In general, human beings obtain new information about external world by reading documents. Since reading comprehension consists of acquiring some information through text medium and reconstructing its meaning, low-achievers in reading are more likely to face various difficulties in everyday life. For school-aged children, low achievement in reading is one of the major reasons to cause overall underachievement. It is because reading comprehension is the fundamental learning ability upon which other subjects are dependent. Accumulated overall underachievement might cause problem in adjustment to school life and in some cases would lead to dropping out of the school. Therefore, effective diagnosis and intervention of low achieving elementary students in reading is helpful to prevent such possible difficulties.

According to previous researches, linguistic component knowledge such as phonemic, vocabulary, and syntactic knowledge and cognitive variables such as prior knowledge and working memory affected students' level of reading comprehension. Considering the developmental level of low achieving elementary students in reading, linguistic component knowledge was more influential than cognitive variables. Moreover, since this linguistic component knowledge is the major content in Korean language education curriculum, it is likely to be more easily improved than cognitive variables. However, there were only a few domestic studies focusing on linguistic component knowledge for low achieving elementary students in reading, even which revealed some important limitations.

This study intended to examine the relationship between reading comprehension and its dependent variables such as linguistic component knowledge and cognitive variables, especially focusing on linguistic component knowledge. Research questions were formed in order to bring some limitations of previous studies to settlement. This study was expected to provide some implications of educational contents and efficient intervention strategies for low achieving elementary students in reading.

The research questions of this study were as follows:
1. What is the unique contribution of linguistic component knowledge, in addition to cognitive variables, on reading comprehension?
2. How much influence does each of the factors of linguistic component knowledge such as phonemic, vocabulary, and syntactic knowledge exert on reading comprehension?

The participants in this study included 101 low achieving students in reading with Grades 4 to 6 from an elementary school in Seoul. The participants above Grade 4 were chosen because in general low achieving students began to develop reading comprehension from Grade 4. Additionally, 100 ordinary students with Grades 4 to 6 were sampled as supplement data. Based on the results of pilot study, the data were collected about 4 weeks for main study. Several instruments were administered, including the Korean language Test in Achievement-Cognitve ability ENDorsement Tests(ACCENT-KT), a reading comprehension test, a phoneme test, a vocabulary test, a syntax test, a prior knowledge test, and a working memory test. For this study, a reading comprehension test, a vocabulary test, a syntax test, and a prior knowledge test were developed, while a phoneme test was reconstituted.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the relationship between linguistic component knowledge and reading comprehension for low achieving elementary students. Applying hierarchical method to the multiple regression analysis, the unique contribution of linguistic component knowledge in addition to cognitive variables was calculated, which expected to influence upon reading comprehension. Also t-values from multiple regression analysis were compared to find how the factors of linguistic component knowledge affected reading comprehension.

The results of this study were as follows:
First, it revealed that the unique contribution of linguistic component knowledge to reading comprehension was 27%. That is, when the cognitive variables such as prior knowledge and working
memory were put in the first step of a multiple regression analysis, their contribution was 20%. In the next step, adding linguistic component knowledge such as phonemic, vocabulary, and syntactic knowledge led to increase their contribution to reading comprehension to 47%, which indicated that the unique contribution of linguistic component knowledge was 27%.

Second, the vocabulary knowledge among the factors of linguistic component knowledge turned out to be the most explanatory variable in reading comprehension, with t-values of vocabulary knowledge, syntactic knowledge, phonemic knowledge corresponding to 3.40, 2.94, 1.05 respectively. This implies that the more vocabulary knowledge is accumulated, the better reading comprehension is likely to be developed.

The implications of this study's findings and some practical suggestions for schools are as follows:

First, the result demonstrated that cognitive variables and linguistic component knowledge explained 47% of the variance of reading comprehension for low achieving elementary students. This reconfirmed that their reading comprehension was affected by not just cognitive variables but linguistic component knowledge as well. Second, the contribution of cognitive variables to reading comprehension turned out 20%, which meant cognitive variables were still influential to reading comprehension for low achieving elementary students. In this study, focusing on the influence of linguistic component knowledge on reading comprehension, the research design was intended to minimize the influence of cognitive variables. Third, the unique contribution of linguistic component knowledge to reading comprehension excepting cognitive variables turned out 27%. In the light of intervention at school, the practical application of this empirical data may enable the teachers in charge of low achieving elementary students in reading to be aware of the importance of linguistic component knowledge to improve reading comprehension. Fourth, the vocabulary knowledge among the factors of linguistic component knowledge turned out to be the most explanatory variable in reading comprehension. This suggests that as far as the low achieving elementary students in reading can maintain word recognition as in this study, the teachers in charge can intervene to improve their reading comprehension focusing on the vocabulary. Fifth, the tests developed or reconstituted for this study, proved technically adequate, could be used for educational assessment as well as for further studies.

* Note: The text above is the abstract of the thesis.

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