

A Comparison of "Proficient" and "Nonproficient" EFL Readers: A Study with Korean High School Students

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I. Introduction

Many studies in L1 reading area (e.g., Allington, 1983; Baker & Brown, 1984; Daneman & Carpenter, 1983; Kletzien, 1991; LeFevre, 1988; Leu, Jr. et al., 1986; Rahman & Bisanz, 1986; Stanovich, 1980) have focused on the differences between good and poor readers and have shown that good readers have certain characteristics which poor readers lack. According to Stanovich (1980), good readers process the graphic information in a text so rapidly, accurately, and automatically that they need not attend to context during word recognition, while poor readers, not having developed rapid, accurate, and automatic word-recognition skills, must compensate by expending limited attentional resources on the use of context for facilitating word recognition.

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Comprehension is usually impeded, he argues, because less attention is available for higher levels of the comprehension process. Daneman & Carpenter (1983), who claim that individual differences are not in memory capacity or an inherent number of "slots," but in processes or procedures they have for maximally utilizing that capacity, conclude that poor readers' processes may be inefficient and hence interfere with the amount of additional information they can store and maintain. In a similar vein, Baker & Brown (1984) argue that good readers have some awareness and control of the cognitive activities they engage in as they read, whereas poor readers have difficulty taking charge of their own cognitive processes while reading and are not as flexible as good readers in adapting their level of processing for tasks that differ in the degree of understanding they demand.

Compared with the efforts made in L1 area, there have been very few, if any, studies in L2 area focusing on the differences between "proficient" and "nonproficient" L2 readers. (Here, the researcher preferred to use the terms "proficient" and "nonproficient" not to ignore the possibility that even a "poor" reader in a foreign language could be a "good" reader in his/her native language and that a "good" reader in a foreign language may not necessarily possess all the characteristics that a "good" reader in a native language does.) Considering that teaching cannot ignore learner factors and that the recognition of the differences between "proficient" and "nonproficient" L2 readers can provide meaningful insights into how to help L2 readers with different proficiency, more attention needs to be drawn to this neglected area.

It has been claimed in many L2 studies that vocabulary knowledge is an important component of reading comprehension (Henning, 1978; Judd, 1978; Koda, 1989; Krashen, 1989; Kruse, 1979; Laufer, 1990; Saville-Troike, 1984; Schulz, 1983; Yorio, 1971). In fact, vocabulary knowledge has been known as a prerequisite and a consequence of reading (Bialystok, 1987). Along with vocabulary knowledge, prior knowledge has also been argued to have impact on reading comprehension (Aron, 1986; Barnitz, 1986; Carrell, 1983, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1987; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Floyd & Carrell, 1987; Johnson, 1981, 1982; Hudson, 1982; Obah, 1983; Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirley, & Anderson, 1982). Given the importance of vocabulary knowledge and prior knowledge as components of reading comprehension, it would be meaningful to examine the relative effects of the two components in the reading behaviors of L2 learners when they endeavor to comprehend the L2 text.

The study reported here developed from concern about whether there are any differences in the ways "proficient" and "nonproficient" L2 readers behave when they read the L2 text. The specific questions asked are:

1. Are there any differences in the quality of recalls of "proficient" and "nonproficient" readers?
 - a. How do the different degrees of vocabulary knowledge affect the quality of the recalls of each group?
 - b. How does prereading instruction affect the quality of recalls of each group?
2. What are the factors that affect "proficient" readers and "nonproficient" readers to behave in the ways they do?

In order to obtain in-depth information about the reading behaviors of the subjects, the study employed "About-the-Test," interviews and questionnaires in addition to the free recall procedure used as the comprehension test.

II. Methods

Subjects

The subjects for the research were 108 Korean high school EFL students who were from two intact classes (54 from each) in a girls' high school and whose ages fell between 16 and 17. The high school involved in the study was chosen from the schools in one of the school districts selected by the researcher. The selection of the two classes depended purely on the situation in the school on the day the experiment was conducted.

