



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>



INFLUENCE OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ON KOREAN LANGUAGE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY AT THE FACULTY OF KOREAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, VNU UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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Received 31 August 2025

Revised 28 January 2026; Accepted 18 June 2026

Abstract: This research employs a mixed-methods approach, including literature review and field survey to examine how English proficiency affects Korean acquisition. Specifically, it investigates the advantages and challenges experienced by English-background students at the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. The research categories and analyzes the effects of English proficiency on particular skill groups, including Listening - Reading, Vocabulary - Grammar, and Speaking - Writing, corresponding to the Korean A and Korean B courses in the official curriculum. The findings indicate that these students leverage their English reflexes, reading skills, and vocabulary knowledge to recognize loanwords and develop effective test-taking strategies. However, due to syntactic differences between these two languages, the learners encounter significant obstacles, especially in speaking and writing skills. The study identifies grammatical disparities and lack of bilingual practice environments as the primary barriers. Based on these findings, the research proposes several solutions to enhance both learning and teaching methods, aiming to maximize the bilingual advantages of students with strong English foundations.

Keywords: English proficiency, Korean language learning, English - Korean contrastive linguistics, bilingual practice

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<https://doi.org/10.63023/2525-2445/jfs.ulis.5606>

**ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA NỀN TẢNG TIẾNG ANH
ĐẾN QUÁ TRÌNH HỌC TIẾNG HÀN CỦA SINH VIÊN
KHOA NGÔN NGỮ VÀ VĂN HÓA HÀN QUỐC,
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ,
ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA HÀ NỘI**

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Nhận bài ngày 31 tháng 8 năm 2025

Chỉnh sửa ngày 28 tháng 01 năm 2026; Chấp nhận đăng ngày 18 tháng 6 năm 2026

Tóm tắt: Bài nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp tổng hợp, phân tích tài liệu kết hợp khảo sát thực tế nhằm tìm hiểu về ảnh hưởng của nền tảng tiếng Anh đến quá trình học tiếng Hàn. Trên cơ sở đó, nghiên cứu đi sâu vào phân tích những thuận lợi, khó khăn của sinh viên có nền tảng tiếng Anh tốt đang theo học tại Khoa Ngôn ngữ và Văn hóa Hàn Quốc, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. Nội dung khảo sát được xây dựng dựa trên các nhóm kỹ năng nghe - đọc, từ vựng - ngữ pháp, viết - nói tương ứng với phân môn Tiếng Hàn A và Tiếng Hàn B trong chương trình đào tạo. Từ đó, nhóm nghiên cứu xác định được nhóm sinh viên trên vận dụng phân xạ, kỹ năng đọc, vốn từ vựng tiếng Anh để nhận biết từ mượn, xây dựng chiến lược làm bài hiệu quả. Tuy nhiên, do sự khác biệt trong cú pháp hai ngôn ngữ, người học gặp nhiều khó khăn, đặc biệt trong kỹ năng viết - nói. Nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng nguyên nhân chính gây trở ngại cho sinh viên là sự khác biệt lớn về ngữ pháp giữa hai ngôn ngữ cùng với việc thiếu cơ hội thực hành song ngữ trong môi trường học tập. Trên cơ sở đó, nghiên cứu đề xuất một số giải pháp nhằm phát huy lợi thế và khắc phục khó khăn cho nhóm sinh viên này, tập trung vào việc cải thiện phương pháp học tập và giảng dạy.

Từ khóa: nền tảng tiếng Anh, học tiếng Hàn, ngôn ngữ đối chiếu Anh - Hàn, thực hành song ngữ

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, English proficiency is prioritized in both general education and university admissions in Vietnam. Students from grade 3 to grade 12 are required to study at least one foreign language (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021). Van Trang (2024) stated that in 2024, 43 universities specifically announced priority admission for candidates holding international English certificates.

English proficiency is also highly valued even among students pursuing non-English majors at the University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU). For graduation, these students are required to attain at least English proficiency level 3 (B1) according to the six-level foreign language proficiency framework for Vietnam.

According to Jessner (2008), metalinguistic awareness - a set of skills or abilities that the multilingual user develops owing to her/his prior linguistic and metacognitive knowledge, influences further language learning. Consequently, students enrolled in the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture utilize English not only as a communication tool but also as a cognitive

scaffold for Korean language acquisition. Furthermore, Cummins' Threshold Hypothesis (1976) argues that bilingual learners must reach a certain proficiency threshold in their previously acquired languages to experience positive interlingual transfer when learning a new language. Therefore, high proficiency in English enables students to access diverse academic materials. However, Rothman's Typological Primacy Model (2011) emphasizes that acquisition of the third language (L3) is determined by perceived proximity between the target languages and other previously acquired languages. In this context, Vietnamese learners who have acquired English as the second language (L2) and targeted Korean as L3 benefit primarily from loanwords, yet face difficulties due to syntactic and cultural differences. In terms of syntax, English is a Head-Initial (SVO) language while Korean is a Head-Final (SOV) language, which forces learners to re-orient their sentence-processing strategies. While English-speaking nations such as the United States and Australia are classified as "low-context cultures", South Korea operates as a "high-context society", relying heavily on an intricate system of honorifics and non-verbal communication (Jeong, 2019). If these problems are not addressed properly, Korean language learning efficiency will inevitably decline.

