



Pronunciation Learning Strategy Use of EFL Learners: Focused on 5th and 6th Graders in Primary School

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to investigate pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) use of 5th and 6th graders learning EFL in Korean elementary schools, including strategies they employ most and least frequently, and to discuss the relationship between PLS use and their grade, gender, and the level of interest in English. The questionnaire data about PLS use from 207 students were analyzed by descriptive statistics, *t*-tests, ANOVAs, and post-hoc tests. The responses to open-ended questions were qualitatively analyzed. Participants showed medium strategy use in six PLS categories. They also reported using memory and cognitive strategies most frequently, and metacognitive strategies least frequently. The most frequently used strategies involved repeating aloud and trying to remember the teachers' pronunciation, whereas planning pronunciation learning and avoiding saying difficult words were used least frequently. Fifth graders and females used more strategies with higher mean scores than sixth graders and males. However, two strategies such as checking the sounds of words on a computer and learning pronunciation with peers varied significantly by grade, and a significant gender difference occurred in one strategy like practicing sounds in words and then in sentences. Noticeably, EFL learners' levels of interest in English had the most significant effect on overall PLS use.

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been generally assumed that language learners use their own language learning strategies to make their learning easier and more enjoyable. Similarly, it is widely acknowledged that language learners do specific actions or take steps to enhance their pronunciation learning. For example, some foreign language learners like to learn pronunciation, repeating after a native speaker of English or a teacher, while others enjoy listening to music or chants to improve their pronunciation.

Pronunciation learning strategies (PLS) of foreign language learners appropriate to their individual needs not only allow learners to approach pronunciation tasks or exercises successfully in the process of pronunciation

learning, but also promote learners' autonomy and independence that can control their pronunciation learning effectively. They also "help language teachers deal with diversity and differentiation within their class" (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2002, p. 60), because language teachers can understand individual learners' differences in the use of a variety of PLS by various factors such as the nature of pronunciation tasks, language and pronunciation proficiency, their learning styles, aptitude, personality, and motivation.

In elementary schools in ESL/EFL contexts where the primacy of spoken language is emphasized as opposed to written language, it is important to equip children with PLS that they can use both inside and outside classroom effectively, since PLS can contribute to the development

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of oral communicative competence of children, by making them involve actively in pronunciation learning tasks. Teachers of children can also raise children's awareness about language learning, by introducing "various aspects of learning to learn" (Pinters, 2017, p. 111) into English classroom practices.

Despite the importance of PLS in ESL/EFL contexts, many studies of learning strategies have explored second or foreign language learning strategies related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing strategies, as well as vocabulary and grammar learning strategies. Those studies have mainly focused on examining the overall use of language learning strategies of ESL/EFL learners along with variables that affect the use of language learning strategies. This perspective has shed some light on studying PLS used by ESL/EFL learners.

Surprisingly, relatively little attention has been paid to investigating ESL/EFL learners' PLS. Over the last decade, fewer studies have revealed that learners use a variety of learning strategies to improve their pronunciation, and that they use their own strategy in relation to various factors, such as language proficiency (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Peterson, 2000; J. A. Seo & Y. B. Yoon, 2015), pronunciation course (Akyol, 2013; Hişmanoğlu, 2012; Vitanova & Miller, 2002), pronunciation proficiency (Berkil, 2008; Osburne, 2003; Rokoszewska, 2012; Szyszka, 2012), gender (Berkil, 2008; Toyama & Sugawara, 2015; Yetkin, 2017), and years of learning English (Yetkin, 2017).

However, nearly all of the earlier studies of PLS have focused on identifying what strategies ESL/EFL students at college level use to enhance their pronunciation. To date, there has been only one study of PLS (J. A. Seo & Y. B. Yoon, 2015) used by young learners' of English in EFL contexts. In particular, no study has been done on examining English PLS used by Korean primary level students associated with their interest in English, which often refers to "a relatively enduring preference for certain topics, subject areas, or activities" (Schiefele, 1991, p. 302), such as enjoying learning English.

Thus, the purposes of this paper are two-fold. One is to investigate PLS that students learning English at elementary schools in Korea use to learn the pronunciation of English with ease, or to improve their English pronunciation in an effective way. The other is to examine the relationship between the use of elementary school students' PLS and their grade, gender, and interest in English.

In order to achieve the goal of the study, the following three research questions will be addressed:

- 1) What are overall PLS used by the EFL students in elementary schools in Korea?
- 2) What are the most and least used PLS in the whole sample of Korean EFL elementary students?
- 3) Are there any significant differences in PLS use in relation to Korean EFL elementary students' grade, gender, and interest in English?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Definition of PLS

Before looking at what PLS mean, it is necessary to point out the definition of language learning strategies briefly. It is because the definition of PLS is generally described based on language learning strategies.

A very popular conceptualization of learning strategies is proposed by Oxford (1990). Referring to learning strategies as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990, p. 8), she classifies language strategy use in terms of direct and indirect strategies, which is further subdivided into six classes. The former includes memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. The latter consists of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. More recently, Oxford (2017) characterizes L2 learning strategies as "complex, dynamic thoughts and actions, selected and used by learners with some degree of consciousness in specific contexts in order to regulate multiple aspects of themselves for the purpose of accomplishing language tasks, improving language performance or use, and/or enhancing long-term proficiency" (p. 48).

