Cognitive correlates of reading comprehension in English as a foreign language

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Research in reading in in the first language (L1) has demonstrated that reading comprehension (RC) is related to cognitive abilities including fluid reasoning, short term memory, crystallized intelligence, and speed of processing. Research on the cognitive correlates of RC in a second language (L2) is very limited. Generally, research on individual differences in second language acquisition has mostly dealt with instructional, affective, and sociocultural factors with little attention to cognitive abilities. We stress that cognitive individual differences in reading comprehension is key to understanding the nature of RC in L2. In this study we aim to identify the cognitive correlates of reading comprehension in English as a foreign language. We set out to determine the contribution of a number of select cognitive abilities from Cattell-Horn-Carroll intelligence model. More specifically the associations of fluid intelligence, crystallized intelligence, verbal analogical reasoning, and speed of processing to L2 reading comprehension are studied. Structural equation modeling is used to determine which construct serves as the best predictor of L2 RC.

Keywords: cognition, reading comprehension, fluid intelligence.