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Editors

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The effects of simplified and elaborated texts on second language reading comprehension: an exploratory study —

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Abstract

This exploratory study was conducted to investigate the effects of two types of input modification — simplification and elaboration — on Filipino high school students' second language reading comprehension. Forty-eight participants were divided into high and low language proficiency groups. Three English reading passages in one of the three forms — baseline, simplified and elaborated — were presented to them. Reading comprehension was evaluated based on their performance on three types of comprehension question items: general, specific and inferential. The data were analyzed according to the mean scores in each proficiency and text type group. This study found that modified written input was more comprehensible than unmodified written input for Filipino learners of English; however, it appeared more helpful to the LP students than the HP students on overall reading comprehension. The results also indicated that simplified passages are easier for them to comprehend than elaborated passages. In addition, the HP students always had significantly higher scores in general and specific comprehension question items except in inferential comprehension type.

Key words: simplified text, elaborated texts, second language reading comprehension, input modification, proficiency.

Resumen

Este estudio exploratorio investiga los efectos de dos tipos de modificación del aducto -simplificación y elaboración- por parte de estudiantes Filipinos de enseñanza secundaria en la materia de comprensión escrita en la segunda lengua. Los 48 participantes se dividieron en dos grupos: nivel de capacitación alto y bajo. Se les mostraron tres pasajes de lectura en inglés en tres modalidades: básica, simplificada y elaborada.

La comprensión escrita se evaluó teniendo en cuenta la realización de tres tipos de preguntas de comprensión: general, específica y de inferencia. El análisis

sis de los datos se llevó a cabo considerando la puntuación media de cada grupo de capacitación y el tipo de texto. Los resultados del estudio indican que el aducto escrito modificado resultó más comprensible que el aducto no modificado para los aprendices Filipinos de inglés, sin embargo, resultó ser más útil para los alumnos con nivel de baja capacitación que para los de alta capacitación en la comprensión escrita global. Los resultados también mostraron que los pasajes simplificados les resultaron más fáciles de entender que los elaborados. Además, los alumnos con nivel de capacitación alto siempre mostraron puntuaciones más altas en preguntas de comprensión general y específica exceptuando la comprensión de tipo inferencial.

Palabras clave: texto simplificado, textos elaborados, comprensión escrita en la segunda lengua, modificación del aducto, capacitación

1. Introduction

It is believed that in the field of second language acquisition, language input is a necessary condition for second/ foreign language learning. Therefore, the role of input in second/ foreign language learning has been widely investigated, both in non-formal settings and in formal classroom settings (Chaudron, 1983; Ellis, 1995; Krashen, 1980; Larsen-Freeman, 1983; Long, 1981; Leow, 1993; Smith, 1993; Van Patten, 1990). Most researchers have focused their attention on input comprehension, since they are motivated by the hypothesis that the learner must comprehend the input if it is to assist the acquisition process (Krashen, 1985; Long, 1985; Loschky, 1994). In recent years, researchers (Yano, Long & Ross, 1994; Oh, 2001) have examined the effects of various forms of input modification on learners' comprehension, attempting to identify the characteristics that make input more comprehensible to second/ foreign language learners. Their investigations are particularly beneficial to material developers, since the results can guide them to develop appropriate pedagogical materials for the learners (Campbell, 1987). And the results can also help classroom teachers make wise decision while choosing the appropriate materials in their classroom settings.

Modifications to the input can be divided into two types: simplification and elaboration. According to Parker and Chaudron (1987), typical features of linguistic simplification include the use of shorter utterances (in words or in T-units), simpler syntax (in clauses or S-node per T-unit), simpler lexis (smaller type-token ratios and avoidance of low-frequency vocabulary), deletion of sentence elements or morphological inflections, and preference for canonical word order. Simplification, according to the researches, may increase the comprehensibility of written input for nonnative readers. On the other hand, elaboration of

input involves increasing redundancy and actualizing underlying thematic relations straightforwardly. Typical features of linguistic elaboration include slower speech, clearer articulation and emphatic stress, paraphrases, synonyms and restatements, rhetorical signaling devices, self-repetition, and suppliance of optional syntactic signals (e.g., relative and complement clause markers). In their opinion, the above features can be helpful in meaning clarifications, and they also provide the listener/ reader with opportunities to better decode the communication.

In investigating the value of simplified and elaborated language as input, different researchers adopted different approaches, which led to the inevitably different results with several patterns emerging from their findings.

According to some researchers (Chaudron, 1983; Long, 1985), simplification is desirable for comprehension, because linguistic simplification usually improves literal comprehension, although simple sentences alone may not help and can even hinder comprehension (Blau, 1982). The results of other studies have been taken to indicate that simplification usually improves second/ foreign language reading comprehension, and thus extensive use of simplified texts in second/ foreign language reading classes has been advocated (Leow, 1993).

Although simplification may increase the comprehensibility of written input for nonnative readers, other researchers have pointed out its disadvantages. Honeyfield's study (1977), for example, disclosed that simplification of linguistic structure and content material could lead students to develop reading strategies that are inappropriate for non-simplified English. Another researcher Chaudron (1983) concluded that certain types of speech adjustments made for L2 listeners (e.g., simplification of surface structure) actually impeded rather than facilitated comprehension. Klein (1986) speculated that simplifying the input might hinder comprehension if the learner is fairly advanced in the language.

On the other hand, many researchers found that comprehension was consistently improved when elaborative modifications were presented. Chaudron (1983) investigated whether syntactic simplicity or elaboration and redundancy would be more effective in promoting retention of the topic. His findings indicated that the redundant repeated noun was significantly better recognized than the simple noun, and was better recalled than the synonym. But learners with relatively low English proficiency tended to have poorer recall ability on the syntactically more complex structures.

