The research has revealed that within lexical inference there are a variety of strategies used by readers to infer the meanings of unknown words. Researchers have investigated the influence of many factors on patterns of strategy use and success. Two such factors are L1 transfer and L2 proficiency.

The current study investigates the influence of L1 transfer as well as L2 proficiency on both native Arabic and native Mandarin speakers. The study utilizes previous research in the design of materials of protocols. Six participants completed a think-aloud lexical inference task followed by a reading strategy questionnaire. There were three Arabic and three Mandarin native speakers represented, and within each L1 group, three levels of reading proficiency were represented.

The results for each think-aloud and questionnaire were coded and analyzed by the individual respondent then analyzed according to both respondents’ L1 and proficiency. The results reveal that accuracy of inferencing increases as proficiency increases. While the findings are participant specific, there were patterns found based on the following variables: L1 transfer, L2 proficiency and area of academic study.