As far as PLS are concerned, they are often conceptualized on the basis of definition of language learning strategies offered by Oxford (1990, 2017). For instance, Peterson (2000) proposes PLS as the "steps taken by students to enhance their own pronunciation learning" (p. 6). What she means is that students use specific operations or steps to facilitate the pronunciation learning process. In other words, language learners do their own actions or behaviors to learn pronunciation effectively, or to become more proficient at pronunciation. This view of PLS coincides with Pawlak (2010) who characterizes it as "deliberate actions and thoughts that are consciously employed, often in a logical sequence, for learning and gaining greater control over the use of various aspects of pronunciation" (p. 191). Mirroring Oxford's (2017) definition of language learning strategies, PLS are also described by Pawlak and Szyszka (2018) as "teachable, dynamic thoughts and behaviors that learners consciously select and employ in specific contexts to improve their self-regulated, autonomous L2 pronunciation development for effective task performance and long-term proficiency" (p. 295).

In the present study, PLS are used to mean dynamic actions or behaviors taken by the learners to make pronunciation learning easier, more enjoyable, and more effective, in order to improve their pronunciation both in and outside the classroom.

2. Previous Studies on PLS

Numerous studies on L2 learning strategies have focused on investigating general language learning strategy

use in relation to such variables as the level of language proficiency, language being learned, language course, gender, motivation, attitudes, and beliefs, learning styles (Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2018; Gunning, 1997; H. J. Ihm & J. E. Kim, 2010; Lan & Oxford, 2003; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990, 2017; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Similarly, many researchers have been concerned with identification and classification of EFL/ESL learners' strategies they use to learn their pronunciation effectively along with factors affecting the use of PLS which include language proficiency, pronunciation ability, pronunciation course, and gender. Previous studies of PLS can be divided into several groups according to their focus of study.

The first group of previous studies of PLS (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Peterson, 2000; J. A. Seo & Y. B. Yoon, 2015) has explored the use of learners' strategies in pronunciation learning in relation to their language proficiency. For instance, Derwing and Rossiter (2002) conducted a study to classify pronunciation strategies used by 100 adult ESL learners at college level and found that paraphrasing was the most frequently used strategy to improve communication, followed by self-repetition, idiosyncratic actions (calming down/miming), writing/spelling, volume adjustment, and speaking slowly/clearly. They reported that higher English proficiency students used paraphrase strategy more frequently than lower English proficiency students. In a study of Korean sixth graders' learning strategies to improve their English pronunciation J. A. Seo and Y. B. Yoon (2015) also found that elementary students used lots of cognitive strategy categories, such as formally practicing with sounds, and indicated that higher-English proficient students show more frequent use of PLS than lower-leveled students. Peterson (2000) was also interested in investigating the types of PLS employed by 11 native speakers of English who were learning Spanish as a foreign language in a university, and found that they used cognitive strategies most frequently, such as practicing naturalistically and formally practicing with sounds, and used the least number of memory, compensation, and affective strategies. Especially, their proficiency level of Spanish was shown to affect PLS use in that advanced students used more and wider pronunciation learning tactics (average use: 20.5 of 43 tactics) than intermediate students (average use: 14.5 of 43 tactics) and beginning students (average use: 15 of 43 tactics).

The second group of previous studies of PLS has focused on the influence of pronunciation proficiency on the use of PLS (Obsburne, 2003; Rokoszewska, 2012; Szyszka, 2012). Obsburne (2003) tried to explore pronunciation strategies of 50 adult advanced ESL learners who were good at doing pronunciation tasks, such as listening to sentences and repeating them, and they were found to use 8 strategies to perform the tasks. Among identified PLS, memory or imitation was the most preferred strategy followed by the strategies like attention to paralinguistic (speed, volume, and clarity), monitoring local articulatory gesture or single sound, focusing on individual words,

monitoring global articulatory gesture, focusing on prosodic structure, focusing on individual syllables, and focusing on clusters below syllable level. In a university context, Rokoszewska (2012) conducted a study of PLS used by 66 freshmen and the relationship between PLS use and performance of pronunciation tasks, and reported that the students used metacognitive strategies most frequently and memory strategies least frequently, and that there was a weak but positive correlation between PLS use and production of English vowels. Another study of EFL learners' PLS use was also done by Szyszka (2012), who identified PLS deployed by 43 students of teacher training college in Poland with special reference to the most and the least frequently used strategy, and to the relationship between the use of strategy and students' pronunciation proficiency. The results revealed that the most frequently used strategy was one of cognitive categories, "I imitate a native speaker or a teacher," and the least frequently used one was one of the memory strategies, such as "I make up songs or rhythms to remember how to pronounce words." Besides, significant differences between students with high pronunciation skills and low pronunciation skills were found in the use of some cognitive strategies.

Another group of previous research on PLS has been interested with learners' strategies associated with pronunciation course (Akyol, 2013; Hişmanoğlu, 2012; Vitanova & Miller, 2002). For example, Akyol (2013) compared the use of PLS of two groups of Turkish EFL university students, who were taking a specific course on pronunciation, and taking no course on pronunciation, and found that there were differences in the use of pronunciation strategies between the two groups. For the first group of students, trying to recall how their teachers pronounced something was the most popular memory strategy, while making up songs or rhymes, and associating English pronunciations with Turkish pronunciations to remember the sounds were the most favored ones for the latter group of students. Similar to this study, Vitanova and Miller (2002) studied graduate students' reflections on the pronunciation course they were taking in a university setting. They asked graduate students to reply to open-ended questions about pronunciation learning, and reported that students become aware of the value of phonetic and phonological knowledge in improving their pronunciation as well as the importance of metacognitive strategies like self-monitoring and self-correction. It was also revealed that students valued the combination of controlled and communicative pronunciation activities, and that they reflected on the significance of socio-affective factors in pronunciation learning.

