Prediction of Korean EFL Learners’ English Reading Comprehension Abilities: An Examination of the Simple View of Reading

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This study investigated whether the simple view of reading framework is supported among upper elementary Korean EFL learners. Specifically, the relative contributive power of two emergent literacy factors, word decoding and linguistic comprehension abilities, which have been identified as the main determinants of successful reading comprehension, was examined. Ninety nine fifth grade students in Korean elementary school participated in this research, and their decoding skills, listening comprehension abilities, and reading comprehension in English were measured. The findings revealed that both English decoding skills and linguistic comprehension ability were significant predictors of their English reading comprehension, which supports the simple view of reading within the Korean EFL context. Specifically, decoding skill explained more of the variance, compared to linguistic comprehension, in reading comprehension when controlling for each other. The result is discussed in terms of the overall development of L2 proficiency and the role of L2 exposure in L2 reading comprehension development.

I. INTRODUCTION

To date, there has been a tendency for early or elementary reading instruction to focus on teaching basic reading skills such as phonics. However, given that the ultimate goal of

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*This study was funded by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2010-332-A00161).
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reading is to comprehend what the text is about, thus constructing one's own meaning through active interaction with the text, teaching such basic reading skills might not be sufficient for facilitating reading development through which one gradually becomes a successful and independent comprehender in the long run. In fact, being a good reader entails much more than merely decoding discrete words. As Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) asserts, "skilled readers are good comprehenders. They differ from unskilled readers in their use of general world knowledge to comprehend text literally as well as to draw valid inferences from texts, in their comprehension of words, and in their use of comprehension monitoring and repair strategies" (p. 62). From this perspective, much research has attempted to identify language and literacy factors that relate to reading comprehension, and has revealed that two major factors that play a crucial role in reading comprehension are word decoding skills and general linguistic comprehension abilities.

One of the widely accepted models of reading comprehension is the simple view of reading (SVR), first posited by Gough and Tunmer (1986). In this framework, reading comprehension is explained simply by the product of two components, decoding and linguistic comprehension abilities, and the lack of either one leads to unsuccessful reading comprehension.

Although other factors, such as age, phonological and orthographical system of the target language, and vocabulary knowledge, may play equally important roles in reading development, it is important to assess the validity of the SVR before discerning the complex relationships among these factors. That is, there is a need to first investigate whether the two major language and literacy factors that have been uniformly identified as the main determinants of reading success are applicable universally. Considering that the role of the two major reading sub-components may be manifested differently in first (L1) and second language (L2), and in second versus foreign language contexts, it is necessary to document what factors account for and how much they contribute to reading comprehension in L2 in order to provide specific implications for sound reading instruction. However, although numerous studies have increasingly examined the respective role of different reading comprehension-related factors, most of them have focused on monolinguals whereas little attention has been paid to bilinguals or L2 learners. Furthermore, few studies have explored the applicability of the SVR for English language learners’ reading comprehension in an EFL context such as in Korea. Thus, the present study aims at examining the role of decoding skills and linguistic comprehension abilities in explaining Korean EFL learners’ reading comprehension by testing the adequacy of the SVR model.
II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, numerous studies have tried to identify the specific language and literacy factors that contribute to effective and successful reading comprehension and uniformly documented two main components: decoding, which is the ability to read both real and pseudo words by matching letters to the corresponding sounds, and linguistic comprehension\(^1\), which is an ability to understand and process spoken language (Catts, Hogan, & Adlof, 2005; Dreyer & Katz, 1992; Hoover & Gough, 1990). Processing spoken language requires a number of different sets of language abilities, such as grammatical knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and the ability to discriminate and process sounds. Thus linguistic comprehension is not simply constrained to oral language (production) skills, but includes many different language sub-skills. Many existing studies have utilized listening comprehension as a measure for linguistic comprehension, as completing such a task requires the learners to integrate the language sub-skills that are similarly required in understanding and processing spoken language. However, it should be clarified that listening comprehension is not equivalent to and cannot replace linguistic comprehension skills.