Research Design

There were two independent variables: 1) Difficulty of vocabulary (more difficult vs. easier vocabulary), and 2) prereading instruction (with vs. without prereading instruction) intended to provide prior knowledge about the content of the text. Both of the two variables were fixed, active (treatment) variables. The design thus had four different conditions: 1) more difficult vocabulary (A1) and without prereading instruction (B1); 2) easier vocabulary (A2) and without prereading instruction (B1); 3) more difficult vocabulary (A1) and with prereading instruction (B2); and 4) easier vocabulary (A2) and with prereading instruction (B2). The design layout of the study is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

(Group)	Difficulty of Vocabulary (more difficult) (easier)		
		A1	A2
P-R Instruction (without)	B1	(Group A)	(Group B)
(with)	B2	(Group C)	(Group D)

Figure 1. A Two-Between-Group Design

Test Materials

The passage for the Reading Comprehension Test was chosen from Inquiries in Sociology (1978, PP. 275-276; The Sociology of the Bicycle), a social studies book written for 9th to 12th grade native English speakers. The original text consisted of 367 words divided into three paragraphs. This original text (i.e., Text A, the "more difficult" vocabulary version) was used for Group A (i.e., the "more difficult" vocabulary and without prereading instruction group) and Group C (i.e., the "more difficult" vocabulary and with prereading instruction group), while the revised version (i.e., Text B, the "easier" vocabulary version) in terms of vocabulary difficulty was used for Group B (i.e., the "easier" vocabulary and without prereading instruction group) and Group D (i.e., the "easier" vocabulary and with prereading instruction group). The changes made in text B include the replacement of 41 "more difficult" words with their "easier" synonyms. A "more difficult" word refers to a word whose meaning had not been introduced in the textbooks, whereas an "easier" word refers to a word whose meaning had been introduced. However, one needs to remember that the degree of difficulty of a word may not be the same among individuals since the concept of word familiarity is subjective (Bensoussan, 1986). Individual students may differ in their previous language experiences outside the class. Also, even when a word had been taught in class, it would not necessarily mean that all the students came to know the word with the same degree of knowledge. The original text (i.e., Text A) and its revised version (i.e., Text B) are introduced in Appendix.

General Procedure

The subjects from the two intact classes chosen from the entire second year classes in a girls' high school were randomly assigned to one of the four groups (A,B,C and

D), each of which included 27 students. Groups A, B, C, and D were assigned to the four treatment conditions A1 x B1, A2 x B1, A2 x B1, and A2 x B2, respectively.

To investigate the differences in comprehension between reading a text with and without the appropriate prior knowledge, two of the four groups (i.e., Groups C and D) received prereading instruction administered by the researcher, while the other two (i.e., Groups A and B) did not. In order to make the students feel comfortable the researcher spent some time before the prereading instruction talking about her own experience living in the United States. The students looked very interested and relaxed. The prereading instruction was to provide the two components of prior knowledge identified by Carrell (1983): 1) prior knowledge that the text is about a particular content area, and 2) prior knowledge in the content area of the text. That is, after the prereading instruction, the subjects in Groups C and D were assumed to know that the text was about the effect of the bicycle on the change of women's clothing. Also, they were assumed to be familiar with the points that were related to what was described in the text and thus expected to facilitate their understanding of the text. After the prereading instruction, therefore, the subjects in groups C and D were assumed to possess the "content schema" (Carrell, 1987). The prereading instruction was teacher-directed rather than student-centered discussion, in which the instructor directly provided in Korean the information helpful for a better comprehension of the content of the upcoming text. The teacher-directed reading instruction was given immediately before the comprehension test.

All the materials used in the test were put in a folder and each subject received a folder. Groups A and C were given Text A (i.e., the "more difficult" vocabulary version) and Groups B and D were given Text B (i.e., the "easier" vocabulary version). After subjects were given 25 minutes to read the passage, they were asked to put the reading passage under the folder, take out the answer sheet from the folder and write down in Korean as much as they could remember from the passage, including as many words as possible that were in the passage. Sufficient time was provided so that subjects could write down all they remembered. During this writing session, subjects were not allowed to refer back to the passage.