Currently, international studies mainly focus on contrastive linguistic analysis and third language acquisition theories. For instance, Heo and Kim (2020) compare English and Korean in terms of morphology, syntax, pragmatics, semantics, and phonology. Regarding acquisition mechanics, Rothman (2011) demonstrates the cognitive process involved in language acquisition based on proximity between languages, while Hufeisen and Marx (2007, as cited in Ehlert, 2018) posit that the acquisition of a second foreign language is an additive process enhanced by five main factors: neurobiological, learner external, affective/emotional, cognitive, linguistic factors. Conversely, domestic studies focus on analyzing the practical advantages and disadvantages faced by students with high English proficiency when learning Korean. For instance, Tran et al. (2024) survey the impact of English loanwords on Korean vocabulary acquisition among students at the Thai Nguyen University School of Foreign Languages, while Le et al. (2024) investigate the difficulties encountered by English-major students learning Korean as a second foreign language. However, a research gap remains, as the benefits and drawbacks in individual skill sets encountered by English-proficient students at the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, ULIS have not yet been specifically analyzed.

Therefore, it is imperative to examine the advantages and challenges encountered by English-proficient students while instructing Korean. Such insights allow educators to refine pedagogical approaches, enhance the learning environment, and optimize student potential, thereby contributing to the improvement of teaching and learning quality.

2. Research Content

2.1. Research Objectives

This study is grounded in the contrastive analysis between English and Korean, alongside other external factors that influence learners' Korean language acquisition. Based on this foundation, the research investigates the advantages and challenges faced by proficient English learners majoring in Korean Language and Korean Education. These effects are examined across different language domains: Vocabulary - Grammar, Listening - Reading, and Speaking - Writing, corresponding to the Korean A and Korean B courses in the curriculum. Based on these findings, the study proposes pedagogical strategies to enhance the bilingual teaching and learning environment, aiming to fully leverage the interlingual advantages of this student group.

2.2. Research Tasks

This study addresses three primary tasks:

First, it aims to clarify the theoretical foundations related to contrastive linguistics between English and Korean and analyze external factors within the English language background - including language reflex, learning strategies, learning resources, and learning environment - that affect Korean language acquisition.

Secondly, it seeks to identify the challenges and advantages experienced by Korean Language and Korean Education students with high English proficiency across different language domains.

Thirdly, it proposes strategies for maximizing the benefits and mitigating the difficulties arising from the influence of the English language background during the Korean learning process.

2.3. Research Scope and Methods

2.3.1. Literature Review Methodology

To ensure the validity of the theoretical framework, a systematic literature search was conducted. Relevant studies were identified through academic databases such as Google Scholar, as well as university journals and academic publications. Key terms used in the search included “English proficiency”, “Korean language learning”, “English–Korean contrastive linguistics”, “bilingual practice”. Only peer-reviewed articles, authoritative academic publications and seminal studies were selected to provide a foundation for the research.

2.3.2. Participants and Research Scope

The study employed a quantitative approach, including an online survey and descriptive statistical analysis to examine the collected data. Conducted over a six-month period from September 1, 2024, to March 1, 2025, the research involved 170 full-time students from the 2022 and 2023 cohorts of the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture at ULIS, VNU, all of whom possessed at least a B1 level of English proficiency. All participants had completed the compulsory English courses, held international English certificates, and either enrolled in or had completed the Korean A and Korean B courses.

To ensure the validity of research on “high English proficiency”, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was adopted as the main benchmark. According to CEFR, learners at level B2 or above possess the ability to employ English independently in various academic and workplace environments. At this level, learners can comprehend complex texts, interact fluently with native speakers, and produce clear written discourse on a wide range of topics. Therefore, this study identifies students with strong English proficiency as those attaining at least a B2-equivalent level in English. While English B1-level students were included in the sociodemographic data, the in-depth research mainly focused on those who had attained the B2 level and above. Proficiency was verified through standardized certifications such as IELTS (minimum 5.5), TOEIC (minimum 785), or VSTEP (level 4 and above).

The participants’ profiles, including academic cohort, English language proficiency certifications (according to the CEFR framework), and Korean language proficiency certificates (TOPIK - Test of Proficiency in Korean) are presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1*Sociodemographic and Academic Characteristics of Surveyed Students*

No.	Characteristic	Percentage (%)	
1	Academic Cohort	2022	39.4
		2023	60.6
2	English Proficiency Certificate	B1	20.0
		B2	40.6
		C1	38.2
		C2	1.2
		TOPIK 1-2	21.8
3	Korean Proficiency Certificate (TOPIK)	TOPIK 3	27.1
		TOPIK 4	32.9
		TOPIK 5	12.9
		TOPIK 6	5.3

2.3.3. Survey Content

The survey content was developed by integrating both theoretical background and the educational reality at the institution. Theoretically, the survey was grounded in contrastive interlanguage analysis of English and Korean (Heo & Kim, 2020), as well as the theories of metalinguistic awareness (Jessner, 2008), Threshold Hypothesis (Cummins, 1976) and the Typological Primacy Model (Rothman, 2011). The survey items were also adapted from the instrument used by Le et al. (2024) in their study on challenges faced by English-major students in learning Korean as a second foreign language.

To accurately reflect the educational reality at the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, ULIS, VNU, the questionnaire was aligned with the core language domains of the Korean Course 1A - 4A, Korean Course 1B - 4B in the curriculum for QH2022 and QH2023 cohorts. Furthermore, to enhance its validity, the survey was finalized after considering expert feedback from the research supervisor, a current lecturer in this faculty.

The survey was divided into three main sections: 1) Inquiries on participants' educational background and foreign language proficiency; 2) Their advantages and challenges in the process of learning Korean; 3) Suggestions for leveraging their English language background to support Korean language learning.

3. Theoretical Background**3.1. Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis**

Grounded in the Typological Primacy Model (Rothman, 2011), which emphasizes perceived linguistic proximity in third language acquisition, this section presents a systematic contrastive analysis of English (L2) and Korean (L3). The analysis examines five core linguistic domains: orthography, phonology, syntax, lexicon, and grammar. This multi-domain approach aligns with established frameworks in crosslinguistic research, which systematically investigates transfer at these distinct levels of linguistic structure (Odlin, 1989; Ellis, 2015). By identifying structural similarities and differences between the two languages, this analysis delineates potential sources of facilitation and interference, thereby informing the formulation of research questions and the design of the learner survey in this study.