Furthermore, Chaudron and Richards (1986) found that listening comprehension is consistently improved when elaborative modifications are present. Parker and Chaudron, (1987) again noted that elaborative modifications and

clear segmenting of the thematic structure of the communication enhanced comprehension, but linguistic simplification in the form of simplified syntax and vocabulary did not. Similarly, Pica, Young, and Doughty (1987) demonstrated that input simplified a priori proved to support L2 learners' comprehension to a lesser extent than did elaborations made to the input during negotiated interaction.

Meanwhile, the disadvantages of the elaboration were also pointed out by some other researchers. For instance, the earlier study by Chaudron (1990) raises the issue of whether teachers' vocabulary elaboration does, in fact, aid student comprehension. He cautions that learners may have difficulty recognizing the relationship between lexical items and structures intended as clarification. Ambiguity may exist regarding what is additional and what is alternative information. (Chiang, 1990).

Nevertheless, Yano et al. (1994) claimed that readers of simplified passages and elaborated passages performed better than readers of the unmodified passages. Although comprehension scores of learners reading the simplified version were the highest among learners, there is no significant difference between the scores of those reading the elaborated version.

Besides exploring the value and the problems of different types of modifications, researchers tried to find out the interaction between modification type and learner language proficiency. Some evidence suggests that modifications are more useful to learners of lower L2 proficiency (Blau, 1982; Chaudron, 1983; Long, 1985), but in other studies, the most proficient learners profited most from input modification (Chiang, 1990).

Chiang (1992) investigates the listening comprehension of 388 high-intermediate listening proficiency (HILP) and low-intermediate listening proficiency (LILP) Chinese students of English as a foreign language. A significant interaction between speech modification (redundant vs. non-redundant speech) and listening proficiency indicated that the HILP students benefited from speech modification, which entailed elaboration/ redundancy of information, but the LILP students did not.

Oh's (2001) study, from which the present study draws the major insights, investigates the relative effects of two types of input modification — simplification and elaboration — on Korean high school students' EFL reading comprehension. According to the author, input should be modified in the direction of elaboration rather than by artificial simplification, because elaboration retains more native-like qualities and is equally successful as simplification in improving comprehension. He also concludes that "instruction with elaborated input

should accelerate the progression to fluent reading of unmodified materials, which is the ultimate goal of foreign language reading instruction” (Oh, 2001:69).

In sum, these findings suggest that modification of input tends to have a positive effect on non-native speakers’ comprehension. Compared with simplification, some researchers seem to favor the elaborative modification because the elaboration has the added advantage of providing learners with continued access to the linguistic items they have yet to acquire. Therefore, elaborative modification would seem more appropriate than what is commonly offered in current commercially published reading materials.

To provide a firmer base for this claim and to identify precisely which type of input modification — simplification or elaboration — is more beneficial, the present study attempts to determine the relative effectiveness of simplification and elaboration of written input on the reading comprehension of Filipino High School ESL learners at two different proficiency levels: high proficiency and low proficiency.

The study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. Which type of input is more comprehensible in reading for Filipino learners of English, modified or unmodified?
2. Are simplified passages easier for Filipino learners of English to comprehend than elaborated passages?
3. Is there any relationship between modification type and students’ language proficiency in their reading comprehension?

2. Method

2.1. *Participants*

The participants involved in the study were 60 third-year students from one class in Parañaque High School, Metro Manila, the Philippines. Their first language is Tagalog and they have studied English for about nine years. English is spoken as a second language in the country. Now they have around 5 hours of English classes each week at school. Based on their grades in last grading period (the second trimester of school year 2004-2005) and their participation in regular classroom activities in this trimester, the class teacher helped the researchers divide the whole class into two language proficiency groups with 30 students in each: High Proficiency group (HP) and Low Proficiency (LP) group. Each of the

two proficiency groups was assigned three passages of one type to read: baseline (B), simplified (S) or elaborated (E). Thus, there were six groups in all: (a) High Proficiency-Baseline (HP-B), (b) High Proficiency-Simplified (HP-S), (c) High Proficiency-Elaborated (HP-E), (d) Low Proficiency-Baseline (LP-B), (e) Low Proficiency-Simplified (LP-S), and (f) Low Proficiency-Elaborated (LP-E). Each reading group consisted of 10 students.

After collecting the test papers, we randomly chose 8 samples from each of the 6 reading groups. Therefore, actually 48 test papers were analyzed in the study.

2.2. Instruments

This study replicated Oh's investigation (2001) on the effect of two types of input modification and followed his way of modifying and naming the passages: baseline version, simplified version and elaborated version.

Baseline Reading Passages

Baseline reading passages refer to the materials written mainly for native speakers and usually regarded as unmodified input to foreign or second language learners. They contain longer sentences with complex syntactic structures or low frequency words, which may lead to readability difficulty for language learners. In the present study, we selected three passages from different resources as the baseline versions of our study. Passage 1 was adopted from Oh's study (2001); Passage 2 from Long's study (1994) and Passage 3 was taken from an on-line reading comprehension test. We tried to choose passages that required no specific background knowledge.

Modified Reading Passages

There are two types of modified reading passages based on the baseline passages: simplified and elaborated. Simplified passages usually consist of simpler structures, easier words and shorter utterances than those appearing in the baseline text. Therefore, in the present study, we tried to use high frequency words to take the place of low frequency words, and split longer embedded sentences into several simple sentences.

For the elaborated version, it is likely that the structures and complexity are almost the same as these in the baseline text. The modification to this part was to add the redundant words and repeated information.

The linguistic complexity of the three passages in modified (simplified and elaborated) and unmodified (baseline) versions respectively used in this study

can be seen in Table 1. Generally, simplification and elaboration made the modified versions longer than the baseline passages. Elaborated passages contained even more complex structures than the baseline. Though simplified passages had more sentences, they were usually shorter ones. Of the three forms of the passages, the simplified versions were the simplest one, and the baseline and elaborated versions were more complex in one way or another.