Whether or not subjects had prior knowledge about the content of the reading passage was investigated by the questions in "About-the-Test" written in Korean and attached at the back of the comprehension test. Subjects were asked to answer them immediately after they finished the test. Later analysis of the responses showed that there were no subjects who prior to the test knew the content of the passage substantially enough to affect the results of the test.

In order to obtain background information about each subject's previous language

learning experience, a questionnaire consisting of 35 questions written in Korean was given immediately after the "About-the-Test" questions had been answered. The questions were about the time the subject started to learn English, the ways she learned English, her attitude toward English, the amount of time she spent a day in studying English, her focus of study in English, and her environment for English learning. The questionnaire was given after rather than before the recall protocols in order to prevent subjects from getting tired working on the rather long questionnaire. After answering the questions in the questionnaire, subjects were asked to put all the materials used in the test back in the folder and wait until all the folders in the classroom were collected.

For in-depth information about the reading behaviors of the subjects, eight students were selected from the four groups (one "proficient" and one "nonproficient" reader from each group) and were interviewed by the researcher a few hours after the test. Without the recall scores yet available, the "proficient" and the "nonproficient" readers were selected by reviewing their recall protocols and by applying a rule of thumb judgment. Later, when the recalls were scored, it was found that the scores of the four "proficient" readers and the four "nonproficient" readers belonged to the top six and bottom six scores in the group. A "proficient" reader was thus defined in this study as one whose recall score in the comprehension test was among the top six in the group and a "nonproficient" reader as one whose recall score was among the bottom six in the group. The questions in the interview, all in Korean, were intended to obtain information about the subject's understanding of reading, about her problems, if any, in reading in Korean and/or in English, about the similarities and differences in her reading behaviors between reading in the two languages, about how she felt she had done in the comprehension test conducted before the interview, etc.

Whether or not the treatment conditions affected readers' performance differently depending on their abilities was determined by examining the recall data obtained from the six "proficient" and the six "nonproficient" readers of each treatment group. (Those subjects in Group C who received a zero score in the comprehension test were excluded since even though they put a lot on the answer sheet, their recalls, which showed a complete reliance on the prereading instruction, reflected the overwhelming effect of affective factors rather than that of the treatment condition.)

Analysis

The study employed both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis of the recalls. In the quantitative analysis, which focused on the correct recalls, the scoring key

constructed by using Meyer's (1985) scoring system of prose analysis was used. Meyer's scoring system is known to be unique in the sense that it includes lexical items, rhetorical relationships, and the top level structure of the text (Bernhardt, 1991) and therefore, it is currently known as the most complete scoring system (Hammadou, 1988).

In the qualitative analysis, which is believed to provide more useful information for teachers as well as for researchers, responses to "About-the-Test" questions, interviews and questionnaires were employed in addition to the recall data, correct and incorrect.

III. Results

General Findings

Before engaging in a discussion of the differences found in the recalls of the "proficient" and the "nonproficient" readers, it seems necessary to briefly introduce some major differences between treatment groups since these differences were also found in the recalls of the "proficient" and the "nonproficient" readers between groups.

In terms of the effects of vocabulary knowledge, the subjects who read the text with "more difficult" vocabulary tended to produce more frequent omissions, ranging from a single word to a whole sentence. As a result, they recalled a smaller number of sentences and the recalled sentences tended to be shorter and simpler. This is partially suggested in that the average number of sentences recalled by each subject in Group A (i.e., the "more difficult" vocabulary and without prereading instruction group) was 4.07, whereas that in Group B (i.e., the "easier" vocabulary and without prereading instruction group) was 7.23, and in that the average number of words per sentence produced by each subject in Group A was 9.33, whereas that in Group B was 10.38. The error type most prominent in the recalls of Group A was thus "omission."

