Applied Language Learning

Action Research

The Impact of Linguistic Knowledge on Reading and Listening Comprehension Across ILR Proficiency Levels

Sun-Kwang Bae
Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center

The ability to comprehend written and spoken language is the cornerstone of second language (L2) acquisition. This study investigates the extent to which three linguistic knowledge components—vocabulary, structural, and discourse knowledge—predict reading and listening comprehension in L2 Korean learners across proficiency levels. It further examines how the relative predictive power of these components differs between modalities. This study analyzed a large-scale dataset drawn from the Online Diagnostic Assessment (ODA) system, comprising over 10,000 data points across five Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels (1, 1+, 2, 2+, and 3). Multiple regression analyses revealed a significant cross-modal asymmetry. In reading, a developmental shift occurred: vocabulary was the primary predictor of reading ODA scores at lower levels, but grammatical knowledge (structural and discourse) became dominant at higher levels. In listening, however, vocabulary remained the strongest score predictor across all proficiency levels. These findings support a developmental interactive model of L2 comprehension, in which learners gradually shift from heavy reliance on lexical knowledge at lower proficiency levels toward a more coordinated use of lexical, structural, and discourse knowledge at higher levels, particularly in reading. The manuscript discusses important implications for proficiency-sensitive pedagogy and diagnostic assessment in L2 Korean.

Keywords: *Action Research, Linguistic correlates, Vocabulary, Syntax, Discourse, Online Diagnostic Assessment*

INTRODUCTION

The ability to comprehend written and spoken language is the cornerstone of second language (L2) acquisition and communicative competence (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Krashen, 1985). Understanding written and spoken language is not monolithic; rather, it is constructed from the integration of multiple linguistic subsystems, including knowledge of vocabulary (lexis), grammar (syntax), and text organization (discourse) (Pae, 2018).

It is well-established within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) that all of these linguistic components are essential for successful comprehension (Jeon & Yamashita, 2014; Joyce, 2019; Mlakar, 2022; Susoy & Tanyer, 2019; Vafaee & Suzuki, 2020). Rather than debating which component is universally "most important," contemporary SLA research seeks to understand how the contributions of these components interact and shift dynamically as learners develop (Sarbazi et al., 2021). This study is built upon the understanding that the architecture of comprehension is not static but dynamic, and that the relative contributions of its constituent linguistic components shift systematically as a function of two critical moderating variables: the modality of input (reading versus listening) and the learner's proficiency level. Such a perspective reframes the central question from a static "what is more important?" to a more nuanced, developmental "when, why, and under what conditions is a particular component more important?"

This study focused on Korean as the target language. For many learners, especially those with an L1 such as English, Korean presents a distinct set of linguistic challenges. Its agglutinative morphology, the use of case-marking particles to encode grammatical relations, and a relatively flexible word order create a processing environment where both lexical and syntactic analyses can be demanding. For instance, L2 learners of Korean frequently misinterpret case-marking particles during reading and listening tasks, which can significantly impede accurate syntactic parsing (Chun & Kim, 2021). These differences make Korean an ideal test case for examining how learners build comprehension when faced with a linguistic system that may differ substantially from their L1. The specific difficulties Korean L2 learners encounter in both reading and listening underscore the need for a fine-grained analysis of the underlying linguistic skills that support comprehension in this context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To situate the present study, this section reviews theoretical models and empirical evidence that inform our understanding of how L2 learners comprehend written and spoken language. It briefly outlines interactive psycholinguistic frameworks for reading and listening, and concludes by examining the established roles of the core linguistic components under investigation.

Interactive Processing and Psycholinguistic Constraints

Early conceptualizations of comprehension were often framed as unidirectional processes. Bottom-up models describe comprehension as a linear, data-driven process that begins with the smallest units of input—letters on a page or phonemes in an auditory stream—and sequentially builds them into words, phrases, sentences, and finally, a representation of the text's meaning. This perspective emphasizes the centrality of decoding and linguistic analysis. In contrast, top-down models, often associated with psycholinguistic approaches, posit that comprehension is a concept-driven process where the comprehender's prior knowledge, expectations, and schemata guide the interpretation of the input. The reader or listener forms hypotheses about the meaning and uses the incoming linguistic data to confirm or disconfirm them.

