The study described in this PhD thesis is the first that investigates the relationship between language knowledge, listening comprehension, and automatisation of spoken word recognition among adult learners of a second language (L2).

The development of a criterion for indexing automatisation of spoken word recognition is described as well as the attempt to predict listening comprehension skills on the basis of information about language knowledge and status of the word recognition process. The main experiment, involving 83 adult Dutch L2 learners, focuses on the relative effect of two distinct methods for the training of listening in L2:

(i) focus on lower-order skills like word recognition in connected speech
(ii) focus on higher order strategy.

Although the results are not so straightforward that recommendations are made towards a change in the teaching of L2 listening skills, the thesis draws conclusions that are of interest for both educationalists and researchers. For example, the results show the usefulness, or even the necessity, of using time-critical tests for compiling detailed language profiles of second language learners. With respect to the notion of automatisation, the results contribute to the idea that automated and controlled processes do not form a dichotomy but that there is a continuum between the two extremes.

The detailed description of the tests and training-exercises that were used offer a wealth of information both for researchers and language teaching professionals.