The last group of existing studies has made a comprehensive approach to overall PLS use of EFL learners and the relationship with several factors, such as age, gender, years of learning, and exposure to English (Berkil, 2008; Yetkin, 2017). As an example, Berkil (2008) analyzed the use of PLS of 40 university students in Turkey in relation to several variables such as pronunciation ability, gender, and out-of-class exposure to English. The results revealed

that there was a significant difference in the use of only three PLS between different pronunciation ability levels, and that significant differences were found in the use of many PLS by gender, with women using strategies more frequently than men. No significant differences were also found in PLS use and out-of-class exposure to English. Yetkin (2017) carried out a study of 27 Turkish pre-service English teachers' PLS in relation to such variables as gender, grade level, and years of studying English, and reported a statistically significant difference in pronunciation strategy use between female and male students, with females outweighing males in strategy use, but no significant differences among freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior. It was also revealed in the study that students with more than 10 years of learning English used PLS more frequently than less than 10 years of learning English, although no significant difference occurred between them.

As reviewed above, almost all of the earlier research into PLS use focused on adolescent and adult learners including college level students in ESL/EFL contexts, except for one study which investigated PLS of Korean elementary school students. Therefore, this paper is concerned with identifying PLS of Korean learners of English in elementary schools, and with examining the extent to which their grade, gender, and their interest in English affect the use of PLS to improve English pronunciation. Specifically, this study is concerned with PLS use of EFL elementary school students with special reference to their interest in English, since there has been no research into EFL learners' PLS use associated with the level of students' interest in English.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

A total of 207 elementary school students took part in this study. They were 156 fifth-graders and 51 sixth-graders learning English at 6 elementary schools (A, B, C, D, E, and F) in 2 cities of Jeju Province, Korea. One hundred and twenty-one fifth-graders and 31 sixth-graders were students at schools in Jeju city, while 35 fifth-graders and 20 sixth-graders went to schools at Seogwipo city. The subjects were 102 boy students (49%) and 105 girl students (51%), and ranged in age from 11 and 12 years.

All of the participants had three hours of English class per week. Fifth graders at schools A, B, and C practiced several kinds of pronunciation exercises in the textbook, Elementary School English 5, published by Daekyo Ltd. The textbook encompassed a variety of pronunciation activities, such as producing individual sounds and repeating sentences, doing the phonics chants, listening and repeating sentences, listening to songs, and reading the whole text aloud. However, 6th graders at school D and F, including 5th graders at school E, did not perform a range of pronunciation activities in class, since those schools used the textbook published by Chunjae Education Inc., which

involved a small number of pronunciation activities, such as listening and repeating sentences, listening to songs and repeating, and reading the sentences focusing on stress and intonation. About 72 % ($n=149$) of them had previous or current experiences studying English in a private language institute. However, 80% ($n=25$) of the sixth-graders at school D located in Jeju city had comparatively less private English learning experience because of the financially difficult family situation.

Based on the mean scores of the questionnaire items about interest in learning English, participant students were divided into three levels of interest. The high level group on interest in English consisted of 58 students (28%) with mean scores ranging from 2.34~3.0; the intermediate level group, 104 students (50%) with mean scores that fell between 1.67 and 2.33, and the low level group, 45 students (22%) that got mean scores ranging from 1.0~1.66.

2. Data Collection

This study used the questionnaire data collected from 207 elementary school students to identify their PLS use related to their grade, gender, and interest in English. The researcher asked six elementary school teachers to distribute 230 questionnaires to their students, and they returned 207 completed questionnaires to the researcher (90 % responses rate).

The questionnaire is composed of three parts (see Appendix). The first part is to measure students' interest in English. The term 'interest' here is referred to as students' inherent curiosity learning English, or simply their intrinsic feelings of enjoyment they experience while learning English, being in support of Schiefele (1991), and Hidi and Renninger (2006) who characterize it as positive feelings of enjoyment and continued involvement in specific objects, activities, or tasks.

The questionnaire items about students' interest in English were designed on the basis of I. S. Na and K. J. Rhee (2017). To be specific, it consists of 5 questions to identify their feelings of enjoyment and engagement in learning English, including the desire to use English. Students were asked to choose one of the three scales, "yes," "neutral," and "no" on each question.

The second part of the questionnaire is to measure participant students' PLS use. The questionnaire statements adapted for this part were based on Peterson (2000), and Rokoszewska (2012). They comprise twenty-eight questionnaire items with 5-point Likert scale responses, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The questionnaire contains memory strategies (Items 1~4), cognitive strategies (Items 5~12), compensation strategies (Items 13~16), metacognitive strategies (Items 17~20), affective strategies, and social strategies (Items 25~28). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the questionnaire items was very highly reliable, 0.943 in that it was above Cohen et al.'s (2011) very high level of reliability, 0.90.

The last part of the questionnaire includes open-ended questions about pronunciation learning. Participants are

asked to think about ways of learning English pronunciation with ease, and to freely describe their favorite actions they do to improve English pronunciation.