In terms of orthography, both English and Korean are alphabetic languages, yet they

employ distinct writing systems. English utilizes the Latin alphabet with 26 letters comprising vowels, semi-vowels, and consonants. Korean, in contrast, uses Hangeul - a phonemic script devised by King Sejong - consisting of 40 graphemes: 19 consonants and 21 vowels.

With respect to phonology, the classification criteria for consonants differ across the two languages, leading to variation in pronunciation. English classifies consonants into voiced and voiceless types, with voiced consonants engaging the vocal cords (Beare, 2024). Korean, however, categorizes consonants based on manner of articulation (plosive, fricative, affricate) and place of articulation (bilabial, alveolar, palatal, velar, glottal), while also distinguishing plain, tense, and aspirated sounds. Furthermore, the absence of English labiodentals (/f/, /v/) or interdental (/θ/, /ð/) in the Korean alphabet, combined with the omission of syllable-initial consonant clusters, necessitates phonological adaptation. For instance, the English word *spring* is adapted as 스프링 rather than 스포링 (Kim, 2018).

Syntactically, English follows a Subject–Verb–Object (SVO) structure in declarative sentences, Korean generally adopts a Subject–Object–Verb (SOV) pattern in contrast, allowing for greater flexibility based on discourse intention. This difference extends to interrogative constructions: English typically employs subject-auxiliary inversion, wh-words, and rising intonation, while Korean retains declarative word order, distinguishing questions through intonation and interrogative markers such as *몇* (“how many”), *얼마* (“how much”), and *언제* (“when”). Similarly, while Yes - No questions in English are formed with auxiliary-fronting, and Korean achieves these functions through expressions such as *렇지(요)?* or *그렇지 않니(요)?*, responses to these questions align with polarity, with “yes” - *네* or “no” - *아니요*. In imperative constructions, both languages permit omission of the second-person subject. Korean employs imperative suffixes such as *-아라/어라* and *-십시오*, while English uses the base form of the verb, often supplemented with “please” for politeness or “do not/don’t” for negation (Heo & Kim, 2020).

Regarding the lexical dimension, English loanwords, which have entered and become increasingly relevant since the presence of the United States military after World War II, are prominent in sports (*골프* - *golf*, *테니스* - *tennis*), medicine (*바이러스* - *virus*, *알러지* - *allergy*), food (*아이스크림* - *ice cream*, *피자* - *pizza*, *와인* - *wine*), and technology (*인터넷* - *internet*, *컴퓨터* - *computer*, *스마트폰* - *smartphone*). While being phonetically and orthographically adapted into Korean, these English loanwords remain relatively recognizable. As they facilitate better comprehension of both daily discourse and academic texts, these borrowings become a ‘lexical bridge’ for Korean learners with a strong background in English (Sohn, 1999).

Grammatically, English distinguishes tense through a binary opposition of “past” and “non-past”, relying on verb stem modification (regular and irregular verbs) with minimal marking for future. In contrast, Korean employs a tripartite system: past, present, and future, characterized by verb conjugations that include present-tense markers such as *-아/어요* and *-습니다/습시다* as well as multiple irregular forms (e.g., *ㅁ*, *ㅂ*, *ㅅ* irregularities) (Heo & Kim 2020). Regarding similar grammatical constructions, another prominent difference lies in the encoding of causal relationships. Whereas Korean utilizes multiple connectives - such as *-아/어서*, *-(으)니까*, and *-기 때문에* - each carrying distinct pragmatic nuances and syntactic restrictions, English relies primarily on “because” or “since”, with fewer stylistic distinctions,

though certain prepositional phrases (e.g., “because of”) impose structural constraints. The most fundamental divergence lies in Korean case particle system (이/가, 은/는, 을/를) that marks grammatical roles, while English relies on word order and inflection (Yeon & Brown, 2019).

Regarding sociolinguistic aspects, a fundamental disparity exists: English-speaking societies are characterized by a “low-context culture” while South Korea exemplifies a “high-context culture” (Jeong, 2019). While deference in English is primarily pragmatic - realized through forms of addresses and titles - Korean features a highly developed and grammaticalized honorific system, including address terms, speech levels, honorific markers, and lexical choices. Unlike the optional and stylistic nature of English honorifics, the Korean honorific system is compulsory. Any omission of appropriate honorific markers in Korean may result not merely in social impoliteness, but also in grammatical inaccuracy (Brown, 2011).

3.2. Other Factors of English Proficiency Influencing Korean Language Learning

The Factor Model (Hufeisen & Marx, 2007, as cited in Ehlert, 2018) argues that the acquisition of a second foreign language (L3) is a cumulative process enhanced by five main factor groups: neurobiological factors, learner external factors, affective/emotional factors, cognitive factors, linguistic factors. Foreign language specific factors are also considered essential. Based on this theory, the research will focus on four main determinants: language reflex, learning strategies, learning resources, and learning environments. While language reflexes and learning strategies are rooted in linguistic and learner-specific factors, both are catalyzed by foreign language-specific factors derived from “metalinguistic awareness” (Jessner, 2008) and prior language learning experience. Learning resources and learning environment correspond directly to external factors, which create a comparative advantage for English-proficient learners in accessing globalized educational infrastructure.

One critical factor is language reflex. According to Webster’s New World Dictionary (1996), reflex denotes any quick, automatic, habitual response. Pavlov’s research (Todes, 2014) demonstrated that repeated stimuli form new neural pathways, reinforcing conditioned reflexes. In language learning, reflex manifests as rapid communicative responses without deliberate grammatical analysis, enabling learners to speak more fluently and naturally. Through repeated practice, students strengthen neural connections and enhance their communicative reflexes. Learners with strong English proficiency often benefit from reflexes established through listening comprehension, speaking fluency, and recognition of grammar and vocabulary, which can be transferred to Korean language learning. Moreover, overlaps in certain grammatical structures and English loanwords in Korean further accelerate vocabulary and grammar acquisition, reducing reliance on rote memorization.

