

Detoxified Protocols Reading Comprehension: The Key to Language Competence*

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I. Introduction

To gain command of a language, individuals commonly learn speaking and writing skills naturally and use them at their convenience. To raise competence of interpretation within our society, however, collegiate reading need be paid more attention than before.

Whenever it is told there are a lot of mistakes in interpretation on international affairs of our government, I, as a person in the related field, feel a heartfelt responsibility. Not only several mistakes committed, but hundreds on

* This paper is based upon KSATs and collegiate interpretational education that I, the author, have directly experienced for over 30 years. It thus aims to provide practical guidance.

Korea-EU and U.S.A, and Korea-U.S.A beef deals have been found. Our community has paid the expense large enough to cover scholarships for thousands of college students suffering from their high tuitions, having vanished into thin air just like that. In order to prevent these kinds disasters, we need to understand the process of English-Korean or vice versa interpretation more attentively then ever.

English, like all languages, is a means of communications for everyday life. Those raised in an English-speaking culture of course acquire normal English language skills. Additionally, English as a foreign language (hereafter referred to as “EFL”) or a second language (hereafter, “ESL”) can be readily utilized by those with common capacities for language acquisition and use.

Given enough motivation, Koreans in an English speaking environment for three to five years can pick up the language and even practice it as well as equivalent ordinary Americans do. English as a means of communication, whether attained as one’s mother tongue or EFL, is not so difficult to acquire as previously believed.

Among the four functions of language use—listening, speaking, reading and writing—most hours should be allotted to reading because the other three derive from it. Without reading you cannot achieve any function in English with satisfactory fluency.

Clearly, increasing international communications on colloquial terms has brought listening and speaking to our attention, yet reading still seems to be the greatest skill for learners to master. Reading lets us probe depths of culture, history, studies, ideas and almost every facet of the target language.

In other words, reading offers the most lasting value of any function, yet it can be accomplished with relative ease.

For instance, if you don’t have time and chances to listen, speak, or write a language for a long time you can easily lose those functions even after you have reached high levels on them. Many overseas Koreans, living among local people for a long time and no chances of exposure to Korean, don’t listen,

speak, or write Korean as well as they used to, but they can do a lot better in reading than in the other three. This refers to the fact that reading is not the function easily forgotten.

Reading can also promote widespread collegiate studies, vocational information searches, or personal refinement through interface with literary works, periodicals, or other readings in English. Additionally, reading comprehension¹⁾ (hereafter, “RC”) may be considered the most important, because most world cultures can only be closely viewed and appreciated through reading. Therefore, RC is not only a source of joy and information, but the nuts and bolts of enlarging and reenforcing learners' knowledge of any foreign language, including English.

II. Theoretical Background in Translation²⁾

2.1. Psychological theory

Psycholinguistics fuse the studies of psychology and linguistics. The result is a field devoted to the acquisition and mental processes on speaking and understanding languages. Psycholinguists specializing in the language acquisition process, such as Brown & Bellugi³⁾, argued that language acquisition—in addition to the acquisition process of imitation, collection and storage—involves the competence of producing sentences never heard before, with a few limited regulations, by learning creative rules.

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- 1) RC is a way of thinking through written texts, and a process of deciphering messages encoded by senders; authors, writers, or speakers.
 - 2) Translation is defined as adjusting meaningful contents of one symbolic expression into another; in other words, transferring sentences of a language into other languages.
 - 3) Brown, Roger & Bellugi, Ursula. “Three Processes in the Child's Acquisition of Syntax,” Cambridge: *Harvard Education Review*, 1964

2.1.1. Overall maturity

When a student shows reading development, it is difficult to tell how much is acquired from natural maturity (self-acquired) and how much from training (education). But you can bet your boots that student grade point averages (GPA) on tests, which assess levels of language training, tend to improve considerably. What comprises mature language skills will now be defined.

2.1.2. Intelligence level

In a general sense, knowledge power means a competent understanding of relationships among segments of society, and the ability to cope with those relationships.

Mental age as an ingredient of intelligence is one element determining the ability and accuracy with which a learner recognizes and understands a word or phrase. Intelligence quotient (hereafter referred to as “IQ”) is the yardstick representing expected learning speed on those acquiring a language.

