

The effects of reading modality (reading while listening vs. reading only) on reading fluency and comprehension in English as a foreign language: the case of children

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Reading is one of the most relevant skills as it gives access to information. Despite its importance, reading in a second or foreign language (L2) has received little attention compared to reading in the students' first language (L1). There have been several approaches to L1 or L2 learning through reading, such as extensive reading (ER), which consists of reading for pleasure some self-selected material that is within the students' level, or reading while listening (RWL). Regarding ER and RWL, several studies show that they have a positive impact on L2 vocabulary learning (Horst, 2005), on reading proficiency (Elley, 1991) and reading rates (Al-Homoud & Schmitt, 2009). However, there are no studies with children. The goal of this study is to fill these gaps by answering the following research questions:

1. To what extent does ER influence L2 reading fluency and comprehension with children?
2. Is reading modality (RWL vs. reading only [R]) associated with L2 reading fluency and comprehension with children?

Method

Eighty-six 10-year-old Catalan/Spanish ESL bilinguals were distributed into three conditions: reading-while-listening (n= 48), reading only (n= 24) and control group (n= 14). Participants in the RWL condition spent two periods a week reading-while-listening, whereas reading only participants spent two periods a week reading. Participants in the two experimental groups read/listened graded readers related to the topics that were covered in the subject of science (also taught in English in their school) over eight months and afterwards they carried out two language activities (25 minutes). The control group learned English through a traditional teacher-centered approach. Participants were asked to read three different but comparable texts at three times: at the beginning of the course, three months afterwards, and at the end of the course.

Results

Results on reading speed and comprehension will be interpreted in terms of time and learning condition.

References

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