Academic Approaches to KFL Education: Research issues in the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing

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1. Introduction

The goal of this presentation is twofold. The first aim is to review some of the current second language (L2) research issues in the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The rationale is that by doing so, we may appreciate what kinds of research issues are commonly dealt with in recent L2 research literatures and how they can be applied to KFL research. However, it must be noted that due to the limited scope of this presentation, it is impossible to cover all major research issues. Consequently, the research topics selected for this presentation are strictly based on the presenter's subjective opinion (reflecting my research interests). For a more extensive survey, one should refer to other references (e.g., McCarthy and O'Keeffe, 2004; Grabe, 2004; Silva and Brice, 2004; Vandergrift, 2004). Moreover, it must be noted that the presentation does not include extensive literature reviews regarding the four skills in the Korean—as—a—foreign language (KFL) classroom settings. For a more detailed survey, one should refer to other sources (e.g., Kang, 2003; Han et al., 2005; Hur et al., 2005; Park et al., 2002).

The second aim is to consider the application of some L2 research issues in actual American KFL classroom settings. In doing so, I discuss four recent process—driven KFL classroom—based studies that explore the pedagogical implications of the four skills. It is hoped that the presentation (i) provides the audiences with the general overview of the recent L2 research issues in the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and (ii) raises KFL teachers' and researchers' awareness regarding the importance of process—driven KFL classroom—based empirical studies in the teaching of these four skills.
2. LISTENING

2.1 Research issues in the teaching of listening

(1) Emphasizing top-down skills

- Osada (2001) reports that a lack of success in listening is often due to an overemphasis on bottom-up skills (e.g., Japanese ESL students tended to adopt a mental translation approach to listening).

(2) Emphasizing bottom-up skills

- Seglowitz and Seglowitz (1993) stress that the automatization of word recognition skills is indispensable for successful L2 listening comprehension.
- Hulstijn (2001) notes that bottom-up skills (e.g., the ability to recognize the vocabulary used in text, speech rates, types of input, and speakers' accents) must be developed so that the listeners may find all the components of the acoustic signals meaningful.

(3) Emphasizing both skills

- A number of studies (e.g., Goh, 1999, 2000; Lynch, 1998, 2002; Rost, 2002; Tsui and Fullilove, 1998; Vandergrift, 2004) investigate the interactive roles of both bottom-up and top-down skills during L2 listening comprehension process.
- Vandergrift (2004) notes that students who take the bottom-up processing do not always use their top-down skills (e.g., background knowledge), whereas those who take the top-down processing exclusively are prone to ignore the bottom-up features (e.g., linguistic elements).
- Goh (1999, 2000) assert that L2 listening involves both processing techniques simultaneously.
- Tsui and Fullilove (1998) report that relying on a single processing technique does not always lead to successful L2 listening. To what extent each processing technique contributes to listening comprehension is still not fully understood and hence subject to further research.