Table 1. Mean linguistic complexity of passages

	Text version					
	Baseline		Simplified		Elaborated	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Total words (length)	120.67	37.82	122.67	29.50	184.33	70.87
Total sentences	6.33	4.16	11.67	0.58	11.33	5.00
Total clauses	5.00	3.61	5.00	1.15	7.33	5.77
Words per sentence	19.05	10.47	10.88	5.32	17.53	7.38

Reading Comprehension Test

Students' reading performance was measured by the result of a reading comprehension test. Each test paper included three passages followed by 3 multiple-choice reading comprehension questions after each passage. Therefore, there were 9 reading comprehension questions in each test paper. Three versions of passages were given to the participants, but the 9 questions in each test paper were the same regardless of the text type. The three questions after each passage focused on three comprehension question items: general comprehension, specific comprehension and inferential comprehension. Students were expected to make good use of reading strategies or skills to fulfill the task successfully.

For general comprehension question items, participants should collect the information from the whole text and summarize the main idea of the passage. For example, the questions might be "what is the proper title of the passage?" Or "What do you think the passages are about?" Specific comprehension requires readers to go to the sentence level and work out the real meaning of a particular sentence, which might have little to do with the general idea of the whole passage. Usually the answers could be found from a close study of one single sentence. In contrast, inferential comprehension needs readers to go beyond the lines in order to predict or infer what might be the possible factual information, which may involve readers' critical thinking and a high level reading processing in reading. As a whole, the three kinds of comprehension questions aimed at

investigating the possible relationship between text types and comprehension question items.

Aside from the 9 multiple-choice items, the participants were asked to evaluate their own reading comprehension by choosing the scales of percentage given at the end of the test paper according to the question "What percentage do you think you can understand the passages?" Their responses were used to compare their actual reading performance and their perceived comprehension.

2.3. Procedures

The study was conducted during a regular class session. The participants were seated in two different groups based on their proficiency level. They were assigned to read the passages given individually at the same time and told that they needed to finish the three passages in 30 minutes by answering the 9 multiple-choice questions. The texts were available to them to refer to during the comprehension test. No questions concerning the content or definitions were allowed.

2.4. Data analysis

Test papers were collected immediately after the participants finished their reading. The data were divided into groups according to both the students' English proficiency (HP, LP) and the types of reading passages (B, S, E) that they were given. Thus six groups of data were produced: (a) HP-B, (b) HP-S, (c) HP-E, (d) LP-B, (e) LP-S, and (f) LP-E. Scores on overall reading comprehension and three types of comprehension questions items (i.e. general, specific and inferential comprehension) were analyzed and compared.

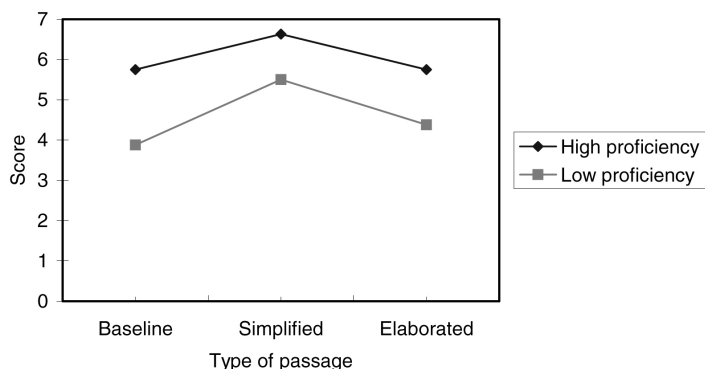
The data were analyzed according to the means and standard deviation of the students' scores so as to explore the possible effect of different written input to learners of different language proficiency levels.

2.5. Results

Figure 1 shows the means of total comprehension scores between two language proficiency groups in reading three versions of passages. As can be seen from the figure, the simplified type, both in the HP group and the LP group, produced the highest scores, with the HP-S group performing the best among the six reading groups ($M = 6.63$). For the HP group, there was no difference in the

baseline and elaborated version reading ($M = 5.75$). In contrast, the LP group had better performance in reading elaborated version than in baseline version. The result indicates that there is some relationship between learner's language proficiency and their reading comprehension scores. Besides, the simplified passages tend to facilitate reading comprehension regardless of the learner's language proficiency level.

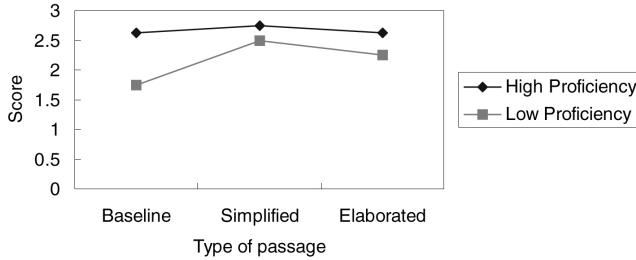
Figure 1. Means of Total Comprehension Scores.



Students' reading performance on three types of comprehension items (general, specific and inferential) is displayed in Figures 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

The means of general comprehension scores among the six groups are presented in Figure 2. It is clearly suggested that both the HP group and the LP group got the highest scores in the simplified passages with little difference between them (Mean difference = 2.75 [HP], 2.5 [LP]). For the HP group, there was no significant difference among the readers' comprehension in three types of passages (general: Mean = 2.63; specific: $M = 2.75$; inferential: $M = 2.63$), which indicates that, for learners of a higher proficiency level, the general understanding of a passage may not be greatly affected by the form of the written materials, no matter whether they are modified or unmodified. However, the LP readers group did the worst in the baseline version ($M = 1.75$), and the reading of the elaborated version fell in between. It seems that modified texts may help LP learners more in constructing the general idea of a passage. Furthermore, there is little relationship between language proficiency and the modification type.

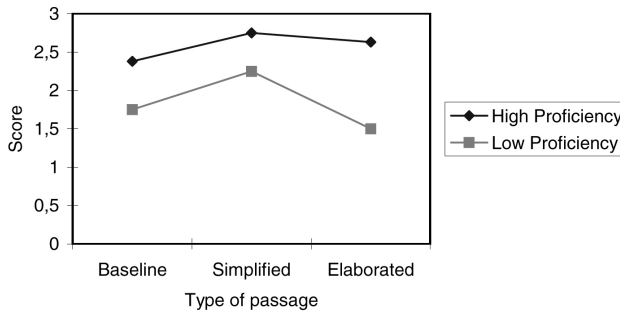
Figure 2. Means of General Comprehension Scores.



