "Critical Mass of Knowledge" of the English language and world-background knowledge(p. 35).

According to Bernhardt (1991), reading is considered as an individual activity that happens within a person's brain, and reading does not require the interaction that speaking does. In other words, reading is an active meaning constructing process from a socio-cognitive perspective by which readers played an important role in reading comprehension. In 2005, Bernhardt added that, both first language literacy and second language knowledge accounted for the variance massively (around 50%) in reading performance but were insufficient to explain the variances in reading performance. She thus concluded that the anxiety had been neglected from the previous reading models, which might explain some of the variances in reading performance.

Coady (1979) and Grabe (1991) found that, when language learners read, their background knowledge and language knowledge (such as word recognition skills, grammar knowledge, and discourse structure) interacted with texts and thus were considered to be the major factors that affect L2 reading performance.

Undoubtedly, earlier research has explored more aspects on reading anxiety in learning a foreign language: Oh (1992) perceived that anxiety levels as assessed by the Cognitive Interference Questionnaire (Sarason, 1978) differed by reading assessment task and speculated that task familiarity, text difficulty, and/or students' perceptions of task validity influenced anxiety levels. Aida (1994) examined Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study by analyzing foreign students' anxiety in learning Japanese and found four factors of FLCAS, namely, Speech Anxiety (SA), Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE), Fear of Failing (FF), Comfortableness in Speaking with Native Speakers, and Negative Attitudes towards Target Language Class. To know whether FLA differ from level to level, Saito and Samimy (1996) studied FLA in three levels of Japanese learning and claimed that the advanced students had the highest anxiety levels, and the intermediate students the lowest. Saito, et al. (1999), by hypothesizing the existence of L2 reading anxiety (FLRA), proposed that for English-speakers experienced reading anxiety in foreign languages, French, Russian and Japanese, due to the writing systems and unfamiliar cultural material. Seller (2000) reported that students learning Spanish as their foreign language also experienced anxiety in reading and reading anxiety had an influence on reading strategies use and passage content recall. Yamashita (2004) found that students' anxiety in reading L2 was higher than that in reading L1. Shi and Liu (2006) argued that foreign language reading anxiety had a negative correlation with scores of both reading comprehension and general language proficiency among English learners in China.

Shariati and Bordbar (2009) argue that reading is a more individual act. Wu

(2011) conducted a study to exam the reading anxiety of the students who took English as foreign language in Taiwan Province and found that students with higher levels of FLA tend to have proportionately higher levels of FLRA. Zhao (2009) and Zhao et al. (2013) examined the FLRA level of English-speaking university students learning Chinese as a FL in an American university and concluded that FLRA was related to course level and experience of travel to China but not with gender. However, both of Zhao's studies have only been done in a unilingual context and it spans the four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing Chinese, focusing on anxiety levels in reading Chinese and the possible variables rather than the features of Chinese language.

Currently, Chinese, or standard Chinese (Mandarin) to be exact, is taught around the world. The learners have different cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds. On the one hand, Chinese is a tonal language. Beginners who learn Chinese do not start with the writing system, but start with Pinyin, a pronunciation system representing Chinese words in Latin letters (combining consonants and vowels with tone markers) is essential to learn the language. On the other hand, Chinese is a logographic language, Chinese characters play more important roles in practice since they are used more widely and frequently than Pinyin in China, both in practical writing and reading, in daily life, the work place, study, social communications, and so on. Furthermore, in different countries and regions, Chinese characters are written in different styles: simplified or traditional. Most countries and /or places choose one of them to teach. However, the reading anxiety of learners of Chinese as a foreign

language has seldom been discussed /or studied, let alone the FLRA in a non-Chinese linguistic landscape.

Context of the Research

Before discussing the present research, it is worth giving a general introduction of linguistic background of the context of the research, Lebanon and the American University of Beirut.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, western missionaries came to Lebanon. English was introduced and used widely. At the end of World War I, Lebanon was controlled and governed by France. French was taught and used with English as major foreign languages until 1943, the year of Lebanese independence. Meanwhile, more and more Lebanese people were exposed to these two languages and cultures since a number of schools were established by western and Lebanese religious communities and missionaries (Shaaban and Ghaith, 1999). After 1943, Arabic became the only official language in Lebanon. However, in 1946, English was taught as one of the required languages in secondary schools (the other one is French). Consequently, the Lebanese government acknowledged the importance of both English and French in official curriculums for public schools, in other words, these major languages were adopted as media of instruction in the Lebanese educational system (Shaaban and Ghaith, 1996). In the following years, English and French were spread fast as they played different dominant roles in Lebanon due to many reasons, e.g. economic power of English-speaking countries and France. According to Shaaban and Ghaith

(1999), the country walked towards multilingualism in society as well as in education since Arabic was struggling with two foreign languages, namely, English and French, in many fields, e.g. cultural-linguistic conflicts. Ghaleb and Joseph (2000) found that most Lebanese students today belong to one of the two dominant types of schools, either “English-medium” or “French-medium.” Shaaban and Ghaith (2003) revealed that, in their research on students’ perceptions of the utility of Arabic, English, and French in Lebanese universities, language-medium background or first foreign language studied at school influences the linguistic attitudes of the students towards these three languages.

The American University of Beirut (AUB) is located in Lebanon. It is a Middle States Accredited Institution offering an American style education with English as the medium of instruction. Most of the students come from Lebanon, some of them from the Middle East countries, although the number of the nationalities amounts to around 70 countries.

In the context of collaboration between AUB and the Chinese government, Chinese courses at AUB were initiated in September of 2007. Up to now, three-level courses have been taught: Chinese 201, an beginning Chinese course designed for the students who learn Chinese from scratch; Chinese 202, a course designed for those who have already completed Chinese 201 and continue learning Chinese for the second semester; and Chinese 203, is a course for the students who take Chinese for the third semester and for those slightly advanced in the language. Both Chinese 201 and 202 are offered every semester, while Chinese 203 is offered annually. Currently,

the Chinese course is an elective course. The students of each section meet three times per week for 50 minutes each time. In each section, the capacity is 20. In Chinese 201, most of the time, the instruction language is English; in Chinese 202, one third of the courses is taught in Chinese, and two-thirds is taught in Chinese; in Chinese 203, one third is taught in English, two thirds is taught in Chinese. After classes, students do not have the opportunity to practice and use Chinese in real situations. All of the students are full-time undergraduates who come from diverse programs at AUB. Many of them know more than two languages, including their mother language(s).

The writer of thesis is the second Chinese language instructor who works for this program at AUB after the first professor returned to China in August of 2008. Since September of 2008, I have worked as a full-time language instructor in Chinese (Mandarin) at AUB. As the sole Chinese language instructor of the university, I teach both Chinese 201 and Chinese 202 every semester. These courses include listening, speaking, writing and translating, as well as getting to know Chinese culture. All of them are taught integrally. The characters that the classes are required to know and read in the regular classes are simplified. In each level, except for hundreds of words, both in Pinyin and their English meanings, there are certain characters they need to know. In Chinese 201, the students are required to recognizing around 120 characters, 100 of them should be memorized. In Chinese 202, the class is expected to recognize around 300 Chinese characters, 180 of them need to be memorized. In regular classes, the students use learning material written in Pinyin, characters, and English meanings. In Lebanon, every year, the total number of Chinese people, including those who

come to work in Lebanon temporarily and the Lebanese Chinese, is 300 or so. Across the country, there are no places for speaking /or practicing Chinese for local students. In other words, Lebanese students do not benefit from Chinese linguistic environmental exposure.

Statement of Research Questions

In the present research, the writer intends to focus on one particular skill, reading, with its particularities in Chinese, since to read and recognize meaning is different than reading aloud. The author of the thesis also intends to examine the possible existence of causal links between language reading anxiety and factors related to the particular language situation in Lebanon. Conclusions from this thesis have the potential for wide dissemination including offering suggestions for a global community of Chinese language instructors to refine their pedagogies in different language settings.

To investigate the issues which are assumed relevant to the recognizing and reading anxiety, three major questions are explored in the study:

First, do the students at AUB studying Chinese as a foreign language at the beginner level perceive the learning of characters as the most difficult part of the course? Second, does the process of recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud become a major source of provoking the AUB students' anxiety in the learning process?

Third, for AUB students of Chinese, how does the anxiety of recognizing and

reading Chinese characters aloud correlate with certain variables, such as the student's gender, knowledge of other languages, purpose(s) of learning Chinese, levels of Chinese course, the Chinese writing system, and amount of exposure to Chinese outside of the classroom in Lebanon?

Significance of the Research

For decades, L2 researchers and theorists have long been aware that anxiety is often related to language learning, and anxiety is studied as a critical aspect of foreign language learning in many languages, including Japanese and Chinese (Saito and Samimy, 1996; Hussein, 2005; Zhao, 2009; Tsai et al. 2012; Al-Shboul et al. 2013; Zhao et al, 2013), and the impact of FLA has been studied with respect to the reading domain (Saito and Samimy, 1996; Saito, Horwitz and Garza, 1999; Zhao, 2009; Wei and Butsakorn, 2012; Qian, 2012; Tsai and Li, 2012; Ahmad, Nordin and Rahman, 2013; Zhao, Ying and Dynia, 2013), however, in general, the FLA and FLRA among Chinese language learners have rarely been studied, especially in a school or university outside of China, despite the fact that Chinese is becoming more popular with foreign learners in recent years. Therefore, differing from the previous studies, this research shows significance from the following perspectives:

Firstly, it expands the knowledge base related to foreign language reading anxiety by analyzing Chinese as the target with Chinese as a free elective course rather than a major course or a required course at the university level. Furthermore, it puts focus on all of the possible causes of reading anxiety which affects students'

reading anxiety in the Chinese course(s) most significantly in a non-Chinese linguistic environment

Secondly, the research is conducted at the American University of Beirut in which an American-style education is adopted, and in Lebanon, a more complex linguistic setting, a bilingual and/ or multilingual country, without opportunities of practicing and using Chinese off campus in daily life.

Thirdly, unlike many previous studies in which scholars themselves did not teach the language courses of all levels and know all of the participants well, the writer of this thesis is the instructor who has been responsible for teaching all of the Chinese courses using the same teaching materials, teaching methods and requirements for the students every semester, and knows the participants of this research well. Thus, this study may show more practical pedagogical implications which are based on the theories on anxiety and teaching.

Last but not least, this study also contributes to further research on foreign language reading anxiety performance by exploring the possible correlation between reading anxiety and reading performance in Chinese courses in a bilingual and/ or multilingual environment.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language anxiety was a popular topic of research in the 1970-90s. Many articles dealing with this topic were published. Over the decade, it was discovered that there are different types of language anxiety, such as speaking anxiety, reading anxiety and listening anxiety. Research on reading anxiety flourished in the 1980-90s and the most reliable articles on this subject are from that period. For this reason, many of the articles mentioned in this study are from that period of time.

In the present study, three major questions are related to foreign language learning anxiety and foreign language reading anxiety, difficulties in learning Chinese as a second language, and the possible relations between learners' reading anxiety and some casual variables. Accordingly, this chapter puts the emphasis on these topics and thus it is divided into three sections: the first section highlights the learners' anxiety and reading anxiety in a foreign language learning process; the second section gives the brief introduction to Chinese language (Mandarin) and the features of the language in the learning process for learners of other languages; and the third section discusses the reading anxiety and the possible variables.

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Prior to discussing the language anxiety, it is good to know the concept of "anxiety." As suggested by Horwitz (2010), "the concept of anxiety is itself

multi-faceted” (p. 154). This term has been given definitions in different ways: for some psychologists, they view anxiety as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object, e.g. Higerd, Atkinson (Scovel, 1978). And according to Spielberger (1976), he argued that the anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry that are associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system and the “heightened activity of the autonomic nervous system that accompanies these feelings” (p.5). For behavior science scholars like Wolman (1989), anxiety is a feeling of one's own weakness and inability to cope with real or imaginary threats.

The literature on anxiety generally distinguishes three types of anxiety: trait, situation-specific, and state anxiety (Spielberger, 1966, 1983; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989, 1991a). For example, according to Spielberger (1983), trait anxiety refers to a general tendency to become nervous in a wide range of situations, people with trait anxiety are anxious about many things under many circumstances; state anxiety is the feeling of worry or stress that takes place at a particular moment under a particular circumstance; and situation-specific anxiety is similar to trait anxiety in that it is stable over time, but it may not be consistent across situations; rather, it is subject to change from situation to situation. Public speaking anxiety is an example of situation-specific anxiety.

From 1980s to 1990s, it was widely recognized and accepted by a great number of scholars that there was certain relations between anxiety and foreign language learning (FLA). Therefore it has been frequently and extensively employed to

conducta second or foreign language research. Gardner(1985) claimed that not all forms of anxiety would influence learning a second language and hypothesized that “a construct of anxiety which is not general but instead is specific to the language acquisition context is related to second language achievement” (p. 34). MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) found that, in language learning process, anxious students learned a list of vocabulary at a slower rate than less anxious students and had more difficulty in the reproduction of previously learned vocabulary items. They (1991a) suggested that, among the three types of anxiety, state anxiety, trait anxiety and situational anxiety, FLA is related to foreign language situation and it should be viewed as a situation-specific anxiety unique to foreign language learning independent of other types of anxieties. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) confirmed that FLA as “the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning” (p. 284). MacIntyre (1999) added that “we can define language anxiety as the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (p. 27).

Likewise, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) defined that FLA is specifically related to the foreign language classroom situation, simply transferred from other types of anxieties such as trait anxiety, but rather “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128).

According to Horwitz and Young (1991), it is very possible to conceptualize FLA as a transfer of other types of anxiety (that is, trait anxiety, test anxiety, or public speaking

anxiety) in the language learning context, and as a situation-specific anxiety.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) came up with that FLA is the feeling of uneasiness, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced by non-native speakers when learning or using a second or foreign language. These feelings may stem from any second language context whether associated with the productive skills of speaking and writing, or the receptive skills of reading and listening.

Meanwhile, with the development of the studies on FLA, a good number of language teachers and other researchers have expressed interests in examining the relationship between learners' anxiety in learning a foreign language and their learning achievements but reached different results: some found negative relationships between anxiety and language achievement, some studies found positive relationship, others found mixed relationships. For instance, Chastain (1975) invited participants who took French, German and Spanish courses at beginning level to conduct a research, which was based on exploring the effect of test anxiety on participants' final grades. His data showed that the test anxiety was positively related to German and Spanish, but negatively correlated with French.

Scovel (1978) reviewed these early studies concerning subjects' anxiety and their learning performance and explained that the conflicting findings of the studies were caused by the fact that researchers adopted various constructs and measures of anxiety. After this, some researchers have proposed a different conceptualization, and clarified the definition of FLA and made it differ from general anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986, 1995, 1996, 2000; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991b, 1993b, 1995; Sparks,

Ganschow and Javorsky, 2000).

From then on, among the scholars, most of them have reached a general conclusion that FLA interferes with the learner's learning process and has negative impacts on his or her language performance or achievement (Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al., 1986, 2009, 2010; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991b, 1994; Young, 1991; Sellers, 2000; Sparks and Ganschow, 2000, 2007; Saito, 1999, 2010; and Zhao, 2009, 2013). Take Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study as a particular example, they proposed that anxious learners may not recall material learned before and compared to learners who are less anxious, may be less active in class.

Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) and the Measuring Scales

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) wrote, many people claim to have fear about learning a foreign language, although these same people may be good learners in other situations, and pointed out that this is probably because foreign language learning is different from learning other things such as mathematics or science. According to them, FLA arises from the uniqueness of the language learning process. In the process of learning a foreign language, learners are trained to speak, listen, read and write in the foreign language. Therefore, anxieties should be identified through and associated with the four specific skills. This also can be seen from Yao et al.'s (2005) study, with regard to a learner's foreign language performance or achievement, his or her language skills consist of four aspects: skills of reading,

listening, speaking and writing that usually appear in the L2 and/ or FL curriculum (2005). However, the concept of foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA), the anxiety which learners experience in reading a foreign language, was first proposed by Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999).

To exam what effects of anxiety are in the learning process of a second or foreign language, Tobias (1979, 1986) hypothesized that, a learner's learning process can be divided into three stages, namely, Input, Processing and Output, and a learner's anxietyinterference with the three stages of cognitive processing. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989; 1994) developed three anxiety scales (i.e., the inputanxiety scale, the processing anxiety scale, and the output anxiety scale) specificallyaddressing anxieties related to three stages of cognitive processing and designed a seriesof experiments to examine the hypothesis proposed by Tobias. They found that anxietyinterfered with all three stages of cognitive processing, and that anxiety had the strongestimpacts on processing and output.

In order to measure the FLA, a numberof specific instruments of second/foreign language anxiety have been developed. Among them, two scales have been well-recognized and widely employed. In this thesis, the writer would like put focus on them.

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was designed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) on the base of their conceptualization of FLA. In this scale, it includes 33 Likert-scale items that assess a learner's level offoreign language anxiety, as evidenced by subjective feelings, perceptions, negativeattitudes

towards foreign language classes, and avoidance behaviors. Since the introduction of measures specific to foreign language anxiety and introduced to measure it in a number of instructional contexts with varying target languages, researchers have found a consistent moderate negative correlation between FLA and foreign language achievement whether it is in high schools, small colleges or large major universities, whether the target language is Spanish, French, Japanese or any other languages, whether language learners are freshmen or graduate students (Horwitz, 2001). Studies have also found that learners of all proficiency levels, namely, beginner, intermediate, and advanced, experience foreign language anxiety to a certain degree (Liu, 2006). For instance, Aida (1994) noticed that a moderate negative correlation exists between anxiety and course grades, and the students with high level scored lower than those who had low anxiety. Saito (1996) found a similar significant negative correlation between anxiety scores and final grades among American students learning Japanese.