As reading skill and knowledge correlate and help us understand more than just those two interactions, we must carefully review the relationship between these two competencies in RC.

2.1.3. Ability classifying and recognizing word-types in vision, hearing

Some of this ability is acquired by nature (birth) and some by nurture (training). Competency includes classifying and memorizing visual word-types, and arranging and connecting phonetic units of meaningful word-groups, relying heavily on ordinary vision and hearing.

Yet when knowledge power, sensory organs and linguistic backgrounds seem normal, students may nevertheless reveal defects in seeing and hearing words. Apparent normality does not simply mean that sensory organs are a key consideration in ELS acquisition. These abilities result somewhat from nurturing which significantly affects the development of early linguistic ability.

2.1.4. Environmental factors

Environmental factors consist of both linguistic backgrounds and a range of experiences, correlate household-conditions. This is the crux of the matter, but household-conditions is an overly broad term. Let us define it plainly, including:

- 1) Household income, building size, financial conditions, square meals, and sound sleep
- 2) Opportunities for leisure and various social experiences
- 3) Quantity and attribution of the target language by children affected by their parents' language use
- 4) Overall household literacy and opportunities to come into contact with books of various levels in the target language
- 5) Family relationships influencing children's psychological stability and character formation

2.1.5. Emotional attitudes

The significance of emotional characteristics, such as interest, enthusiasm and confidence, becomes apparent. Ongoing methods in schools show that some teachers recognize these factors, while some don't, causing students despair and frustration. By the same token, parents must show adequate interest in their children's reading, not just by demanding too much, but by commending⁴⁾ their efforts, even when progress is small and slow.

2.2. Sociolinguistic theory

In order to enjoy comfortable linguistics study, factors relevant to society and language need to be comprehended. For the sake of reading and understanding foreign publications, in particular, it is necessary to understand a country's society, structure and linguistic life by region, class, gender and age.

4) Complimenting or praising

Hall⁵⁾ stated that culture is the whole ball of wax in lifestyles, behavioral patterns, attitudes and material conditions in a target language country. In other words, culture consists of both material and psychological factors. The latter reflects the lifestyles, behavioral patterns and attitudes of a people, which relate to target language acquisition.

As language naturally represents the experiences and ideas of people living in their cultural realm, culture is inevitably woven into the language. The conclusion, therefore, that linguistic life itself refers to culture, has caused the argument that the more differences between languages, the larger the gaps in cultures are. Similarly, another argument holds that language and culture have a hand-in-glove relationship. In either case, the relationship between language and culture is appreciated as dynamic, affecting each other closely. Here we refer to this relationship as a means of alleviating the difficulties of RC.

More precisely, RC expresses approximate meanings through completely individual linguistic forms. This bears upon the process of regenerating meanings in other languages, including language patterns, such as word order, phonetic tone, rhythm, writing style, nuance, and so forth. It is impossible to express exactly the same meaning through either RC or translation.

For instance, the Korean “Yak-Guk” must inevitably be translated as “drugstore,” but the equivalent establishment in the U.S.A offers various goods and services besides medications, such as cigarettes, cosmetics and magazines. They may even have snackbars serving tea, coffee, soft drinks and light meals.

Yak-guk, therefore, refers to a pharmacy, rather than a drugstore, in a more exact translation. As another example, there is no single Korean equivalent to “uncle” in English. In Korean, “uncle” has numerous concepts. Koreans use several terms to refer to a mother’s elder (or younger) brother, a father’s elder (or younger) brother, the husband of a father’s sister, and the

5) Edward T. Hall. *The Silent Language*, Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965

husband of a mother's. All these word, however, apparently no difference in English, have meaningful attributions in Korean.

Cultural differences are semantically meaningful. Let's take another example. When Koreans meet and say, "Where are you going?" or "Have you eaten?," they have little semantic meaning beyond social greetings. They simply reply, "Over there! or Yeah!" If those same questions were asked to Westerners, the answers would be totally different. They might even assume we were violating etiquette, leading to misunderstandings.