According to Nguyen (2010), in the study “Active Learning Methods in Higher Education”, learning strategies are defined as skills and techniques cultivated through study and self-directed learning. Learning strategies encompass the methods, procedures, and techniques learners employ to process, retain, and apply knowledge. Students with a solid English background can apply effective English learning strategies to Korean language acquisition. Techniques such as *Skim & Scan* (for rapid extraction of key ideas) and *Shadowing* (to improve speech fluency and rhythm) exemplify transferable methods. Employing such strategies enhances cognitive processing speed, listening, and pronunciation skills, thereby promoting more effective Korean language learning.

Regarding learning resources, many high-quality Korean language textbooks developed by prestigious universities, including Seoul National University, Yonsei University, and online

courses on Coursera, edX, FutureLearn are delivered in English. This educational infrastructure empowers English-proficient students to readily access expert-guided, standardized content. Additionally, English-mediated learning channels - ranging from YouTube channels, blogs, and forums to academic websites - offer systematic instruction in grammar, vocabulary, and communication while fostering learners' engagement with global learning communities. Given that most Korean learning applications are bilingual (Korean - English), students with solid English competence are well-positioned to utilize these tools effectively.

The learning environment of the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, ULIS, VNU, Hanoi, serves as an external factor catalyzing trilingual development. A distinctive feature of this learning environment is the integration of bilingual courses and trilingual (English - Korean - Vietnamese) instructional materials. This pedagogical approach encourages cross-linguistic comparisons, expands general and linguistic knowledge, and improves Korean communication skills. Furthermore, expert instruction provided by both the English Faculty and the Korean Faculty fosters theoretical grounding and practical communicative strategies, which effectively enhance students' ability to use Korean confidently.

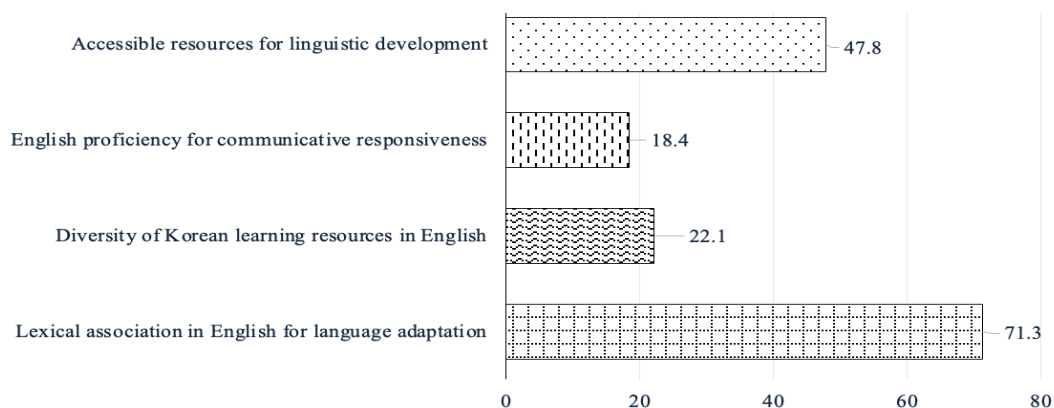
Nonetheless, the facilitative role of English proficiency in Korean acquisition remains constrained. While English proficiency optimizes input processes - such as comprehension and access - the typological distance limits cross-linguistic transfer. Additionally, the relative lack of bilingual practice opportunities is another prominent hindrance. As Korean is more frequently employed as the primary medium of communication, students' English competencies may stagnate, especially in speaking and writing skills, thereby restricting their ability to apply bilingual competencies in everyday contexts.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Advantages of English Proficiency in Korean Language Learning

Figure 1

Overall Evaluation of the Advantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean



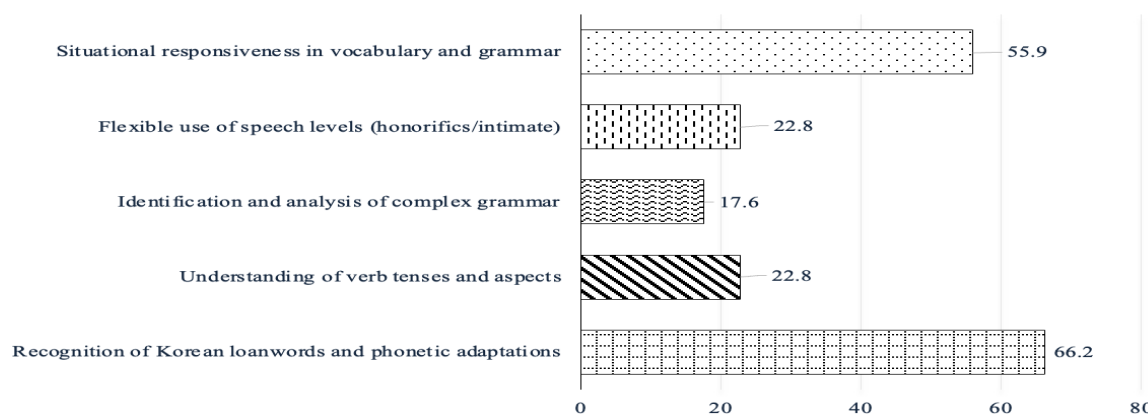
According to the findings, most students were conscious of the supporting role of English proficiency in the process of learning Korean, with 71.3% considering their ability in “lexical association in English for language adaptation” as the most important. Other perceived benefits included “accessible resources for linguistic development” (47.8%), “diversity of Korean learning resources in English” (22.1%), and “English proficiency for communicative responsiveness” (18.4%). Overall, students with a strong foundation in English emphasized the

importance of leveraging this background to facilitate Korean acquisition, particularly through vocabulary transfer and communicative adaptability, which highlighted a broader trend of interlingual learning.

