READING-WHILE-LISTENING AND READING-ONLY IN A SECOND LANGUAGE AT DIFFERENT LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES: AN EYE-TRACKING STUDY

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Abstract:

Reading-while-listening (R/L) has a facilitation effect on second language (L2) reading comprehension after longitudinal R/L training from empirical studies. However, most empirical evidence provides limited insight into how the auditory input affects readers' language processing. When R/L was examined using eye movement metrics, a hindrance effect has been reported for L1 readers, and its facilitation effect on comprehension disappears for advanced-level L2 readers (Conklin et al., 2020). To study R/L's effect on less adept L2 learners, this study compared the comprehension accuracy and eye movements of intermediate and elementary-level L2 readers of English between reading-only (R/O) and R/L modes. 22 university students in Macao completed a vocabulary test and reading comprehension tasks. Participants were assigned to either an intermediate-level group (n = 11) or an elementary-level group (n = 11) based on vocabulary test performance. Both groups completed the tasks while their eye movements were captured by a Tobii eye tracker. Results showed there was no significant difference between R/L and R/O in comprehension for the participant groups. Mixed model analyses of variance revealed significant main effects of reading mode (R/L or R/O) in total fixation durations and total visit durations, suggesting R/L facilitated processing of the text in both levels of participants. Significant interactions between the reading mode and participants' language level showed that the facilitation was significantly greater for elementary-level L2 readers. Hence, we preliminarily established the accuracy of a continuum model that summarizes the differing effect of auditory input on readers across language proficiency levels.

Keywords: eye-tracking, reading-while-listening, second language acquisition

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