Likewise, wall-to-wall miscommunications or misunderstandings occur now, due to these cultural differences. Let's consider another example from a Westerner's viewpoint. When an Englishman scratches his back, he might say, "Oh, great! God bless the Duke of Argyle!⁶⁾[107:1~6]" Hearing this, we might wonder what on earth the saying means. How can we translate it when it is not listed in an English-Korean dictionary?

We frequently hear students say with a sigh, "I can translate it, but I can't understand its meaning." This is definitely due to cultural differences. Fries⁷⁾ classified and identified such semantic meanings as follows.

※Literal and Sociocultural Approaches in Interpretation

General meaning	literal	lexicon
		syntactic (structural)
	social · cultural	figurative
		metaphoric

6) An exclamation, 'Oh, that feels good or feel fresh,' when scratching one's back. It has been said that the Duke of Argyle erected a row of posts to mark his property, and these posts were used by the cattle and people (continued) to rub against. Jordan Almond, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, Citadel Press, Kensington Publishing Corp., 1995

7) C.C. Fries. *The Structure of English*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952

Every meaningful unit of expressions shall be interpreted into one of the four categories, in the accordance with the semantic circumstances, as mentioned in the chart above. Readers, needless to say, must learn and appreciate both sociocultural and literal meanings. We must consider the differences of cultural backgrounds between Korean and English to master the English language.

※Understanding Cultural Diversity in Interpretation

Western Cultural Background	Korean Cultural Background
① Commercial life with a long seafaring history	① Agricultural life with a long seasonal/meteorological history
② Logical thoughts	② Natural thoughts
③ Highly emotional expressions	③ Low emotional expressions
④ Strong self-reliance and independence	④ Strong collectivity and solidarity
⑤ Avoidance of general expressions	⑤ Frequent general expressions
⑥ Skillful self-exposure	⑥ Accustomed to self-humbleness
⑦ Detesting formality, and favoring outgoing straightforwardness	⑦ Preferring formality and politeness
⑧ Enjoying discourse (discussions)	⑧ Avoiding discourse
⑨ Frequent use of humor	⑨ Frequent use of serious and sincere expressions
⑩ Explicit between “Yes” and “No”	⑩ Inexplicit between “Yes” and “No”
⑪ Active and sincere for oneself	⑪ Overly conscious of others
⑫ Valuing personal choice and freedom	⑫ Compliant and patient

Cultures are not regarded as superior or inferior, just different from one another and undoubtedly in flux. Thus, we must remain flexible.

In acquiring not only English grammar and pronunciation in constant change, but cultural knowledge too, we can hope to agilely cope with RC.

That is, we have to understand the target culture first in order to master its language. Knowing a culture is part of grasping a language.

III. Elements of Interpretation⁸⁾

Language is the process of communicating messages, consisting of symbols upon experiences, between a sender and a recipient. The former is a speaker or writer conveying thoughts; the latter a listener or reader grasping for meaning. If the sender's experience of a word different from the recipient's there must be misunderstanding causing misinterpretation.

Misinterpretation instances are frequently reported including recent Korea-EU and USA FTA deals, and Korea-U.S.A beef deal, which led to disastrous delays of ratifying the deals in the congress, impairing our economy or creating social turmoil of wasteful controversies on the mistakes. In order for us to avoid these problems costing tremendous monetary waste of our community, we'd better closely consider the elements of written expression, related to RC.

3.1. Analysis⁹⁾

- ① Grammar and syntax
- ② Vocabulary
- ③ Relevancy of words, phrases and sentences
- ④ Conjunctions
- ⑤ Comprehending a reading's title, subject, point, and central idea
- ⑥ Identifying and using reference materials

8) Interpretation gives meaning to linguistic signs—shedding light on them to be understood easily by other language speakers.