In particular, the skills of “Vocabulary-Grammar”, “Reading-Listening”, and “Speaking-Writing” are taught under the curricular orientation of the subjects Korean A and Korean B at the university. The survey results highlighted the following advantages.

Figure 2

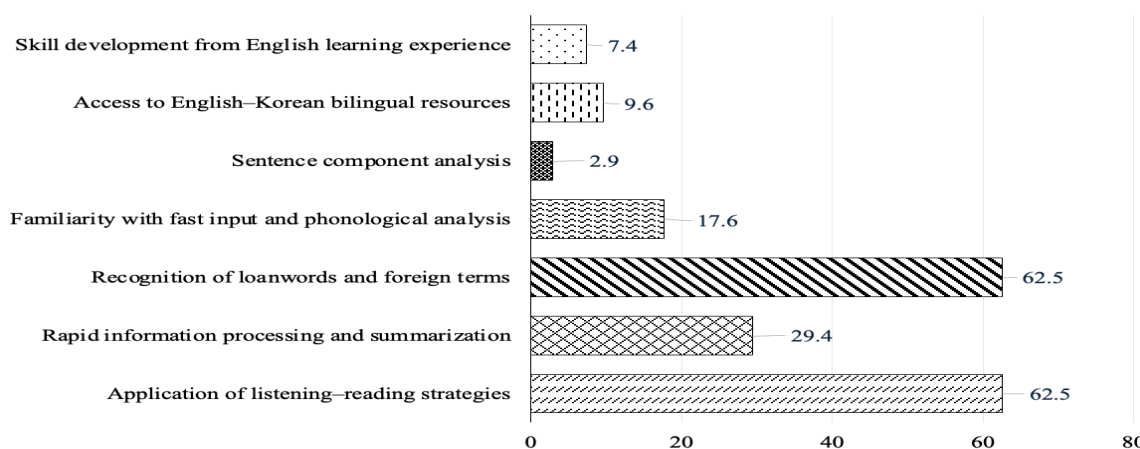
Advantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean Vocabulary and Grammar



When asked about the benefits of strong English proficiency for learning the Korean Vocabulary-Grammar skill group, the majority of students (66.2%) chose “recognition of Korean loanwords and phonetic adaptations”. The capacity for “situational responsiveness in vocabulary and grammar” ranked second, with 55.9%. Furthermore, some students reported other benefits such as “understanding of verb tenses and aspects”, “flexible use of speech levels (honorifics/intimate)” (22.8%), and “identification and analysis of complex grammar” (17.6%). Overall, the findings indicated that students can use their prior linguistic experience in English to support the acquisition of Korean vocabulary and grammar structures, particularly loanwords, which offered a clear connection between the two languages.

Figure 3

Advantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean Reading and Listening

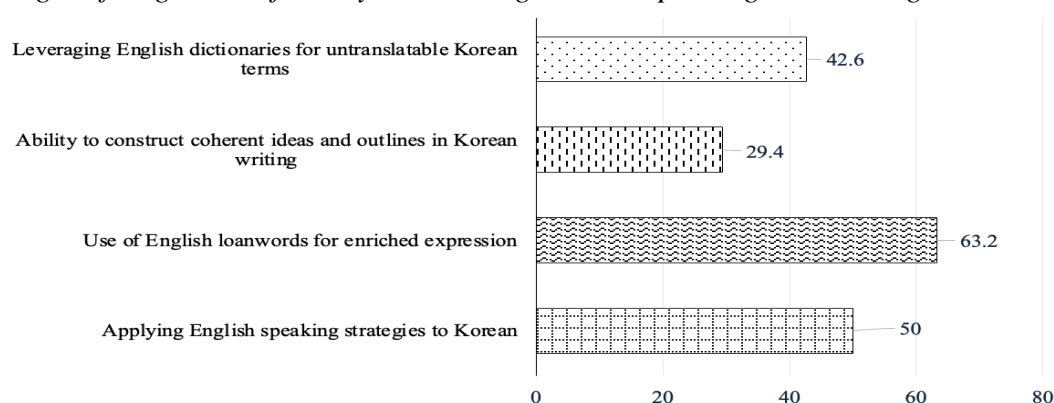


In the listening-reading skill group, two of the most prominent advantages reported were

“recognition of loanwords and foreign terms” and “application of listening-reading strategies”, with the highest proportion (62.5%). Other benefits mentioned included “rapid information processing and summarization” (29.4%), “familiarity with fast input and phonological analysis” (17.6%), “access to English-Korean bilingual resources” (9.6%), “skill development from the English learning experience” (7.4%), and “sentence component analysis” (2.9%). Overall, these results demonstrated that students frequently employed effective strategies such as skimming, scanning, and making contextual predictions when engaging with Korean. Furthermore, these findings suggested that the transfer of language learning skills fostered an ideal environment for the acquisition of foreign languages.

Figure 4

Advantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean Speaking and Writing

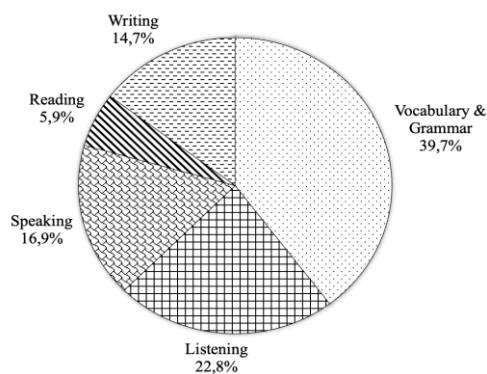


According to the study findings, “use of English loanwords for enriched expression” was identified as the most significant advantage in learning Korean speaking and writing skills, with 63.2% of participants selecting it. Other benefits were also recorded, such as “leveraging English dictionaries for untranslatable Korean terms” (42.6%) and “ability to construct coherent ideas and outlines in Korean writing” (29.4%). The aforementioned results indicated that English proficiency not only provided students with a solid foundation in grammar and vocabulary but also fostered expressive thinking and coherent presentation skills in Korean, particularly when learners were required to switch flexibly between languages.