3. Data Analysis

Mean scores of 5 questions about elementary students' interest in English were analyzed to distinguish which levels of interest they were involved in. When they replied "yes" to each question, 3 points were assigned, and 2 points to "neutral" choice, and 1 point to saying "no." And then, mean scores of 5 questions were counted, and elementary students with mean scores that fell between 2.34 and 3.0 were classified as students with a high level of interest in English, 1.67 and 2.33 as students with an intermediate level of interest in English, and 1.0 and 1.66 as students with a low level of interest in English.

The data collected from the second part of the questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed through descriptive statistics of the SPSS version 22.0. Mean scores for strategy items on the 5-point Likert scale were calculated as follows; high strategy use (3.5 to 5.0), medium strategy use (2.5 to 3.4), and low strategy use (1.0 to 2.4), following Oxford (1990, p. 300). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also conducted to check differences in strategy in relation to students' grade, gender, and interest in English, and then Tukey's post hoc test was used to identify significant differences among the three groups of students with high, medium, and low degree of interest in English. The answers to open-ended questions were read and read again, and analyzed qualitatively to identify effective ways of enhancing their pronunciation learning.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Difference in Overall PLS Use

It was found that the mean score for each of the six strategy categories fell between 2.81 and 3.40, the range which Oxford (1990) defined as medium strategy use (2.5~3.4). Means and standard deviation for each PLS category were presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Variation in Use of PLS Categories

Strategy Category	Item	M	SD	Ranking
Memory	1~4	3.40	1.23	1
Cognitive	5~12	3.27	1.27	2
Compensation	13~16	3.11	1.28	4
Metacognitive	17~20	2.81	1.24	6
Affective	21~24	3.18	1.24	3
Social	25~28	3.02	1.31	5
Overall total	1~28	3.13	1.26	

In this sense, the findings are similar to the results of Lan and Oxford (2003) who studied Taiwanese EFL 6th graders' language learning strategies and reported that they used all six strategy categories in the medium-use range. However, the mean overall PLS use ($M = 3.13$) of Korean EFL 5th and 6th graders was higher than that ($M = 2.90$) of Taiwanese EFL 6th graders. Furthermore, the results are different from those of a study of Canadian ESL 5th graders' language learning strategies carried out by Gunning (1997) whose participants revealed the mean overall strategy use ($M = 3.5$) in the high-use range. These findings in this study also suggest that learners use language learning strategies more frequently in ESL contexts where they are given more opportunities to use English in their daily lives than in EFL settings.

Unlike other studies (Hişmanoğlu, 2012; Rokoszewska, 2012) that investigated the PLS of university students and pointed out infrequent use of memory strategies, the participants in this study, however, used memory strategies most frequently ($M = 3.40$) among the six categories. Cognitive strategies and affective strategies came in next, with means of 3.27 and 3.18, respectively, which were followed by compensation and social strategies ($M = 3.11$ and 3.02, respectively). Metacognitive strategies were found to be the least frequently used ones ($M = 2.81$), in contrast to the study of Rokoszewska (2012) who reported that metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used strategies by Polish university students ($M = 3.52$). Thus, this result suggests that the aspects of English PLS use can vary, depending on whether pronunciation learners are young or not, as can be seen, as an example, in Pinters (2017) statement that "the younger the learners, the less they are able to stand back and reflect on their own learning, choose for themselves, plan, or evaluate their performance" (p. 125).

2. The Most and Least Used PLS

Table 2 demonstrated the five PLS most frequently used by Korean EFL elementary school students.

TABLE 2
The Five Most Frequently Used PLS

Item	Strategy	Strategy Category	M	SD	Range of Strategy Use
7	Repeating aloud	Cognitive	3.64	1.28	High
4	Trying to Remember the teacher's pronunciation	Memory	3.57	1.22	High
14	Guessing the pronunciation of words	Compensation	3.53	1.25	High
21	Trying to relax when pronouncing words	Affective	3.51	1.13	High
3	Repeating words to remember	Memory	3.42	1.23	Medium

As shown in Table 2, of the five most frequently used PLS, four indicated high strategy use, and one was in the higher end of the medium-use range. The participants reported using the cognitive strategy like “repeating aloud” most frequently. The second most frequently used PLS was the memory strategy, “trying to remember the teacher’s pronunciation.” The compensation strategy, “guessing the pronunciation of words,” came in third, followed by the affective strategy, “trying to relax when pronouncing words,” and the memory strategy, “repeating difficult words several times to remember.”

The five least frequently used PLS among the Korean EFL learners were reported in Table 3.

TABLE 3
The Five Least Frequently Used PLS

Item	Strategy	Strategy Category	M	SD	Range of Strategy Use
17	Planning pronunciation learning	Metacognitive	2.61	1.27	Medium
15	Avoiding saying difficult words	Compensation	2.65	1.24	Medium
25	Asking a native speaker/teacher for correction	Social	2.74	1.29	Medium
6	Listening to CD/or watching television	Cognitive	2.75	1.27	Medium
24	Talking feelings about pronunciation learning	Affective	2.75	1.25	Medium

All of the five PLS least frequently utilized by the participants showed medium strategy use, as presented in Table 3, The metacognitive strategy, “planning for learning pronunciation,” was reported as the least frequently used. The category of compensation strategy, “avoiding saying difficult words,” ranked as the second least frequently used. The third least frequently used one was the social strategy, “asking a native speaker/teacher for correction.” The fourth and fifth least frequently used strategies were the cognitive and affective strategies such as “listening to CD/television and talking feelings about pronunciation learning.”