9) Otto Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar*, 1924

- ㉗ Inference and anticipation
- ㉘ Coherence and logic of contents
- ㉙ Cultural background “horse sense”
- ㉚ Mother-tongue RC transferred to the target language RC

3.2. Syntax

- ① Subject, verb, object (“SVO”) sentence order (subject and predicate in long sentences)
- ② Modifiers (adjectives and adverbs)
- ③ Classifying verb types and the five sentence structures
- ④ Demonstratives (designating inference)
- ⑤ Special structures (inversion, postposition, commonality, insertions, appositions, and ellipses)
- ⑥ Use and differences between limited and continuous relative factors
- ⑦ Punctuation
- ⑧ Articles, narration, voice and subjunctive tense
- ⑨ Conjunctions, relations, phrases and clauses
- ⑩ Take this advice with a grain of salt¹⁰⁾

3.3. General comprehension (title, subject, point, cause, and summary, etc.)

- ① Title, subject and point, and grasp of core and subordinate ideas
- ② Dividing paragraphs to improve organization and finding key sentences and words
- ③ Relevancy of paragraphs and coherence
 - i) Recognize relevance with subject
 - ii) The overall concept within each paragraph

10) To consider something to be not completely true or right

- iii) Conjunctions connecting paragraphs (especially adverbial conjunctions) and connected sentences
- iv) Relating the stream of whole sentences to pairs of paragraphs
- v) Key paragraphs or thesis statements

3.4. Logical understanding (cohesion, coherence, and uniformity)

Sentences or passages must make sense. The following attributes are essential for good English.

3.4.1. Cohesion

Linguistic competence¹¹⁾ refers to an ability to connect sentences with proper grammar. This is referred to as discourse competence, which includes adverbial conjunctions, demonstrative adverbs and conjunctions.

*[eg] for your reference¹²⁾

-furthermore: moreover, in addition, what is more, into the bargain, besides, as well, also, by the same token, likewise, too, to boot

-simultaneously: at the same time, as one, concurrently, in concert, synchronously, together

-meanwhile: in the meantime, during the interval, for now, for the duration, for the moment, meanwhile back at the ranch, for the time being

3.4.2. Coherence

Coherence means a consistency of contents and style from “stem to stern” of a given work. Sentences in paragraphs should be logically connected. Each

11) According to the Chomsky’s Standard Theory (1965), linguistic competence does not repose in utterance actually spoken by a native speaker, but is relevant to his or her knowledge of the language.

12) Merriam-Webster, *Dictionary and Thesaurus*, Merriam-Webster, London, 2009

sentence must maintain person, number, case, gender, voice, tense, etc. in its grammar and meaning.

3.4.3. Unity

Unity means that all sentences in a paragraph need to represent a single thought, and all facts, including the thesis statement and core idea of the paragraph have something to do with the subject. The unity means sentences develop one core idea per paragraph. Thus, sentences should develop the subject in the paragraph. Additional considerations that also come to our attention in RC include: (1) logic, (2) time, space and importance order, and (3) transitions.

3.5. Appreciation on target cultures

In RC, syntax and vocabulary knowledge is sometimes unnatural, due to inadequate cultural understanding. Readings often connote different meanings to different people, even though passages seem clear. This tends to occur with proverbs and maxims. To avoid such unintended embarrassments, cultural awareness helps us grasp whole meanings conveyed.

For instance, the phrase “Keep the wolf from the door” does not literally mean “stop the wolf from entering,” but to “live from hand to mouth”—that is, to barely maintain oneself at a minimal level or keep from starvation.

“Jump on the band wagon” does not literally mean “get on a bandwagon that’s coming,” but, rather, “support or become involved in something that is popular.” Etymology of this idiom traces back to the era of trailblazing¹³⁾ in the American West when circus bandwagons were used for election campaigns. Getting on the wagon showed support for a particular candidate.

13) To do early or pioneering work that others follow up on

IV. Conclusion

English education has largely relied on RC, which accounts for a large part of the KSAT. Reading English textbooks in the areas of expertise of college lectures only deepens our appreciation of RC for English acquisition. Thus, improving RC competence is desperately needed. First, in terms of psycholinguistics for RC training, passages must be interesting to learners. Considering sociolinguistics, linguistic adaptability must be acquired. As a result, there is no missing the cultural understanding of RC, which we can't stress too much. That is, one must be acquainted with a target culture to seriously master a language. In addition, syntactic structure, vocabulary, background knowledge, general judgement and inferencing ability must be developed. In conclusion, I'd like to suggest methods to improve RC in order to acquire English.

1) Abundant vocabulary is the ABCs of RC, but do not learn words by heart in isolation. This impedes progress.