To measure learners' reading anxiety in learning a foreign language, and test whether this anxiety is correlated with students' learning performance, Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) developed a Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS). In this theory, they made the total score for all of the designed questions range from 20 to 100. To test how this scale works, the designers invited 383 students, who was taking French, Russian and Japanese at beginning level, to do the respond to the questions in this theory. As a result, they found that FLRA was distinguishable from general foreign language anxiety. Their findings also indicated that students' levels of general foreign language anxiety were not significantly different for the three different

target languages (French, Russian, Japanese), but levels of reading anxiety were significantly different for students of the three target languages examined in their study. Students of Japanese had the highest levels of reading anxiety, followed by students of French, while Russian students had the lowest level of reading anxiety. They also suggested that reading anxiety was caused by unfamiliar scripts and lack of necessary cultural background knowledge in the target language.

Since then, this scale has been adopted widely in the studies regarding reading anxiety in learning a foreign language.

Sources of Foreign Language Anxiety

Due to its prevalence and negative effects on language learning, most language teachers are interested in the causes or sources of foreign language anxiety so that they can help alleviate their students' anxiety. A large number of sources or causes of foreign language anxiety have been identified in the literature.

For example, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) considered foreign language anxiety as resulting from learners' difficulties presenting themselves authentically in the new language. Sparks and Ganschow and their colleagues claimed that a poor language learning ability is the only reason for foreign language anxiety (Sparks and Ganschow, 1993a, 1993b). MacIntyre and Gardner (1993) proposed that language anxiety stemmed from repeated negative experiences associated with the foreign language. Based on a close review of the literature at the time, Young (1991) proposed six potential sources of language anxiety: (1) personal and interpersonal

anxieties, (2) learner beliefs about language learning, (3) instructor beliefs about language teaching, (4) instructor-learner interactions, (5) classroom procedures, and (6) language testing. Young (1994, 1999) categorized sources of foreign language anxiety into those stemming from the learner, the teacher, and the instructional practice.

Classroom Environment

To a large degree, learners' foreign language anxiety is associated with foreign language classrooms. The two major measures of foreign language anxiety, i.e., Gardner's (1985) French Classroom Anxiety Scale and Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales (FLCAS), are based on learners' experience in the classroom setting.

The teacher and the instructional practices identified by Young (1991) can be subsumed under the classroom environment. In addition, the other students (including their behaviors and the learner's relationship with them) can also be considered contributing factors to the classroom environment. The following sections will explore the classroom environment as a source of foreign language anxiety from three perspectives, i.e., the role of the teacher, classroom practices and relationships among the students in the classroom.

The language instructor has been found to play an important role in students' anxiety levels in a foreign language class. For example, Allemand and Aida (1994) were particularly interested in the effect of the instructor on anxiety levels. In their study, one instructor was judged to be "authoritarian" whereas the other was viewed as

“facilitative”. Students from the “authoritarian” teacher’s class commented on their experiences of high stress and anxiety; meanwhile, students from the “facilitative” teacher’s class were reported to be more comfortable and less anxious.

Based on the results of interviews with anxious students, Price (1991) also reported that the teacher “had played a significant role in the amount of anxiety each student had experienced in particular classes” (p.106). Price also pointed out that those teachers who criticized students’ accents or high school instructors who walked around the classroom with a yardstick and flung it on the desk of anyone who was not listening were thought to increase students’ anxiety. Those instructors who made class time a performance rather than a learning time were also reported to be anxiety-provoking. On the other hand, those teachers who encouraged mistakes in class and asked the students to discuss the importance of making mistakes in language learning were thought to alleviate anxiety.

Samimy (1994) considered a judgmental teaching attitude as anxiety-provoking. Aida (1994) saw a harsh manner of teaching as leading to anxiety in foreign language classrooms. Young (1994) also viewed “the instructor’s harsh manner of correcting student errors” as causing anxiety. Similarly, Palacios (1998) found several teacher characteristics to be associated with anxiety. These characteristics included absence of teacher support, an unsympathetic personality, lack of time for personal attention, favoritism, a sense that the class did not provide students with the tools necessary to match the teacher’s expectations, and the sense of being judged by the teacher or the desire to impress the teacher. On the other hand,

students were less anxious in classes where teachers were supportive, patient, humorous, understanding of a student's lack of knowledge, had a desire to help the students achieve success, and cared about students.

The instructor's beliefs about language teaching are a further source of language anxiety mentioned in the literature. According to Young (1994), instructors' beliefs that could cause anxiety among students include the following: 1) some intimidation of students is necessary; 2) the instructor's role is to correct students constantly; 3) the instructor cannot have students working in pairs because the class may get out of control; 4) that the instructor should be doing most of the talking and teaching; and 5) the instructor is a drill sergeant (Young, 1994, p.31).

Such beliefs about language teaching are likely to be manifested in the teacher's manner and instructional practices in language classes, which, in turn, can lead to students' feelings of anxiety.

In addition to teacher characteristics, a number of classroom practices are associated with anxiety. In Palacios' (1998) study, several classroom practices were cited by the students as anxiety-provoking. These included demands of oral production, feelings of being "put on the spot," the fast pace of class and the element of being evaluated. On the other hand, classrooms that had a communication focus or that encouraged group work were seen as the best environment for alleviating anxiety. Price (1991) reported that the greatest source of foreign language learners' anxiety came from having to speak the target language in front of their peers in the classroom.

Koch and Terrell (1991) investigated students' opinions on various

classroom activities associated with the Natural Approach, a language teaching method that is supposed to alleviate learners' anxiety. Surprisingly, learners were found to be uncomfortable participating in some activities such as oral presentations, skits, and roleplay activities even in Natural Approach classes. In addition, students' opinions on these activities varied greatly. It was common for the same activity to be judged "comfortable" by some students while "stressful" by others. Therefore, the teacher should be sensitive to the needs of each student and adjust their use of classroom activities accordingly.

Tests are another common and frequently used classroom practice that has been identified to be anxiety-provoking. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) noted that "since performance evaluation is an ongoing feature of most foreign language classes, test anxiety is also relevant to a discussion of foreign language anxiety" (p. 127). Horwitz (1986) found a significant positive correlation ($r=.53$, $p=.001$) between test anxiety and foreign language anxiety. Many other researchers (Young, 1991, 1994; Daily, 1991; Palacios, 1998) also believed that tests could lead to anxiety in foreign language classes. Young (1994, p.32) listed three aspects of language testing that could provoke anxiety: 1) test formats that evoke more anxiety than others, e.g., listening comprehension, translation from the target language to English; 2) overstudying only to find that tests assess different materials from those that have been studied; 3) unfamiliar test tasks.

In addition to formal tests or quizzes, some other common classroom practices, such as being called on to read aloud or answer questions in the target

language, speaking the target language in front of the class, writing answers on the blackboard and so on, also have an element of evaluation or testing. In these daily activities in language classes, students may feel they are either evaluated by the teacher or the other students in the class or both, which, in turn, can provoke anxiety among students.

In Palacios' (1998) study, affiliation was found to be negatively correlated with foreign language anxiety, and lack of affiliation among students, after lack of teacher support, was the second most mentioned element of the classroom environment to which students attributed foreign language anxiety. Anxious students observed the prevalence of cliques as a characteristic that did not support overall classroom affiliation. In the same study, competition among students was found to be positively correlated to the levels of foreign language anxiety. In addition to lack of affiliation, the interviewees also discussed competition and self-comparison with other students as causing them to be more anxious in language classes. Although Palacios' students did not explicitly make the connection between competition and anxiety, Bailey (1983) did establish that connection by analyzing her own language learning diary. The diary analysis showed that comparing herself to the other students in the classroom was the most important cause of her high level of anxiety in learning French as a foreign language.

The anxious students interviewed by Price (1991) made it very clear that speaking the target language in front of their peers was the most anxiety-provoking thing in language classes. Although speaking the target language can be a cause of

anxiety, “being in front of peers” is also crucial in this scenario. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) identified fear of negative feedback to be related to foreign language anxiety. Although there is no denying that students may be afraid of being evaluated negatively by the teacher, they are also “acutely sensitive to the evaluations—real or imagined—of their peers” (p. 128). When asked about suggestions for alleviating foreign language anxiety, some students mentioned that “getting to know the other students helped them to feel more relaxed by reducing the fear of being ridiculed and taking away the feeling that the others were all smarter and more confident” (Price, 1991, p. 107).

Learner Characteristics

In addition to the classroom environment, researchers have also approached the sources of anxiety from the perspective of the learner. A number of individual learner characteristics have been linked to foreign language anxiety. These characteristics include competitiveness, perfectionism, fear of negative feedback, low self-esteem, low self-perceptions of ability, and learner beliefs about language learning (e.g. Bailey, 1983; Price, 1991; Yan and Horwitz, 2008; Tallon, 2006). It should be noted that these characteristics are likely interrelated intricately with each other rather than being independent of one another. They probably work together in complex ways to cause foreign language anxiety. Bailey (1983) found that competitiveness was a key factor that contributed to foreign language anxiety. Bailey defined competitiveness as “the desire to excel in comparison to others” (p. 96). “Others” in this definition

are typically the learner's classmates, but a learner may compete with an idealized self-image or with learners not directly involved in the language classroom. If a learner perceives himself or herself as lacking when comparing to the others or the idealized self-image, such competitiveness can lead to anxiety.

Bailey's analysis showed that she tended to frequently compare herself with other learners in the class and that she became anxious when she found herself less proficient. However, her anxiety decreased as she perceived herself becoming more proficient and therefore better able to "compete" with her peers. Bailey (1983) also noted that competitive language learners shared some other characteristics, such as "a desire to out-do other language learners," "emphasis on or concern with tests and grades," and "a desire to gain teachers' approval" (p. 93).

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) identified the fear of negative feedback to be one of the three anxieties related to foreign language anxiety. It would also seem that competitiveness and perfectionism both have a component of fear of negative evaluation. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) attributed anxiety associated with language learning and use to learners' difficulties presenting themselves authentically in the new language:

Adults typically perceive themselves intelligent and sensitive to different socio-cultural mores. These assumptions are rarely challenged when communicating in a native language as it is not usually difficult to understand others or to make oneself understood.

However, the situation when learning a foreign language stands in marked

contrast. As an individual's communication attempts will be evaluated according to uncertain or even unknown linguistic and socio-cultural standards, second language communication entails risk-taking and is necessarily problematic. Because complex and nonspontaneous mental operations are required in order to communicate at all, any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear or even panic (p.128).

According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), foreign language learners were notable to communicate freely or present themselves authentically in the foreign language because their language proficiency was not good enough. For example, they could sound very humorous, witty or smart in their native language, but they were not able to present their charm in the foreign language in front of others. In this case, self-conscious language learners were worried that people would see them differently from the way they see themselves. Horwitz (2000) considered those feelings to be similar to the discomfort people would experience when they get a bad haircut or wear clothing that they do not like. As can be seen, the core of Horwitz's explanation of the cause of anxiety is the fear of negative evaluation. Horwitz's argumentation also seems to support competitiveness as a cause of anxiety. In Horwitz's explanation, foreign language learners compare themselves to an idealized self-image, that is, an "intelligent," "socially-adept" individual; anxiety arises when they find they are not able to reach their self-created expectations.

Low self-esteem and low self-perceptions have been associated with anxiety

by several researchers. Young (1994) cited low self-esteem as one of the learner characteristics contributing to foreign language anxiety. Earlier, Young (1992) conducted a series of interviews with language experts to elicit their thoughts on foreign language anxiety. Krashen responded that an individual's degree of self-esteem was highly related to language anxiety:

Young (1992) stated that "The more I think about self-esteem, the more impressed I am with its impact. This is what causes anxiety in a lot of people. People with low self-esteem worry about what their peers think; they are concerned with pleasing others. And that I think has to do a great degree with anxiety (p. 15)."

Price's (1991) study also supported this point of view. In her study, the subjects were highly anxious language learners and most of them believed that their language skills were weaker than their classmates and that everyone else in the class looked down upon them because they did a poor job in language classes. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) found that anxious language learners tended to underestimate their actual language proficiency, which suggested that anxious language learners tended to have low self-esteem and low perceptions of their language competence and ability. Competitiveness is likely to be related to low self-esteem or low self-perceptions.

As mentioned previously, Bailey (1983) reported that language learners tended to compare themselves with others, especially their classmates. When they perceived themselves to be less proficient or have weaker language learning ability, they became anxious or stressed.

Bailey and Daley (1999) explored a number of demographic and self-perception factors for relationships with foreign language anxiety. The results showed that self-perceptions and foreign language anxiety were negatively correlated. In addition, the seven variables, including three self-perception variables, accounted for 40% of the total variance in foreign language anxiety. The self-perception factors were students' expectation of their overall achievement in foreign language courses, their perceived self-worth, and their perceived scholastic competence. As can be seen, low self-perceptions and low self-esteem contribute to foreign language anxiety.

In brief, a number of learner characteristics have been identified to be potential sources of foreign language anxiety. These characteristics include competitiveness, fear of negative feedback, low self-esteem, low self-perceptions of language learning ability and language beliefs. As discussed previously in this section, these characteristics are not independent of each other; rather, they overlap and they are interrelated to one another. For example, when a competitive learner compares himself to an idealized self-image, he or she is also likely to be a perfectionist, who sets a high standard for language learning. Both competitive and perfectionist students are worried about negative evaluation and are concerned about making mistakes, which are also manifestations of anxiety. Competitiveness can easily result in negative self-perceptions. When the competitive learner judges himself or herself to have weaker skills or learning abilities than the other students in a language class, he or she is likely to suffer from anxiety. Language

learners who hold unrealistic beliefs are also likely to form negative self-perceptions when beliefs and reality clash. Language learners who have low self-esteem and low self-perceptions tend to worry about others' opinions and thus are likely to get anxious.

As can be seen, all these characteristics are interrelated to each other and work together in complicated ways to cause anxiety in foreign language learners.

The Target Language

Another potential source of anxiety that is shared by most language learners but that has not yet been fully explored by researchers lies in the target language.

According to Zhao (2009, 2013), many researchers and scholars, the high drop-out rates of the less commonly taught foreign languages such as Chinese and Japanese are likely due to the difficulty level of these languages (Norman, 1996; Pease, 1996; Oh, 1996). Studies have also shown that drop-out experienced significantly higher levels of anxiety (Gardner, Moorcroft and MacIntyre, 1987) and that highly anxious students were more at risk for dropping out of their language classes (Bailey and Daley, 2003). In addition, many studies show that anxious foreign language learners tended to perceive foreign language learning as a very difficult task (Palacios, 1998; Horwitz, 1989). Thus, it is reasonable to think that the high drop-out rate of student from Chinese language classes in the U.S. is related to students' anxiety experienced in these classes; anxiety, which, in turn, may be a result of the difficulty level of the Chinese language.

The target language as a source of foreign language anxiety can also be inferred from a number of other studies. For example, Le (2004) found that American learners of Chinese experienced the highest level of anxiety when learning Chinese in study-abroad programs in China compared to the anxiety levels of learners of other languages in other studies. Aida (1994) found that the anxiety level of students of Japanese (M=96.7) was slightly higher than that of Horwitz's (1986) study (M=94.5). She thought this result was understandable because "students may feel more anxious in learning a non-western, foreign language like Japanese than in learning commonly taught Western languages such as Spanish" (p.158).

In addition, Japanese FL learners' anxiety was found to differ somewhat from that of French learners in several ways. For example, the Japanese learners' anxiety level increased as instruction continued whereas the anxiety of French FL learners decreased (Samimy and Tabuse, 1992; Saito and Sammy, 1996;). Kitano (2001) attributed the difference in results to the well-known difficulty of the Japanese language and to the much-discussed differences between the Japanese and American cultures.

Also, as mentioned previously, learners' foreign language reading anxiety significantly differed for three different target languages (French, Russian and Japanese) (Saito, Horwitz and Garza, 1999).

Many participants who took the Chinese course(s) at AUB told author that they felt more anxious in learning Chinese than learning French as a foreign language.

The reason seems to be simple. Chinese is more difficult than French for American learners because French is more similar to English while Chinese has exotic linguistic features such as tones and characters.

As can be seen, the target language seems to be a source of foreign language anxiety. I would take a step further and argue that some amount of foreign language anxiety is language-internal or inherent in the target language. However, interestingly, Saito, Horwitz, and Garza (1999) found no significant differences in general foreign language anxiety levels among learners of the three different target languages. In their study, they used the FLCAS, a generic foreign language anxiety scale that primarily addresses speaking anxiety to measure foreign language learners' general foreign language anxiety for all target languages. This result which is seemingly contrary to common sense may be due to the fact that the FLCAS does not take into consideration the characteristics of specific target languages, and/or due to the fact that it does not include enough items reflective of listening, reading and writing anxieties.

The present study attempts to develop a CFL Anxiety Scale, which not only reflects the four components (speaking, reading, writing, listening anxieties) of foreign language anxiety, but also specifically addresses the characteristics of the Chinese language, the CFL classroom environment and the CFL learners.

Difficulties in Learning the Chinese

Chinese is a language with a history of more than four thousand years and is

used in China and beyond, such as in Japan, Singapore and a part of Malaysia. On the other hand, for the learners from the remaining world, a large percent of them view that learning Chinese is difficult and even a headache. In this study, the author would like discuss about the difficulties of leaning Chinese from the perspective of reading Chinese rather than speaking, listening, and writing, to be specific, this research puts the focus on reading Chinese aloud since a language can be usually read in two ways: read it silently and read it aloud.

LohSeng Tsai and Ethel Abernethy (1928),by taking the number of strokes of a Chinese character as the criterion of complexity,investigated the relative difficulty of recognizing and reproducing characters of varying degrees of complexity and exhibited that, character recognition seemed to be irrelevant to the complexity of the characters within the numbers of strokes ranging from 3 to 12 strokes, whereas character reproduction seemed “to increase directly with the complexity of the characters” (p. 435), and individual differences in the rate of mastery of the size and relative position of the lines existed in the learning process of reproducing figures.