Students' performance in specific comprehension item is shown in Figure 3. As shown in the means, students reading the simplified version of the texts scored highest in each language proficiency group ($M=2.75$ [HP], $M=2.25$ [LP]). In the HP group, the mean score in the elaborated version was higher than that in the baseline version. On the other hand, in the LP group, readers of the baseline version performed better than the readers of the elaborated version. The result seems to reveal that when reading for specific information; elaborated types might benefit the high proficiency readers, but do no good to low proficiency learners.

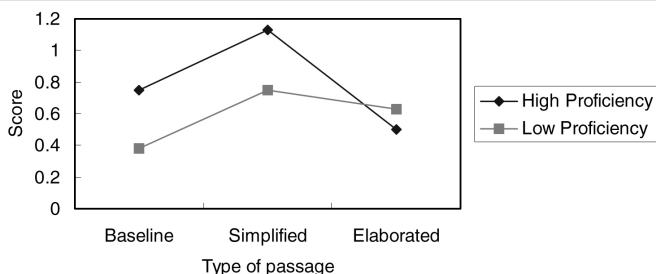
Figure 4 reveals the students' mean scores in reading inferential comprehension items. As can be seen, the students reading simplified text outperformed the students reading the other two types of passages. In the HP group, the readers of baseline texts ($M=0.75$) scored higher than those of elaborated texts ($M=0.5$). However, in the LP group, the readers of the elaborated passages achieved higher scores than the readers of baseline passages.

Figure 3. Means of Specific Comprehension Scores



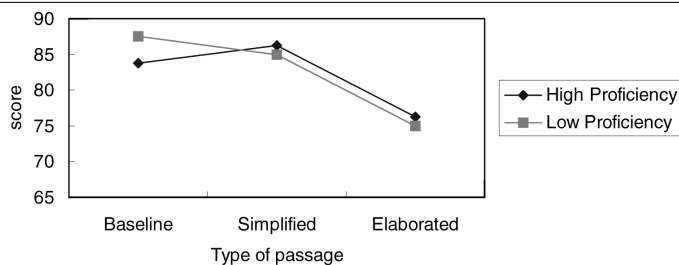
More surprising is that the LP group had a better performance in elaborated passages than the HP group, which may suggest that there might be some relationship between the types of passages and the types of comprehension items.

Figure 4. Means of Inferential Comprehension Scores.



The means of perceived comprehension scores are demonstrated in Figure 5. Generally, in both proficiency groups, the readers of elaborated versions had least confidence on their reading comprehension, which was about 10 percent lower than that on simplified passages. Students thought they had more difficulties having a better understanding of elaborated passages. The LP group in baseline version ranked the first among the six groups, and most students thought they were competent in dealing with baseline passages. In contrast, the HP group lacked confidence compared with the simplified version in its group and the LP group in baseline versions. In addition, the perceived comprehension scores of the HP group were higher than those of the LP group in simplified and elaborated passages.

Figure 5. Means of Perceived Comprehension Scores.



3. Discussion

3.1. Effect of modification text type on total reading comprehension

The first and second research questions involved the effect of modification text type on L2 reading comprehension. As for the first research question, the results of the study do not confirm the effectiveness of text type because different text types produce different test answers. As shown in Figure 1, the students

who had read simplification passages outperformed those who did at the same proficiency level, which agrees with the previous studies such as the one conducted by Yano, Long and Ross (1994) and another by Oh (2001). Contrary to the results obtained in these studies, there was no significant difference between the baseline (unmodified) version and the elaborated (modified) version according to the test scores that the HP students got in this study. The elaborated passages seemed helpful to the LP students in overall reading comprehension; they performed a little better in the elaborated passages than in the unmodified one.

Regarding the second research question, the answer is affirmative. Both groups (the HP and the LP groups) distinguished themselves by gaining much higher scores in comprehension test of the simplified passages than in the elaborated passages. Thus, simplified passages are easier for Filipino learners of English to comprehend than elaborated passages in this study.

As far as the effect of simplification is concerned, Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 demonstrate that the simplified version is much more effective in improving student reading comprehension than the elaborated version. The results indicate that simple syntactic structures facilitated L2 learners' total reading comprehension. The reason why L2 learners performed well in the reading comprehension test of the simplified passage may be that, from the perspective of cognitive language processing, simplification may not impose much cognitive burden on learners' information processing. Simplification of the lexis and syntax seems to make it easier for learners to understand reading passages. Hence, the students benefited a lot in reading comprehension from the simplified texts and scored much higher, which is consistent with the previous studies by Honeyfield (1977) and Chaudron (1983) that simplification of linguistic structures and content materials could lead students to develop reading strategies and comprehension.

However, the study yielded a quite different result from the studies by Oh (2001). With respect to the overall reading comprehension, linguistic simplification offers profits to the HP students but not the LP students, while in this study, the effect of syntactic simplification influences both HP and LP students' overall reading comprehension. They achieved similar scores in baseline and elaborated passages, but outperformed in simplified passages on overall reading comprehension. In the vein of general reading comprehension, the results of Figure 2 are not consistent with the two studies above. The HP students acted almost the same in the three types of passages. It is clear that they did not benefit from the simplification, whereas the LP students achieved much higher scores in the reading test of simplification. This result may imply that simplification helps the LP students to improve their ability of reading comprehension and makes it easier to do

information processing of getting the main idea of texts in reading tasks. It can be concluded that the effect of simplification was significant for the LP but not for the HP students in overall and general reading comprehension.