Previous research on the joint effects of decoding and linguistic comprehension has repeatedly revealed that these two components are closely related to reading comprehension, which has led to a wide acceptance of the ‘simple view of reading (SVR)’ first proposed by Gough and Tunmer (1986). According to the SVR framework, reading comprehension (R) is the product of decoding (D) and linguistic comprehension (LC) as in the formula, \( R = D \times LC \). Accordingly, both decoding and linguistic comprehension play an essential part in reading comprehension. In general, the SVR serves as a theoretical model to explain reading development, which in turn highlights the potential difficulties involved in reading comprehension. More specifically, if one does not have either decoding skills (D=0) or linguistic comprehension (LC=0), reading comprehension will not occur (R=0). In light of this framework, much research has been conducted in monolingual contexts, and numerous cases supported the SVR by documenting the presence of the joint effects of decoding and linguistic comprehension (Adlof, Catts, & Little, 2006; Carver, 1997; Chen & Vellutino, 1997; Conners, 2009; Cutting &

\[^1\] “Linguistic comprehension”, “language comprehension”, "oral language comprehension", and “listening comprehension” are used interchangeably in this body of research studies to refer to the ability to understand spoken language. Hoover and Gough (1990), who were one of the first to discuss the simple view of reading, used the term “linguistic comprehension”, which was measured with listening comprehension abilities. Others have measured listening comprehension and/or other factors such as vocabulary knowledge, and referred to the construct with the general term, “oral language proficiency”. In this study, the term “linguistic comprehension” is used, following Hoover and Gough (1990).
Scarborough, 2006; Dreyer & Katz, 1992; Georgiou, Das, & Hayward, 2009; Gough, Hoover, & Peterson, 1996; Høien-Tengesdal, 2010; Johnston & Kirby, 2006; Joshi & Aaron, 2000; Lee & Wheldall, 2009; Nation & Snowling, 1998; Savage, 2001, 2006; Savage & Wolforth, 2007; Tunmer & Hoover, 1992; Vellutino, Tunmer, Jaccard, & Chen, 2007). For example, Georgiou and his colleagues (2009) investigated fifty English-speaking Canadian children’s decoding and listening comprehension as the potential explanatory factors in reading comprehension. Their findings showed that as much as 45% of the variance in reading comprehension was accounted for by decoding and linguistic comprehension. Similarly, Joshi and Aaron (2009) examined forty third grade English monolinguals’ reading comprehension, decoding, listening comprehension and the speed of processing, and found that both decoding and listening comprehension were significant predictors of reading comprehension (48% of the variance explained), and that the speed of processing contributed an additional 10% of the unique variance.

Although both decoding and linguistic comprehension are deemed necessary components of reading comprehension, there is not yet a consensus on which is relatively more important. Some studies have shown that decoding has more predictive power in explaining reading comprehension than linguistic comprehension for monolinguals (Catts, Adlof, & Weismer, 2006; Lee & Wheldall, 2009). For instance, Lee and Wheldall (2009) investigated 117 first grade Malaysian monolingual students’ decoding skills, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension, and revealed that reading comprehension was largely explained by decoding (67.24%), compared to listening comprehension (42.25%).

On the other hand, several studies have shown that listening comprehension contributes significantly to reading comprehension even after controlling for the effects of decoding skills (Adlof et al., 2006; Høien-Tengesdal, 2010; Savage, 2001). For example, Adlof et al. (2006) examined word recognition and listening comprehension skills of 604 English monolingual students followed longitudinally from second through eighth grade, and demonstrated that listening comprehension was a stronger predictor than decoding abilities when the participants were in eighth grade. In specific, listening comprehension explained almost all of the variance in reading comprehension, while there was barely any variance left for decoding skills to explain. Moreover, listening comprehension skill in early grade showed stronger predictive power than early decoding skills in accounting for reading comprehension abilities in later grades, thus highlighting the significant long-term effects of linguistic comprehension on reading comprehension.