Zhangtai Chen, Genyuan Yu and Jinmin Zhao (2005) explored the features of the Chinese language during the teaching and learning process from four aspects: first, in terms of the pronunciation system, Chinese language can be spelled or written in Latin letters with tones (Pinyin). Generally, each Pinyin consists of two or three parts, namely, the initial, the final and the tone. All of the initials are consonants (in Chinese pronunciation system they are named “shēngmǔ”),e.g. “b”, “p”, “m”, “f”, “zh”, “sh”, and “r”. While finals (which are named “yùnmǔ” in Chinese pronunciation system)

are vowels or syllables, such as “a”, “e”, “i”, “u”, “ao”, “ou”, “ie”, “uai”, “ing”, “eng”, “iong”, and “uang”. Furthermore, there are four tones (“shēngdiào” used in the system), namely, “ˉ”, “ˊ”, “ˇ”, “ˋ”, some Chinese Pinyin are neutral (no tones). There are some difficulties for foreign learners to get used to pronounce some words or sentences. For example, when learners read the Chinese sentence written in this system, some of them might not pronounce them correctly due to the places of articulation and changes of the tones in practical situations, which makes it easy to get native speakers confused. Second, in terms of Chinese vocabulary, learners of Chinese have more difficulties in this part due to many reasons: they can be grouped in various ways: by contents, they can be categorized into basic and general vocabulary. The former refers to the individual “characters”, , the latter represents the individual “words” that are used as the same as that in English. For instance, “阿” (“ā”, no meaning), however, when this Pinyin or character is used with “姨” (“yí”) and written as “阿姨” (“āyí”), it stands for “aunt.” Furthermore, some individual characters can be employed alone to represent one “word.” For example, “学” (“xué”), means “study, learn”; and “妈” (“mā”), which is exact corresponding “word” of “mum” in English. Additionally, by forms, the vocabulary can be divided into two parts: words (phrases) and idioms. However, idioms are always rooted in Chinese history and culture to some extent. A good number of compound words are created using the same individual characters but show different meanings after being used as one word, for example, 字, 字, character” (as we saw in the early example), and “shù, 数, number.” When these two individual words are used together, they become “zìshù”

(“字数”, stands for “number of characters”) and “shùzì” (“数字”, means “number”). Meanwhile, some words are created using roots, prefixes, and suffixes. However, compared to many languages, e.g. English, it is more difficult for foreign learners to differentiate them and understand the meanings in Chinese, e.g. in the word “dàjiā, 大家,” individually, “dà, 大” means “big, large,” “jiā, 家” stands for “home, family.” When the two of them are used together as one word, they mean “everyone, everybody.” Another example is “dàxué, 大学,” “xué, 学” by itself means “study (verb)”; but when it is used along with “dà,” it means “university, college.” In the two words, the “dà, 大” functions as a prefix, but presents different meanings. Furthermore, some homophones are used often, e.g. when seeing the Pinyin “niánqīng,” two commonly-used words easily come to learners’ mind: one is “年轻,” meaning “young (adjective),” the other is “年青,” which stands for “young people (noun).” As for the writing system, Chinese can be written in either Pinyin or characters, however, there are many differences between them. For example:

English: She is also a university student.

Chinese Sentence 1. In Pinyin: Tā yě shì yí ge dàxuésheng.

Chinese Sentence 2. In characters: 她也是一个大学生。

From the two Chinese sentences above, it is obvious that, in the first sentence, all of the Pinyin is written in Latin letters (with tones), and between two words in Pinyin, there is a space. By contrast, the second sentence is showed in characters, an unfamiliar script to learners of other languages. Furthermore, there is no space between two words in characters. For Chinese learners who come from other

languages, some of them may read the second sentence as “她 / 也 / 是 / 一 / 个 / 大 / 学生,” and may mistake it to mean “She is also a big student,” or they may look at the sentence as “她 / 也 / 是 / 一 / 个 / 大学 / 生,” meaning “She is also a university” and get confused about the meaning of the whole sentence, if they are familiar with the word “大学” (“university”) but can not realize that, in this sentence, the three characters “大学生” are used as one word or one phrase since “生,” when used alone, takes the meaning of “strange.” In other words, without a space between characters, for some readers, this kind of sentence is problematic since they might fail to find which two, three or even more characters are one word/ phrase. Consequently, to read the sentence in characters looks more difficult than in Pinyin. And third, Chinese grammar is another source which can make learning Chinese difficult. For example, in one sentence, there are four Chinese characters (but three Chinese words) in total: “wǒ, 我, I / me,” “chī, 吃, eat,” “niǔròu, 牛肉, beef.”

Sentence 1: Wǒ chī niǔròu. / 我吃牛肉。(Chinese)

I eat beef. (English)

Sentence 2: Niǔròu wǒ chī. / 牛肉我吃。(Chinese)

I eat beef, (and I also eat something else) (English)

I eat beef, (but I don't eat something else.) (English)

In Chinese, after switching the order of words, both of the above sentences are correct grammatically, however, the meanings expressed differs from each other (pp 349 – 434).

With 145 elementary students of native Mandarin speakers as subjects,

Xiaochen Wang, George K. Georgiu and J.P. Das (2013) adopted PASS (Planning, Attention, Simultaneous, and Successive) to study the connection of cognitive process (namely, PASS) with learners' accuracy and fluency in reading Chinese, and demonstrated that, Attention, Simultaneous, and Successive were related to phonological awareness (tone, rhyme, onset awareness), orthographic knowledge (lexical reversal and lexical decision) and reading measures and so they correlated significantly to the two reading outcomes, while planning was not, although planning could be influenced by the contribution of attention.

Gaps from the previous research:

Among early studies, the majority of researchers that were conducted; focused on many languages (such as English, Spanish and French),and explored various hypotheses on language anxiety, such as the existence of anxiety and reading anxiety in foreign language learning process (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope,1986; Kenneth Williams, 1991;Zhao, 2009; Elaine K. Horwitz, 2010). Two scales for measuring the anxiety of learning foreign languages as well as reading foreign languages were developed(Elaine K. Horwitz, Michael B. Horwitz and Joann CopeSource, 1986; Aida, Y, 1994; Saito, Elaine K. Horwitz and Thomas J. Garza, 1999, 2013).The possibilityand resources and effects that cause anxiety of reading foreign languages in classroom were studied (Horwitz, E. K. , 1988; Phillip Bailey, 1999;Ganschow, L., and Sparks, R., 2001; Chen, T., and Chang, G., 2004; Richard L. Sparks, 2007; Tsai and Li, 2012)Nevertheless, few studies paid attention to the

students' anxiety in the process of learning Chinese as a foreign language, and in particular, anxiety of reading Chinese and the possible resources (or variables). For instance, Zhao (2009, 2013), in her studies, explored the anxiety in reading Chinese as a foreign language in the classroom for US university students, with her focus being the Chinese courses at the beginner and intermediate levels. On the other hand, she left some related aspects affecting Chinese reading anxiety unresolved, such as the way of reading, the size of the classes, the pedagogy of teaching Chinese, and the nature of reading Chinese.

Among the other languages, Japanese is the only language which is very close to Chinese, and thus they many features in common, one of them, for example, being the writing system. In Japanese, two writing systems are employed, namely, Kana (hiragana and katakana) and Kanji. The word "Kanji" is derived from "Hanzi", which means Chinese characters ("Han" was originally the name of the biggest ethnic group in China, the Han Ethnic Group, while "zi" stands for "character"). Due to the influence of Chinese civilization through history, the Japanese language was created based on Chinese characters and radicals, and therefore thousands of Chinese characters have been borrowed and used in Japanese, but most of them were given different pronunciations. For example, according to Saito et al. (1999), in the Foundation of Japanese Literacy (1981), 1,945 Chinese characters are adopted for daily use (p. 204). In June of 2010, the Japanese government added 196 Chinese characters to the Updated Commonly-used Chinese Characters Table bringing the total number of daily-used Chinese characters to 2,136 (Xinhua News Agency, 2010,

November 30). Likewise, in Japanese, between these borrowed characters and the pronunciations, no corrections can be found or created. Saito et al.'s (1999, 2013) studies indicated that in American universities, native English speaking students had different levels of anxiety in learning and reading Japanese (a language utilizing several alphabets ranging from roughly phonological to logographic), Russian (a language using few cognates and the phonological Cyrillic alphabet) and French (a language having many cognates and using the Roman alphabet) as their target languages. They came up with a scale for measuring students' reading anxiety in a foreign language classroom and proposed that both unfamiliar writing systems and different cultural contents contributed to the students' reading anxiety. On the other hand, the scholars did not explain how the American university students had higher reading anxiety in Japanese than in French and Russian from the perspective of reading progress.

Definitions of the Main Terms

Chinese characters

Chinese characters is named as "Hànzi." In Japanese language, they are called "Kànji." Chinese writing (in characters) is really drawing, to the Westerners" (LohSeng Tsai and Ethel Abernethy, 1928, p. 433), and thus the character learning is a study of the progressive mastery of certain simple percepts (Judd and Cowling, 1907, p.7). For instance, the Chinese for the English word "you (singular)" is "nǐ," the character is written as "你"; similarly, "you (plural)" is "nǐmen," the characters are written as "你们".

Eye movement

Over the last decade, numerous investigators employed eye movement methodology as a measure of on-line processing to understanding more about cognitive processing during Chinese context reading comprehension. For experimental psychologists, one of the most valuable characters of this methodology is that “it provides an on-line measure of processing difficulty” (Simon P. Liversedge, Jukka Hyona and Keith Rayner, 2013, p. S1). Moreover, Simon et al. claimed that the eye movement methodology can “significantly inform current theoretical understanding of the nature of Chinese reading (p. S3).

Pinyin

It refers to a pronunciation system and / or a writing system representing Chinese words in Latin letters combining consonants and vowels with tone markers, because it is essential to learning the language. The term includes both the system of writing Chinese in Latin script and the unit of pronunciation that includes a consonant (called an initial), vowel or vowel combination (called final) and tone. Take a Chinese word “hǎo” as an example. In this Pinyin, the spelling is “hao”; “h” functions as the initial; “ao”, functions as the final; while the mark “v” is one of the “intonations/ tones that sit above the vowels”; altogether the word means “hello.” Totally, five intonations are adopted in Chinese Pinyin, namely, “-” or horizontal tone, “/” or rising tone, “v” or falling and rising tone, “\” or falling tone, and neutral. When the same spelling is pronounced with different tones, the corresponding characters or words change, and express different meanings.

Reading

Reading includes two ways: read something silently and read something aloud. It is considered as a big part of the aspects of language proficiency, namely, speaking, reading, listening and writing.

Reading is a complex process. It requires simultaneous coordination across many tasks. Samuels and Kamil (1988) proposed that in the 1960s and early 1970s many scholars developed explicit models of the reading process. Bernhardt (1991) viewed their models generally fall under one of the two rubrics: one is the cognitive process, the other is the social process. This suggested that reading is meaning-extracting or a meaning-constructing process.

Reading as a cognitive process

Bernhardt (1991) viewed reading process as an intrapersonal problem-solving task that takes place within the head. This posits that fluent readers have central processors that act on information in a set format. The fixed nature in reading is determined by the nature of text. The Laberge and Samuels (1994) model illustrates how information from the text is perceived by a reader and then sent to various locations for processing, this indicates that text-based models should be considered as a cognitive process. Wang, George K. Georgiu and J.P. Das (2013) Consider the cognitive progress in reading to be consisting of four factors, namely, planning, attention, simultaneous, and successive (or PASS).

Strokes of Chinese characters

According to LohSeng Tsai and Ethel Abernethy (1928), in an individual Chinese character, each separate dot or line is counted as a stroke (p. 434). For example, in the character “一”, the number of stroke(s) is 1. Similarly, in the character “三”, the number of stroke(s) is 3; in the character “小”, the number of stroke(s) is 3; in the character “你”, the number of the stroke(s) is 7.

Traditional and simplified characters

Chinese characters can be written in two ways, namely, in the traditional way or the simplified way. For instance, for the English sentence “She closed the door.” The

Chinese sentence in traditional characters would be “她关了门”(in simplified characters) or “她關了門”(in traditional characters). Based on these two sentences, it is easy to notice some similarities and differences between them: as for the individual character, for the same character, the number of strokes in a traditional character is more than the simplified one, e.g. for the word “door,” the traditional character is one character, “門”, while the simplified one is one character too, “门”, in other words, the number of character(s) is the same. On the other hand, generally, it is easier to find connection between a traditional character and its meaning. Take “door” as a sample. The “門” looks more like a “door” than the simplified one: the character could be divided into left and right parts, each part representing one side of a door in ancient times, while the horizontal stroke in each part looks like a “bolt.” However, this connection can not be found in the simplified character.

Writing system

Ho and Byrant (1997b) proposed that it is a symbolic system that is used to represent the spoken language. Most writing systems are classified into three categories: alphabetic, syllabic, and logographic. Florian Coulmas (2003) described writing systems “as the most visible items of a language, scripts and orthographies are 'emotionally loaded', indicating as they do group loyalties and identities and symbolic systems of great social significance which may, moreover, have profound effect on the social structure of a speech community.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND STATISTICS

Purpose of the study

With the development of Chinese economy, the number of Chinese language learners is increasing around the world. On the other hand, anxiety in learning many languages as a second language or a foreign language, such as English, French, Spanish, Russian, have been studied, but publications on learning Chinese almost do not exist, let alone those on reading anxieties at a beginning level Chinese course.

Based on the American University of Beirut students' anxiety in taking Chinese courses at an introductory level and the author's teaching practice, the present research attempts to bridge the gap and reveal the possible correlations between learners' Chinese reading anxiety and reading performance, and their background variables (e.g. linguistic background). To do this, the three fundamental research questions that were introduced earlier must be answered.

In order to get the possible answers to these major questions, an online survey (also named LimeSurvey) was conducted, and it was implemented in the spring semester of 2014 at the American University of Beirut.

Participants

At the American University of Beirut, Chinese courses 201 and 202 are offered each semester. Each class or lecture is 50 minutes long. Usually, except for the

holidays and examination days, around 42 classes or lectures (35 hours) are taught each semester. That is, the students enrolled in Chinese 201 completed around 35 hours of Chinese sessions, while those attending Chinese 202 completed 70 hours of Chinese sessions. Both of the courses are considered as basic-level Chinese courses.

The subjects in this study are students who completed at least one semester of introductory Chinese course (or a Chinese course at the basic level) at the American University of Beirut from the Spring semester of 2012 to Fall semester of 2013, namely, Chinese 201, or both Chinese 201 and Chinese 202. Furthermore, all of the invited participants scored 60 or more out of 100 (full credit) in the course(s). This selecting criteria is to make sure all of the participants are those who had experienced Chinese learning, both Pinyin and Chinese characters, throughout the whole semester since some students dropped the course(s) during the course-dropping period. This study does not address, therefore, the possible relationship between reading and anxiety. Additionally, the participants came from different schools and majors and students from the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior classes were present. These students took the Chinese course(s) as a free elective, rather than as a required course.

In this study, the invitation letter of participating was sent to 125 students. All of them were full-time AUB undergraduates and were more than 18 years old. Before taking Chinese 201 with the researcher of this study, very few of them knew Chinese words, phrases and sentences except for one student whose mother was a Chinese national who married a Lebanese and moved to Lebanon around 18 years ago. She knew some daily expressions, e.g. “Nǐhǎo.” (Chinese equivalent to “Hello.” for

greeting). But none of the students had experience with Chinese characters. Among the students, 2 (3.4%) were Lebanese-Chinese: 1 (1.7%) of them had a Chinese parent and was able to practice Chinese (Mandarin) orally at home (in Lebanon); and the other also had a Chinese parent but who knew Cantonese only, a different dialect of Chinese. In other words, 1 out of 56 (or 1.7%) had a background in Mandarin (standard Chinese). Finally, 61 students responded and filled the online survey. However, only 55 of them responded to all items of the online survey, while 6 of them responded to some of them. Therefore, a total of 55 students' responses will be analyzed and discussed in the following chapters.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show some background information about the participants: gender and native language(s). As shown in the table: among the 55 participants, 38 (69.1%) were female, the remaining 17 (30.9%) were male. The female-male ratio of this sample was 38:17 ($M=1.46$, $SD=0.47$). In terms of native language(s), most of them, 39 (70.9%) were from Lebanon and other Arab countries and thus chose Arabic as their native language, 3 (5.5%) viewed their native language to be French, and 13 (23.6%) viewed English as their native language. Furthermore, 6 respondents added more information about their native languages in the "Other (please specify)," such as "I speak English more than Arabic," "Although I do speak English better than Arabic to some extent," "Arabic and English are mutually considered as my native languages," and "my native languages are Arabic, English and French since I have used them together." None of them considered Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese) as their native language.