In terms of the effects of the prereading instruction, one can argue that the provision of prereading instruction made differences at least in the quality, if not the degree of comprehension itself, of the recalls, correct or incorrect. For instance, the recalls of Group C (i.e., the "more difficult" vocabulary and with prereading instruction group) contained far fewer sentence fragments than those of Group A. The number of subjects who included a sentence fragment(s) in the recall was 14 in Group A, whereas that in Group C was 5. Furthermore, the average number of sentence fragments by those subjects was 4.86 in Group A and 3.20 in Group C. However, this does not necessarily mean that the recalls influenced by the prereading instruction contained more correct recalls. Rather, the recalls of Group C contained much more extratextual elements than

those of Group A, which mostly reflected blind reliance on what the subjects remembered from the prereading instruction. As a consequence, the recalls of Group C often contained a higher number of invalid idea units than those of Group A. One extremely clear piece of evidence is that Group C had as many as five subjects who filled out the whole page of the answer sheet only to get a zero score, whereas Group A had only one subject who did not write down anything and got a zero score. The zero score in Group C was thus different in quality from that in Group A; the former represents a recall protocol in which the subject wrote down a lot which did not reflect the text at all, whereas the latter represents one in which the subject left the answer sheet blank.

Another effect of the prereading instruction was that it brought about a shift of the reader's attention, changing the quality of the incorrect as well as the correct recalls. This is suggested in that there was no significant difference in the recall scores by Groups A and C (Table 1) and also in that some idea units (i.e., those reflecting the prereading instruction) were better recalled by Group C, while others were better recalled by Group A.

Table 1: Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD)
of Recall Scores by Group (N=27)

	Vocabulary				Group M	
	("More difficult" Voc.)		("Easier" Voc.)			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
P-R Ins. (Without)	29.19	17.62	60.59	37.52	44.89	33.08
(With)	30.11	26.20	61.85	37.12	45.98	35.63
Group M	29.65	22.22	61.22	36.98		

Comparison between Group C and Group D showed that the effect of the prereading instruction was different depending on the degree of vocabulary difficulty. There were quite a few cases indicating that the prereading instruction was effective for the "easier" vocabulary group (i.e., Group D) but not for the "more difficult" vocabulary group (i.e., Group C).

The differential effect of prereading instruction was also revealed in the extratextual

elements. Both Group C and Group D included extratextual elements mostly from the prereading instruction, though differently in degree. However, whereas the recalls of Group C included a lot of extratextual elements from blind reliance on the prereading instruction, those of Group D included extratextual elements from guessing based on the knowledge obtained in the prereading instruction.

Thus far, some general differences found in the recalls of the four treatment groups have been introduced. However, this should not lead one to ignore the fact that there were much more common features shared in their recalls; despite the different conditions provided, even the problems found in their recalls shared common features. The general characteristics shared in the recalls of the four groups and the types and sources of problems commonly found in them are introduced in separate articles.

"Proficient" Readers vs. "Nonproficient" Readers

According to the analysis, there were several characteristics that distinguished between the "proficient" and the "nonproficient" readers in this study. However, this does not necessarily mean that what was found in "proficient" readers did not exist in "nonproficient" readers. In fact, there were similarities found between the recalls of the "proficient" readers in one treatment group (e.g., Group A) and those of the "nonproficient" readers in another treatment group (e.g., Group B). Moreover, even the "proficient" and the "nonproficient" readers in the same treatment group shared some general characteristics as shown in the recall of idea units on the macro- and the micropropositional levels and also in the recall of idea units on each level of the hierarchical content structure (Table 2 & 3). That is, both groups recalled better on the micropropositional level than on the macropropositional level. Also, both groups recalled better on lexical items than on role relationships. Considering the similarities found between the two groups, therefore, it would be safer to say that the differences between "proficient" readers and "nonproficient" readers were in degree rather than in kind.