Compared with the effect of simplification, elaboration was in disadvantage. This study did not support the results of the previous studies by Yano et al. (1994) and Oh (2001), who suggested that elaboration could improve the students' reading comprehension. It is surprising that compared with the HP students, the LP students performed a little better in elaboration, while the HP students demonstrated similar performance in both simplification and elaboration in overall reading comprehension.

In this study, on the one hand, the baseline and elaborated passages possessed the identical linguistic complexities and the students of both levels did not perform well in the two types of reading passages, which seemed to indicate that the syntactic complexity and the length of a passage may be a barrier to reading comprehension for the students. On the other hand, the fact that the LP students did better in elaboration than in baseline indicates that the exemplification, paraphrasing, definition and supplementary to the content of the reading texts in the elaboration led to the improvement of reading comprehension because the development of redundancy signals "the thematic structure more clearly"; and "elaborative modification can help the reader exploit more opportunities to process critical information within the text and this to comprehend the text better" (Oh, 2001: 86).

3.2. Relationship between modification type and learners' language proficiency

The third research question involves the relationship between learner proficiency and reading comprehension, as well as the interaction of modification type and learner proficiency. The results in this study revealed that the HP students always had significantly higher scores when they were given the same type of passage except the scores of the inferential comprehension (the HP students did worse than the LP students). It is strange that the HP students did worse in referential comprehension item than the LP students. Anyhow, as a whole, learners' proficiency had a great impact on reading comprehension. The findings support the claim that the relationship between general language proficiency and L2 reading ability is "closely related to their level of proficiency in that language; the higher the level (up to a certain point), the better the chances that a learner will comprehend a reading text" (Oh, 2001: 87).

However, as for the interaction of modification type and learner proficiency, contrary to the results of the previous studies, the present study supplied a positive answer to the third research question that was proposed based on the presumption that the LP students find elaboration much more difficult than simplification because the complex syntax and lengthy passage may produce a heavy burden on the cognitive language processing of reading comprehension. The results of this study indicate that neither the LP nor the HP students benefited much from the elaboration. However, it is worthy to note that the LP students performed better in elaboration than did the HP students. This result shows that elaboration tends to help the LP students to improve their ability of reading comprehension. As for the HP students, since baseline and elaboration have the same difficulty in syntax and lexis, it appeared reasonable that they did similarly. Therefore, although simplification is significant to the LP students, elaboration also has some effect on the LP students' overall reading comprehension. They can benefit from elaboration and are not much bothered by the greater length and complexity of the elaborated texts.

3.3. Relationship between modification type and item type

The results of the study illustrate that the type of input modification leads to the different performance on general, specific and inferential comprehension items.

As manifested in Figure 2, the HP and the LP students demonstrated different performance on general comprehension questions. Contrary to the results of the study done by Oh (2001) where the HP students got significantly higher scores of the two types of modification in general comprehension items, in the present study, the HP students did not make any significant difference in general comprehension item between simplification and elaboration, which demonstrates simplification may show its superiority to elaboration. This may indicate that the HP students' high language ability enabled them to extract the main idea easily from any type of reading passages no matter whether they have complex syntactic structures or lengthy sentences or vague and obscure meaning. It is obvious that the modification type did not influence the HP students' reading comprehension, and nor did it improve their reading ability.

It is amazing that the modification type can facilitate the LP students' reading comprehension and promote reading comprehension. As suggested in Figure 2, the LP students who had read simplification scored significantly higher on general reading comprehension and outperformed the HP group in elaboration than in baseline. It can be concluded that the modification type of general read-

ing comprehension was significant for the LP but not for the HP students, as stated above. Logically, for the LP students, the simpler the syntax is and the more details a passage provides, the easier it is to get the main idea.

As for specific comprehension, Figure 3 offers a different result. Simplification assisted the specific comprehension of the students' at both proficiency levels. Simplification, thus, again shows its advantage of improving extraction of specific factual information due to the simple syntax and lexis. The HP and the LP students performed differently in the elaborated version. Elaboration seems to be helpful only to the HP students in this study. The HP students take advantage of their ability and the modification type to help reading comprehension and seek the specific information from the reading passages. Nevertheless, elaboration seems helpless for the LP students in comprehending the specific information of the passages. The complicated syntactic structures and uncommon vocabulary seem to prevent the LP students from understanding specific information, which may be the main reason why they had a very poor performance on the elaboration, even worse than on the baseline.

In terms of inferential comprehension the results of Figure 4 disclose that students at both proficiency levels performed better in the reading test of simplified text. It seems that simplification is one viable option for promoting the reading comprehension for L2 learners. It is unexpected that the LP students performed better in the test of elaboration, whereas the HP students did poorly in the elaboration, even worse than in the baseline. Theoretically, elaboration can facilitate the readers' inferential comprehension process by providing them repeated chances to reread those terms and concepts; as a result, the inferring chance can be increased in the reading process and assistance of making a correct inference can take place. In the present study, it seems that it is the LP students who benefited from elaboration, while the HP students did not. This may be due to the fact that the limited amount of reading did not offer the HP students chances to show their abilities, or that the reading of the HP students was not influenced by different types of text because of their high language ability and proficiency. Nevertheless, it is still worthwhile to undertake further studies in order to explore why it is not beneficial to the HP students.

3.4. Effect of text type on perceived comprehension

One purpose of the perceived comprehension was to check how much confidence the students had in answering the reading questions. It aimed at finding out whether the students could assess their reading properly. The results in this study are not consistent with the study conducted by Oh (2001). In his study,

both the HP and LP students thought they comprehended the content when they read either simplification or elaboration. As opposed to Oh's results, in our study, the HP and the LP students thought their comprehension was much lower when they read elaborated passages. It was observed that the HP students had much more confidence in the comprehension of the simplified version than in the baseline and the elaborated one, whereas the LP students' confidence decreased from the baseline to simplification and to elaboration. However, the findings suggest that both the LP and the HP students' perceived comprehension is in line with their performance in total reading comprehension except the LP students in baseline reading. It seems that the LP students' perceived comprehension was decided by the length of the reading passages, while in the case of the HP students' it was due to the complexity and difficulty of the reading passages. The other possible explanation may be that the Filipino students have more exposure to native-like input. Therefore, they are more familiar with the baseline text type.