Skilled comprehension is currently understood through the lens of interactive models, which posit that comprehension involves a complex, simultaneous interplay between bottom-up (data-driven decoding) and top-down (concept-driven) processes (Eskey & Grabe, 1988; Wang, 2023). For example, strong top-down processing can sometimes assist a learner when bottom-up processing is strained, though relying strictly on context to guess unknown words has recognized limitations (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). This interactive framework is fundamental to the present study, as it provides the theoretical basis for investigating how multiple knowledge sources—lexical, syntactic, and discourse—contribute concurrently to the construction of meaning.

Psycholinguistic and Cognitive Frameworks

While reading and listening both draw on a common pool of linguistic knowledge, listening comprehension operates under a unique and demanding set of psycholinguistic constraints (Hogan et al., 2014). The auditory signal is ephemeral; it unfolds in real-time and cannot be reviewed once it has passed (Joyce, 2019). This *now or never* quality places an immense cognitive load on the listener, requiring rapid and efficient online processing (Fang, 2011). Cognitive models of listening, such as Anderson's (1995) three-stage model of perception, parsing, and utilization, underscore the critical importance of foundational, bottom-up processes. A failure at the early stages of perception or parsing can cause a catastrophic breakdown in comprehension, as the listener cannot simply go back and listen again in the way a reader can go back and re-read a sentence. This fundamental asymmetry between the modalities suggests that the linguistic skills supporting rapid and accurate bottom-up processing, particularly vocabulary recognition, may play a disproportionately critical role in listening.

The Role of Core Linguistic Components in L2 Comprehension

This study focuses on three core components: vocabulary, syntax, and discourse.

Vocabulary Knowledge

An extensive body of research has firmly established vocabulary knowledge as a cornerstone of L2 proficiency and a powerful predictor of comprehension in both reading and listening (Zhang, 2025). Studies consistently demonstrate a strong positive correlation between vocabulary size and comprehension ability, with some research suggesting that vocabulary knowledge can account for 40-50% of the variance in reading and listening performance (Alderson, 2005; Qian, 2002; Stæhr, 2009). While vital for both modalities, vocabulary's role is often found to be especially pronounced in listening comprehension (Stæhr, 2009).

Syntactic Knowledge

The specific weight of syntactic knowledge, or grammar, in L2 comprehension varies depending on factors such as text complexity and learner proficiency. Studies involving adult L2 learners indicate that syntactic knowledge becomes increasingly vital for reading comprehension as texts become more structurally complex (Morvay, 2012; Susoy & Tanyer, 2019). In L2 listening, research indicates that while both vocabulary and syntactic knowledge are significant predictors, vocabulary often emerges as the stronger of the two overall (Vafaee & Suzuki, 2020).

Discourse Knowledge

Discourse knowledge represents a higher level of linguistic competence, involving the understanding of how sentences are connected to form a coherent and meaningful whole (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). While foundational vocabulary and syntactic skills are necessary for processing individual sentences, discourse knowledge is what enables the comprehender to move beyond the sentence level to grasp the overarching message (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022). As such, the ability to effectively utilize discourse knowledge is often associated with more advanced stages of language proficiency.

Research Questions

Based on the existing literature concerning L2 processing constraints and developmental trajectories, it is hypothesized that vocabulary knowledge will serve as a stronger predictor for listening comprehension than for reading comprehension, particularly at lower proficiency levels where foundational decoding is paramount. It is further hypothesized that the predictive power of structural and discourse knowledge will increase commensurately with proficiency in both modalities, as learners' processing becomes more automatized, freeing cognitive resources for higher-order analysis.

This study leverages a large-scale dataset to systematically investigate these dynamics. The primary research questions guiding this inquiry are as follows:

1. To what extent do vocabulary, structural, and discourse knowledge uniquely predict reading comprehension in L2 Korean learners at Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency levels 1, 1+, 2, 2+, and 3?
2. To what extent do vocabulary, structural, and discourse knowledge uniquely predict listening comprehension in the same population and at the same proficiency levels?
3. How does the relative predictive power of these linguistic components differ between reading and listening comprehension across the proficiency spectrum?

METHODOLOGY

Data Corpus

The study utilizes a large, anonymized dataset sourced from the Online Diagnostic Assessment (ODA) system, a platform designed for learners of foreign languages at a major US government language institute. The dataset consists of Korean learner data collected between December 2008 and February 2023. The final corpus for analysis was compiled after standard data cleaning procedures, resulting in 5,465 valid data points for reading comprehension and 5,318 valid data points for listening comprehension.

