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## From reading to feeling

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# **From reading to feeling: A language-based approach to alexithymia**

**Dalya Samur**

Almost everyone has experienced being at a loss for words when they are trying to express their feelings, for example during such events as a break-up, loss, or marriage. However, people with high levels of alexithymia find this especially daunting. Alexithymia is a personality dimension that relates to chronic problems in identifying and talking about emotions. The present dissertation examines alexithymia from a language perspective, which is crucial to understanding the underlying emotional problems and developing suitable interventions.

Reading requires emotional abilities, such as understanding emotions of self and others. Thus, the first part of the dissertation investigates the link between reading and alexithymia. The results show that alexithymia indeed predicts reading motivation and comprehension, and this helps to explain why people differ in how much they read. The second part of the dissertation explores the underlying language processes in alexithymia. Research indicates that the emotional processing problems manifest themselves particularly in more complex forms of language use, such as during mental simulation of narrative worlds. Finally, the third part of the dissertation considers how research on alexithymia and language may be translated into clinical-psychological interventions.

Taken together, the four empirical articles and two review articles from the present dissertation highlight the profound psychological connections between reading and feeling.