4. Conclusion

This study presented that comprehension of modified input differed significantly for students of high proficiency and low proficiency levels. It suggests that modified input was more comprehensible for Filipino learners of English; particularly, it appeared more helpful to the LP students than to the HP students on total reading comprehension. It also indicates that simplified input led to significant facilitation of L2 learners' reading comprehension due to its simple syntactic structures and lexis; elaborated input tended to aid the improvement of the LP students' total reading comprehension but not the HP students'.

With respect to the interaction between language proficiency and comprehension question items, the HP students did not exhibit any significant difference between simplification and elaboration on general reading comprehension while the modification type of general reading comprehension was significant for the LP. Simplification assisted the students' specific comprehension at both proficiency levels. However, the complex syntactic structures and infrequent vocabulary of elaborated passages seemed to prevent the LP students from specific comprehension because they had a very poor performance on the elaboration, even worse than on the baseline. The LP students benefited from modification type and it facilitated the LP readers' inferential comprehension process by providing them repeated chances to reread those terms and concepts so as to aid their inferential reading comprehension.

In addition, the findings show that the HP students appeared to have much more confidence in the comprehension of the simplified version than in the baseline and elaboration ones, whereas the LP students' confidence decreased straightly from the baseline to simplification and to elaboration. There were some discrepancies between students' actual performance scores and their perceived comprehension scores. The text type that they thought easiest to comprehend turned out to have the lowest scores.

The findings of this study, relative to reading comprehension, have implications for language teaching. Firstly, the current trend in second language teaching emphasizes the use of authentic reading materials, however, according to the findings of the present study, it seems that the two types of modification tend to facilitate L2 reading in a different manner regarding readers' language proficiency. Since the elaborated version could hardly assist the HP students' reading comprehension, it is suggested that for the HP students, authentic materials could be used in classroom language instruction. For the LP students, conversely, simplified passages can be used as instructional materials, for the simplified version helps improve and facilitate their reading comprehension. When administrators and teachers select teaching materials for their specific students, it is better for them to take into consideration the student language proficiency level.

Secondly, according to Snow and Sweet (2003), besides text types, reader and activity are other two factors affecting the readers' reading comprehension. They argue that reading is an interaction between the reader and the text. The reading ability, prior knowledge, experience and the motivations of a reader influence reading comprehension. Therefore, in classroom instruction, teachers should try all means to motivate both the HP and the LP students in classroom reading activities to use the language. Thirdly, reading comprehension cannot happen automatically; it needs a reader to employ appropriate reading strategies to conduct reading comprehension. Hence, it is important for an instructor to teach students reading strategies. Since this study reveals that both the HP and the LP students did not do well in inferential questions, it is necessary to train their critical reading.

However, this study has three limitations. First, when this research was conducted in the high school, it was almost the end of the school year. Thus, teachers and students were busy preparing for their examinations. In order not to interrupt their regular curriculum, the researchers had to give up the pretest whose aim was to determine the stratification of the students. As a result, the participants' language proficiency level was decided by the class teacher, who divided the whole class into high and low proficiency groups according to both the participants' performance in the last grading period of this school year and

their classroom participation. Second, the number of passages in three text types tends to restrict the reliability of the test. There were only 3 passages with 9 comprehension questions in the present study, whereas in the previous studies, more than 10 passages were used and more subjects were involved. Hence, slightly different results were gained among the readers of the elaborated version in our study. If we had adopted more passages, the probability of having a more reliable test would have been increased. Third, the small sample size is another limitation of this study for only 48 test papers were adopted and analyzed, which may affect the generalizability of results.

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Appendix A

Means and Standard Deviations for Comprehension Scores by Type of Item

Level and text Version		Comprehension Items									
		All		General		Specific		Inference			
n	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
(total= 48)											
High proficiency											
Baseline	8.00	5.75	1.28	2.63	0.74	2.38	0.52	0.75	0.46		
Simplified	8.00	6.63	1.30	2.75	0.46	2.75	0.71	1.13	0.64		
Elaborated	8.00	5.75	0.71	2.63	0.52	2.63	0.74	0.50	0.76		
Low proficiency											
Baseline	8.00	3.88	1.25	1.75	0.89	1.75	0.46	0.38	0.52		
Simplified	8.00	5.50	1.51	2.5	0.76	2.25	0.71	0.75	0.89		
Elaborated	8.00	4.38	2.13	2.25	1.04	1.50	0.93	0.63	0.74		

Appendix B

Test Paper 1

School _____ Class _____ Name _____

Directions: Read the following passages carefully and choose the best answer to each question according to the passages. Write the letter of your answer in the bracket behind each question.

Passage 1

Catfish have both gills for use under water and lungs for use on land, where they can breathe for twelve hours or more. The hot daytime sun would dry them out, but they can slip out of their ponds at night and still stay cool while they hunt for food. They are meat eaters, so they search for worms, insects, and other fish, and can often be seen crossing roads at night while on these hunting expeditions. (77 words)

1. Catfish breathe through _____ ()
 - a. gills in and out of water.
 - b. gills in water only.
 - c. lung in and out of water.
 - d. gills for 12 hours only.
2. Catfish eat _____ ()
 - a. only meat.
 - b. different kinds of food.
 - c. only when it is cool.
 - d. mostly insects.
3. Catfish _____ ()
 - a. prefer life on land.
 - b. cross roads faster than cars.
 - c. are able predators.
 - d. can live on land for as long as in water.

(source: Yano, Y., Long, M. & Ross, S. (1994). The effects of simplified and elaborated texts on foreign language reading comprehension. *Language Learning*, 44, 189-219.)