Most longitudinal research has shown differing degrees of readers’ dependence on decoding skills and linguistic comprehension in relation to increasing age. More specifically, lower-level elementary students tend to rely on decoding skills more than linguistic comprehension whereas older students seem to depend more on linguistic comprehension in reading comprehension tasks (Carver, 1997; Chen & Vellutino, 1997;
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Gough, Hoover, & Peterson, 1996; Vellutino et al., 2007). That is, linguistic comprehension seems to play an increasingly important role with age. In fact, in the previously mentioned study by Adlof et al. (2006), it was decoding skill that explained as much as seven times more unique variance in reading comprehension compared to listening comprehension when the participants were in second grade. In another longitudinal study, Chen and Vellutino (1997) examined a number of reading sub-skills, including reading comprehension, language comprehension, and decoding skill, and revealed that decoding skill and language comprehension carried different weights in predicting reading comprehension at different grade levels. Unlike the early grades, the contribution of language comprehension in later graders was stronger than word recognition. These findings may suggest that readers may have reached a certain level of decoding ability before language comprehension gradually takes over in later grades. In this respect, as Hoover and Gough (1990) speculated, we could assume that the increment of students' dependence on linguistic comprehension over time may not only derive from age itself, but from the overall development of language proficiency as they mature and become skilled decoders.

Even though most research has been conducted with monolinguals, some studies have examined the SVR model with bilinguals, including second language (L2) learners. Most of such studies are in agreement that both decoding and linguistic comprehension are important predictors for L2 reading comprehension as well (Droop & Verhoeven, 2003; Gottardo & Mueller, 2009; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Mancilla-Martinez, Kieffer, Biancarosa, Christodoulou, & Snow, 2011; Nakamoto, Lindsey, & Manis, 2008; Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005; Royer & Carlo, 1991). To assess the SVR with bilinguals, Hoover and Gough (1990) followed English-Spanish bilingual children from first to fourth grade and confirmed its applicability for bilinguals. They explained, "at each grade level a substantial proportion of variance in reading comprehension was accounted for by the linear combination of the decoding and listening comprehension indices ... [The] product of these two indices accounted for an additional significant proportion of variance" (pp. 140-141). In another longitudinal study of English-Spanish bilingual children's reading development, Gottardo and Mueller (2009) found that among various components of literacy skills, English (L2) oral language proficiency and decoding skills were the strongest predictors of English reading comprehension.

However, as was the case with monolinguals, there is not an agreement on which reading sub-components of the SVR plays a bigger role in the reading comprehension of bilinguals. Some studies on bilinguals revealed that word decoding skill appears to be a more powerful predictor of reading comprehension compared to linguistic comprehension (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Nakamoto et al., 2008). In a longitudinal study of fifth through seventh grade Spanish-English bilinguals, Mancilla-Martinez and her colleagues
(2011) demonstrated that both linguistic comprehension and word-reading ability in English predicted the student's English reading comprehension development. Between the two, however, it was word decoding ability that showed stronger effects on reading comprehension. Another longitudinal study that examined Spanish-English bilinguals, conducted by Nakamoto et al. (2008), measured students' third grade decoding and oral language skills to predict their sixth grade reading comprehension in both languages. Both Spanish and English decoding skills and oral language comprehension abilities significantly predicted reading comprehension both within and across languages. However, their L2 (English) decoding skills displayed a stronger predictive power than oral language comprehension for their L2 reading comprehension.

Other studies of the SVR model with L2 learners have shown contrary findings that linguistic comprehension is a more significant predictor of reading comprehension than decoding skills (Droop & Verhoeven, 2003; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Proctor et al., 2005; Royer & Carlo, 1991). For example, Hoover and Gough (1990) argued that for upper-grade students, the power of decoding ability had lesser effects on reading comprehension unlike linguistic comprehension which remained as a strong predictor in later years. Along the same line, Droop and Verhoeven (2003) examined reading comprehension, word decoding abilities and oral language skills in Dutch of third and fourth grade Dutch native speakers and Dutch L2 learners in the Netherlands. They demonstrated that reading comprehension of both Dutch native speakers and L2 learners, in particular, tended to be more influenced by their oral language proficiency than decoding process, as oral Dutch skills played a prominent role in the explanation of their reading comprehension skills.