3. PLS Use Differences by Grade, Gender, and Interest in English

When comparing the mean scores of all PLS items used by 5th and 6th graders, the mean scores of 20 PLS employed by 5th graders were higher than those of 6th graders. On the other hand, the mean scores of 8 PLS used by 6th graders were higher than those of 5th graders. However, it was found that there were statistically significant differences in just two strategies (Items 9 and 27) between 5th and 6th graders ($p < .05$). The results were reported in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Items Showing Significant Difference by Grade

Item	Strategy	Grade	M	SD	t	p
9	Checking the pronunciation of words on a computer or mobile phone	5	2.91	1.40	-2.169	.031*
		6	3.39	1.30		
27	Learning pronunciation with peers	5	3.31	1.36	1.994	.047*
		6	2.88	1.21		

* $p < .05$

The reason for 5th graders’ showing higher mean scores of most PLS than 6th graders seems to come from doing a variety of pronunciation learning tasks in class. As seen in the participants’ background information, the majority of 5th graders performed a range of different pronunciation activities than 6th graders did in the classroom. This finding indicates how many different types of pronunciation learning activities or tasks are presented in the textbook that elementary students are going to learn can affect their PLS use.

Identifying the mean scores of all PLS items used by gender, females showed higher mean scores in the use of five PLS categories than males. Males ($M=3.03$) employed a higher mean score of one PLS category (social strategy), i.e., the mean score of one social strategy used by males is a little higher than females ($M=3.01$). Of all 28 PLS items, females showed the use of higher mean scores of 18 PLS, while males used 10 PLS with higher mean scores than females. However, a significant gender difference occurred for one item of PLS (Item 12) in this study, as seen in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Item Showing Significant Difference by Gender

Item	Strategy	Sex	M	SD	t	p
12	Practicing sounds in words and then in sentences	M	3.08	1.37	-2.046	.042*
		F	3.45	1.23		

* $p < .05$

The reason for females’ using more PLS with higher mean scores than males is that girl students use a number of PLS that are similar to pronunciation activities they usually do in English class. For example, PLS used by girl students, such as “making up chants or songs,” “trying to remember the teacher’s pronunciation,” “imitating a native speaker/teacher,” “producing consonants and vowels correctly,” “producing stress and intonation appropriately,” and “practicing sounds in words, and then in sentences” bear some resemblance to pronunciation tasks listed in their English textbooks.

The findings in this study are similar to those of previous studies of PLS that have investigated females’ greater strategy use over males (Berkil, 2008; Toyama & Sugawara, 2015; Yetkin, 2017). However, unlike the three

studies showing significant differences in overall PLS use between females and males, this study revealed that there was a significant difference by gender in one strategy use as indicated above.

Of the three independent variables, the level of interest in English had the most significant influence on strategy use. That is, the ANOVA tests indicated that there were statistically significant differences among the students with high, intermediate, and low levels of interest in English regarding the use of individual PLS. Noticeably enough, the statistically significant difference was found in their use of 27 of the total 28 strategies, which all showed $p < .05$. There was no significant difference for only one strategy Item 15 ($p > .05$). In comparison with the participants in the low interest level group, the participants in the intermediate interest level group reported using 23 strategies significantly more often ($p < .05$). No significant differences occurred between the intermediate interest level group and the low interest level group in the use of 4 strategies (Items 6, 24, 25, and 26).

As most PLS were shown to be statistically significant, the post-hoc test was conducted for multiple comparisons among the three groups. The major results of the post-hoc comparisons are presented in what follows, according to the six PLS categories, respectively.

Firstly, as seen in Table 6, two PLS of the memory strategy categories showed significant differences among the three groups, which were “repeating words to remember,” and “trying to remember the teacher’s pronunciation” ($p < .01$). The differences mean that the participants in the high interest level group used these strategies significantly more often than those in the intermediate and low interest level groups, and that the participants in the intermediate interest level group used them less often than those in the

TABLE 6

Post-Hoc Test by Interest in English: Memory Strategies

	(I) Interest	(J) Interest	MD (I-J)	SE	p
3. Repeating words to remember	H	I	.78	.16	.000**
		L	1.75	.21	.000**
	I	H	-.78	.18	.000**
		L	.97	.19	.000**
	L	H	-1.75	.21	.000**
		I	-.97	.19	.000**
4. Trying to remember the teacher’s pronunciation	H	I	.89	.17	.000**
		L	1.98	.20	.000**
	I	H	-.89	.17	.000**
		L	1.09	.18	.000**
	L	H	-1.98	.20	.000**
		I	-1.09	.18	.000**

H: High interest level group, I: Intermediate interest level group, L: Low interest level group
** $p < .01$

high interest level group, but more often than those in the low interest level group.

As to the cognitive strategy categories, significant variation was found in the use of four individual PLS ($p < .01$), such as “repeating aloud,” “producing consonants and vowels correctly,” “producing stress and intonation appropriately,” and “practicing sounds in words, and then in sentences.” As shown in Table 7, the participants in the high interest level group used these PLS significantly more frequent than those in the intermediate and low interest level groups for improving their English pronunciation, and the participants in the intermediate interest level group used them significantly more often than those in the low interest level group.