Passage 2

Yet the fact is we know very little about gorillas. No really satisfactory photograph has ever been taken of one in a wild state, no zoologist, however intrepid, has been able to keep the animal under close and constant observation in the dark jungles in which he lives. Carl Akeley, the American naturalist, led two expeditions in the nineteen-twenties, and now lies buried among the animals he loved so well. But even he was unable to discover how long the gorilla lives, or how or why it dies, nor was he able to define the exact social patterns of the family groups or indicate the final extent of their intelligence. All this and many other things remain almost as much a mystery as they were when the French explorer Du Chaillu first described the animal to the civilized world a century ago. (142 words)

4. According to the passage, Carl Akeley ()
- was the first zoologist who examined gorillas in a wild state.
 - failed to reveal gorillas' intellectual faculties.
 - is still leading expeditions in order to investigate gorillas.
 - introduced gorillas to the world for the first time.
5. Which of the following can Not be inferred from the passage? ()
- People usually believe that they know much about gorillas.
 - Much has been discovered about gorillas during the past one hundred years.
 - Gorillas in a wild state are very dangerous.
 - The gorilla was not made known to the world until the mid 1800's.
6. Which of the following would be the best title for the passage? ()
- Expeditions in the Nineteen-Twenties.
 - Carl Akeley, the Great Naturalist.
 - Gorilla — Ancestor of Man.
 - Mystery About Gorillas.

(source: Oh, Sun-young. (2001). Two types of input modification and EFL reading comprehension: simplification versus elaboration. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 69-97.)

Passage 3

Bats have been accused of attacking humans and carrying infectious disease. The fact that they sleep during the day and fly at night also adds to their mystery. However, bats do not attack humans. Actually, there are more deaths each year from pet dog attacks and bees than from bats.

Bats perform an important ecological function throughout the world. They eat millions of harmful insects yearly. A single colony of Arizona bats observed by scientists eats up to 35,000 pounds of insects every night.

Bats are almost at the edge of extinction. In the State of Arizona alone, the number of bats has been found to decline from 30 million to 30,000 over the past six years. Many people kill bats out of unreasonable fear. Said one bat expert, "The most critical need for bat conservation today is increased public awareness and education". (143 words)

7. According to this passage, which of the following statements is NOT true?
- a. Pet dogs are more dangerous than bats. ()
 - b. Bats are often considered mysterious animals.
 - c. Many people still find bats fearsome.
 - d. In Arizona, bats eat 35,000 pounds of insects every night.
8. Which statement best describes the main idea of this selection? ()
- a. Bats are harmful to human beings.
 - b. Bats are becoming an endangered species.
 - c. Bats are frightening and destructive creatures.
 - d. The prejudice against bats is well-grounded.
9. What suggestion is given in this passage to protect bats from dying out?
- a. Helping them to find new homes. ()
 - b. Using chemicals to kill insects.
 - c. Making the public learn more about bats.
 - d. Providing them with more insects.

(source: [http:// www.kssh.khc.edu.tw/study](http://www.kssh.khc.edu.tw/study))

After reading the passages, answer the question below.

What percentage of the passages do you think you understand?

- a.20% b.30% c.40% d.50% e.60% f.70% g.80% h.90% i.100%

Test Paper 2

School _____ Class _____ Name _____

Directions: Read the following passages carefully and choose the best answer to each question according to the passages. Write the letter of your answer in the bracket behind each question.

Passage 1

Catfish have both gills and lungs. The gills are used for breathing under water. The lungs are for use on land. The fish can breathe on land for twelve hours or more. At night these fish can slip out of ponds. They move at night so they can stay cool. The hot sun would dry them out. They hunt for food at night, too. They are meat eaters. They search for worms, insects, and other fish. People often observe them crossing roads at night when they are hunting. (89 words)

1. Catfish breathe through _____ ()
 - a. gills in and out of water.
 - b. gills in water only.
 - c. lung in and out of water.
 - d. gills for 12 hours only.

2. Catfish eat _____ ()
 - a. only meat.
 - b. different kinds of food.
 - c. only when it is cool.
 - d. mostly insects.

3. Catfish _____ ()
 - a. prefer life on land.
 - b. cross roads faster than cars.
 - c. are able predators.
 - d. can live on land for as long as in water.

Passage 2

But, in fact, we know very little about gorillas. No one has ever taken a good photograph of a gorilla in a wild state. Gorillas live in the dark jungles. No scholar on animals has ever examined the gorilla closely and continuously in the jungles. Carl Akeley was an American naturalist. He took two trips in the nineteen-twenties. He loved animals very much. He now lies buried among the animals. But even he was not able to discover how long the gorilla lives, or how or why the gorilla dies. He could not tell us about their family patterns or how smart they are. All this and many other things remain a mystery. They were a mystery also when the French explorer Du Chaillu first introduced the gorilla to the modern world 100 years ago. (135 words)

4. According to the passage, Carl Akeley ()
- a. was the first zoologist who examined gorillas in a wild state.
 - b. failed to reveal gorillas' intellectual faculties.
 - c. is still leading expeditions in order to investigate gorillas.
 - d. introduced gorillas to the world for the first time.
5. Which of the following can Not be inferred from the passage? ()
- a. People usually believe that they know much about gorillas.
 - b. Much has been discovered about gorillas during the past one hundred years.
 - c. Gorillas in a wild state are very dangerous.
 - d. The gorilla was not made known to the world until the mid 1800's.
6. Which of the following would be the best title for the passage? ()
- a. Expeditions in the Nineteen-Twenties
 - b. Carl Akeley, the Great Naturalist
 - c. Gorilla — Ancestor of Man
 - d. Mystery About Gorillas

Passage 3

Bats are said to attack humans and spread disease. Because they sleep during the day and fly at night, people think they are mysterious. In fact, bats do not attack humans. Pet dogs and bees are more often to attack people.

Bats play an important role in keeping the natural balance of plants and animals throughout the world. They eat millions of harmful insects every year. Scientists found that bats in Arizona can eat up to 35,000 pounds of insects every night.