Figure 3.1 Gender Information of the Participants

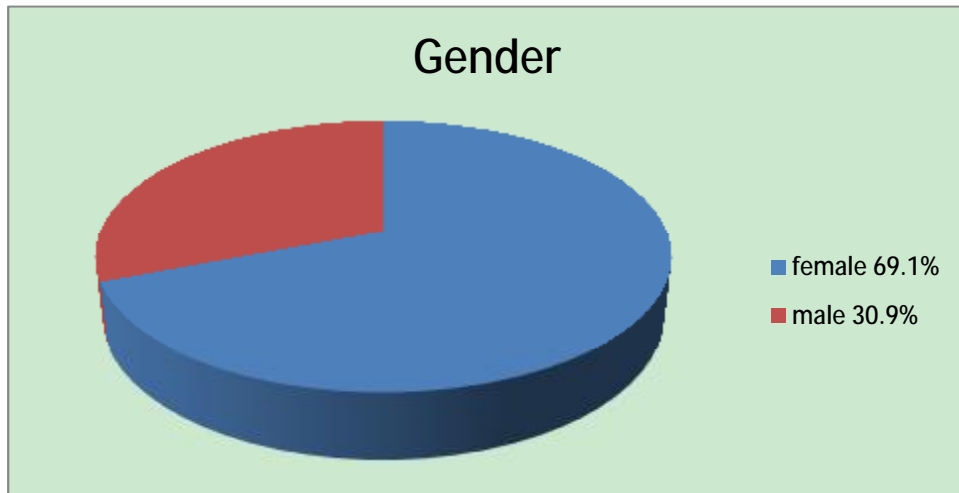


Figure 3.2 Language Background Information of the Participants

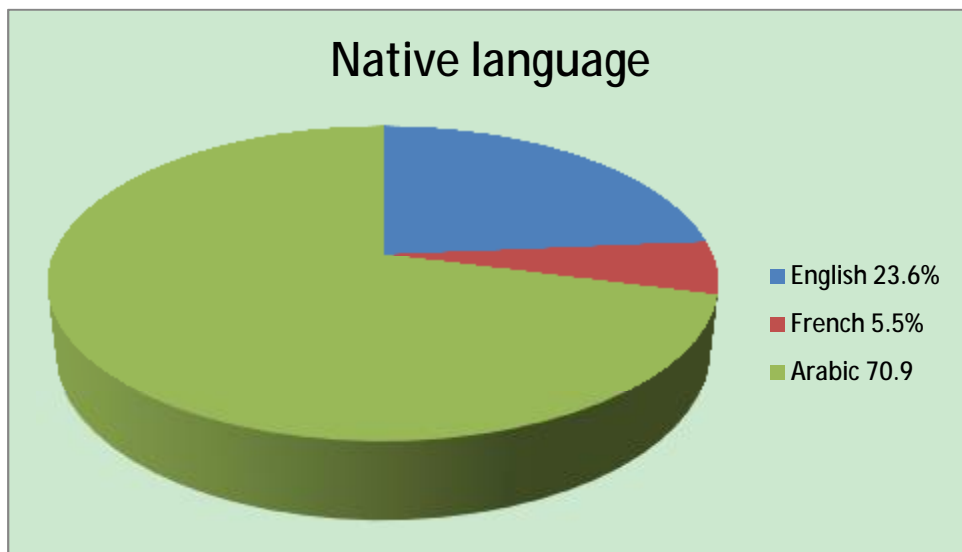


Figure 3.3 gives their information on course taken, while Figure 3.4 shows the time spent on the course(s): Of the total participants, 38 (69.1%) were enrolled in Chinese 201, while 17 (30.9%) came from Chinese 202. In terms of the time (per week) spent on the course after class, 7 (12.7%) students spent less than one hour per

week on the course(s), 23 (41.8%) students spent 1 to 2 hours, 21 (38.2%) students spent 2 to 4 hours, 4 (7.3%) students spent more than 4 hours.

Figure 3.3 Course(s) Taken by Participants

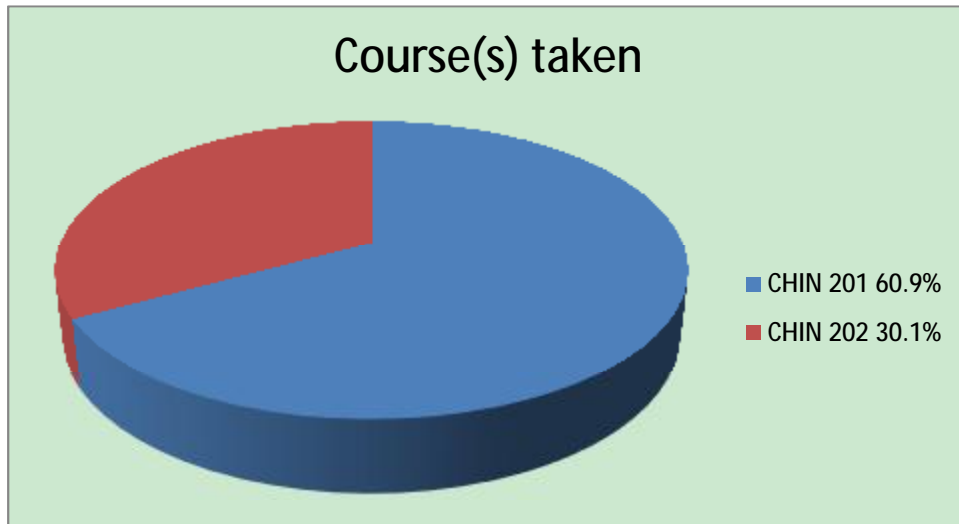


Figure 3.4 Time Spent on the Course

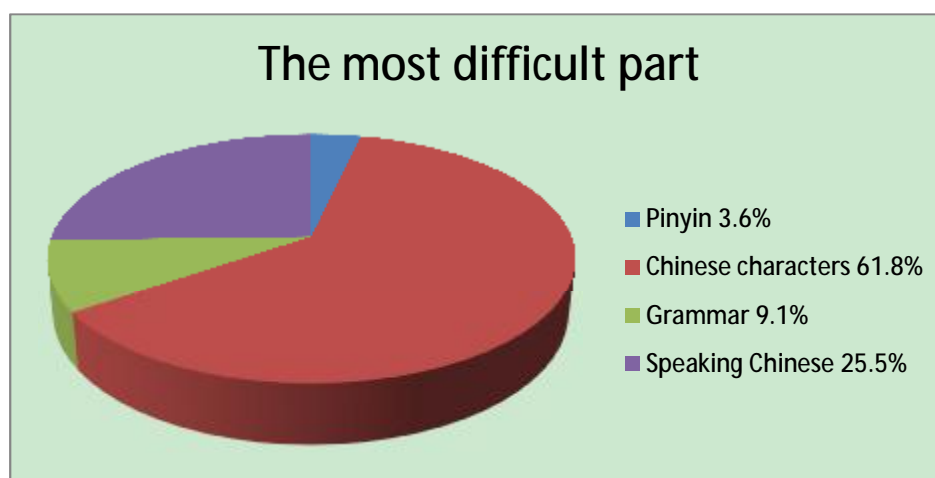


As for the main purpose(s) of taking the course(s), most of participants had

multiple ideas: 30 (54.5%) students thought one of their purposes was to get the elective credits, while 25 (45.5%) students didn't agree with this; 43 (78.2%) of them didn't think they registered for the Chinese course (s) because they liked the language while the remaining participants (21.8%) registered because they did like Chinese; 24 (43.6%) participants took the course(s) because they might travel to China, while this wasn't the case for 31 (56.4%) participants ; 15 (27.3%) students learned the language because they wanted to work in China / with Chinese people, the remaining 40 (72.7%) had different opinions; 11 (20%) students liked to do business with Chinese people so they took the course(s), while another 44 students (80%) did not choose this; 11 (20%) participants also gave other purposes of taking the course(s). Such reasons included "because it's an interesting language and knowing Chinese would make one unique/ stand out in a way," "It would be useful," "I like to learn new languages," "To be able to interact in case I visit the country," "study in China," "I want to have my own company in Guangzhou," etc.

Regarding participants' views on the item "which part is the most difficult in the Chinese learning process," 2 (3.6%) students thought the Pinyin (the pronunciation system) was the most difficult part, 34 (61.8%) of the participants believed the best answer was Chinese characters, 5 (9.1%) of them viewed the Chinese grammar was the most difficult, 14 (25.5%) students agreed that speaking Chinese was their biggest headache, as indicated in Figure 3.5 below.

Figure 3.5 The Most Difficult Part in Chinese Learning



In terms of criteria and what makes a good Chinese language learner, as presented in Table 3.1, 34 (61.8%) of them held that it is someone who can give the meaning of characters, 43 (78.2%) argued that he/she must recognize characters and tell others what their meanings are in English, 41 (74.5%) students believed that knowing how to pronounce a word when seeing a character is what makes a good Chinese learner, 41 (78.2%) of the participants suggested that it is knowing Chinese grammar well, 40 (72.7%) argued that he/she must be able to translate sentences correctly, 39 (70.9%) participants proposed that it is speaking Chinese, even without knowing characters, and 42 (76.4%) of the students argued that it is by pronouncing Chinese well.

Table 3.1 Criteria of A Good Chinese Language Learner

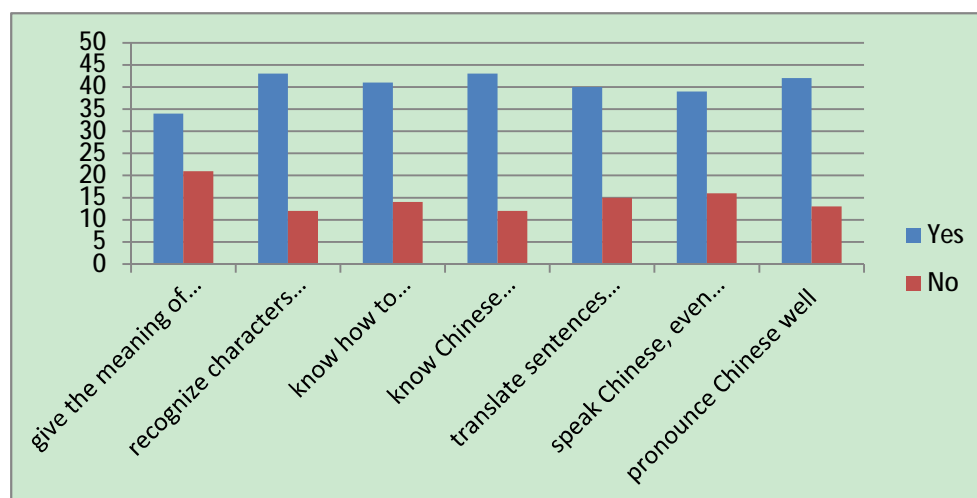
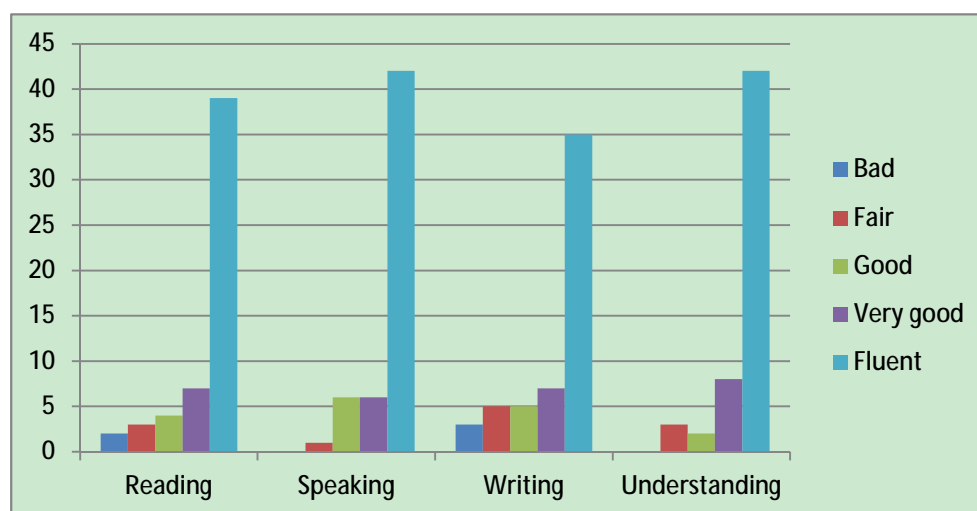


Table 3.1 shows the participants' languages background, namely languages they know and their proficiencies: in reading Arabic, 2 (3.6%) students thought their proficiency was bad, 3 (5.5%) students thought their proficiency was fair, 4 (7.3%) students thought their proficiency was good, 7 (12.7%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 39 (70.9%) participants believed that they were fluent. In speaking Arabic, 1 (1.8%) student thought his/ her proficiency was fair, 6 (10.9%) students thought their proficiency was good, 6 (10.9%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 42 (76.4%) participants believed that they were fluent. In writing Arabic, 3 (5.5%) students thought their proficiency was bad, 5 (9%) students thought their proficiency was fair, 5 (9%) students thought their proficiency was good, 7 (12.7%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 35 (63.6%) participants believed that they were fluent. In understanding Arabic, 3 (5.5%) students thought their proficiency was fair, 2 (3.6%) students thought their proficiency was good, 8 (14.5%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 42

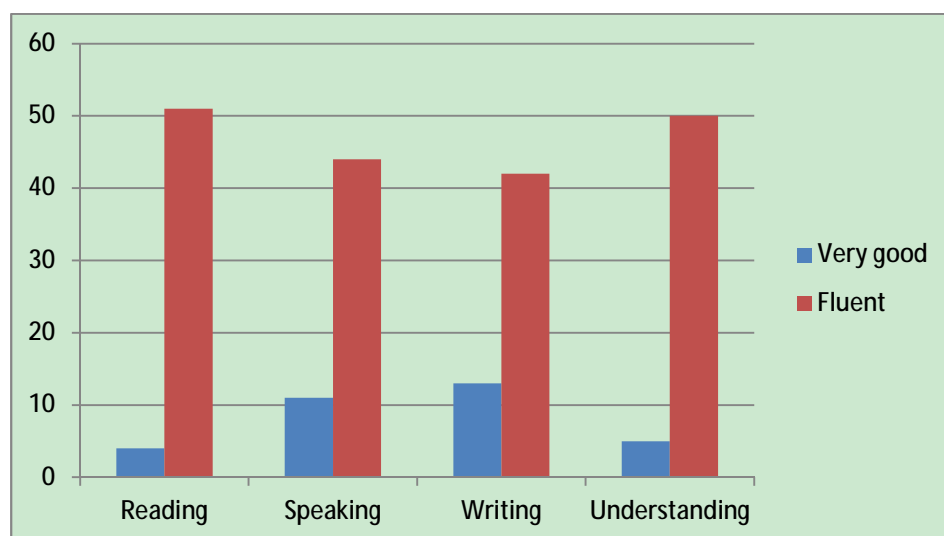
(76.4%) participants believed that they were fluent.

Table 3.2 Arabic Proficiency of the Participants



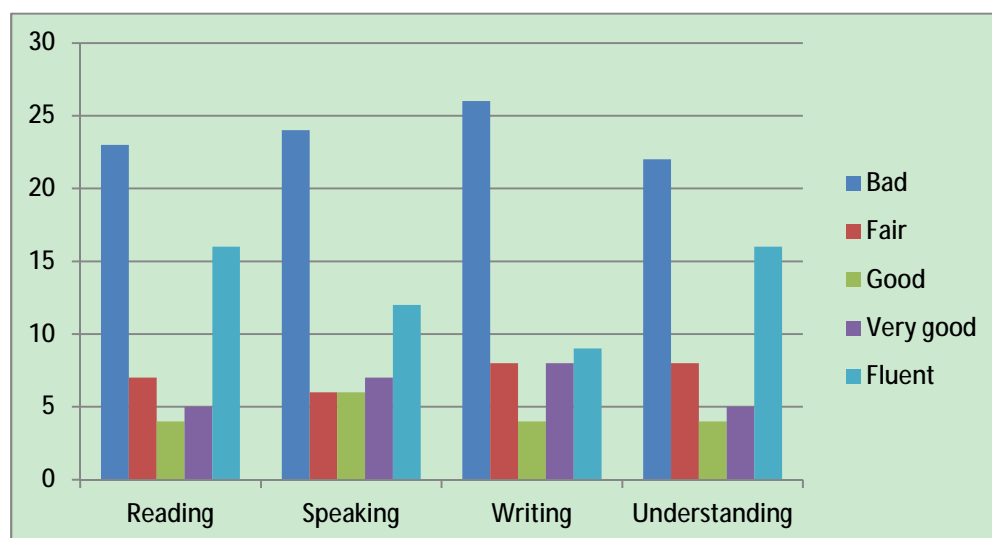
Similarly, the participants' proficiencies in the three languages are shown as follows: In terms of reading English, 4 (7.3%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 51 (92.3%) participants believed that they were fluent. In speaking English, 11 (20%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 44 (80%) participants believed that they were fluent. In writing English, 13 (23.6%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 42 (76.4%) participants believed that they were fluent. In understanding English, 5 (9%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 50 (90.1%) participants believed that they were fluent.

Table 3.3 English Proficiency of the Participants



In reading French, of the participants, 23 (41.8%) viewed their proficiency was bad, 7 (12.7%) thought their proficiency was fair, 4 (7.3%) reported their proficiency was good, 5 (9%) held that their proficiency was very good, and 16 (29.1%) believed that they were fluent. In speaking French, 24 (43.6%) thought their proficiency was bad, 6 (10.9%) believed that their proficiency was good, 6 (10.9%) held that their proficiency was very good, and 12 (21.8%) said they were fluent. In writing French, 26 (47.3%) thought their proficiency was bad, 8 (14.5%) claimed their proficiency was fair, 4 (7.3%) trust their proficiency was good, 8 (14.5%) held that their proficiency was very good, and 9 (16.4%) believed that they were fluent. In understanding French, 22 (40%) thought their proficiency was bad, 8 (14.5%) thought their proficiency was fair, 4 (7.3%) students held that their proficiency was good, 5 (9%) held that their proficiency was very good, and 16 (29.1%) viewed that they were fluent.