Despite the features shared in the recalls of the "proficient" and the "nonproficient" readers in this study, there were not a few characteristics that distinguished between the two groups. One of them was in the recall of idea units on the higher hierarchical levels of content structure (See Table 2 & 3). As can be recognized, there is a tremendous gap between "proficient" and "nonproficient" readers in the recall of the idea unit on the highest hierarchical level: none of the "nonproficient" readers in Groups A, B, and C and only 16.67 % of the "nonproficient" readers in Group D succeeded in recalling the idea unit on Level 1, whereas 88.33% of the "proficient" readers in each of Groups A, B, and C, and 66.67 % in Group D did. However, the gap becomes

narrower as the level goes down, reflecting that "proficient" readers were better recallers of higher level idea units.

Table 2: Comparison between "Proficient" and "Nonproficient" Readers on the Recall of Idea Units on Macro- and Micropropositional (Role relationships and Lexical Items) Levels

Group	Level	Proficient Readers			Nonproficient Readers		
		Macro. Level	Role Re.	Lexical It.	Macro Level	Role Re.	Lexical It.
Group A		13.72 %	16.67 %	19.03 %	2.16 %	1.59 %	6.31 %
Group B		30.79 %	39.68 %	36.83 %	6.61 %	8.47 %	10.81 %
Group C		18.63 %	20.90 %	22.97 %	3.14 %	3.70 %	5.86 %
Group D		34.51 %	38.09 %	40.09 %	4.12 %	5.29 %	8.45 %

Table 3: Comparison between "Proficient" and "Nonproficient" readers on the Recall of Idea Units on Each Hierarchical Level of Content Structure

L:Level G:Group P:Proficient Readers N:Nonproficient Readers(%Score)

G	L	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		A	P	83.33	91.67	54.63	23.13	11.49	11.44	15.97	7.96
	N	0	5.56	11.67	4.09	1.72	1.74	4.17	8.33	1.39	0
B	P	83.33	86.11	54.63	47.96	36.03	41.79	20.14	11.67	11.11	4.17
	N	0	36.11	17.50	13.95	4.90	6.72	3.82	7.69	8.33	0
C	P	83.33	88.89	44.44	23.47	14.22	21.89	19.44	16.03	15.28	0
	N	0	16.67	13.33	8.81	1.13	3.39	3.13	2.56	0	0
D	P	66.67	77.78	51.85	45.92	36.03	41.54	35.76	10.56	6.94	0
	N	16.67	27.78	17.50	12.26	3.68	4.48	1.74	1.67	2.78	0

Another difference between the two groups was that "proficient" readers were generally better than "nonproficient" readers in the recall of topic sentences located in the beginning of each paragraph (See Table 4). This may be interpreted, along with the fact that they were better recallers of higher level idea units (Table 3), as that "proficient" readers had a better grasp of the gist of the text and hence, a global understanding of the text.

The recalls of "proficient" and "nonproficient" readers were also different in the quality of the recalled sentences (See Table 5). While the sentences recalled by

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"proficient" readers were generally longer and included more complete sentences, often with a complex structure, the sentences recalled by "nonproficient" readers were smaller in number and shorter in length. Furthermore, "nonproficient" readers produced more sentence fragments especially when the prereading instruction was not provided. What needs to be remembered at this point is that the fact that the average number of complete sentences and the average number of words per complete sentence increased and that the average number of sentence fragments decreased by "nonproficient" readers when prereading instruction was provided (See Table 5) should not be interpreted as that the quality of their recalls improved. Such an "improvement" in terms of numbers has to do with blind reliance on the prereading instruction. This is reflected in the fact that despite the "improvement", the average recall scores of Groups C and D were about the same as or even lower than those of Groups A and B, respectively.