One explanation for the differences in the relative significance of decoding skills and linguistic comprehension in explaining L2 reading comprehension can be interpreted in terms of learner's age, as observed in previous research with monolinguals. For example, Proctor and colleagues (2005) showed that fourth grade Spanish-English students' oral proficiency measured by the combination of vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension had a more predictive power than decoding skills in explaining their English reading comprehension. This result is in accordance with the findings with monolinguals that oral language comprehension is a better predictor of reading comprehension for older students whereas decoding skill is for younger students. On the other hand, Mancilla-Martinez et al.'s (2011) finding is inconsistent with previous research with monolinguals in that decoding skills of fifth grade Spanish-speaking English language learners exerted more influence than linguistic comprehension in English reading comprehension. That is, although the participants in the two studies were at similar age, dealing with the same two languages, and were both in the U.S., the accountability of decoding and linguistic comprehension to reading comprehension is different. As speculated with similar studies on monolinguals, the differences found in the relative role
of decoding and linguistic comprehension with bilinguals might be related to the development of L2 proficiency over time rather than age itself. Given this, it is difficult to directly compare the results of the two studies, because neither study specifically measured or presented information about the participants’ L2 proficiency.

In Korea, English is taught as a foreign language, and thus Korean English learners have relatively less L2 exposure and practices than the participants examined in previously discussed studies with bilinguals or L2 learners. Moreover, Korean EFL learners have relatively fewer opportunities to be exposed to authentic or naturally-occurring target language discourse, compared to those in second language contexts. Although Korean EFL learners are provided with L2 instruction through formal schooling since elementary schools and in some cases, through private out-of-school learning, it may not be sufficient to develop their emergent literacy and oral language skills to the extent that they can fully utilize such skills in comprehending written text in English, due to the relatively limited language exposure and resources. Under these circumstances, it is questionable if decoding skills and linguistic comprehension are still powerful predictors of reading comprehension for students with possibly lower language proficiency and literacy skills, compared to those in second language contexts. Seeing that decoding skills played a more significant role in reading comprehension even among Spanish ESL learners in the study by Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2011), it is important to test the SVR with English language learners with relatively less L2 language experiences and exposure in a foreign language context such as in Korea. Thus, the present study specifically examines the followings:

1. Is the simple view of reading supported among upper-grade elementary Korean EFL learners?
2. Between the two major components of reading comprehension proposed by the simple view of reading – word decoding skills and linguistic comprehension abilities, which is a better predictor of upper-grade elementary Korean EFL learners’ reading comprehension?

III. METHOD

1. Participants

Ninety nine fifth grade students attending a public elementary school in Incheon, Korea, served as participants in this study (forty seven boys and fifty two girls). The participants had been learning English as foreign language in school for three hours per week for approximately two years. Although they were at diverse levels of English proficiency, very
few of them were fluent in English to the extent that they could produce extended discourse in speech or writing. However, most of them were able to read (decode) English words. Many of the students were also attending private English learning institutions, and this factor will be controlled for in later analyses.

2. Measures

1) Reading Comprehension

Students’ reading comprehension ability was measured by the subtest of the standardized Gates MacGinitie Reading test (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000). In this subtest, students answered thirty-nine test items in total. Each test item was worth one point, and the possible score range was from zero to thirty nine. There were ten different reading passages on the test, and each passage comprised three to four scenes. Each scene contained two to four sentences, and students were instructed to choose a corresponding picture that represents the depicted scene from three different picture choices. The reported reliability coefficient (Kuder-Richardson) for this subtest is .93.

2) Decoding

To measure students’ English decoding abilities, the word decoding subtest of the standardized Gates-MacGinitie Reading test (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2000) was employed. In this test, a total of forty three test items were included, and each test item was worth a point. Thus the possible score range was from zero to forty three. Students were asked to choose a correct word choice that corresponded to the picture shown for each question from four answer choices. For example, for a test item that showed a picture of a bug, the students were expected to pick a correct answer from the choices of ‘bug,’ ‘bog,’ ‘beg’ and ‘bag.’ In other words, the students were asked to identify correctly spelled words that depict the given pictures, which assesses their ability to decode and differentiate similarly spelled sets of words. The reported reliability coefficient (Kuder-Richardson) for this subtest is .94.

3) Listening Comprehension

To measure students’ linguistic comprehension, one of the school-designed listening comprehension tests which were designed to measure students’ English proficiency development on a regular basis, was administered. The test contained thirteen questions, and each test item was worth one point. Thus the possible score range was from zero to
thirteen. For each question, students were asked to choose a correct answer among five answer choices after listening to a conversation between two people. Conversation topics for each item were related to everyday conversation including greetings, asking preferences, picture description, asking for direction, and so on. Cronbach’s alpha for this test was .73.