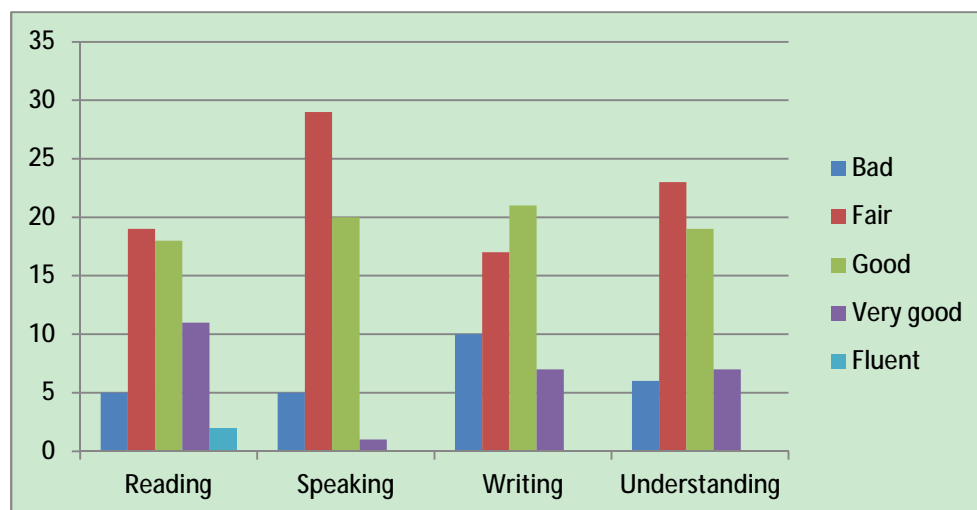
Table 3.4 French Proficiency of the Participants



In reading Chinese, 5 (9%) students thought their proficiency was bad, 19 (34.5%) students thought their proficiency was fair, 18 (32.7%) students thought their proficiency was good, 11 (20%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and 2 (3.6%) participants believed that they were fluent; In speaking Chinese, 5 (9%) student thought their proficiency was fair, 29 (52.7%) students thought their proficiency was good, 20 (36.4%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and none of the participants believed that they were fluent. In writing Chinese, 10 (18.2%) students thought their proficiency was bad, 17 (30.9%) students thought their proficiency was fair, 21 (38.2%) students thought their proficiency was good, 7 (12.7%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and none of the participants believed that they were fluent. In understanding Chinese, 6 (10.9%) students thought their proficiency was bad, 23 (41.2%) students thought their proficiency was fair, 19 (34.5%) students held that their proficiency was good, 7

(12.7%) students held that their proficiency was very good, and none of the participants believed that they were fluent.

Table 3.5 Chinese Proficiency of the Participants



Take Tables 3.4 and 3.5 into consideration as a whole, it is easy to notice that before attending a Chinese language course, the majority of students knew two languages, including their native language(s), namely, Arabic and English, or Arabic and French; some of them knew three languages: Arabic, English and French. In other words, they were bilingual or multilingual, as evidenced by Shaaban and Gaith (1999). Meanwhile, how about their reading proficiency of Chinese?

Over the past years, Chinese has been of interest to an increasing number of people around the world, and many international proficiency tests for Chinese learners have been developed. To provide a reference curriculum for Chinese educational institutes and instructors, the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) has developed the International Curriculum for Chinese Language

Education (ICCLE). The curriculum (2012 version) proposes that learner's proficiency can be ranked into five stages, Stages 1-5, and assessed by testing four competences: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. In regard to the reading proficiency, it suggests:

In Stage 1, a learner can recognize Pinyin and some simple characters, words and numbers learned in class and can exchange personal information, including: recognizing Pinyin and using Pinyin to locate characters with the help of dictionaries; extracting specific information in simple everyday contexts related to personal and daily life from brief discourse; understanding common greetings and expressions of gratitude in social interactions; understanding common characters, words, and numbers related to daily activities; and understanding commonly-seen signs and instructions with the help of drawings and photos.

In Stage 2, a learner can recognize basic characters, words, sentences and short textual materials, understand program requirements and gather relevant information from short textual materials, including: recognizing the general idea of simple information materials related to personal and daily activities; recognizing and understanding expressions of greeting and gratitude, or invitations in routine social interactions; guessing the meaning of signs, symbols or descriptive materials encountered in daily activities written in familiar characters and words; understanding simple notes, notices, graphs, tables and lists; locating specific information in short and easy materials with fixed structures.

In Stage 5, a learner can understand more complex language materials, determine main ideas, identify important facts and details and the structure of the text, including: understanding texts of descriptive material, getting the gists, locating important facts and details and understanding the structure of the text; understanding accurately narrative compositions containing some proverbs, idioms and figurative language; understanding introductions and descriptions with some new words and terms, getting the gists and locating specific information; and understanding simple popular science materials related to work, study or personal life. (pp 3-29)

Unfortunately, as indicated in the Stage 5, this curriculum does not give the description of objectives or learning outcomes of higher stages although it is obvious

that the Stage 5 is far away from superior and distinguished stages.

Therefore, to get a better understanding on the classification, the author of this thesis also studied the classification on Chinese language proficiency by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL). According to proficiency guidelines designed by ACTFL (2012 version), a learner's foreign language proficiency can be divided into five levels: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior and Distinguished. In each level, there are three sublevels or stages, that is, Novice Low, Novice Mid, and Novice High. With respect to Chinese proficiency at Novice High Stage (Reading Part), it states:

At this stage, the learner is able to express his/her ideas, ask some formulaic questions, understand predictable language and messages from native speakers, communicate with native speakers on some simple topics, such as personal information, daily subjects, some activities, hobbies and needs, with relative ease, key words and phrases across a range of highly contextualized texts; the learner can be understood by native speakers by restatement after misunderstanding sometimes; the learner may respond to native speakers with some clear and correct sentences, although he/she fails to use complete sentences all the time. (<http://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/chinese>)

At AUB, as designed in the syllabi of both Chinese courses 201 and 202, the objectives or learning outcomes for reading proficiency are very similar to that proposed by Hanban and ACTFL, as showed in the Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Learning outcomes for Chinese 201 and Chinese 202

Course Name	Learning Outcomes
Chinese 201	<p>By the end of the semester, the students are supposed to master basic rules of Pinyin; differentiate the four tones and read tones correctly; pronounce any Chinese characters in dictionaries correctly; read words, phrases and sentences correctly; recognize the structures, radicals and basic components, strokes and stroke orders of Chinese characters; understand the relationships between Pinyin and the characters, characters and word-formations; recognize Pinyin and the English meanings for 300 Chinese characters; identify basic grammar and 22 commonly-used sentence patterns; use Chinese phrases and sentences correctly; understand the most common key words, phrases and two-sentence dialogues that are closely related to campus life or one’s personal everyday life; understand greetings, regards or well wishes from native speakers; ask and answer basic questions in Chinese, covering the topics like age, request, instructions, apologies, price and locations; master some learning techniques and skills of word formation; and communicate with native speakers in Chinese successfully, on topics such as time, weather, age, giving directions, etc.</p>
Chinese 202	<p>By the end of the semester, the students are expected to read dialogues, paragraphs, short stories and poetry correctly; master strategies and some learning skills to enlarge their vocabulary; identify basic grammar and sentence patterns; use some commonly used compound sentences correctly; understand clearly articulated words, phrases, simple discourses that are related to personal experiences and everyday life; understand brief and direct questions, requests, suggestions, instructions, casual conversations and cultural expressions that are used in everyday life; communicate with Chinese people on some daily topics correctly, such as time, weather, age, giving directions, hobbies, friends, travel, feelings, making a hotel reservation, telling a short story using different tenses (past tense, present tense and future tense).</p>

Therefore, in accordance with Hanban and ACTFL, both Chinese courses 201 and 202 at AUB should be considered as the courses at less than Stage 2 level or

Novice level. In other words, they are at the beginning or basic level.

Instrument

In this study, the participants were invited to respond by filling out a survey to find the possible answers to the three major questions. First, do students at AUB learning Chinese as a foreign language at the beginner level perceive the learning of characters as the most difficult part of the course? Second, through AUB's reading anxiety in Chinese language learning, is recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud the most difficult part to learn? Third, for AUB students learning Chinese, does the anxiety of recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud correlate with certain variables, such as the learner's gender, knowledge of other languages, purpose(s) of learning Chinese, level of Chinese course, the Chinese writing system, and amount of exposure to Chinese outside of the classroom in Lebanon? The survey was conducted in the form of LimeSurvey, which took place via the American University of Beirut website.

This survey was offered in English since it is the language of instruction at AUB. Also, the survey consisted of two parts containing a total of 32 questions: questions 1 to 8 (see Appendix 1) are about Chinese learners' background information, such as gender, native language, and the purpose(s) of taking the Chinese course(s); questions 9 to 32 (see Appendix 2) are about the students' experience of learning Chinese language and Chinese reading performance. All of the questions were designed on the base of the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA), and the

Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA). In these two widely employed scales, many early discussed possible sources are considered. Furthermore, these questions were responded in different ways: In part 1, the questions in were multiple-choice. None of the questions in the survey requires that participants provide their private information, such as name, address, and religious affiliation. While inPart 2, all the questions weremeasured by self-reporting, which consisted of items scored on a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.The estimated time to complete the online survey was 10 minutes.

To protect the participants' rights and privacy and keep the data more reliable, the participants excluded the current students who are taking Chinese courses at AUB. Furthermore, the students were not invited to participate in the survey by the researcher, the instructor of the Chinese courses. Instead, Dr. Michael Vermy, advisor of the thesis, sent the invitation letter (see Appendix 3) to the students via email to introduce them to the study being conducted and to ask them to consider participating in the survey anonymously.

In this study, what the researcher tries to present is the AUB students' anxiety in recognizing and reading Chinese at the beginner level in a non-Chinese context. To successfully explore the answers to the three research questions, the reliability was tested and the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.734 (see Table 3.7, page 66), which is higher than 0.70 and thus indicates that the survey is acceptable and reliable, according to Dornyei (2003).

Table 3.7 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.734	.733	24

Data Analysis

In this study, computer software known as SPSS(Statistic Package for Social Science) was employed to analyze the collected data. For instance, to answer the second research question, “Concerning the process of recognizing and reading Chinese characters as a source of source of provoking the AUB students’ anxiety in the learning process?” some quantitative statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, were computed. Meanwhile, in order to investigate the possible correlation of the participants’ background (e.g. gender, purpose, level, etc.) on recognizing and reading Chinese, SPSS was also adopted. This helped detect how the students’ background information affects their Chinese recognition and reading Chinese. Additionally, Pearson Product-Moment correlation analysis was conducted to obtain the correlation between reading anxiety and reading performance rank in Chinese.

Discussion on Reliability

Validity has always been a concern in educational research. It is defined by scholars in various ways: Kenneth R. Howe (1992) viewed it as the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from data. William et al. (1997) proposed that,

in general, for something to be valid it should be based on facts or evidence. Yuan Jun (2006) considered it as specific to the appropriateness of the interpretations made from the scores. However, it is well recognized that the term “validity” has two components of meanings and can be illustrated simultaneously by two concepts: internal validity and external validity. The two validities are involved and should be discussed in the context of present research.

Internal validity refers to the confidence placed in the cause-and-effect relationship. There are threats to internal validity theoretically. However, in this research, the internal validity will be discussed from the perspectives below.

The first aspect is the means of data collection. In a number of studies, the data are collected by various ways, such as interviewing face-to-face, filling out questionnaires, sending emails. For example, during the research on foreign language anxiety, many scholars (Young, 1990, 1999; Williams, 1991; Saito et al., 1996, 1999; Spitali, 2000; Elkhafafi, 2005; Zhao, 2009; Wei et al., 2012; Zhao et al., 2013) adopted one and/or both of them and conducted them in the same study. This may suggest that a combination of models of data collection is good to have because it gives us abundant data to analyze. On the other hand, it is easy to get conflicting data. In the current study, only an online survey was used to collect data for various reasons: for instance, as required by IRB, the participants were limited to the students who graduated, however, most of them live and/or work in many places and countries and thus it was very difficult to get data by other

means, e.g. face-to-face interviews. Meanwhile, among the items of the survey, not all of them were offered in a positive pattern. For example, Item 17 was “Speaking Chinese is more important to me than being able to write in characters” instead of “Writing characters is not as important as speaking Chinese” with the same scoring order. Although they could almost present the same meaning with either positive or negative way This might lead to data with differences for two reasons: each response was transferred into a score (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) when computed the alpha coefficient “r”; and the alpha coefficient “r” is calculated based on the scores.

The second aspect would be the instrument itself. For example, an instrument that can measure what the designer aims to measure and can yield consistent results among the same sample over time is highly desired instrument. However, the three widely-used measurements of anxiety in learning a foreign language, namely, Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLAS), Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) could not meet the demands of measuring anxiety of the students’ reading anxiety in Chinese learning accurately. For example, in the item “I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me if I make a mistake while reading Chinese aloud.” This is because the way of reading could vary from course to course or from instructor to instructor. For instance, if this reading takes place in a reading exercise class, the instructor will ask the class to try reading some new words after learning most or all of the previous characters. For the new Chinese

words, it is very common for most students to read them incorrectly. Therefore, it is no wonder that students may laugh at others or even at themselves when they make mistakes because the laughter may just represent a kind of interest or the strangeness of hearing this Chinese word again. The way of reading, however, isn't the only reason why some students might be afraid of other students laughing at them. The features of Chinese, mainly the use of both the Latin script and characters, can also contribute to this fear. For example, if a student is asked to read a sentence or paragraph written in characters rather than Pinyin, they might worry about confusing characters which they recognize, and so they make mistakes while reading.

The third aspect might be the participants. Paulhus (1991) proposed that, when conducting a survey, the validity was massively dependent on the respondent's honesty in responding. However, some of them may sometimes hide their honest responses in order not to give a bad impression of themselves and as a way of self-deception. For example, when some students received the invitation email from Dr. Michael Vermy, the Principal Investigator of the present study, and realized the purpose of the survey is to explore some possible relations among the Chinese learners, they might have thought the designer's purpose is to reach a positive or negative conclusion, or they might have wanted to help the designer because the designer was an instructor they liked, or they might have ended the course(s) with a good grade. Perhaps they chose the highest or lowest scale(s) in some items of the survey regardless of their true experience. On the

other hand, some respondents engage in self-deception when responding to the survey when they imagine themselves to be different from their real behaviors in the learning process; e.g. when being asked what his/ her primary purpose of taking the course(s) was, a student may present himself/herself as a keen learner genuinely interested in learning a new language rather than simply taking the course in order to complete credits. Another example might be students who took the Chinese course(s) one or two years ago, now, and who may have forgotten some of the true impressions they experienced while taking the course. So when they respond to the survey, it is possible for some of them to choose the “Strongly Agree” (SA) or “Strongly Disagree” (SD) options as much as possible since they only remember their final grades for the course(s) now.

External validity should be considered as well. Alreck and Settle (1985) claimed that, in a survey, the response rate affects both the research analysis and the result, and therefore it is considered as an indicator of external validity. In this research, some variables may lead to different response rates: for example, the learner’s main purpose of taking the course. Chinese courses 201 and 202 are electives at the American University of Beirut. In Chinese 201, most of the students registered for it because their primary purpose was to get credits for the course. In this case, it is not right to view them as highly-motivated students and expect them to spend too much time on learning Chinese. In contrast, the students in Chinese 202, the more advanced course, were very motivated, showed more effort in the language course (including reading Chinese) and gained more experience on reading and writing Chinese.

Therefore, the response rate of Chinese 202 is logically higher than that of Chinese 201.

Furthermore, the representativeness of the sample size is another factor which may threaten the external validity: for instance, as stated earlier, for some undergraduates, they are limited in the number of elective courses they can take. They did not have a chance to take the language course(s). The others can be divided into three groups: the first one is the students who took Chinese course(s) before the spring semester of 2012 and who are not included in this research; the second is the students who took the course for the first few weeks and then dropped the course -- it is possible that some of them stopped learning due to the high-level anxiety in Chinese reading; the third is those who tried working hard on their Chinese but scored under 60 out of 100 in the course at the end, since those students had very low attendance and could not pass the course and so they could not take the survey. Similarly, their responses might also be helpful for the research. Therefore, undoubtedly, these aspects may cause few responses and threaten the representativeness. Furthermore, a total of 125 previous students were invited to participate in the research, finally, 61 of them accepted and took part in the survey, but only 55 of them responded to all items of the online survey. Among these participants, 21 (38.2%) were male students and the remaining 34 (61.8%) were female students.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Numerous studies have been conducted in the fields relevant to foreign language anxiety and reading anxiety in learning many foreign languages, such as French, Spanish, Russian and Japanese. However, very few researchers showed interest in the study of anxiety and reading anxiety in the Chinese language learning process, except for Aiping Zhao.

Zhao's (2009, 2013) studies, with Chinese as the target language, revealed the construct of Chinese language reading anxiety and the reading process of the logographic language. However, Zhao's (2009, 2013) research put focus on the Chinese learners at intermediate and advanced levels and limited them to the United States, a country in which English is widely-used and is the native language of the majority of its citizens.

Based on the previous studies and the two measurements for language anxiety, namely, FLCAS and FLRAS, the two-part questionnaire with 32 items was designed in the survey. To answer the three research questions, these items are divided into the groups according to their relations to the questions: With respect to the first question, concerning the difficulty of characters for beginners, the answer can be derived from Item 6 (see Appendix 1). As for the second question, concerning the recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud as sources of reading anxiety, among the survey, items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29 and 32 (see Appendix 2) are

closely relevant to this question and can be used as explanations. Regarding the third question, concerning the correcting factors with student's reading anxiety, the answer can be found based on the items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18, 20, 25, 26, 30 and 31 (see Appendixes 1 and 2).

After grouping each of the 32 items in line with the research questions, the following results of AUB students' responses to these major questions become clear.

AUB Students' Answers to Research Question 1:

Among the 32 items in the survey, Item 6 was designed to answer the question directly, as revealed in Figure 5 (page 61), and Tables 4.1 and 4.2 through descriptive statistics, in terms of the most difficult part in the Chinese learning process, a large proportion of participants (61.8%) chose Chinese characters, which was much higher than the three other aspects: Pinyin (the pronunciation system), Chinese grammar and speaking Chinese. The mean was 2.56, the Standard Deviation is 0.918. There is a big difference between 2.56 and 0.918, and the Mode is "2", which indicated that Chinese character part was the most difficult.

Table 4.1 Statistics of the Most Difficult Part in Chinese Learning

N	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Mode
55	55	0	2.56	2.00	.918	2

Table 4.2 Statistics of the Most Difficult Part in Chinese Learning (by percentage)

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Pinyin	2	3.6	3.6
Chinese characters	34	61.8	65.5
Chinese grammar	5	9.1	74.5
Speaking Chinese	14	25.5	100.0
Total	55	100.0	

Furthermore, it is very interesting to notice that in item 8, based on the students' experience in learning Chinese : reading, speaking, writing and understandig, most of them rated themselves lower than that in others. This may indictae the participants experienced more difficulties in reading part.