TABLE 7

Post-Hoc Test by Interest in English: Cognitive Strategies

	(I) Interest	(J) Interest	MD (I-J)	SE	p
7. Repeating aloud	H	I	.92	.19	.000**
		L	1.67	.23	.000**
	I	H	-.92	.19	.000**
		L	.75	.20	.001**
	L	H	-1.67	.23	.000**
		I	-.75	.20	.001**
10. Producing consonants and vowels correctly	H	I	1.16	.16	.000**
		L	1.89	.20	.000**
	I	H	-1.16	.16	.000**
		L	.73	.18	.000**
	L	H	-1.89	.20	.000**
		I	-.73	.18	.000**
11. Producing stress and intonation appropriately	H	I	1.08	.16	.000**
		L	2.15	.19	.000**
	I	H	-1.08	.16	.000**
		L	1.07	.17	.000**
	L	H	-2.15	.19	.000**
		I	-1.07	.17	.000**
12. Practicing sounds in words and then in sentences	H	I	1.11	.18	.000**
		L	1.99	.22	.000**
	I	H	-1.11	.18	.000**
		L	.88	.20	.000**
	L	H	-1.99	.22	.000**
		I	-.88	.20	.000**

H: High interest level group, I: Intermediate interest level group, L: Low interest level group
** $p < .01$

Concerning the compensation strategy categories, a significant difference was found in the use of only one strategy (Item 14), as shown in Table 8. The participants

in the high interest level group used such a strategy as “guessing the pronunciation of words,” when they learn English pronunciation, significantly more often than those in the intermediate and low interest groups ($p < .01$).

TABLE 8

Post-Hoc Test by Interest in English: Compensation Strategy

	(I) Interest	(J) Interest	MD (I-J)	SE	p
14. Guessing the pronunciation of words	H	I	.96	.16	.000**
		L	2.17	.20	.000**
	I	H	-.96	.16	.000**
		L	1.21	.18	.000**
	L	H	-2.17	.20	.000**
		I	-1.21	.18	.000**

H: High interest level group, I: Intermediate interest level group, L: Low interest level group
** $p < .01$

Regarding the metacognitive strategy categories, significant differences were found in the use of two strategies, such as “self-evaluating,” and “comparing their pronunciation with that of a native speaker” ($p < .01$). As shown in Table 9, the higher interest level participants reported using PLS in their pronunciation learning, significantly more frequent than the lower interest level participants did.

TABLE 9

Post-Hoc Test by Interest in English: Metacognitive Strategies

	(I) Interest	(J) Interest	MD (I-J)	SE	p
18. Self-evaluating	H	I	.97	.16	.000**
		L	1.60	.20	.000**
	I	H	-.97	.16	.000**
		L	.63	.18	.001**
	L	H	-1.60	.20	.000**
		I	-.63	.18	.001**
19. Comparing with a native speaker	H	I	.84	.17	.000**
		L	1.86	.21	.000**
	I	H	-.84	.17	.000**
		L	1.02	.19	.000**
	L	H	-1.86	.21	.000**
		I	-1.02	.19	.000**

H: High interest level group, I: Intermediate interest level group, L: Low interest level group
** $p < .01$

About affective strategy categories, the post-hoc test also revealed that the participants in the higher interest level groups used two PLS significantly more often than those in the lower interest level groups ($p < .01$), as

demonstrated in Table 10. It can be said that elementary students with the higher interest in English enjoy learning English pronunciation with low anxiety and with confidence than those with the lower interest in English.

TABLE 10

Post-Hoc Test by Interest in English: Affective Strategies

	(I) Interest	(J) Interest	MD (I-J)	SE	p
21. Trying to relax when pronouncing words	H	I	.69	.16	.000**
		L	1.63	.20	.000**
	I	H	-.69	.16	.000**
		L	.94	.18	.000**
	L	H	-1.63	.20	.000**
		I	-.94	.18	.000**
23. Having confidence even when being afraid of pronunciation	H	I	1.10	.17	.000**
		L	1.81	.20	.000**
	I	H	-1.10	.17	.000**
		L	.71	.18	.000**
	L	H	-1.81	.20	.000**
		I	-.71	.18	.000**

H: High interest level group, I: Intermediate interest level group, L: Low interest level group
** $p < .01$

In relation to the use of social strategy categories, similarities were found, as presented in Table 11. The participants in the high interest level group used a strategy, such as “learning pronunciation with peers,” significantly more often than those in the intermediate interest level group, and the participants in the intermediate interest level group used the strategy more often than those in the low interest level group ($p < .01$).

TABLE 11

Post-Hoc Test by Interest in English: Social Strategy

	(I) Interest	(J) Interest	MD (I-J)	SE	p
27. Learning pronunciation with peers	H	I	.97	.19	.000**
		L	1.74	.24	.000**
	I	H	-.97	.19	.000**
		L	.76	.21	.001**
	L	H	-1.74	.24	.000**
		I	-.76	.21	.001**

H: High interest level group, I: Intermediate interest level group, L: Low interest level group
** $p < .01$

As the results of the post-hoc test above show, the level of student’s interest in English is a very significant factor affecting PLS use when they learn pronunciation effectively. The differences in PLS use between the high

interest level group and the intermediate interest level group showed a consistent pattern. The differences in the use of PLS between the intermediate interest level group and the low interest level group were also consistent. This means that the students with the higher interest level always used PLS more frequently than those with the lower interest level. In other words, these findings show that the higher the level of students' interest in English, the more frequently they use PLS in their pronunciation learning.

Even though not in the studies with a focus on students' PLS, similar results were found in other studies examining the effect of liking English on the use of language learning strategies. For example, Lan and Oxford (2003) reported that Taiwan elementary students who like English used language learning strategies significantly more often than those who do not like English. In a similar vein, it was found in Schiefele's (1991) study that high-interest readers tend to read a text and process the meaning of it more successfully than low-interest readers (p. 310). The findings of this study, which are almost in line with those of other studies, suggest that the level of students' interest in English can open up a new perspective of studying learners' strategies of other areas of second or language learning and teaching.

