

Abstract

The present study examined the extent L1 Chinese cross-linguistic skills and L2 language-specific skills uniquely predict L2 English reading. A total of 76 Cantonese-English bilingual children in Hong Kong were assessed on word reading fluency, word reading accuracy, morphological awareness, word order skill, morphosyntactic skill and vocabulary skill in L1, and word reading accuracy and vocabulary skill in L2. Reading comprehension were also tested in both L1 and L2. Hierarchical regressions manifested that after partialing out the effects of age and nonverbal intelligence, word order skill and morphosyntactic skill each independently and significantly contribute to L2 reading comprehension. Together with morphological awareness and word reading fluency, these four Chinese variables still uniquely predict L2 reading comprehension after removing the influence from Chinese reading comprehension. There were however limits in the magnitude of L1 Chinese in explaining L2 reading comprehension. English word reading accuracy and vocabulary skill emerged as language-specific components. They each uniquely explain for variance in L2 reading comprehension. These findings could inform Hong Kong educators on strategies that they should take in structuring an effective L2 reading comprehension environment.