AUB Students' Answers Related to Research Question 2

Considering the sources provoking the AUB students' reading anxiety in learning Chinese, the participants responded to 16 items from Appendix 2, and expressed their feelings and views through frequency of responses to the items in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Percentage of Questions Answered

Item	Percent (%)				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
13: Recognizing Chinese characters is difficult because the writing system (in characters) is different.	3.6	14.5	12.7	29.1	40.0
14. I prefer recognizing Chinese characters with Pinyin rather than their English meaning	7.3	14.5	5.5	29.1	43.6
15. I prefer reading Chinese words/sentences using Pinyin rather than characters.	12.7	9.1	5.5	16.4	56.4
16. I would learn Chinese better if it were written in Pinyin than with characters.	1.8	9.1	12.7	21.8	54.5
17. I recognize characters but I forget their meanings in English.	3.6	20.0	16.4	27.3	32.7
19. If I see a character I have studied, I can read it aloud.	7.3	7.3	14.5	40.0	30.9
21. Once I get used to guessing the meaning of characters, reading Chinese in characters is not difficult.	14.5	30.9	9.1	34.5	10.9
22. I get upset when I encounter two different words that are similar (in sound)	0	16.4	7.3	38.2	38.2
23. I get upset when I encounter two different characters that are similar (in form).	1.8	10.9	10.9	40.0	36.4
24. I get upset whenever I encounter unknown sentences patterns when reading Chinese aloud.	0	29.1	18.2	38.2	14.5
27. I can read sentences written in characters aloud if I know the Chinese grammar well.	9.1	23.6	3.6	38.2	25.5
28. Compared to other foreign languages I have studied, it is/was hard to learn to pronounce Chinese Pinyin.	60.0	34.5	1.8	1.8	1.8
29. Compared to other foreign languages I have studied, Chinese was hard to learn to guess the meaning of words written in characters.	14.5	12.7	1.8	38.2	32.7
32. If Chinese were only written in Pinyin, more people would like to learn Chinese.	5.5	3.6	0	18.2	72.7

(Notes: Strongly Disagree = SD, Disagree = D, Neither agree nor disagree = N, Agree = A, or Strongly Agree = SA)

When taking a careful look at the items above, it is very interesting to notice that all of the items can be divided into five groups or form five aspects, namely, writing system (Chinese written in either Pinyin or characters), difficulty of pronunciation of Chinese, difficulty of forms of characters, Chinese grammar, and difficulty of guessing the meanings of characters.

With respect to the writing system, 69% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the item 13 that said “recognizing Chinese characters is difficult because the writing system (in characters) is different,” 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed with item 14 that stated “I prefer recognizing Chinese characters with Pinyin rather than their English meaning,” 72% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the argument, in item 15, “I prefer reading Chinese words/sentences using Pinyin rather than characters,” 76.3% of students agreed or strongly agreed that item 16 “I would learn Chinese better if it were written in Pinyin than with characters” was true; 60% of students agreed or strongly agreed with item 17 saying “I recognize characters but I forget their meanings in English.” As for item 19, “If I see a character I have studied, I can read it aloud,” 70.9% of students agreed or strongly agreed with it; 45.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed with item 22 “Once I get used to guessing meaning of characters, reading Chinese in characters is not difficult, and on item 32 “If Chinese were only written in Pinyin, more people would like to learn Chinese,” 90.9% of students agreed or strongly agreed with it.

In terms of difficulty of pronouncing Chinese words, the responses were as

indicated in items 14 and 20: in the statement “I get upset when I encounter two different words that are similar (in sound),” 76.4% of participants had such an experience, while 16.4% did not, and 7.3% neither agreed nor disagreed that; for “Compared to other foreign languages I have studied, it is/was hard to learn to pronounce Chinese Pinyin,” 3.6% of the students argued that they had this feeling, while 94% of them claimed that Chinese was not hard to pronounce comparing to other languages, the remainder kept a neutral stand.

As for difficulty of the forms of characters, AUB students presented different views in item 23, “I get upset when I encounter two different characters that are similar (in form)”: 76.4% of students agreed or strongly agreed with it, while 1.8% of them strongly disagreed with it, 10.9% simply disagreed it and 10.9% held a neutral opinion.

Regarding Chinese grammar, items 24 and 27 were closely related to this: among the students, 52.7% agreed to the statement stating “I get upset whenever I encounter unknown sentence patterns when reading Chinese aloud.” By contrast, 47.3% strongly disagreed or disagreed to it; and in responding to the view that “I can read sentences written in characters aloud if I know the Chinese grammar well,” 63.7% strongly agreed or agreed with it, 32.7% strongly disagreed or disagreed, and 3.6% were indifferent.

In relation to the difficulty of guessing meaning of characters, as showed in responses to item 29 “Compared to other foreign languages I have studied, Chinese was hard to learn to guess the meaning of words written in characters,” of the

participants, 70.9% either simply or strongly agreed, while 29.3% of participants either simply or strongly disagreed with the statement, and 1.8% considered it neutrally.

Prior to exploring the relation between these five variables and AUB students' Chinese reading proficiency with the aid of the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, it is necessary to provide the descriptive statistics for their Chinese reading proficiency.

Table 4.4 Descriptive Statistics of the AUB Students' Reading Proficiency:

	Reading Proficiency
Mean	2.64
Median	3.00
Std. Deviation	0.677
Range	3
Minimum	1
Maximum	4

Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics of the AUB Students' Reading Performance (by percentage)

Proficiency	Frequency	Percent (%)
Bad	3	5.5
Fair	17	30.8
Good	32	58.2
Very Good	3	5.5

AUB Students' Answers Related to Research Question 3

This question explored what variables are related to reading anxiety in Chinese among AUB students from two perspectives: one is the participants' background information, such as gender, language background, course level, time spent on Chinese after classes, amount of expose to Chinese and other linguistic landscape. The other is the students' subjective purpose(s) for taking the course, and perspectives on the language e.g. getting credits, and ideas on Chinese language, these results are shown in Table 4.3. To investigate whether gender affects reading anxiety in Chinese during the learning process, 55 (n=55) AUB students were required to state whether they were male or female. As evidenced in Table 4.4, 69.1% were female, while 30.9 were male. However, as showed in Table 4.6, there is almost no difference between Female students' performance (M=2.74, Std. = 1.005) and male students' performance (M=2.76, Std. = 1.033) in reading Chinese.

Table 4.6 Descriptive Statistics of the AUB Students' Chinese Reading (gender)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	38	1	5	2.74	1.005
Male	17	1	4	2.76	1.033
Valid N	55				

The second variable stemmed from students' language background information: with regard to the native language, among the participants, 70.9% were Arabic native speakers, 23.6% were English native speakers, 5.5% were

French native speakers. Meanwhile, as stated in the item 8, native and second language(s): all of them were bilingual or multilingual, namely, both Arabic and English, both Arabic and French, or Arabic, English and French. Furthermore, it is very interesting to notice that, for the majority of AUB students, they reported that their proficiencies in English, including reading, speaking, writing and understanding, are higher than other languages, even higher than their Arabic, which near three fourths of them regarded it as their native language or one of their native languages, as evidenced in the Tables 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 (see page 50 to page 53).

The third variable was students' course level(s), which can be seen from Figure 3.3 (page 46) and the Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Descriptive Statistics of the AUB Students' Chinese Reading (levels)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Chinese 201	38	1	5	2.66	1.021
Chinese 202	17	1	4	2.94	.966
Valid N	55				

Based on the table, it seems that the students who came from Chinese 202 (M = 2.94, Std. = .966) read Chinese better than those of Chinese 201 (M = 2.66, Std. = 1.021). In this study, the students came from two levels, either Chinese 201 or Chinese 202, both levels were considered as Introductory Chinese or beginner levels, according to the Office of Chinese Language Council International (2014). Among them, 69.1% were from Chinese 201, an introductory Chinese for the students who

took Chinese from scratch, 30.9% came from Chinese 202, an introductory Chinese for the students taking Chinese for the second semester.

The fourth variable “time spent on Chinese after class” was also regarded as a factor which is related to the anxiety of reading Chinese. In this sample, four choices were adopted: less than one hour, one to two hours, two to four hours, and more than four hours. During the semester, 41.8% students spent less than one hour on reviewing Chinese course material after class per week, 32.7% students spent one to two hours, 16.4% students spent two to 4 hours, 9.1% students spent more than four hours (see Figure 3.4 on page 47). However, when the time they spent on the course after classes is considered together with their reading performance, the finding is there is almost no relationship between them. This is not conjunction with many others’ claims: the much more time students spend on the language, the better performance they will show. The explanation for this could be out of the nature of the Chinese course. At AUB, as stated early, the courses were taught as free electives rather than compulsory or major course, with three-time lectures per week. In other words, in the limited time, the courses were given integratedly (i.e. combination of reading, speaking, listening, writing and translating) and it was hard to require students spend more time on reading only. Therefore, the finding differs from E.g. Zhao (2009) found that the much more time the students spend on the reading, generally, most of scholars the correlation between time spent and the reading performance is indicated in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8 Correlations between Time Spent and the Students' Reading Performance

	N	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2 tailed)
Chinese Reading	55	1.000	.452
Time Spent	55	.104	.
Valid N	55		

The fifth variable lied in “the main purpose(s) of learning Chinese.” 54.5% of AUB students admitted that “to get the elective credits” was their main purpose, 78.2% claimed that it’s “because I like the language,” 43.6% agreed that “I would like to travel to China,” a small number of them (27.3%) thought another purpose was “I would like to work in China/ with Chinese people,” 20% agreed that they took the course in order to help them when “doing business with Chinese people.” In addition, 8 students added other purposes, such as “because it's an interesting language and knowing Chinese would make one unique/ stand out in a way,” “It would be useful,” “I like to learn many languages,” “It will help me find jobs,” and “I want to study in China.” But, it is not easy to find the correlation with their Chinese reading performance, because most of the participants agreed more than one of the statements.

As showed in Table 3.1 (page 49), the sixth variable that is discussed is what makes “a good Chinese learner,” among the participants, 63.6% agreed “he/she gives the meaning of characters,” 78.2% stated “he/she recognizes characters and can tell you what their meanings in English,” 76.4% trust “he/she knows how to pronounce a word when seeing a character,” 80% thought “he/she knows Chinese grammar well,” 74.5% agreed “he/she translates sentences correctly,” 72.7% argued “he/she speaks

Chinese, even without knowing characters,” and 76.4% agreed “he/she pronounces Chinese well.” Based on this responses, it is easy to found for the students, most of them attached more importance to the grammar, recognizing characters, and pronouncing Chinese than others, such as giving the meanings of characters, and speaking Chinese without knowing characters.

Meanwhile, reading anxiety in the classroom was affected by other factors, such as the learner’s confidence andthe topic of the reading materials, as evidenced in the table below.

Table 4.9 Frequencies of Other Variables

Item	Percent (%)				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
9. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me if I make a mistake while reading Chinese aloud.	47.3	21.8	3.6	10.9	16.4
10. I feel anxious to read Chinese aloud when I have to read Chinese aloud in the classroom without preparation.	27.3	16.4	9.1	21.8	25.5
11. I feel that the other students read Chinese aloud better than I do.	36.4	29.1	9.1	12.7	12.7
12. I feel confident when I read Chinese aloud in the classroom.	9.1	14.5	23.6	30.9	21.8
18. I am nervous when I am reading a passage in Chinese characters when I am not familiar with the topic or context.	3.6	10.9	14.5	45.5	25.5
20. I feel intimidated whenever I see a whole paragraph of Chinese characters in front of me.	7.2	14.5	12.7	10.0	25.5
25. Speaking Chinese is more important to me than being able to write it in characters.	3.6	18.2	7.3	41.8	29.1
26. It is possible to speak fluent Chinese without knowing any Chinese characters since spoken Chinese is based on pronouncing Pinyin rather than Chinese characters.	7.3	5.5	0	20.0	67.3
30. If I have more chances to be exposed to Chinese characters in Lebanon, I will recognize Chinese characters better.	1.8	3.6	3.6	21.8	69.1
31. In Lebanon, I see few opportunities of exposure to Chinese characters in our daily lives.	0	3.6	1.8	18.2	76.4

Concerning the students' attitude toward the language, the responses are revealed in items 25 and 26 in Appendix 2: 70.9% held or strongly held that "speaking Chinese is more important to me than being able to write it in characters," while 21.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, the remaining (7.3%) considered it neutrally; on the statement "It is possible to speak Chinese fluently without knowing any Chinese characters since spoken Chinese is based on pronouncing Pinyin rather than Chinese characters," 87.3% agreed or strongly agreed with this item.

In this study, students also presented different confidence levels in their reading Chinese, as indicated in the followings: a majority (69.1) disagreed or strongly disagreed with item 9 stating "I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me if I make a mistake while reading Chinese aloud," while 27.3% agreed or strongly agreed with this; and another 65.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with item 3 that argued "I feel anxious to read Chinese aloud when I have to read Chinese aloud better than I do," 52.7% agreed or strongly agreed with item 4 that says "I feel confident when I read Chinese aloud in the classroom."

Preparation, familiar topic or context, length of text were tested as sources of reading anxiety, this can be seen from the following items: 43.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed with item 10 which states "I feel anxious to read Chinese aloud when I have to read Chinese aloud in the classroom without preparation," by contrast, 47.3% agreed or strongly agreed with it. It seems there is very little difference between the two extremes; 71% agreed or strongly agreed with item 10 "I am nervous when I am reading a passage in Chinese characters when I am not familiar with the

topic or context,”65.5% felt or strongly felt “intimidated when I see a whole paragraph of Chinese characters in front of me.”Additionally, both item 30 and item 31 explored the connection between the amount of exposure to Chinese characters and reading anxiety: on this statement, a majority of participants (90.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that if they had more chances of being exposed to Chinese characters in Lebanon, they would have recognized Chinese characters better, and the majority (94.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that “In Lebanon, I see few opportunities of exposure to Chinese characters in my daily life.”

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Over the decades, anxiety in reading foreign languages has been explored among many syllabic or alphabetic languages, such as English, French and Spanish, but Chinese has rarely been studied as the target language, which adopts two writing systems, namely, one alphabetic writing system and one logographic system. Based on three research questions, this chapter presents an extensive discussion of the findings of the present study. First, it comes up with the interpretations which support the hypothesis that characters are the most difficult part in learning Chinese at the beginner levels. Then, a detailed explanation pertaining to the process of recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud becomes a major source provoking the AUB students’ anxiety in the learning process by exploring the supported and unsupported correlations between anxiety in reading Chinese and some sources. Finally, the

possible implications for teaching practice and suggestions for future research are discussed.

The Most Difficult Part in Chinese Learning

As evidenced in the item 6, 61.8% of the subjects agreed or strongly agreed that, among the four aspects in the processing of learning Chinese at the beginner level, Pinyin, Chinese characters, grammar, and speaking Chinese, the part of the characters was the most difficult in the progress of learning Chinese as a foreign language. This was also can be seen from the result of “Mode” is “2.”

At AUB, due to the nature of Chinese course, that is, the course being offered as an free elective and -not a humanities course, most of students would like to take the course for one semester before their graduation, therefore, it was necessary and important for them to be exposed to basics, such as pronunciation, most-commonly used vocabulary written in both Pinyin and characters, grammar (sentence patterns), and speaking Chinese. With regard to pronunciation in Chinese language, it refers to Pinyin, a system of pronouncing or reading Chinese written in alphabetic ways, which includes spelling and tone(s). By the end of each semester, the students were expected to achieve the following learning outcomes: master the basic rules of Pinyin (e.g. recognize initials and finals), differentiate the four tones and read tones correctly, pronounce any Chinese characters in dictionaries correctly, and read words, phrases and sentences correctly, as showed in Appendix 5, Syllabus for Chinese 201.

Chinese is a tonal language. Beginners who learn Chinese do not start with

the writing system, but start with Pinyin in which Latin letters are borrowed and used with tone markers. Take a Chinese word “hǎo” as an example. In this Pinyin, the spelling is “hao”; “h” functions as the initial; “ao” functions as the final; while the mark “v” is one of the “intonations/ tones that sit above the vowels”; The English meaning of this word is “good.” Interestingly, the alphabet introduced in Pinyin is the same as that in English, with the exception of one letter “ü”. Namely, letters are employed in the Chinese alphabet, they are a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, ü, w, x, y, and z. Meanwhile, the pronunciations for letters and syllables are easy to master if students can pronounce English letters and syllables (or the international phonetic system) well, such as b [b]; p [p]; m [m]; ai [ai]; ao [ao]; iao [iao] (see more examples in Appendix 5 “Comparison Table for Chinese Pinyin and the International Phonetic Symbols”). When these letters and syllables are used in specific words, a majority of them are pronounced in the same way. Take some words as instances: the Pinyin for “you (singular)” is “nǐ,” “n” is the initial, which is equal to the letter with which a word can be started in English, while “ǐ” is used as the final. If the pronunciation is written in the International Phonetic Alphabet, it is similar to [ni]; the Pinyin for “good” is “hǎo,” “h” is used as the initial, while “ao” is used as the final. The pronunciation for this Pinyin is similar to [h a u] ; The Pinyin “ma” is put at end of a sentence and functions as a question mark, indicating that the sentence is an interrogative sentence. In this Pinyin, “m” is the initial, while “a” is the final, the pronunciation sounds like [m^]. Therefore, the pronunciation for the whole sentence is “ [ni] [h a u] [m^] ?” Which means “How are you?”