4. Analysis of Responses to Open-Ended Questions

The major themes that emerged from the participants' responses to open-ended questions were about effective pronunciation learning activities, practicing sounds in words and sentences correctly and naturally, and solutions to difficulties in learning pronunciation. Those can be categorized in Table 12.

As can be seen in Table 12, 132 participants described their preferred pronunciation learning activities and the reasons for doing them. More than half of the students

(54%) mentioned that they learn pronunciation through repeating aloud after a teacher/a native speaker with tapes or CD-ROMs, and that those activities are very useful for learning to pronounce individual sounds as well as developing a sense of stress, rhythm, and intonation in English correctly. Some students were found to enjoy memorizing and practicing English words/phrases silently (19%), and practicing saying words using a computer or a mobile phone dictionary (14%), which can be very simple and clear for learning pronunciation. Other students preferred listening to children's songs or watching films (9%), and learning pronunciation using phonics books (4%), because those things can be an interesting way of practicing pronunciation. These responses support PLS use of elementary school students pointed out in the previous section, and further, they are partially in agreement with cognitive and metacognitive strategies of pronunciation learning studied by Peterson (2000), and J. A. Seo and Y. B. Yoon (2015).

One hundred thirteen participants commented on practicing sounds that help them promote pronunciation development. Forty percent of the participants said that they focus their practice on pronouncing words correctly over and over, followed by concentrating on a native speaker's pronunciation while listening (27%), talking aloud to themselves (14%), practicing stress and rhythm in sentences naturally (11%), and speaking English words slowly to get the pronunciation right (8%). These findings indicate that they try to practice English sounds correctly and naturally both in the levels of individual words and sentences, paying attention to cognitive strategies of pronunciation learning.

Finally, 96 participants proposed some solutions to difficulties in learning pronunciation with which they cope. Most of the students (63%) preferred asking their friends or parents to pronounce correctly. However, some of them (22%) stated that they check phonetic symbols of words on a computer/mobile phone to understand how to

TABLE 12
Major Themes of Pronunciation Learning

Themes	Sub-themes	No. of Respondents
Effective pronunciation learning activities	- Repeating aloud	71
	- Memorizing and practicing words/phrases silently	25
	- Practicing words with a computer	19
	- Listening to songs/Watching films	12
	- Studying phonics books	5
Practicing sounds with correctness and naturalness	- Producing words correctly	45
	- Concentrating on a native speaker's pronunciation while listening	31
	- Talking aloud to oneself	16
	- Practicing stress and intonation naturally	12
	- Speaking words slowly	9
Solutions to pronunciation learning difficulties	- Asking for help to friends or parents	61
	- Checking phonic symbols	21
	- Avoiding pronouncing words	14

pronounce them, and a few of them (15%) reported avoiding pronouncing given words purposefully, and trying to practice sounds of other words instead. These results show that almost all of them use social strategies, compensation stages, and memory strategies more frequently when they have difficulty in pronouncing English sounds.

V. CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In general, Korean EFL learners in elementary schools used the six PLS categories in the medium frequency. One of cognitive PLS, “Repeating aloud,” was the item that they used most frequently, and one of metacognitive PLS, such as “planning pronunciation learning,” was the least used one by them.

Fifth graders in Korean elementary schools showed the higher mean scores of 20 of all 28 PLS items than 6th graders, and 6th graders used 8 PLS with higher mean scores than 5th graders. Female students used 18 PLS with higher mean scores than males, while male students reported using 10 PLS with higher mean scores than female students. However, significant grade differences occurred for only two strategies (Item 9 and Item 27), and one strategy (Item 12) was used significantly more often by females. It is noteworthy that statistically significant differences in almost all of PLS use among the three interest level groups. The level of students’ interest in English was the most important factor that has an influence on using PLS in pronunciation learning.

The results of this study suggest some implications for classroom practice to make EFL learners improve their pronunciation. Firstly, it is important for elementary school teachers to recognize that several factors affect the use of PLS, and to help students positively choose a variety of pronunciation strategies available to them as much as possible in order to improve pronunciation abilities effectively. Especially, teachers should realize that the higher students’ interest in English is, the more frequently they are likely to use PLS, and that teachers must learn how to facilitate the development of interest in English. It is necessary for teachers to bear in mind that one of the goals of elementary school English is to increase students’ interest in English, and to use a variety of classroom techniques that arouse their interest in English in order to improve English pronunciation. Thus, teachers need assist young EFL students learn English pronunciation enjoyably in class, making them perform many interest-generating activities such as games, chants, songs, rhymes, and role plays, which help them enhance improved intelligibility of English pronunciation and build greater confidence in pronouncing segmental and suprasegmental features of English effectively.

In order for EFL learners to become independent and self-directed, EFL teachers in Korea will have to understand the principles of PLS-based instruction that stimulates the integration of language learning and learn-

ing strategies in the classroom, which Styles-and Strategies-Based Instruction (SSBI) focuses on. It is possible for EFL teachers to train students in employing strategies effectively and flexibly, based on five components of SSBI focused on PLS, such as strategy preparation, strategy awareness-raising, strategy instruction, strategy practice, and personalization of strategies (Cohen & Weaver, 2005). In a word, Korean EFL teachers can help students enhance their pronunciation learning, by making them aware PLS, try them out on a wide range of pronunciation tasks, monitor and evaluate them, and experiment them effectively in a variety of “changing conditions of language learning and use” (Purpura, 2014, p. 546).