4.2. Disadvantages of English Proficiency in Korean Language Learning

Figure 5

Overall Evaluation of the Disadvantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean

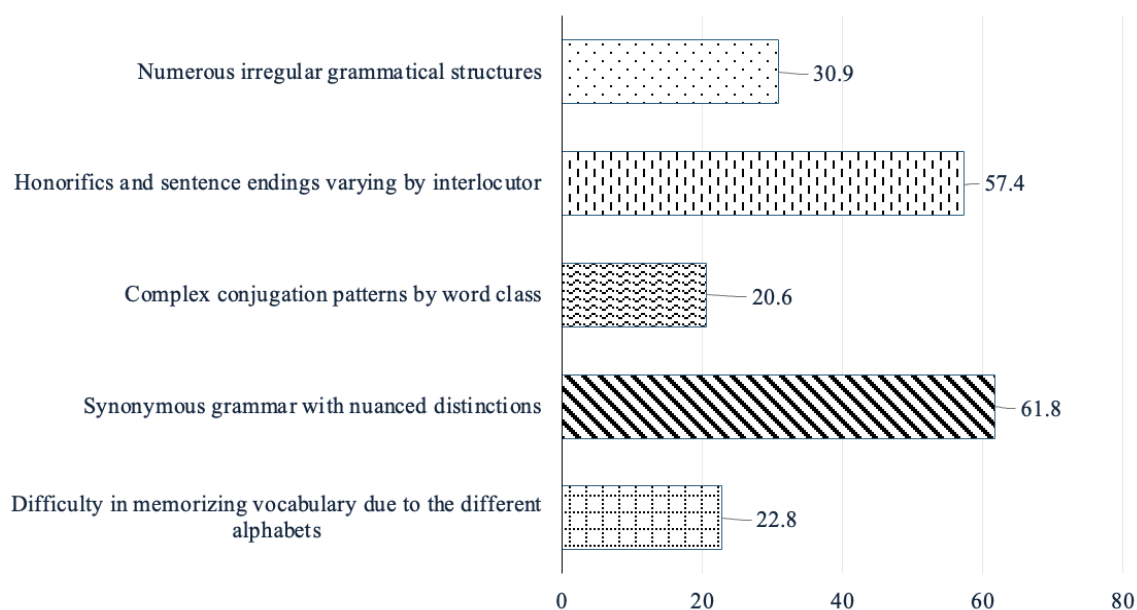


Regarding the most challenging skill in learning Korean, “Vocabulary and Grammar” accounted for the highest proportion at 39.7%, surpassing other skills. This was followed by “Listening” (22.8%), “Speaking” (16.9%), “Writing” (14.7%), and “Reading” (5.9%). The survey results showed that vocabulary and grammar were the greatest hindrance, whereas reading skill was considered the most approachable skill. This survey result aligned with the hypothesis derived from contrastive interlanguage analysis and Typological Primacy Model (Rothman, 2011). Specifically, the typological differences between these two languages - marked by English’s Head-Initial structure versus Korean Head-Final pattern. This profound structural divergence, together with the Korean particle system and multi-tiered honorific system, created significant typological distance, limiting positive cross-linguistic transfer, which later posed a challenge for learners (Heo & Kim, 2020).

In addition, the survey revealed the difficulties Korean major students encountered when applying their English proficiency into learning Korean. These challenges were categorized specifically into three skill groups: “Vocabulary and Grammar”, “Reading and Listening” and “Speaking and Writing”.

Figure 6

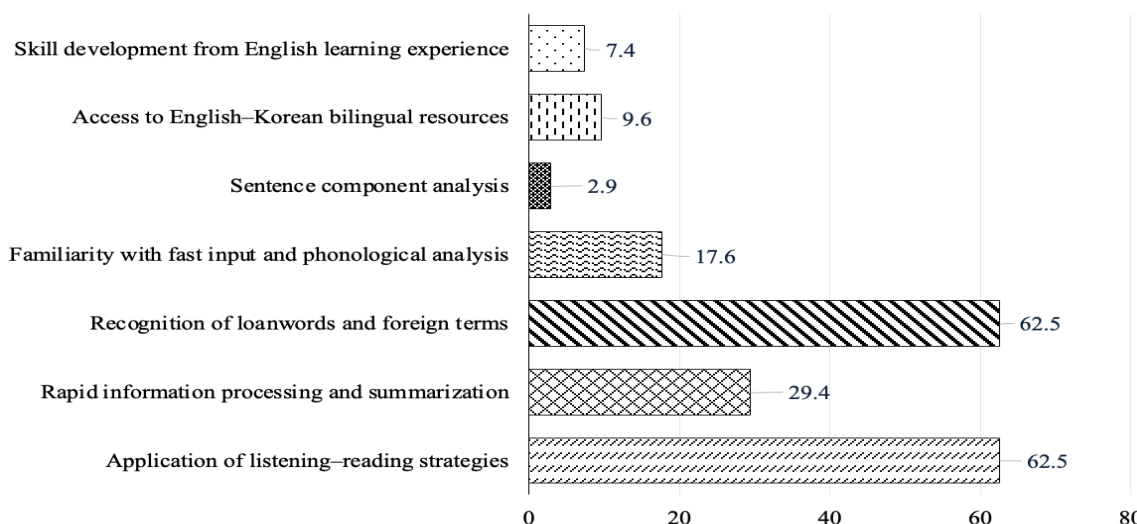
Disadvantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean Vocabulary and Grammar