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, to learn the pronunciations of spelling with different intonations it is essential to read the word shown in letters. In the Chinese alphabet, there are six vowels: a, o, e, i, u, ü. In one Pinyin, there is one intonation if it is not neutral. In addition, for the same spelling, meanings differ from tone to tone. Sometimes, for non-Chinese speakers, differentiating tones is part of the difficulty in studying Chinese, e.g., some students could not tell the difference between the second tone and the third tone. Take two specific words as the samples: Pinyin “ma” is a particle, indicating an interrogative sentence; “mā” means “mum,” “má” represents “numb,” “mǎ” stands for “horse,” while “mà” means “curse.” Additionally, homophones exist in Chinese just as they do in English, e.g. “gē” could be used to mean “old brother” or “song.” However, at the beginner level, such as in Chinese courses at two levels at AUB, there were a small number of such words.

On the other hand, one of the main learning outcomes for these beginners was to be able to communicate with native Chinese speakers on some daily topics by the end of each semester; in other words, lectures were conducted with practical exercises as the core. In certain settings, the speakers’ words can be understood even if he/she pronounced the tone incorrectly, because the listener can guess the exact word from the context. From the examples mentioned previously, it seems that Pinyin was not a difficult portion in Chinese learning for the native English speakers and the other foreigners who are well educated in English, as indicated in the items.

In classes of learning Chinese as a foreign or a second language (L2), students are exposed to Chinese characters, which is a different writing system of

Chinese. They are asked to recognize, read and write these characters since Pinyin is used for beginners only, both in China and outside. By contrast, writing in characters is the official system of the language and is applied widely, such as in printed documents, books, and other reading materials, websites, and TV programs. Thus, in the classroom of learning Chinese as a second or a foreign language, characters are introduced as a part of the language and have always been viewed as a headache for a majority of beginners (Young, 2002; Zhao, 2009). For example, at AUB, in the two-level Chinese courses, characters were an important part of the course.

Nevertheless, the requirements for each course were different: for the students of Chinese 201, by the end of each semester, they were expected to recognize the structures of Chinese characters, recognize radicals and basic components of characters, recognize strokes and identify stroke orders of Chinese characters, write them in correct order, understand the relationships between Pinyin and the characters, characters and word-formations, memorize 100 most commonly-used Chinese characters, and recognize Pinyin and the English meanings of 300 Chinese characters, and read the characters in a word, phrase and sentence. The students of Chinese 202, on the other hand, were expected to recognize all strokes of Chinese characters, memorize the 30 most commonly-used radicals, write Chinese characters correctly, memorize 200 Chinese characters, recognize 500 Chinese characters, master some techniques and learning skills to enlarge their vocabulary, use Chinese-English freely, and read dialogues, paragraphs, short stories and poetry correctly, both in Pinyin and characters.

In the process of learning Pinyin, characters, words and phrases, all of the students were also exposed to Chinese grammar to practice them in situational settings, such as putting them in some sentences or situational dialogues, orally and in writing. To engage the students in Chinese grammar and encourage them to study it well, specific sentence patterns were taught in each lecture. In Chinese 201, AUB students were exposed to 23 sentence patterns (grammar) throughout the semester; while in Chinese 202, the students were expected to know around 40 sentence patterns. When the students were familiar with certain patterns by analysis, discussions and practice, they could know how to apply them to meet various purposes.

As indicated in item 5 in Appendix 1, the AUB students came to the classroom with different purposes of taking the course: getting credits, knowing some basic knowledge on a challenging foreign language, communicating with the native speakers in the future, studying in China, etc. Therefore, to meet a majority of students' demands, speaking Chinese was highlighted. Every semester, at the beginning of most of the classes, e.g. in Chinese 202, students were always required to practice speaking Chinese for 10 minutes in pairs or in groups.

Compared to pronouncing words, using vocabulary written both in Pinyin and characters, forming sentences and speaking Chinese, it seems that characters are the most time-consuming and the most challenging part of the process of learning Chinese. This may be in conjunction with the findings by Sun (1993). In his study, Sun

The Process of Reading Chinese And the Sources of Anxiety of Reading Chinese

In relation to the previous studies on reading anxiety in learning L2 or FL, many languages have been introduced and studied by a large body of researchers, such as English, Spanish, French, German, Russian, and so on. Chinese had been ignored till recently (Zhao, 2009, 2013).

Although learning is a continuous process, Tobias (1986) came up with a useful mode in which he regarded the learning process in three stages (Input, Processing, and Output) to explain the effects of anxiety. In this model, the Input Stage refers to illustrating the learner's first experiences with a given stimulus as a given time, which associated with the initial representation of items in memory. The Processing Stage involves the cognitive operations performed on organization, storage, and assimilation of the material. The Output Stage refers to a process in which the learner is expected to demonstrate his /or her abilities to use the second-or foreign language to produce or reproduce previous input stimulus or materials, and in this stage involves many unseen, internal manipulations of items taken in at the first stage, Input stage. Tobias also proposed that the performance at the Output Stage can be measured by various ways, such as test scores, verbal production, and qualities of free speech. Meanwhile, the three stages are interdependent, e.g. difficulty in performance at the Output Stage may be caused by deficits created at the Input and Processing Stages.

Tobias's three-stage theory has been employed by a good number of scholars in their studies. For instance, Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced this model one of in

their studies and observed that the material has been learned but that their test performance does not reflect that learning. This indicated that there is interference at the Output Stage and supported Tobias' stage theory. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b) investigated the effects of anxiety on input and output in native and second languages by adopting Tobias' model and noted that significant correlations between language anxiety and second language performance at the two stages. Following this, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991c) noted that existing scales of language anxiety have been primarily focused on output.

According to Tobias' three-stage model, for students learning Chinese as a second or foreign language, they should experience or have experienced the three stages, Input, Processing, and Output. Likewise, reading Chinese is considered as a way of production or reproduction and therefore belongs to the Output Stage. However, due to the features of the Chinese language, e.g. sound pronunciation and two writing systems employed at the language classroom, this production involves more sources and effects. For instance, when Chinese words or sentences are written in Pinyin, the reader has to recall the pronunciation and even the English meaning. By contrast, if the words or sentences are given in characters only, the reader cannot find the pronunciation from the form of the characters directly, as demonstrated in item 13, since characters and their pronunciation correlate with each other in certain ways: for most characters, each of them was assigned one Pinyin when the Pinyin system was designed. This kind of corresponding relation was established and has been kept in use all the time once Pinyin is given to a specific character. E.g. in Chinese,

the character “你” (you) was given a Pinyin and pronounced as “nǐ,” “好” (good) was given a Pinyin and pronounced as “hǎo,” “妈” (mum) was assigned a pinyin “mā.”

Generally, the relationship between character and Pinyin is one-to-one. At the same time, some homophones, which are words sharing the same pronunciation but having different forms and meanings, exist among Chinese characters too and make the sound mediation inefficient. Take character “歌” as an example: There are two characters that are spelled and pronounced “gē” but the characters are not the same, one is “哥,” meaning “old brother”; the other is “歌,” which means “song,” as indicated in item 22. Additionally, some characters have more than one Pinyin (or pronunciation), which means that they are polysemous. An example of this is “好,” which refers to “good (adjective)” when it is spelled and pronounced as “hǎo”; but represents “love (verb)” or “like (verb)” when it is spelled and pronounced as “hào,” as stated in the item 23. Therefore, when a learner tries to read a character, the first thing he /she has to do is to recall the corresponding Pinyin. Thus, something interesting happens when a Chinese learner does it in verse, particularly those who are English-speaking learners. In languages with alphabetic orthographies (e.g. English), the reader’s habit of word recognition skill and phonological mediation is employed frequently by analyzing the word’s component letters (Taft, 1985; Jordan, Thomas, Patching and Scott Brown, 2003; Martelli, Majaj and Pelli, 2005; Rayner et al. 2006; Zhao, 2009; Wang et al. 2013).

Therefore, it seems that, during the recognition of both Pinyin and Chinese characters, and guessing their English meanings, English speakers like transferring

their word skills and phonological mediation(it is a learning way in which a foreign language learner applies his/ or her knowledge on phonology from his/ or her native language to the foreign language) from their native language (L1) to Chinese (L2 or FL): It is natural for them to read Pinyin very well without knowing any characters and the English meanings, and to speak to Chinese natives fluently without knowing any characters, as evidenced in the item 26. This is consistent with many previous findings that native or near-native English speakers are used to transferring their word recognition skill to their second or foreign language, e.g., Wang, Koda and Perfetti (2000), and this is can be seen from items 15 and 16. On the other hand, for these English-speakers, this impedes their recognition of Chinese characters with the aid of the sound mediation. Consequently, a learner has to create connections between the characters and the pronunciations prior to recalling the pronunciation. What is more, due to characters being completely different from English and Pinyin, when he /she wants to recall the English meaning of a word or a sentence written in characters, a learner has to create the connections between characters and their English meanings, and identify the characters by employing some word recognition skills, such as features, structure, and radical of the Chinese character (Taft et al. 1999; Wang et al., 2013), particularly in the process of reading Chinese in characters aloud, a learner has to recall the Pinyin (or pronunciation) and the English meaning simultaneously and cognitively. Taken together, reading Chinese is a cognitive process in which four aspects are involved, namely, pronunciation, identification, differentiation, and guessing the meaning of Pinyin and the characters. However, all of them are derived

from writing systems that have been adopted in the Chinese language. In other words, it is the progress of recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud that provokes the AUB students' anxiety in learning.

Conclusion

Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed that, when language anxiety research is conducted, researchers should study its more subtle effects, namely, the relation between anxiety and the more specific processes involved in language acquisition and communication. Zhao (2009) and Zhao et al. (2013) suggested that, reading anxiety do exist among the English-speaking students when they took Chinese as a foreign language, there are a number of resources were relevant to the anxiety, unfamiliar scripts (Chinese writing system) is one of them.

Nevertheless, in the present study, where AUB was the research setting, the purpose was to explore university-level Chinese learners' reading anxiety and the possible explanations by discussing three primary research questions.

At AUB, Chinese was taught to the students as a foreign language rather than second language or third language, and this course was counted as a free elective. Among the learners at basic level, namely, Chinese 201 and Chinese 202, they perceived the learning of characters as the biggest headache in Chinese learning, compared with other aspects of the language. Secondly, the students of AUB experienced anxiety in reading Chinese and had similar reasons or explanations for this feeling. Both of these findings are consistent with proposals by many researchers

(such as Young, 1994; Saito, 1999; Zhang, 2001; Shi and Liu, 2006; Qian, 2012) from their previous studies on reading anxiety in other languages that were studied as foreign or second languages: during the course of learning, learners have anxiety in reading, and this kind of anxiety was caused by numerous sources, such as pronunciation, grammar, unfamiliar topic, time spent on the language, reader's worry about the reading result and confidence, purposes of taking the course, his / her language background. Therefore, it is safe to make the conclusion that, during their study of the Chinese language, AUB students had the same or similar causes that made reading Chinese difficult, in other words, the findings of this research support the FLRA and FLCRA theories and these sources were identified as the reasons for affecting their reading.

On the other hand, in this study, if AUB students' reading anxiety is given a careful look, it is not hard to see that more sources that contributed to the reading anxiety and that affected the reading process significantly, although the causes listed previously looked like good explanations. For example, due to Chinese being written mostly in characters rather than in Pinyin, which is spelled with Latin letters, Chinese characters differ from Pinyin in various aspects. Secondly, when an English sentence is written both in Pinyin and in characters, the two writing systems of the Chinese language, some differences will be noticed, e.g., in the sentence written in characters, there is no space between the characters, while spaces exist between Pinyin since Pinyin is written in Latin letter(s) and based on single words, like English words in an English sentence. Furthermore, in the Chinese courses at AUB, the characters taught

were simplified ones, the most popular choice with the majority of learners of Chinese as a second (e.g. Singapore) or foreign language in the world. On one side, over the past years, several investigations have revealed that, because most Chinese characters are read by analyzing and synthesizing the component radicals, Chinese children use information derived from semantic radicals to recognize and read Chinese (Chen and Weeks, 2004; Law, Wong, Yeung, and Weekes, 2008; Leung and Ho, 2009). On the other side, compared to traditional characters, it is more difficult to create connections between the simplified characters' forms and the meanings they represent (Saito, et. al. 1999; Galambos, 2011; Wang, et. al. 2013; Zhao and Liu, 2013). In short, due to these techniques on recognizing and reading Chinese characters, reading traditional Chinese is easier than reading simplified ones. Surprisingly, up to now, neither simplified nor traditional characters accelerate the reading process and or reduce the reading anxiety, as evidenced in the study on reading anxiety by many scholars (Siokand Fletcher, 2001; Zhao, 2009, 2013; Tong and Chang, 2010). The present study does not address the differences between the simplified Chinese characters and the traditional characters.

Meanwhile, as evidenced in items 13 "Recognizing Chinese characters is difficult because the writing system (in characters) is different," 15 "I prefer reading Chinese words/sentences using Pinyin rather than characters," 16 "I would learn Chinese better if it were written in Pinyin than with characters," and 32 "If Chinese were only written in Pinyin, more people would like to learn Chinese," 69.1%, 72.8%, 76.3%, and 90.9% of the participants, agreed or strongly agreed with the

statements, respectively. In other words, AUB students, who were native or near-native English speakers, in their second or foreign language studies, preferred to transfer their L1 (native or near-native language) word recognition skills, and phonological mediation, to their second or foreign language, e.g. Chinese written in the form of Pinyin. Likewise, the English speakers have had the habit of using phonological mediation in recognizing English words. Thus, for AUB students, it is natural to apply phonological mediation while they decoded meaning from characters. Nevertheless, owing to the features of the two Chinese writing systems, e.g. Pinyin and characters, no direct relation was interacted between pronunciation and the meaning, or almost no connections could be created or found, as showed in items 17 “I recognize characters but I forget their meanings in English,” 21 “Once I get used to guessing the meaning of characters, reading Chinese in characters is not difficult,” and 29 “Compared to other foreign languages I have studied, Chinese was hard to learn to guess the meaning of words written in characters.” From the previous discussions on the two forms of Chinese writing (characters, an ideographic writing system, and Pinyin, an alphabetic writing system), it seems that it is these writing systems that are obstacles to the reading process and thus provoke the reading anxiety among the all of the variables, since the relationship between phonological awareness or ideographic meanings and Chinese readings is weaker than what has been found in alphabetic languages, e.g. English.

Also, as showed in the early figures and tables related to the students’ background information, it seems that their reading performance in Chinese was not

affect by the gender, language background, course level, time spent, and their views on the requirements of the good learner of the language.

Therefore, it can be seen that among these sources, the major source of foreign language anxiety identified in this study was the process of recognizing and reading Chinese characters. This is in conjunction with the findings by Sun (1993). In his study of testing eye-movement, Sun invited native-Chinese students from a Chinese primary school, a high school and a university, to read a text prepared in Pinyin and Chinese characters, and he noticed that, without exception, all of the students fixated longer on the Pinyin, took in smaller and more frequent amounts of information during each fixation of Pinyin text, and read the Pinyin text much slower than character text. This informs researchers of two findings: although Pinyin is serving its designated function in facilitating learning of Chinese from the phonological aspects, it will become more secondary once Chinese characters become the dominant of reading passages; the students of Chinese as a foreign or second language, might read Chinese words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs written in Pinyin rather than in characters better than the native-Chinese speakers. Both of the findings indicate that there are no or few corresponding connections between Pinyin and the characters, and the students' reading anxiety in the process of learning Chinese is more relevant to Chinese characters rather than Pinyin.

Limitations of the Research

In this research, some limitations may lie in the aspects below.

First, the representativeness of the participants might be affected by three factors: the writer of this study was the sole Chinese instructor at the American University of Beirut, therefore, to protect the respondents' rights and privileges, the writer was required by IRB that all participants in this study were limited to those who have already completed Chinese courses; Each semester, there were two sections for Chinese 201, while there was only one section for Chinese 202 because the Chinese courses were free electives rather than compulsory or major courses and the number of credits reserved for taking elective courses is limited. In fact, only 6 students or so completed the Chinese 202 each semester. This indicates that the size of the subjects who were involved in this study was small, although almost all of the students showed good learning performances (including reading proficiency) at the end of each semester. As a consequence, it is not easy to test that how the variable of course levels affect the students' reading anxiety.

Secondly, as required by IRB, before and during responding to the online survey, the author could not contact the previous students (participants) and most of the students had graduated from AUB and worked in different parts of the world for the sake of protecting the respondents' rights and privileges. Therefore, face-to-face interviews could not be scheduled, although they would have been helpful since they might have given the researcher more chances to follow up on the participants' responses and obtain more detailed information behind their responses or choices, e.g.

explanations or reasons for some specific items. On the contrary, it may weaken the result of the study.

Thirdly, the findings would be more convincing if two more items can be added to the LimeSurvey: “my knowledge of recognizing and reading English words helps me in recognizing and reading Chinese written in Pinyin”; and “my knowledge of recognizing and reading English words does not help me in recognizing and reading Chinese written in characters.” As we can see from these items, the participants’ responses could be utilized as the direct evidences proving how students’ language skills in English correlate with their Chinese reading anxiety.

Finally, all of the participants were taught by the same instructor, the writer of this research. Over the past two years, the instructor kept using the same teaching and learning materials, including the Chinese characters part (words and phrases), teaching them almost the same or similar basic Chinese knowledge, such as Pinyin (the spelling and pronunciation system of Chinese), Chinese characters, Chinese grammar or sentences’ patterns, Chinese daily and cultural expressions, and so on. Meanwhile, students didn’t have opportunities to apply their knowledge of Chinese to their daily life, for example, reading Chinese and/ or recognizing Chinese characters on and off campus. This may have misled students/ participants focused on what they were exposed to in the classroom and spent little attention on the Chinese off campus and beyond when they thought of the whole picture of the Chinese language.