4) English Learning Experience

In order to gain information about the students’ English learning experiences, individual interviews were conducted for approximately five minutes for each student by trained researchers. Each student was pulled out from their regular English classes, and was interviewed in a quiet area in school. The interview contained questions about their overseas experiences and their past and current English learning experiences through attending any out-of-school private institutions. Regarding the students’ overseas experiences, they were asked in which and for how long they stayed in English-speaking countries. The students were also asked whether they received or had received any out-of-school English instruction, for how many hours a week, for how long, and in what institutions.

IV. RESULT

In order to first have a closer look at the students’ background and literacy variables, descriptive statistics were examined (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Means and Standard Deviations of the Background and Literacy Variables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration of oversea stay (months)</td>
<td>Min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours studying English in private institute (hrs/wk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At present</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English decoding</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English listening comprehension</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English reading comprehension</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

As can be seen in Table 1, the participants in this study, on average, had a little less than one-month overseas experience in English-speaking countries, but the standard deviation
which was nearly four times bigger than the mean reflected the huge gap among the students – the duration of the stay ranged from no experience to two years. In addition, they reported that they studied English in private institutions before the onset of the study for about 2.42 hours per week, and were studying at the onset of the study for about 3.39 hours per week, on average. There was a wide range in the number of hours they spent in learning English out-of-school, both in the past and the present, as it ranged from zero to 13 hours per week.

The students' ability to correctly decode English words also widely varied. On average, they answered approximately 24 items correctly, out of 43 questions, with sufficient variations ($SD=7.35$). In addition, the students displayed grade appropriate listening comprehension abilities, as reflected in the high mean scores of their English listening comprehension test. In addition, on the reading comprehension test, the students answered approximately 19 test items correctly on average, out of 39 items.

Next, correlation analysis was conducted in order to have a look at the potential relationship between reading comprehension abilities and other interested variables.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations between Reading Comprehension and Other Variables</th>
<th>Reading comprehension</th>
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<tr>
<td>Duration of oversea stay</td>
<td>.284**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours studying English in private institute (past)</td>
<td>-.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours studying English in private institute (present)</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>.526**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>.431**</td>
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</table>

**p < .01**

As seen in Table 2, the result of the correlation analysis revealed that both decoding skills and listening comprehension were significantly correlated with reading comprehension ($r=.53$, $p<.01$; $r=.43$, $p<.01$, respectively). Moreover, students' decoding skills and listening comprehension showed significant correlation with each other ($r=.45$, $p<.01$). Additionally, partial correlation analysis controlling for all the background variables was conducted in order to examine the relationship among the key variables while the effects of other factors were controlled for. The results indicated that word decoding and listening abilities were both significantly correlated with reading comprehension abilities ($r=.49$, $p<.01$; $r=.25$, $p<.05$, respectively), even when the duration of oversea stay and the number of hours studying in private institutes in the past and present were controlled for.

Interestingly, the number of hours studying English in out-of-school settings in the past
and at present was not significantly correlated with reading comprehension, whereas the duration of children's overseas experience showed a moderate but significant correlation ($r=.28, p<.01$). This may suggest that the amount of out-of-school English learning may not necessarily relate to the development in the students' reading comprehension abilities.

In predicting English reading comprehension, a set of hierarchical regression analyses was conducted (see Table 3).

<table>
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<th>TABLE 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Reading Comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steps</td>
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<td>1</td>
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</table>

In predicting English reading comprehension, $R^2 = .315$, $\Delta R^2 = .200$, $\Delta F = 27.104$, $p < .001$. The duration of overseas stay (months) is a significant predictor of reading comprehension, whereas hours studying English outside school did not make any additional contribution beyond their overseas experiences.

When controlling for the background variables, the students' decoding ability explained an additional 20% of the variance ($p < .001$), and listening comprehension ability added approximately 4% ($p < .05$) of the unique variance beyond the effects of decoding skills. That is, when controlling for the effects of decoding skills, listening comprehension ability was still a significant predictor of reading comprehension, contributing a significant 4% of the remaining variance in reading comprehension.