As illustrated in Figure 6, a considerably high percentage of respondents (61.8%) agreed that “synonymous grammar with nuanced distinctions” was a significant disadvantage in learning Korean. Additionally, other significant factors were identified, including “honorifics and sentence endings varying by interlocutor” (57.4%), “numerous irregular grammatical structures” (30.9%), “difficulty in memorizing vocabulary due to the different alphabets” (22.8%), and “complex conjugation patterns by word class” (20.6%). The complexity of the Korean grammar system, especially in grammar conveying the same meaning but with different nuances, resulted in learners’ confusion. This finding highlighted the necessity for greater effort from both teachers and learners in distinguishing contexts and expressing nuance among the synonymous grammars.

Figure 7

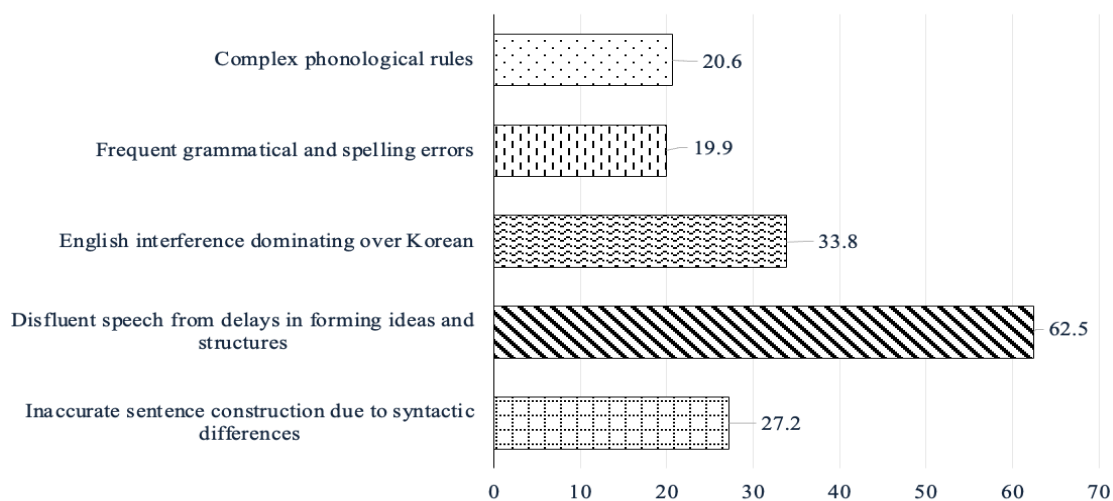
Disadvantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean Reading and Listening



The survey results on Reading-Listening skills revealed two major challenges associated with grammatical differences from English. In particular, 59.6% of respondents had difficulty due to “syntactic differences in translation”, followed by “particles omitted/combined, unclear sentence components”, affirmed by 58.1%. Other factors included “attitudinal nuance via intonation” (30.1%), “contextual ambiguity from subject omission” (23.5%), and “difficulty with formal texts due to honorifics” (24.3%). Overall, the majority of students experienced challenges stemming from differences in syntactic structures and the particle system between Korean and English. This indicated the necessity of enhancing instruction on distinctive grammatical features and guidance in handling omissions when practicing Reading-Listening skills.

Figure 8

Disadvantages of English Proficiency in Learning Korean Speaking and Writing



Within the challenges of learning English Speaking-Writing skill, research indicated that “disfluent speech from delays in forming ideas and structures” was the greatest hindrance,

selected by 62.5% of respondents. Other challenges were also reported, including “English interference dominating over Korean” (33.8%), “inaccurate sentence construction due to syntactic differences” (27.2%), “complex phonological rules” (20.6%), and “frequent grammatical and spelling errors” (19.9%). Generally, the limited ability to think and express ideas based on Korean structures led to challenges in terms of comprehensive speaking and writing, particularly under the influence of English interference.

Moreover, the research identified the cause leading to difficulties in language transfer.

Figure 9

Causes Preventing College Students From Applying Their English Proficiency in Learning Korean