Last but not least, reading Chinese characters can be defined and examined in various ways from researcher to researcher. For example, in terms of the ways of

reading, Chinese can be read in at least four ways: reading Chinese on the screens using projectors in front of classmates, reading Chinese on the board (on which the instructor wrote Chinese) in front of classmates; reading Chinese from the text book or hard copy materials in front of classmates; and reading Chinese from the text book or hard copy materials and recording it at home. This is because Chinese reading material can be provided in three ways: one is by being written on the blackboard by the instructor, the other is by providing published copies or text books, and the last is by sending a soft copy. As for Chinese itself, it can be divided into three groups: the first was that the reading material was offered in Chinese characters alone, the second was that the material was provided in Chinese characters along with Pinyin, the third one was that the material was written in Chinese characters and English meanings only, the fourth one could be the material was shown in Chinese characters, Pinyin and English meanings. Additionally, for the same content, Chinese could be written in either traditional scripts or simplified scripts. Undoubtedly, all of these ways might lead to different reading results and reading anxieties. In the present study, during the regular sessions of Chinese 201 and Chinese 202, the AUB students practiced reading simplified Chinese in most of ways mentioned above and used two of them more often: in front of class, students read the words, phrases, sentences and some short paragraphs, which were written by the instructor on the blackboard in either Chinese characters or Pinyin; and they read the words, phrases, sentences and some short paragraphs from printed materials in either Chinese characters or Pinyin. At the end of each semester, the students were examined by reading two printed paragraphs (one

was typed in simplified Chinese characters, the other was typed in Pinyin) online and recorded their readings (see Appendix 4). After that, the students were required to upload their reading results (audio files with MP3 format) on the Online Course Management System (Chinese MOODLE Course).

Implications for Teaching Practice

Although the present study has some limitations, for a Chinese language instructor, it is not difficult to find the current study will enrich and expand implications for teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages between chapters.

First of all, the study proposed that the students' reading anxiety is affected significantly by the writing system of Chinese. This could remind the Chinese language instructors of many methods that are relevant to the teaching and learning of characters, and may help the learners in experiencing less or low-level reading anxiety in Chinese learning process. The first way could be the selection of reading materials. As was found in the study, students thought they would learn Chinese better if they had reading materials written in Pinyin with English rather than in characters with Pinyin. Therefore, at the beginner levels, since the students were first exposed to learning of Pinyin, spent more time on learning and being familiar with the Pinyin, it was possible for them to read and speak Chinese without knowing any characters. Therefore, instructors can prepare different reading materials at different stages, e.g., during the period of learning Pinyin, the materials are offered in Pinyin along with the

English meanings; in the process of learning characters, the materials are given in characters, together with Pinyin and English meanings. The second way is to engage students in getting used to the writing system, both Pinyin and characters, and creating the connections between Pinyin and characters, and characters and the English meanings. For instance, with the aid of education technologies and soft programs, instructors employed some easy and simple online dictionaries with audio and story about the development of the characters or the word. Furthermore, instructors can edit audio or video reading and listening materials as well, e.g., instructors can read and record some Chinese characters, words, phrases and sentences in the textbook and ask students do the matching exercises between audio materials and the characters, or between characters and the English meanings, online and in-classroom. The third way is teaching students to know how to use soft programs to type Chinese in Pinyin and in characters with an American-style keyboard. As evidenced over the past years of teaching at AUB, this could bring students many good surprises, for example, after learning how to use the programs, they knew how to type characters based their knowledge of Pinyin, and could edit and study all of Pinyin and characters and the corresponding English meanings on their own. In addition, when practicing how to read, students can be asked to tell English meanings while reading lyrics or subtitles in characters on the screen.

Furthermore, based on the study, it seems that students' reading anxiety was closely related to many aspects, such as the participants' aims of taking the course, language background, amount of exposure to Chinese outside of the classroom in

Lebanon, and time spent on the course. Therefore, the instructor may engage his or her students in the course(s) from three aspects: first, the instructor helps learners to have a better understanding of the course(s) at the beginning of each semester, including but not limited to what the course(s) is going to cover, what the learning outcomes are, what teaching methods will be adopted, and what is expected from the class in each step by the schedule. There is no doubt that, by being informed of this kind of information, students have more clear and feasible purposes of taking the course, that is, when students were highly motivated to learning the language, the more time he/she spent on the language, the less anxiety he/ she might have in the reading Chinese aloud, either written in Chinese Pinyin or in characters. This may also suggest that, during the semester, instructors should encourage their students to show increasing interest in learning the language in various ways, e.g. instructors giving the lectures by utilizing students' knowledge of English, their first or second language, applying what they are taught in the classroom to the practical settings, and urging the students to find questions and answers from exposures off campus and daily life.

In addition, it is necessary for the instructor to design a course schedule which allows students to have the time and the chance to read and speak Chinese in and out of classrooms, individually and in pairs or in groups.

Suggestion for Future Studies

As one of the languages which are becoming popular with other speakers, Chinese is increasingly attracting attention as a foreign language (L2) across the

world, especially over the past eight years. For example, according to Annual Reports by the Confucius Institute Headquarters / Hanban, with the exception of the great number of Chinese learners in other schools at all levels and private institutes outside of China, by the end of 2006, 122 Confucius Institutes (including Confucius Schools and Confucius Classes) had been established in 49 countries and regions. More than 300 multi-level and diverse Chinese courses were taught to over 13,000 learners in total (Confucius Institute Headquarters/ Hanban, 2006, p.6). By the end of 2012, 400 Confucius Institutes and 535 Confucius Classrooms were established in 108 countries and regions with over 655,000 registered students (Confucius Institutes Headquarters/ Hanban, 2012, p.6). In other words, outside of China, Chinese is becoming more popular with foreign learners. By contrast, Chinese is still new to a majority of learners from various backgrounds, and it is viewed as a challenging language out of different reasons. Meanwhile, the number of research on Chinese taught as a L2 or FL is few, and the theories on teaching and learning in non-Chinese linguistic landscapes are insufficient.

Therefore, with respect to the future studies on anxiety in reading Chinese and the variables, the first suggestion the writer would like to propose is that scholars pay much more attention to the affective variables in specific settings. For example, as discussed in this present study, in some investigations, it would be beneficial to research if both Chinese Pinyin and characters are considered while conducting the reading anxiety since both writing systems are adopted in the Chinese classroom at beginning level. As maintained by Gardner (1985), not all forms of anxiety would

influence L2 because a construct of anxiety which is not general but instead is specific to the language acquisition context is related to L2 achievement. With regard to the traditional characters and simplified characters, two types of writing Chinese characters, another example is that students' anxiety also can be studied by exploring their similarities and differences, and their effects on students' reading performances.

The second suggestion is, when a research on reading anxiety is designed, face-to-face interviews are encouraged to be considered and implemented since they may offer researchers more useful information, such as participants' specific explanations behind their choices and feelings on reading Chinese.

The third suggestion is, as indicated in this study, the desired participants are those who have as many similarities as possible, such as linguistic backgrounds, taking Chinese language course(s) at same level with the same instructor, etc.

Furthermore, prior to conducting research, the participants should be given enough time and opportunities to practice reading Chinese in various ways and in all kinds of practical settings, which would help them understand the Chinese reading better, and present the reading performance normally. Last but not least, due to some unique features of the Chinese language, e.g. the writing systems of Pinyin and characters, which are applied simultaneously in the classrooms for beginners, both Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) and Foreign Language Classroom Reading Anxiety Scale (FLCRAS) can be reexamined to see whether some limitations exist or not.

Appendix 1: LimeSurvey– Part 1

The following questions attempt to know the students' language background and their opinions about learning Chinese:

1. You are: (1) male _____ or (2) female _____
2. Which do you consider your native language to be?
(1) Arabic _____, (2) English _____, (3) French _____, or (4) other(specify) _____
3. Which Chinese language course(s) have you taken at AUB?
(1) CHIN 201 _____ (2) CHIN 201 and CHIN 202 _____
4. How much time did you spend per week outside of classroom when you studied Chinese?
(1) <1 hour _____, (2) 1–2 hours _____, (3) 2–4 hours _____, (4) >4 hours _____
5. What's your main purpose(s) of learning Chinese?
(1) To get the elective credits _____
(2) Because I like the language _____
(3) I would like to travel to China _____
(4) I would like to work in China/ with Chinese people _____
(5) I want to do business with Chinese people _____
(6) others (specify) _____
6. Which of the following is the most difficult for you while learning Chinese?
(1) Pinyin _____ (2) characters _____, (3) grammar _____, (4) speaking Chinese _____
7. A student can be considered as a good student in learning Chinese if he/ she can (choose all that apply)
(1) can give the meaning of characters _____
(2) can recognize characters and tell you the meanings in English _____
(3) know how to pronounce a word when seeing a character _____
(4) know Chinese grammar well _____
(5) can translate sentences correctly _____
(6) can speak Chinese, even without knowing characters _____
(7) can pronounce Chinese well _____

8. For the language(s) you know, rate yourself by choosing number
(1=Bad,2=Fair,3=Good,4=Very good,5=Fluent).

	Name	Reading	Speaking	Writing	Understanding
L1	Arabic	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5
L2	English	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5
L3	French	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5
L4	Chinese	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5	1--2 --3 -- 4 --5

Appendix 2: LimeSurvey– Part 2

(The following questions are based on “Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale” by Horwitz et al. J., 1986, Modern Language Journal, Vol. 72, No.2, pp. 125-132) and “Foreign Language Reading Anxiety” by Saito, Horwitz, et al.,1999, Modern Language Journal, Vol. 83, No. 2, pp. 205-207.)

Directions: Statements 1 through 23 refer to how you feel about learning Chinese. For each statement, please indicate whether you (1) strongly disagree = SD, (2) disagree = D, (3) neither agree nor disagree = N, (4) agree = A, or (5) strongly agree = SA by circling the appropriate number on the line following each statement. Please give your first reaction to each statement and choose an answer for every statement.

9. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me if I make a mistake while reading Chinese aloud.

SD D N A SA

10. I feel anxious to read Chinese aloud when I have to read Chinese aloud in the classroom without preparation.

SD D N A SA

11. I feel that the other students read Chinese aloud better than I do.

SD D N A SA

12. I feel confident when I read Chinese aloud in the classroom.

SD D N A SA

13. Recognizing Chinese characters is difficult because the writing system (in characters) is different.

SD D N A SA

14. I prefer recognizing Chinese characters with Pinyin rather than their English meaning

SD D N A SA

15. I prefer reading Chinese words/sentences using Pinyin rather than characters.

SD D N A SA

16. I would learn Chinese better if it were written in Pinyin than with characters.

SD D N A SA

17. I recognize characters but I forget their meanings in English while I am reading Chinese.

SD D N A SA

18. I am nervous when I am reading a passage in Chinese characters when I am not familiar with the topic or context.

SD D N A SA

19. If I see a character I have studied, I can read it aloud.

SD D N A SA

20. I feel intimidated whenever I see a whole paragraph of Chinese characters in front of me.

SD D N A SA

21. Once I get used to guessing the meaning of characters, reading Chinese in characters is not difficult.

SD D N A SA

22. I get upset when I encounter two different words that are similar (in sound).

SD D N A SA

23. I get upset when I encounter two different characters that are similar (in form).

SD D N A SA

24. I get upset whenever I encounter unknown sentences patterns when reading Chinese aloud.

SD D N A SA

25. Speaking Chinese is more important to me than being able to write it in characters.

SD D N A SA

26. It is possible to speak Chinese fluently without knowing any Chinese characters since spoken Chinese is based on pronouncing Pinyin rather than Chinese characters.

SD D N A SA

27. I can read sentences written in characters aloud if I know the Chinese grammar well.

SD D N A SA

28. Compared to other foreign languages I have studied, it is/was hard to pronounce Chinese Pinyin.

SD D N A SA

29. Compared to other foreign languages I have studied, Chinese was hard to guess the meaning of words written in characters.

SD D N A SA

30. If I have more chances to be exposed to Chinese characters in Lebanon, I will recognize Chinese characters better.

SD D N A SA

31. In Lebanon, I see few opportunities of exposure to Chinese characters in our daily lives.

SD D N A SA

32. If Chinese were only written in Pinyin, more people would like to learn Chinese.

SD D N A SA

Appendix 3: Sample Reading material for Chinese Reading Test (CHIN 201)

Part 1 (40 pts)

Shàngwǔ hé sān, tāngxiūmen.

Wǒ jìào Mǎhànmǎde (for boy student) / Mǎsìyǎ (for girl student),
rénshìmen wǒ hèn gǎoxìng.

Wǒ shì Lǎobànnǎn. Xiànzài zài Bèijīng. Mǎgū Dàxué xué Wǒ
xiànzài shì dàsīndè xuéshēng, wǒde zhūnyì shì dìnnǎo. Wǒ hèn
xǔhuānzǎodezhè ge zhūnyì. Wǒ xīwǎng jìnglǐ (in the future) yǒu
zǎode dìnnǎo gōng.

Wǒ yào zài xué Hányǔ, yīnwèi wǒ xǔhuān xué wǎiyǔ. Wǒ dǎng
sī mǎn yǎng: Ālǐbǎyǔ, Yīngyǔ, Fǎyǔ hé Hányǔ. Wǒ xiànzài yǎng
hú shù yǎxiù Hányǔ, dàshì zhè hù yǎdì, sù yǎ wǒ xiǎng jìnnǐ
jìyù hǎi yào xué Hányǔkè, yīnwèi wǒ, wǒ bǎba, mǎma, gōng hé
mǎmèi xiǎng mǎngnǐ qī Zhōngguó lǐyǒu. Wǒ hǎi xīwǎng qī nǎr
gōngzǔ.

Xièxie.

Part 2 (60 pts)

1. 单词:

(1) 明天 (2) 喜欢 (3) 出租车 (4) 国家 (5) 哪儿

2. 短语:

(1) 请进 (2) 再见 (3) 谢谢你 (4) 对不起 (5) 要不要

3. (对话)

阿里: 晚上好, 林娜。

林娜: 晚上好, 阿里。

阿里：听说今天是你的生日，是吗？

林娜：是的。

阿里：祝 -- 你 -- 生 -- 日 -- 快 -- 乐，

祝 -- 你 -- 生 -- 日 -- 快 -- 乐，

祝 -- 你 -- 生 -- 日 -- 快 -- 乐 -- 哦，

祝 -- 你 -- 生 -- 日 -- 快 -- 乐，林 -- 娜。

（唱生日歌）

林娜：你唱的真好听！谢谢你，阿里！

阿里：不用谢。

4. (paragraph)

今天是星期六，我没有课，所以不用去学校学习。但是今天天气不太好，因为很热 (r=)。我和我的爸爸妈妈都很怕热，所以我们上午的时候去商场买了很多饮料和水果：冰水、可乐和咖啡；苹果和西瓜。

Appendix 4: Invitation email

Hello,

This is not an official AUB email message.

My name is Dr. Michael Vermy in the Department of English at AUB. Kuang Yafeng, the Chinese courses instructor at AUB, is one of my students. We are currently in the process of conducting an online survey about the anxiety in recognizing and reading Chinese characters aloud in Chinese courses 201 and 202. In this study, I am the Principal Investigator (PI).

Our purpose of the present study is to investigate the anxiety in learning Chinese in non-Chinese context, specifically in Lebanon. It will explore the existence and causes of language learning anxiety, such as such as the learner's knowledge of other languages, Chinese course taken, reason for learning Chinese, and the Chinese writing system, Chinese grammar and linguistic landscape of Chinese.

You are invited to consider participating in this online survey of a set of multiple-choice questions. All of the questions in this survey are multiple-choice. None of the questions in the survey require that you provide private information, such as name, address, or religion. The estimated time to complete the online survey is 10 minutes. This is an entirely voluntary participation. If you choose to participate, your identity will remain anonymous. Both Kuang and I will not know whether a particular student/ ex-student has participated in this survey and will not be able to identify your responses.

If you are interested in this survey and willing to participate in it, kindly complete the survey within fifteen days.

Kuang is doing this study as part of his graduate studies at AUB. He will use the data from this survey as the basis for his thesis. He may also use this information in articles that might be published, as well as in academic presentations.

If you have any other questions related to this study, you are free to contact me at email av03@aub.edu.lb or by phone (ext.4100). You also can contact IRB directly by phone 01 350000 (ext. 5445) or email irb@aub.edu.lb.

If you decide to participate, please click on this link <https://survey.aub.edu.lb/index.php> to read the Informed Consent Form first. If you agree to participate, please click on the button “Next”, it indicates your willingness to participate in the study, and then the questionnaire will become available after you have clicked the button “Next.” If you do not agree to participate, please click on the button “Exit and clear the survey.”

Thank you for considering this request. Your time and participation are highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Vermy
Assistant Professor of Linguistics
Department of English
American University of Beirut

Appendix 5: Comparison Table for Chinese Pinyin and the International

Phonetic Symbols

Pinyin	International Phonetic Symbol	Pinyin	International Phonetic Symbol	Pinyin	International Phonetic Symbol
b	[p]	g	[k]	s	[s]
p	[pʼ]	k	[kʼ]	zh	[tʂ]
m	[m]	h	[x]	ch	[tʂʼ]
f	[f]	j	[tɕ]	sh	[ʂ]
d	[t]	q	[tɕʼ]	r	[ʐ]
t	[tʼ]	x	[ç]	y	[j]
n	[n]	z	[ts]	w	[w]
l	[l]	c	[tsʼ]	v	[v]
a	[a]	e	[ɤ]	u	[u]
o	[o]	i	[i]	ü	[y]
ai	[ai]	ing	[iŋ]	uai	[uai]
ei	[ei]	ia	[ia]	ui (uei)	[uei]
ao	[ɑu]	iao	[iɑu]	uan	[uan]
ou	[ou]	ian	[iɛn]	uang	[uɑŋ]
an	[an]	iang	[iɑŋ]	un (uen)	[uən]
en	[ən]	ie	[iɛ]	ueng	[uən]
in	[in]	iong	[yŋ]	üe	[yɛ]
ang	[ɑŋ]	iou	[iou]	üan	[yan]
eng	[əŋ]	ua	[ua]	ün	[yn]
ong	[uŋ]	uo	[uo]	ng	[ŋ]

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