To examine whether decoding ability has any effects on reading comprehension beyond those of listening comprehension, a separate analysis was conducted with decoding ability entered in step 5, and listening comprehension entered in step 4 (see the bottom panel of
Table 3). The result indicated that listening comprehension contributed approximately 13% ($p<.001$) of the additional variance, controlling for the effects of oversea and out-of-school English learning experiences. When controlling for the effects of such background variables and listening comprehension abilities, decoding skills accounted for a significant unique variance, contributing an additional 11% ($p<.001$) of the variance in reading comprehension.

On the whole, our analyses show that both listening comprehension and decoding abilities were significant predictors of reading comprehension, even when controlling for the effects of each other. However, when we consider the amount of variance explained, decoding skill seems to be a stronger predictor than listening comprehension abilities, contributing relatively more to reading comprehension.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study investigated whether the simple view of reading is supported within L2 among the upper-grade Korean EFL learners, and which of the factors, between decoding and linguistic comprehension, contributes more to predicting English reading comprehension. Similar to the findings from previous studies (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990), our findings indicated that both decoding and linguistic comprehension are significant predictors of reading comprehension in English. Thus, the simple view of reading framework was confirmed in a foreign language context with L2 learners whose first language is linguistically quite distant from the target language. With respect to our second research question, although both decoding and linguistic comprehension abilities were identified as significant contributors to reading comprehension above and beyond the effects of each other, the students' decoding ability revealed relatively stronger predictive power beyond that of linguistic comprehension. However, the amount of variance explained by the two key components was relatively small compared to that reported in previous studies. Thus, further research that includes other language and literacy factors is warranted in order to generate a more fully developed model of reading comprehension for Korean EFL learners.

Considering our participants' age, the findings of this study are disparate from previous studies of English monolinguals, which claimed a bigger role of linguistic comprehension for upper-elementary level students' reading comprehension (Adlof et al., 2006; Proctor et al., 2005). As speculated before, the increasingly important role linguistic comprehension plays in reading comprehension as one gets older may not be simply related to the effects of age themselves, but instead to the overall development of language proficiency. Thus the participants of this study showing less reliance on linguistic comprehension could be
attributed to their underdeveloped overall English language proficiency. As previously discussed, some researchers argue that when readers fully rely on linguistic comprehension in reading comprehension process, they are likely to have achieved an adequate level of decoding skill (Hoover & Gough, 1990; Lee & Wheldall, 2009). Because Korean EFL students have had limited exposure to the English language, this might have slowed down their development of decoding skills to a sufficient level. Indeed, only about 60% of the test items on the decoding test were answered correctly on average, with a large standard deviation among the students. Thus, in order to foster successful reading, instruction that promotes general language proficiency should precede or go hand in hand with quality phonics instructions.

Along this line, it can be speculated that the discrepancies in the findings between Proctor et al. (2005) and Mancilla-Martinez et al. (2011) may have derived from the differences in the participants’ language proficiency. That is, most of the participants in Mancilla-Martinez et al.'s study (2011) might have had more limited English proficiency, thus resulting in heavier reliance on decoding skills than linguistic comprehension in reading comprehension, although they were slightly older than those in Proctor et al.'s (2005). Although it is not conclusive due to the lack of information regarding the participants’ language proficiency in the two studies, oral language proficiency seems to have affected the differing degrees of relative dependence on decoding and linguistic comprehension skills in reading and comprehending extended texts in L2.

Another interesting finding from the present study is that the students’ English learning experiences outside school contexts did not contribute to their reading comprehension ability, while students’ overseas experiences did. This reflects that the English instruction the students receive outside the school may not be providing quality decoding instruction or developing their linguistic comprehension to the extent that they can facilitate or contribute to the complex cognitive processes involved in the students’ reading comprehension.

Although this study identified the basic key components that play an important role in L2 reading comprehension in a foreign language context, some limitations still remain. It is difficult to conclude whether the students' heavier dependence on English decoding skills in reading is due either to their low English proficiency or limited language input, or both. Thus, further research on students with diverse language proficiency and with varying amount of language and literacy input is necessary in order to gain more information regarding the applicability of the simple view of reading for L2 readers. Nevertheless, this study provides a good starting point toward identifying the fundamental components in reading comprehension and investigating L2 reading development.
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Applicable levels: elementary
Key words: the simple view of reading, reading comprehension, decoding, linguistic comprehension, Korean EFL learners

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Received in December, 2010
Reviewed in February, 2011
Revised version received in March, 2011