Table 4: Comparison between "Proficient" and "Nonproficient"
Readers in the Recall of Topic Sentences

P: Proficient Readers N: Nonproficient Readers
SN: The topic sentence in paragraph N

Group	Topics	S1 *of subj(%)	S2 *of subj(%)	S3 *of subj(%)	Average
A	P	5 (83.3%)	4 (66.7%)	1 (16.7%)	55.6%
	N	2 (33.3%)	0 (0 %)	1 (16.7%)	16.7%
B	P	5 (83.3%)	1 (16.7%)	4 (66.7%)	55.6%
	N	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	16.7%
C	P	5 (83.3%)	0 (0 %)	3 (50.0%)	44.4%
	N	1 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	0 (0 %)	11.1%
D	P	5 (83.3%)	4 (66.7%)	6 (100%)	77.8%
	N	1 (16.7%)	0 (0 %)	1 (16.7%)	11.1%

As for the influence of the prereading instruction, "proficient" readers and "nonproficient" readers showed a clear difference. That is, one finds a clear difference between "proficient" readers and "nonproficient" readers in the use of their prior knowledge obtained from the prereading instruction. While "proficient" readers tended to use their prior knowledge to enhance comprehension of the text and their recalls rarely included extratextual elements from the prereading instruction, "nonproficient" readers

Table 5: Comparison between "Proficient" and "Nonproficient" Readers on the Quality of Sentences Recalled

Sentences

P: Proficient Readers N: Nonproficient Readers

Group	Average of Recall Scores	Average Number of Complete Sentences	Average Number of Words per Complete S.	Average Number of Sentence Fragments	
A	P N	53.8 12.0	9.2 1.7	8.4 4.6	0.3 3.8
B	P N	113.0 27.7	10.3 3.0	10.9 8.2	0.2 1.8
C	P N	62.2 13.7	8.6 3.3	8.4 9.8	0.2 1.5
D	P N	114.4 20.0	11.6 6.3	10.5 10.6	0.6 0.0

frequently showed blind reliance on their knowledge from the prereading instruction. This is indicated in the examples below which were frequently found in the recalls of "nonproficient" readers in the groups provided with the prereading instruction.

e.g. R: (by C1) 'The old model of bicycle was not as convenient as today's, and it was hard for women to ride in long skirts.'

R: (by C25) 'A person called Bloomer developed a dress with the design of pants under a long or short skirt.'

R: (by D8) 'Women could not participate in voting, but this woman participated and got expelled.'

R: (by D14) 'In old days women exercised in long dresses, and it must have been inconvenient.'

R: (by D16) 'A brave woman volunteered to wear pants, and following her, some women in New York wore pants, which made it possible for all women to wear pants freely.'

R: (by D18) 'Women did not have the right-to-vote. A brave woman voted and got arrested.'

The differences in the quality of the recalled sentences seemed to be related to the readers' use of different strategies as well as to their linguistic knowledge. For instance, even if there were any vocabulary difficulties, "proficient" readers tended to finish the sentences once they started writing, trying to guess at the meaning or sometimes omitting the part they didn't know, whereas "nonproficient" readers tended

to give up in the middle, leaving the sentence as an incomplete one, or resort to wild guessing and/or blind reliance on the prereading instruction. This can be recognized at least partially in the comparison of the quality of the sentences recalled by the two groups (See Table 5).

Putting aside the quality of recalls, the analysis of the interview and the questionnaire results also provided information about the differences between "proficient" and "nonproficient" readers. According to the analysis, "proficient" readers considered themselves as fast readers in their native language, reading differently for different purposes. "Nonproficient" readers, on the other hand, judged themselves as slow readers even in their native language. One reason for this slow speed, according to the readers themselves, was that they read very carefully, trying not to miss a single word in the sentence. From this analysis one can suspect that one's reading ability in a foreign language is related to his/her reading ability in his/her native language. But discussion on this part is beyond the scope of this study.