The data were drawn from a database of assessment sessions collected from Korean language learners from diverse backgrounds. For the purposes of this study, learners in the database were categorized into five distinct proficiency levels of their Target Level Performance based on the ILR scale (ILR, n.d.). Target Level Performance refers to the proficiency level the ODA is intended to assess—the level at which a user does not yet demonstrate sufficient mastery (i.e., the failed level). This is in contrast to the Current Level Performance, which reflects the learner's actual performance, the level successfully attained and passed. The Target Level Performance was chosen to use for analysis because it is supported by a substantially larger amount of response data—twice as much as that available for the Current Level Performance—resulting in more stable estimates and greater reliability for analytical purposes. The five levels analyzed were: ILR 1 (Elementary), ILR 1+ (Elementary Plus), ILR 2 (Limited Working), ILR 2+ (Limited Working Plus), and ILR 3 (Professional Working). The distribution of learner records across these proficiency levels is detailed in the Descriptive Statistics section below (Table 1).

Instrumentation and Procedures

The primary instrument for data collection was the ODA (DLIFLC, n.d.), a web-based, computer-adaptive style assessment designed for proficiency maintenance and enhancement. It utilizes authentic source materials (both written texts and audio recordings) and a series of interactive activities to assess comprehension. The dataset includes records of learners who accessed the ODA platform and completed diagnostic assessments aligned with their designated target proficiency level. The assessment generated scores for discrete linguistic competencies, which served as the independent variables in this study:

- **Vocabulary Knowledge:** Measured by performance on tasks targeting the recognition and comprehension of lexical items within the context of the authentic source material. The assessment utilized constructed-response test (CRT) prompts (i.e., student generated).
- **Structural Knowledge**: Measured by performance on tasks in ODA that require learners to process and understand grammatical relationships, word order, and other syntactic features. The assessment incorporated multiple formats, including CRT, multiple-choice, and matching questions.
- **Discourse Knowledge**: Measured by performance on tasks assessing the ability to understand the relationships between sentences and identify the overall organizational structure. The assessment incorporated multiple formats, including CRT, multiple-choice, and matching questions.

The dependent variables were the L2 comprehension scores, operationalized as the percentage of correctly answered questions following each reading or listening passage. These questions consisted exclusively of CRT items. To allow for a more nuanced analysis, comprehension questions were categorized into two types:

- **Main Idea/Topic Comprehension**: Identifying the gist or primary message.
- **Supporting Idea/Detail Comprehension**: Identifying specific information or examples.

DATA ANALYSIS

To investigate the unique contribution of each linguistic knowledge component to reading and listening comprehension across the five proficiency levels, a series of multiple linear regression analyses was conducted. A total of 10 primary regression models were calculated: one for each of the five ILR proficiency levels (1, 1+, 2, 2+, 3) for reading comprehension, and one for each of the five levels for listening comprehension.

Prior to analysis, standard assumptions for multiple regression were evaluated. Linearity and homoscedasticity were checked via residual plots. Multicollinearity among the linguistic predictors (Vocabulary, Structure, Discourse) was assessed using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF); while correlations existed, VIF values remained within acceptable limits (typically < 5), allowing for the interpretation of unique contributions. To control for Type I errors (i.e., false positives) across the multiple models, the alpha level was maintained at $p < .05$, but exact p-values are reported to provide transparency regarding the strength of evidence.

For each model, the standardized beta coefficient is reported to compare the relative predictive strength of the independent variables. The coefficient of determination (R-squared) is reported to indicate the proportion of total variance explained.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for all predictor and outcome variables, disaggregated by modality and ILR proficiency level. An analysis of the mean scores reveals a non-linear trend as proficiency increases, with scores often peaking at ILR Level 1+ before decreasing, reflecting the increasing difficulty of the authentic materials at higher levels. Notably, data for the Discourse Score was not available for ILR Level 1 in either modality due to the design of the assessment instrument.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for All Variables by Proficiency Level