- ① Accurate pronunciation (heeding accents, syllables, intonation, and so forth)
- ② Derivatives (transitions in parts of speech, prefixes, suffixes, roots, stems, and so forth) are helpful
- ③ Identifying intransitive and transitive verbs, and conjugating verbs, such as “-ed” or “-ing”, is basic
- ④ Recognize synonyms, antonyms, idioms and usage
- ⑤ Dictionaries are excellent teachers for looking up unknown words
- ⑥ Grasping meanings in context, through inference by separating prefixes, suffixes, and roots is fundamental.

2) Grammatical knowledge is part and parcel of RC.

Focus on context, rather than strict grammar. Thoroughly understand

sentence structures, and learn by heart as many expressions as possible.

Accurate grammar and syntax—largely verb tense, quasi-verbs, voice, subjunctive mood, pronouns and comparatives—should be learned backwards and forward.

3) Keep in mind that RC ability lives at the mercy of background knowledge of cultures and mother tongue competence to make accurate expressions.

As copious common sense, refinement and good Korean literacy are directly proportional to English RC competence, a great deal of writings—literary works, newspapers, magazines, traveler’s journals, essays, and so forth—should be read, summarized and criticized day in day out until they become habitual. To successfully acquire a language, you must pass through these gates. The adage “practice makes perfect¹⁴⁾[226:1~12]” is certainly true in language acquisition.

4) Read attentively and extensively.

Regular reading leads to mastery in any language. By means of extensive reading, acquiring substantial vocabulary, comprehending syntax and RC speed is achieved. To win good grades on exams and tests, read analytically and critically everyday.

5) Read long works.

English questions on the KSAT, TOEIC, TOEFL and various other tests range from short passages of 80~120 words to long ones of 300~700 words. Therefore, accustom yourself to these lengths. Cultivate RC endurance. To analyze and know what part of an essay—the introduction, thesis statements, body or conclusion—you are reading is both pleasant and beneficial. Your RC

14) Martin Manser, *Dictionary of Proverbs*, Facts on File, 2007

ability will undoubtedly improve within a relatively short period.

Maintain these five methods of acquiring English, along with active and steady efforts at RC, and you will slowly but surely come to understand any English writing at last. As English speaking ability is compulsory in this era of globalization, listening and speaking seem increasingly important in English study.

These functions, however, are fundamentally based on RC. You can't speak or listen to most of what you have never read before. So put forth more efforts toward RC. Ultimately, I hope this advice grants as many learners as possible the keys to open the gates on the way toward their goals.

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[Abstract]

**Detoxified Protocols Reading Comprehension:
The Key to Language Competence**

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English education and learning in Korea have become proficient in the four functions – listening, speaking, reading and writing – which collegiate English education can integrate into a powerful English competence for each student. This has helped us accept overseas advanced technologies, knowledge and cultures, and this will contribute to introducing our own culture to the broader world more and more in the future.

Not only for studying many professional fields, but also for the specialized activities of searching for jobs and undertaking international business, the two functions of listening and speaking receive priority. I strongly insist that English reading comprehension education must be front and center, for everything related to English acquisition starts from reading, which also deepens appreciation of the rest of the world and cultivates the inner man. These are truths widely shown.

During my presence at classroom rostrums for over 30 years, I have deeply felt that learners wishing to reduce the stress, time and intensity of learning need these “detoxified protocols.” Thus, this monograph aims to help them reach their goals of English acquisition with reading proficiency, provided they learn and understand these protocols thoroughly.

This paper allocates reading comprehension significance above all other functions for building translation skills, as well as cultural understanding. The paper concludes by offering methods to improve reading comprehension.

To summarize: 1) vocabulary, 2) grammar (especially structure and syntax), and 3) cultural knowledge of both and one's own language form the bottom line in mastering reading comprehension.

We can easily become embroiled in the controversy of whether or not translation is an art or science. Linguists call translation a science because the work requires objective facts. On the other hand, great translation takes skill beyond reasoning; great translation takes talent. We should examine more theories of interpretation as broadly as this monograph has undertaken to teach effective reading comprehension and translation.

▶ Key Words: detoxified protocols, secret methods, English interpretational education, language acquisition, English acquisition, prerequisites

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