The most prominent reader characteristic that distinguished between "proficient" and "nonproficient" readers, as revealed in the interview and the questionnaire analysis, was that while "proficient" readers had confidence in their English abilities, and were more interested and devoted to learning English, "nonproficient" readers did not have confidence in their English abilities and were less devoted to the study of English. The interview results showed that none of the four "nonproficient" readers, but all of the four "proficient" readers had confidence in their English abilities and that all the "proficient" readers spent at least one hour per day in studying English, whereas the "nonproficient" ones almost gave up their efforts to learn English and often did not study even for exams. Two of the four "nonproficient" readers interviewed responded that they often gave up reading the text in English if it looked a little difficult at the first glance.

Despite the differences described above, however, the interview and the questionnaire analysis also showed that "proficient" readers and "nonproficient" readers shared common characteristics. According to the interview results, both groups had a good understanding of what reading was; they were aware that reading, as a second-hand experience, was not just decoding the letters, but understanding the author's message through the means of the written language, and that readers' interpretations of the same text may be different depending on their prior knowledge. Both groups also had ideas about how to cope with different types of texts for different purposes; they knew that depending on the purpose of reading, they would have to use different strategies. However, comparison of the interview and the questionnaire results and the recalls shows that what one knows and can use is one thing, and what one actually uses is

another. Here, lack of language knowledge seems to be the main cause for the gap.

Interview results also showed that "proficient" readers and "nonproficient" readers shared strategies in reading in their native language. For instance, when they encountered an unfamiliar word, both groups responded that they would try to guess at the meaning using the context, looking at the preceding and the following sentences or sometimes skipping the unfamiliar part rather than looking up the dictionary. Reading in Korean, according to them, was different from reading in English in that they had no trouble with the grammar and they rarely came across unfamiliar words. Another common characteristic revealed in the analysis of the interview and the questionnaire results was that for both groups memorizing words and studying grammar were the last thing they wanted to do in learning English. Amazingly, 96 % of the subjects, including "proficient" and "nonproficient" readers, in the response to a question in the questionnaire, said that they hated learning grammar and vocabulary, for which, however, they confessed they spent most of their study time allotted for English. The analysis showed that both groups knew that vocabulary was the key component in L2 reading comprehension; six out of the eight subjects interviewed responded that vocabulary was the most important element in reading in English.

IV. Conclusion and Classroom Implications

Up to this point, some of the differences as well as the similarities between "proficient" readers and "nonproficient" readers have been introduced. In short, the differences between the two groups seemed to result from the differences in their language abilities first of all, in the strategies they used to deal with the difficulties they came across while reading, and in the confidence they have in their language abilities. And these three factors seemed to be closely related.

The present study, although limited in scope, does seem to point out the differences between "proficient" and "nonproficient" readers. One can draw from the results of the study some important implications for the reading instruction in the EFL classroom. Here are two suggestions made. First, individual readers need to be helped on the basis of their own reading levels. This suggests that readers with different reading abilities need to be provided with instruction with different reading materials in terms of difficulty level. Unfortunately, however, the current situation in Korea is very deplorable in this regard. By providing the individuals with different abilities with the same textbook, educators are in fact discouraging, rather than encouraging, many of their students. Therefore, even though one need not argue that all reading materials must

be specially written for individual EFL learners, it seems obvious that more consideration needs to be given to individual differences of the learners.

Secondly, "nonproficient" readers' confidence in their abilities as learners needs to be improved. That is, the readers need to be helped to have more confidence in their abilities and thus have more positive attitudes toward the language they learn. The current situation in Korea, however, seems that by forcing the "nonproficient" readers to realize how "poor" they are in their abilities the educators in fact contribute to encouraging the students to give up making further efforts to learn English and to form negative attitudes toward the language. In this sense, educators themselves may be the ones most responsible for the negative attitudes of the "nonproficient" readers toward English. As revealed in the interview analysis, exams are the most important events for students in their school lives, and educators should help their students gain more confidence in their abilities and change their negative attitudes into positive ones by providing them with more "encouraging" exams. Of course, this should not mean that exams should be easy. Rather, it means that exams should be challenging but not discouraging. Educators should keep in mind the fact that readers' confidence in their abilities and their attitudes toward the language are closely related to their performance in the exams and that a challenging exam for individuals should take their different levels into consideration.