		Reading			Listening		
Target ILR Level	**Variable Scores**	***N***	**Mean**	**SD**	***N***	**Mean**	**SD**
1	Main Proposition	613	0.279	0.223	384	0.355	0.229
	Supporting Proposition	613	0.283	0.207	384	0.257	0.201
	Vocabulary	613	0.505	0.276	384	0.462	0.257
	Structural	613	0.586	0.258	384	0.521	0.260
1+	Main Proposition	779	0.445	0.210	936	0.469	0.206
	Supporting Proposition	779	0.389	0.193	936	0.366	0.195
	Vocabulary	779	0.633	0.199	936	0.581	0.195
	Structural	779	0.609	0.240	936	0.640	0.225
	Discourse	779	0.637	0.241	936	0.580	0.244
2	Main Proposition	1626	0.432	0.217	2283	0.399	0.221
	Supporting Proposition	1626	0.380	0.164	2283	0.350	0.162
	Vocabulary	1626	0.524	0.215	2283	0.484	0.190
	Structural	1626	0.557	0.242	2283	0.538	0.228
	Discourse	1626	0.514	0.244	2283	0.489	0.226
2+	Main Proposition	1854	0.359	0.219	1363	0.338	0.210
	Supporting Proposition	1854	0.279	0.173	1363	0.259	0.158
	Vocabulary	1854	0.422	0.208	1363	0.283	0.168
	Structural	1854	0.399	0.233	1363	0.503	0.239
	Discourse	1854	0.408	0.234	1363	0.439	0.228
3	Main Proposition	593	0.294	0.218	352	0.347	0.235
	Supporting Proposition	593	0.262	0.178	352	0.241	0.170
	Vocabulary	593	0.376	0.235	352	0.336	0.204
	Structural	593	0.349	0.245	352	0.514	0.251
	Discourse	593	0.349	0.245	352	0.488	0.226

Note: Discourse Score was not available per assessment design for ILR Level 1.

RQ1: Predictors of Reading Comprehension

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the predictive power of the various linguistic knowledge components on reading comprehension (Table 2).

Main Propositions (Gist)

At the lower proficiency levels (ILR 1 and 1+), vocabulary knowledge was the dominant predictor (beta = .475 and .464, respectively, p <.001). A clear shift begins at ILR Level 2, where all three components were highly significant. By ILR Level 3, discourse knowledge emerged as the strongest predictor (beta = .280), followed by structural knowledge (beta = .196), while vocabulary's influence diminished (beta = .169).

Supporting Propositions (Details)

A similar, yet more pronounced developmental trend was observed for detail comprehension. At ILR 1, vocabulary was the strongest predictor. However, by ILR Level 2, the combined predictive power of structural and discourse knowledge surpassed that of vocabulary.

At ILR 3, the shift was most dramatic: Discourse (beta = .313) and structural (beta =.294) knowledge were the strongest predictors, with the combined influence (beta =.607) substantially outweighing vocabulary (beta =.152).

Table 2

Multiple Regression Models Predicting Reading Comprehension Across ILR Levels

		Main Proposition as Outcome Variable				Supporting Proposition as Outcome Variable			
Target ILR Level	**Predictor**	**B**	**SE**	**beta**	***p***	**B**	**SE**	**beta**	***p***
1	**(intercept)**	0.036	0.020		0.070	0.049	0.018		0.008
	Vocabulary	0.384	0.033	0.475	<.001	0.324	0.031	0.432	<.001
	Structural	0.086	0.036	0.099	0.016	0.120	0.033	0.150	<.001
		R^2 = 0.287, F(2, 612) = 123, p <.001				R^2 = 0.281, F(2, 612) = 119, p < .001			
1+	**(intercept)**	0.080	0.024		<.001	0.103	0.023		
	Vocabulary	0.488	0.040	0.464	<.001	0.302	0.039	0.312	<.001
	Structural	0.058	0.031	0.067	0.059	0.099	0.030	0.123	0.001
	Discourse	0.033	0.032	0.037	0.312	0.054	0.032	0.067	0.088
		R^2 = 0.269, F(3, 776) = 95.2, p <.001				R^2 = 0.180, F(3, 776) = 56.7, p < .001			
2	**(intercept)**	0.111	0.015		<.001	0.091	0.010		<.001
	Vocabulary	0.388	0.024	0.385	<.001	0.258	0.017	0.339	<.001
	Structural	0.077	0.021	0.086	<.001	0.136	0.015	0.200	<.001
	Discourse	0.145	0.021	0.163	<.001	0.153	0.015	0.226	<.001
		R^2 = 0.268, F(3, 1623) = 198, p <.001				R^2 = 0.352, F(3, 1623) = 293, p < .001			
2+	**(intercept)**	0.107	0.012		<.001	0.030	0.008		<.001
	Vocabulary	0.304	0.024	0.289	<.001	0.324	0.017	0.391	<.001
	Structural	0.165	0.022	0.176	<.001	0.143	0.015	0.194	<.001
	Discourse	0.141	0.022	0.150	<.001	0.135	0.016	0.183	<.001
		R^2 = 0.230, F(3, 1851) = 184, p <.001				R^2 = 0.366, F(3, 1851) = 355, p < .001			
3	**(intercept)**	0.081	0.016		<.001	0.057	0.012		<.001
	Vocabulary	0.157	0.040	0.169	<.001	0.115	0.030	0.152	<.001
	Structural	0.170	0.037	0.196	<.001	0.209	0.028	0.294	<.001
	Discourse	0.249	0.039	0.280	<.001	0.228	0.029	0.313	<.001
		R^2 = 0.283, F(3, 590)= 77.6, p <.001				R^2 = 0.394, F(3, 590) = 128, p < .001			