Bats may soon disappear from the world. For example, in the State of Arizona, the number of bats has been reduced from 30 million to 30,000 in the past six years. Many people kill bats because they fear them without any reason. One bat expert said, "In order to protect bats, it is important to arouse people's awareness and increase their education." (144 words)

1. According to this passage, which of the following statements is NOT true?
 - a. Pet dogs are more dangerous than bats. ()
 - b. Bats are often considered mysterious animals.
 - c. Many people still find bats fearsome.
 - d. In Arizona, bats eat 35,000 pounds of insects every night.
2. Which statement best describes the main idea of this selection? ()
 - a. Bats are harmful to human beings.
 - b. Bats are becoming an endangered species.
 - c. Bats are frightening and destructive creatures.
 - d. The prejudice against bats is well-grounded.
3. What suggestion is given in this passage to protect bats from dying out?
 - a. Helping them to find new homes. ()
 - b. Using chemicals to kill insects.
 - c. Making the public learn more about bats.
 - d. Providing them with more insects.

After reading the passages, answer the question below.

What percentage of the passages do you think you understand?

- a.20% b.30% c.40% d.50% e.60% f.70% g.80% h.90% i.100%

Test Paper 3

School _____ Class _____ Name _____

Directions: Read the following passages carefully and choose the best answer to each question according to the passages. Write the letter of your answer in the bracket behind each question.

Passage 1

Catfish have two systems for breathing: gills, like other fish, for use under water, and lungs, like people, for use on land, where they can breathe for twelve hours or more. Catfish would dry out and die from the heat of the sun, so they stay in the water during the daytime. At night, on the other hand, they can slip out of their ponds and still stay cool while they hunt for food. They are meat eaters, so they hunt for worms, insects, and other fish. People traveling at night often see catfish crossing roads when they are out on these hunting expeditions. (104 words)

1. Catfish breathe through _____ ()
 - a. gills in and out of water.
 - b. gills in water only.
 - c. lung in and out of water.
 - d. gills for 12 hours only.

2. Catfish eat _____ ()
 - a. only meat.
 - b. different kinds of food.
 - c. only when it is cool.
 - d. mostly insects.

3. Catfish _____ ()
 - a. prefer life on land.
 - b. cross roads faster than cars.
 - c. are able predators.
 - d. can live on land for as long as in water.

Passage 2

Unlike our common belief, however, the fact is that we know very little about gorillas. No one has ever taken a really satisfactory photograph of a gorilla in a wild state. So we don't have any good pictures of them. No zoologist, who is scholar on animals, however intrepid and courageous he or she is, has been able to keep the gorilla under close and constant observation in the dark jungles in which they live. That is, gorillas in the jungles have not been fully examined by men. Carl Akeley, who was an American naturalist, led two expeditions in the nineteen-twenties in order to examine these animals in the African jungles. He died there and now lies buried among the animals whom he loved so well. But even Carl Akeley, who took trips to Africa, could not discover much about gorillas. He was not able to discover how long the gorilla lives, or how or why it dies. Nor was he able to define the exact social pattern of family groups, or indicate the full extent of their intelligence; we don't know yet about the gorillas' family or their IQ. All this and many other things remain almost as much a mystery as they were when the French explorer Du Chaillu first described the gorilla to the civilized world a century ago. Since the animal was first known to the modern world, little has been discovered about them. (238 words)

4. According to the passage, Carl Akeley ()
 - a. was the first zoologist who examined gorillas in a wild state.
 - b. failed to reveal gorillas' intellectual faculties.
 - c. is still leading expeditions in order to investigate gorillas.
 - d. introduced gorillas to the world for the first time.
5. Which of the following can Not be inferred from the passage? ()
 - a. People usually believe that they know much about gorillas.
 - b. Much has been discovered about gorillas during the past one hundred years.
 - c. Gorillas in a wild state are very dangerous.
 - d. The gorilla was not made known to the world until the mid 1800's.
6. Which of the following would be the best title for the passage? ()
 - a. Expeditions in the Nineteen-Twenties
 - b. Carl Akeley, the Great Naturalist
 - c. Gorilla — Ancestor of Man
 - d. Mystery About Gorillas

Passage 3

The evil reputation of bats is easy to understand. These creatures have been accused of attacking humans and carrying infectious disease. The fact that they sleep during the day and fly at night also adds to their mystery. However, bats do not attack humans. Actually, there are more deaths each year from pet dog attacks and bees than from bats.

Bats perform an important ecological function throughout the world. They eat millions of harmful insects yearly. In fact, the food a bat eats every night amounts to one quarter of its own body weight. A single colony of Arizona bats observed by scientists eats up to 35,000 pounds of insects every night. That's the equivalent weight of 34 elephants!

Bats may soon disappear from the world. For one thing, they are fast losing their natural homes — caves, abandoned mines, certain kinds of trees. Bats are also in danger from certain chemicals used by farmers to fight destructive insects. Scientists have found that in the State of Arizona alone, the number of bats has declined from 30 million to 30,000 over the past six years. Many people kill bats out of unreasonable fear. Said one bat expert, "The most critical need for bat conservation today is increased public awareness and education". (211 words)

7. According to this passage, which of the following statements is NOT true? ()
- a. Pet dogs are more dangerous than bats. ()
 - b. Bats are often considered mysterious animals.
 - c. Many people still find bats fearsome.
 - d. In Arizona, bats eat 35,000 pounds of insects every night.
8. Which statement best describes the main idea of this selection? ()
- a. Bats are harmful to human beings.
 - b. Bats are becoming an endangered species.
 - c. Bats are frightening and destructive creatures.
 - d. The prejudice against bats is well-grounded.
9. What suggestion is given in this passage to protect bats from dying out? ()
- a. Helping them to find new homes. ()
 - b. Using chemicals to kill insects.
 - c. Making the public learn more about bats.
 - d. Providing them with more insects.

After reading the passages, answer the question below.

What percentage of the passages do you think you understand?

- a.20% b.30% c.40% d.50% e.60% f.70% g.80% h.90% i.100%

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