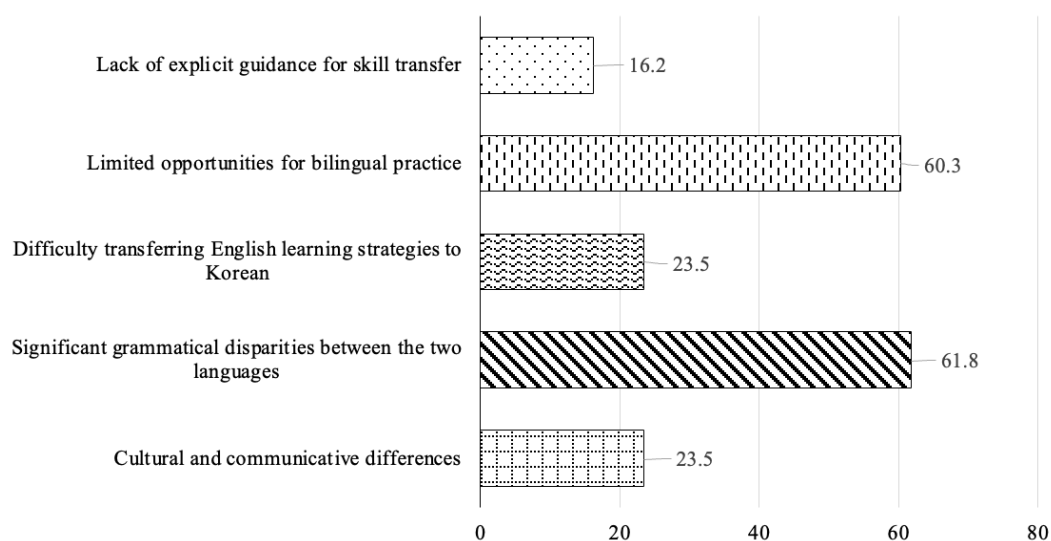


Figure 9 illustrated that the most significant obstacle preventing students from applying English proficiency in learning Korean was “significant grammatical disparities between the two languages”, which was selected by 61.8% of respondents. The subsequent factor was “limited opportunities for bilingual practice”, selected by 60.3% of the students. Other reasons were mentioned, including “cultural and communicative differences” (23.5%), “difficulty transferring English learning strategies to Korean” (23.5%), and “lack of explicit guidance for skill transfer” (16.2%). Thus, two primary hindrances to utilizing English proficiency in Korean learning were the distinctiveness of the grammatical systems and limited bilingual practice opportunities. Additional factors contributed to impeding learners’ language transfer, including cultural and communicative differences, insufficient learning strategies, and inadequate instruction for skill transfer.

4.3. Recommendations for Disadvantages of English-Proficient Students in Learning Korean

4.3.1. Recommendations for Students of the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, ULIS, VNU

First of all, students majoring in Korean should maintain a high awareness of the cognitive and practical advantages of English-Korean bilingual proficiency. In a globalized context, mastery of both languages open pathways to a wide range of specialized academic resources and broaden career prospects across diverse fields, including interpretation,

translation, diplomacy, education, media, or multicultural corporations. Additionally, English proficiency is also regarded as an additional requirement for pursuing higher education or joining companies in South Korea.

Acknowledging this, students are encouraged to proactively adjust their learning paths to strengthen bilingual capacity. Throughout their academic journey, bilingual English-Korean textbooks such as *Korean Grammar in Use*, *Talk to Me in Korean*, as well as applications such as *Duolingo* and *ChatGPT*, should be utilized effectively. In their freshman and sophomore years, alongside compulsory Korean subjects, students are encouraged to take courses in bilingual subjects, including “*Korean-English Writing Skills*”, “*Korean-English Presentation Skills*”, “*Contrastive Linguistics*” or English-focused subjects such as “*Business and Economic English*”, “*English for Career Development*”. These subjects not only sharpen students’ understanding of structural, grammatical, and cultural differences between the two languages but also foster cognitive flexibility. Furthermore, through these subjects, students can enhance their translation skills and adaptability in multicultural communication environments. Beyond meeting Korean proficiency requirements, students should take the initiative to pursue English certificates such as TOEIC and IELTS early in their studies to fulfill English graduation standards.

In addition, active engagement in bilingual practice environments is vital. Students should participate in clubs from both faculties or international competitions related to Korean culture conducted in English such as *Talk Talk Korea*, *The Understanding Korea Contest*. These platforms will provide a greater chance for using English and Korean interchangeably and effectively in authentic contexts.

4.3.2. Recommendations for the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, ULIS, VNU

To optimize Korean learning outcomes for students with strong English proficiency, the Faculty should consider adjusting the curriculum toward an interdisciplinary approach that capitalizes on students’ bilingual assets. During freshman and sophomore years, lecturers should integrate contrastive linguistics knowledge into foundational language practice courses. This baseline exposure prepares students for various integrated bilingual subjects including “*Korean-English Presentation Skills*” or “*Theory and Practice of Translation and Interpretation*” or “*Contrastive Linguistics*” courses in their junior and senior year. In these courses, trilingual Korean-English-Vietnamese materials should be employed. Lecturers are also encouraged to provide examples of common translation errors or equivalent translation methods, thereby enhancing students’ presentation and translation competencies. In particular, the institution can consider offering an optional subject, “*Basic Korean-English Translation and Interpretation*”, tailored specially for English-proficient students to maximize their academic and professional potential.

Additionally, fostering an interdepartmental learning environment is essential. This can be achieved by organizing cross-faculty academic projects, inviting lecturers from the Faculty of English Language Teacher Education to co-teach bilingual specialized seminars. Interdepartmental clubs and multilingual translation projects will also provide a robust practical environment, enabling students to practice and apply their bilingual skills in real-world tasks.

5. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Despite obtaining positive results, several limitations persisted in this study. Firstly, due to time limitations, the research primarily focused on collecting and analyzing quantitative data

via Google Forms, without incorporating in-depth interviews to explore learners' individual experiences in greater detail. Secondly, the sample size was relatively small, restricted to full-time students from the QH2022 and QH2023 cohorts at the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, ULIS, VNU, Hanoi. Furthermore, official statistics verifying the exact number of students attaining a B2 level of English proficiency or higher at the faculty were unavailable at the time of the study.

These limitations suggest that future research should enlarge the sample size and employ mixed-methods approaches for comprehensive results. Additionally, to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed pedagogy, the research team aims to conduct in-depth studies on the implementation of the proposed solutions.

6. Conclusions

This study clarified the impacts of English proficiency on Korean language acquisition among students at the Faculty of Korean Language and Culture, ULIS, VNU. Based on these findings, the research group drew three main conclusions. First, students with a strong English background effectively leverage loanwords and transferable learning strategies to facilitate Korean language acquisition. Second, due to the complexity of Korean grammatical structures, these students encounter considerable difficulties in mastering the “Vocabulary–Grammar” skill domain. Third, students lack sufficient opportunities for bilingual practice.

Therefore, to effectively leverage their English proficiency in learning Korean, students need to proactively adjust their learning pathways and engage in bilingual practice environments. Additionally, the institution should pivot its curriculum toward an interdisciplinary approach that capitalizes on bilingual strengths while fostering close collaboration with the Faculty of English Language and Culture to promote a more conducive, trilingual learning environment.

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