RQ2: Predictors of Listening Comprehension

Parallel regression analyses for listening comprehension revealed a markedly different pattern (Table 3).

Main Propositions (Gist)

Vocabulary knowledge remained the dominant predictor across *all* five proficiency levels, with consistently high predictive strength (e.g., ILR Level 3 beta = .493, p < .001). In contrast, structural knowledge was a small predictor at lower levels and became non-significant at ILR Level 3 (p = .076). Discourse knowledge was largely a weak or non-significant predictor for listening gist.

Supporting Propositions (Details)

Vocabulary knowledge was also the strongest predictor for detail comprehension at every level (e.g., ILR Level 3 beta = .406). However, unlike in the main proposition models, both structural and discourse knowledge were consistently significant predictors. Discourse knowledge peaked at ILR Level 3 (beta = .226), yet even at this peak, it remained secondary to vocabulary.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Models Predicting Listening Comprehension Across ILR Levels

		Main Proposition as Outcome Variable				Supporting Proposition as Outcome Variable			
Target ILR Level	**Predictor**	**B**	**SE**	**beta**	***p***	**B**	**SE**	**beta**	**p**
1	**(intercept)**	0.094	0.023		<.001	0.003	0.020		0.892
	Vocabulary	0.404	0.046	0.453	<.001	0.307	0.039	0.392	<.001
	Structural	0.143	0.045	0.163	0.002	0.215	0.039	0.278	<.001
		R^2 = 0.315, F(2, 382) = 87.8, p < .001				R^2 = 0.355, F(2, 382) = 105, p < .001			
1+	**(intercept)**	0.092	0.021		<.001	0.032	0.020		
	Vocabulary	0.504	0.039	0.476	<.001	0.302	0.035	0.302	<.001
	Structural	0.107	0.028	0.116	<.001	0.142	0.027	0.143	<.001
	Discourse	0.027	0.028	0.032	0.338	0.135	0.028	0.169	<.001
		R^2 = 0.305, F(3, 933) = 136, p < .001				R^2 = 0.249, F(3, 933) = 103, p < .001			
2	**(intercept)**	0.059	0.013		<.001	0.057	0.009		<.001
	Vocabulary	0.576	0.024	0.494	<.001	0.363	0.017	0.426	<.001
	Structural	0.077	0.019	0.079	<.001	0.120	0.013	0.169	<.001
	Discourse	0.041	0.019	0.042	0.030	0.108	0.013	0.151	<.001
		R^2 = 0.305, F(3, 2283) = 333, p < .001				R^2 = 0.363, F(3, 2283) = 433, p < .001			
2+	**(intercept)**	0.127	0.013		<.001	0.055	0.009		<.001
	Vocabulary	0.476	0.035	0.379	<.001	0.423	0.024	0.448	<.001
	Structural	0.061	0.024	0.069	<.001	0.083	0.002	0.125	<.001
	Discourse	0.105	0.025	0.114	<.001	0.098	0.017	0.141	<.001
		R^2 = 0.228, F(3, 1360) = 134, p < .001				R^2 = 0.354, F(3, 1360) = 248, p < .001			
3	**(intercept)**	0.090	0.028		0.001	0.008	0.019		0.670
	Vocabulary	0.568	0.066	0.493	<.001	0.339	0.045	0.406	<.001
	Structural	0.086	0.049	0.092	0.076	0.069	0.033	0.102	0.038
	Discourse	0.043	0.058	0.041	0.457	0.170	0.040	0.226	<.001
		R^2 = 0.325, F(3, 349) = 55.8, p < .001				R^2 = 0.394, F(3, 349) = 75.3, p < .001			