In the above, two suggestions have been made about the reading instruction with L2 learners with different reading abilities. Both suggestions put emphasis on more considerations of individual differences, which have been largely ignored in many EFL contexts. Of course, there are many difficulties involved in taking such individual differences into consideration. However, such difficulties should not discourage educators' efforts to move toward the suggested direction. It is considered not fair to treat different individuals not differently.

Appendix

Text A ("More Difficult" Vocabulary Version)

What were the consequences of the full acceptance of the bicycle in certain areas of social life? Perhaps the bicycle's greatest impact was upon the American woman. As soon as the safety and the drop frame made it easier for them to mount and ride, women seized upon the vehicle as a new means of defying tradition. This was the period, it must be remembered, of the suffrage movement, when the genteel female was

on her way out and women were demanding every form of equality with men. Soon, for example, probably because of the reluctance of elderly ladies to learn to ride, it became socially proper for a boy and girl to go cycling without a third party. (Or was it because the bicycle built-for-two had no room for a chaperone?)

For the sake of both comfort and safety, women's clothing was drastically changed. As one female cyclist put it, "On the bicycle excursion a special adaptation of dress is absolutely necessary, for skirts, while they have not hindered women from climbing to the topmost branches of higher education, may prove fatal in downhill coasting." Some of the bolder among the sex easily adapted their dress to cycling by shortening their skirts, shockingly exposing their ankles to view. The courage of some yet more daring women gave the United States the famous bloomer girls. "Skirts," as one advocate of dress reform was quoted in The New York Daily Tribune, "long or short ... are bound to go. It is merely a question of time when an unadulterated men's suit ... will be the universal garb for women, and all this talk and agitation of the question will be forgotten." And bloomers did resemble men's knickerbockers, though they were wider and more flowing. Despite the censure and ridicule directed at them, the women stuck doggedly to the new fashion. "The time for a woman to faint if a man caught sight of her ankle," said the new women, "has passed."

The effect of the bicycle on women's clothing was truly revolutionary - within a period of two to three years the bicycle gave the American woman the liberty of dress which reformers had been seeking for generations.

Text B ("Easier" Vocabulary Version)

What were the results of the full acceptance of the bicycle in some areas of social life? Perhaps the bicycle's greatest effect was upon the American woman. As soon as the safety and the drop frame made it easier for them to mount and ride, women used the bicycle as a new way of not obeying tradition. This was the period, it must be remembered, of the "right-to-vote" movement, when the lady-like woman was on her way out and women were asking for every form of equality with men. Soon, for example, probably because of the reluctance of elderly ladies to learn to ride, it became socially acceptable for a boy and girl to go cycling without another person. (Or was it because the bicycle built-for-two had no place for a chaperone?)

For the sake of both comfort and safety, women's clothing was much changed. As one woman cyclist said, "On the bicycle trip a special adaptation of dress is absolutely necessary, for skirts, while they have not stopped women from climbing to the highest

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branches of higher education, may prove deadly in downhill riding." Some of the braver among the women easily adapted their dress to cycling by shortening their skirts, shockingly exposing their ankles to view. The bravery of some much braver women gave the United States the famous "pants" girls. "Skirts," as one person for dress change was quoted in The New York Daily Tribune, "long or short ... are surely to go. It is simply a question of time when an unaltered men's suit ... will be the universal clothing for women, and all this talk and excitement of the question will be forgotten." And girls' short pants did look like men's short pants, though they were wider and more flowing. Despite the censure and laughter directed at them, the women strongly held to the new fashion. "The time for a woman to faint if a man caught sight of her ankle," said the new women, "has passed."

The effect of the bicycle on women's clothing was truly revolutionary - within a period of two to three years the bicycle gave the American woman the liberty of dress which many had been seeking for generations.

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