What is more significant is that useful PLS are teachable but “not always considered enjoyable” (Pawlak & Szyszka, 2018, p. 316), and that PLS available to some students may not appropriate for other students. For example, EFL young learners in this study used metacognitive strategies more infrequently even though they were found to be employed more frequently by successful EFL learners. In literature metacognitive strategies are regarded as effective and important, because they enable EFL learners learn to reflect on their own learning process and evaluate it. To develop metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, evaluating and organizing pronunciation learning tasks, EFL teachers can encourage students to think about a range of different pronunciation activities and review what activities they enjoyed, and reflect about why or how well they carried out activities. Hence, it is important for EFL teachers to help students develop self-regulated PLS, suiting strategy instruction to their learning style preferences, needs, and especially their levels of interest in English.

This study has some limitations to be indicated. The subjects of study are not students at a large number of elementary schools and districts in Korea. In addition, despite the analysis of contents of open-ended questions about PLS use, this study is quantitative in nature. Hence, the specific findings cannot be generalizable to other contexts and different populations of EFL elementary school students in Korea. More quantitative and qualitative studies of PLS of Korean EFL students at elementary, secondary and tertiary levels need to be carried out in relation to a range of different variables affecting EFL learners’ PLS use, such as English proficiency, vocabulary and spoken language development, pronunciation ability, pronunciation course, age, personality, learning styles, beliefs and attitudes.

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APPENDIX
영어 발음 학습 설문지

다음은 여러분이 영어 학습 과정에서 영어 발음을 향상시키기 위해 어떤 활동들을 하고 있는지를 알아보기 위한 것입니다.
해당되는 곳에 ○표해 주세요.

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I: 다음을 읽고 자신에게 해당되는 곳에 0표해 주세요.

1. 영어 배우는 것이 재미있다(예, 보통, 아니오).
2. 영어 배우는 시간이 기다려진다(예, 보통, 아니오).
3. 영어 배우고 싶은 마음이 든다(예, 보통, 아니오).
4. 영어 배우는 시간이 더 많았으면 좋겠다(예, 보통, 아니오).
5. 영어 원어민과 얘기하고 싶다(예, 보통, 아니오).

II: 다음을 읽고 자신에게 해당되는 곳에 0표해 주세요(1=전혀 아니다, 2=아니다, 3=보통이다, 4=그렇다, 5=매우 그렇다).

1. 나는 발음기호를 이용하여 영어 단어의 발음을 기억하려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. 나는 찬트나 노래를 통해 영어 단어의 발음을 떠올려 본다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3. 나는 영어 단어를 자주 반복해 봄으로써 발음을 기억하려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4. 나는 선생님이 영어 단어를 어떻게 발음했는지 떠올려 본다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
5. 나는 원어민이나 선생님의 영어 발음을 그대로 따라 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
6. 나는 영어 CD를 듣거나 텔레비전을 보며 발음을 따라 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
7. 나는 큰 소리를 내어 영어를 읽으며 발음을 배운다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
8. 나는 조용히 영어 단어의 발음을 따라해 본다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
9. 나는 컴퓨터나 스마트폰을 이용하여 영어 단어의 발음을 찾는다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
10. 나는 영어의 자음과 모음을 정확하게 발음하려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
11. 나는 영어의 강세와 억양을 적절하게 발성하려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
12. 나는 단어에서 발음을 연습하고 그 후에 문장에서 연습한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
13. 나는 영어 단어의 발음을 우리말로 쓰며 발음을 연습한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
14. 나는 영어 단어의 철자를 보고 발음을 추측해 본다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
15. 나는 단어의 발음 방법을 알지 못하면 그것을 말하는 것을 피한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
16. 나는 단어의 발음을 모를 경우 그와 유사한 발음을 내려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
17. 나는 영어 발음에 대한 학습 계획을 세운다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
18. 나는 나 자신의 영어 발음에 대해 스스로 평가해 본다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
19. 나는 나의 영어 발음을 원어민의 발음과 비교해 본다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
20. 나는 영어 발음 방법에 관한 인터넷 자료들을 검색한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
21. 나는 영어 단어를 말하고 읽을 때 편안하게 발음하려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
22. 나는 영어 단어를 잘 발음할 때는 스스로를 칭찬한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
23. 나는 영어 단어를 발음하는 것이 두려워도 자신 있게 하려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
24. 나는 영어 발음 배우면서 느끼는 점을 누군가에게 말하려고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
25. 나는 원어민이나 선생님에게 영어 발음을 고쳐달라고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
26. 나는 영어 발음 방법을 모를 때 주변 사람들에게 도와달라고 한다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
27. 나는 친구들과 활동하며 함께 영어 발음을 배운다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
28. 나는 다른 사람들이 영어 발음을 배우는 것을 도와준다. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

III: 다음 질문에 답변해 주세요.

1. 여러분은 영어 발음을 더 쉽고 효과적으로 배우기 위해 어떤 활동들을 하고 있나요? 그런 활동들을 하는 이유는 무엇인가요?
2. 여러분은 영어 발음을 향상시키기 위해 영어 발음을 연습할 때 어떤 활동들에 초점을 맞추고 있나요?
3. 여러분은 영어 발음을 배울 때 발음하기 어려운 단어들을 접하게 되면 어떻게 하나요?