RQ3: Cross-Modal Differences

Synthesizing the results reveals a stark cross-modal asymmetry. In Reading, a clear shift occurs where vocabulary dominance at low levels is replaced by grammatical knowledge (structural and

discourse) at high levels. In Listening, this shift does not occur; vocabulary remains the primary predictor of comprehension for both gist and details from ILR 1 through ILR 3.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the dynamic contributions of various linguistic knowledge components to L2 Korean comprehension. The findings reveal a clear developmental trajectory and a significant cross-modal asymmetry.

The Primacy of Vocabulary in Listening

The most robust finding is the persistently dominant role of vocabulary knowledge in listening comprehension across all proficiency levels. This aligns with psycholinguistic models characterizing listening as a now-or-never process (Joyce, 2019). The listener must perceive and parse input in real-time; in this high-pressure environment, rapid lexical access is the primary gatekeeper to meaning (Fang, 2011). If a key word is not recognized instantly, the listener cannot look back to use context as a reader might. Consequently, vocabulary knowledge explains the greatest amount of variance among the predictors examined, suggesting that a strong lexicon is the non-negotiable foundation of auditory comprehension.

Developmental Shifts and Joint Contributions

The results for reading comprehension support a developmental interactive model. At lower levels (ILR 1, 1+), comprehension is constrained by bottom-up processing (decoding). As learners progress to intermediate and advanced levels (ILR 2+), the predictive power of structural and discourse knowledge increases significantly. This suggests that as basic lexical decoding becomes automatized, cognitive resources are reallocated to higher-order analysis (Verhoeven et al., 2011).

It is important to note a limitation regarding ILR Level 1 data. The absence of discourse scores at this level means that the dominance of vocabulary at ILR 1 must be interpreted with caution, as the potential contribution of discourse knowledge was not mathematically controlled. However, the trend remains consistent at ILR 1+, where discourse was measured but remained a weaker predictor than vocabulary.

The data also highlight a distinction between comprehending the *gist* versus *supporting details*. For listening, while vocabulary drives gist comprehension almost exclusively, the comprehension of details requires a significant joint contribution from structural and discourse knowledge (peaking at ILR Level 3). This indicates that while learners may grasp the general topic of a spoken text via keywords, a precise understanding of specific details requires the ability to parse syntax and follow discourse markers.

Pedagogical Implications

The results advocate for a differentiated pedagogical approach. For lower-proficiency learners, the overwhelming importance of vocabulary suggests that instruction should prioritize building a robust, high-frequency lexical foundation. For listening, this includes connecting spoken forms to meanings through contextualized vocabulary learning, rather than isolated memorization. While grammar is essential, instruction prioritizing complex grammar rules at the expense of lexical accumulation may be less effective at these early stages.

For higher-proficiency learners (ILR Level 2+ and 3), instruction should shift to encompass complex linguistic features. The growing importance of structural and discourse knowledge in the regression models suggests these learners need to engage with the intricacies of grammar—such as cohesive devices and rhetorical structures—to facilitate advanced comprehension (Grabe & Yamashita, 2022).

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, as a cross-sectional correlational study, these results identify predictive relationships but cannot establish causality or confirm longitudinal developmental trajectories within individuals. Future longitudinal research is needed to track how these component contributions shift over time for the same learners. Second, the absence of discourse measures at ILR Level 1 limits the conclusions drawn for the lowest proficiency level. Finally, this study's focus on L2 Korean—a language with distinct agglutinative morphology—may influence the results; cross-linguistic comparisons would help determine if these patterns are universal.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the architecture of L2 comprehension is not fixed but varies significantly by modality and proficiency. While reading comprehension evolves from a lexically driven process to one heavily reliant on grammatical knowledge, listening comprehension remains consistently anchored in vocabulary knowledge. These findings underscore the need for proficiency-sensitive and modality-specific approaches in both L2 assessment and instruction.

Author

Sun-Kwang Bae (Ph.D., The Australian National University) is an Associate Professor at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center. He serves as the Program Manager for the Online Diagnostic Assessment and the Global Language Online Support System projects within the Technology Integration Division of Educational Technology and Development Directorate.

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