A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES AS EXPERIENCED BY SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT A SOUTH KOREAN UNIVERSITY

by

Eric Hall

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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2015
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the shared experiences and beliefs concerning the use of language learning strategies (LLS) among successful English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a South Korean university. The research questions focused on how successful EFL learners describe their experiences learning English through the lens of learning strategies. Further examination described the role LLS play in the student’s successful English language learning. The participants were 12 successful EFL students from a South Korean university. Data collection consisted of interviews, focus groups, and observations. Data analysis was achieved through use of the hermeneutic circle, which consists of reading, reflective writing (and rewriting), and interpretation. Additionally, phenomenological reduction, specifically hermeneutic reduction was used to reflectively explicate current assumptions within the text. Findings revealed three themes through examination of the participants’ data:

1. Participants’ strategy use in light of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development
2. Proactivity, willingness to communicate and motivation among successful EFL students
3. Interrelation of individual strategies via strategy chains

Discussion and recommendations for future research are located in chapter five.

Keywords: Language learning, language learning strategies, college students, university, EFL, South Korea, hermeneutic phenomenology
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my chair, Dr. Connie McDonald. She was a tremendous help from the very inception of this paper. Her guidance and insight into language learning was invaluable. I met Dr. McDonald only once when I was taking an intensive class on campus. She was organizing a trip to Japan for class credit and although I wasn’t able to make the trip, I did speak with her about her time teaching overseas. Since this was a shared interest she seemed the best fit to chair this dissertation. She gave all she had to seeing this study come to fruition even though she was battling cancer for several years. Unfortunately, as this dissertation neared the end of its completion, Dr. McDonald passed away. It saddens me that she did not live to see the defense and publication of this study but I rest assured that she has found peace in her Savior’s arms. I look forward to the day I can speak with her again, face to face. Thank you for your time, effort, and patience Dr. McDonald. It was not wasted.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my committee first and foremost. To Dr. Gina Thomason for her insight and guidance for the past several years. To Dr. Gina Kim for being a source of encouragement in writing this study while at the same time being very busy with so many other responsibilities at our university. To Dr. Fred Milacci for his qualitative insight, details emails, and quick replies that made the completion of this paper possible.

To my family in Korea, especially my wife who put up with so many long days of study, reading, writing and rewriting. I could not have done it without your support.

To my family back in the United States. They were half a world away but provided much needed encouragement and support every time we talked and on the few occasions we could meet in person.
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List of Abbreviations

LLS: Language Learning Strategies
SILL: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning
LLSI: Language Learning Strategy Inventory
BALLI: Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ESL: English as a Second Language
S²R: Strategic Self-Regulation
FSI: Foreign Service Institute
ILR: Interagency Language Roundtable
TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication
TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language
iBT TOEFL: Internet Based Test for Test of English as a Foreign Language
EMC: English Multilingual Café
IELTS: International English Language Testing System
ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development
SRL: Self-Regulated Learning
WTC: Willingness To Communicate
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter begins with a brief background on language learning strategies. It looks at a brief history of strategies and some current literature that highlights the importance of studying strategy use. Benefits of using strategies are discussed, as is the study’s situation to the researcher. The problem and purpose statements are addressed as well as the significance of the study. The research questions and research plan are introduced. Delimitations as well as limitations are discussed.

Background

Language learning strategies (LLS) have been around since the beginning of education (Oxford, 1990); However, they had not been identified by that particular name until the mid-1970s. Learning strategies are often referred to as “steps taken by students to enhance their own learning” (Oxford, 1990, p. 1). Language learning strategies are therefore strategies students use to enhance their learning of another language. Modern day identification of LLS began with Rubin and Stern in 1975 (Stern, 1975). As more teacher-centered learning became the focus of education and research, LLS fell out of favor with the academic community primarily in the 1980’s. In 1990, Rebecca Oxford published her seminal book on LLS, titled Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know. This comprehensive work detailed the different categories of LLS and initiated a reemergence of LLS among the research community. Perhaps the most important aspect of this foundational work was a standard classification system for strategies. Oxford used a six-category system that includes memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.
Recent studies concerning LLS have taken place all over the world and in a variety of educational settings. For example, Chang and Shen (2010) conducted LLS research concerning junior high school EFL language learners in remote districts of Taiwan. Liu (2010) also conducted research based on LLS and training models in China. In 2011, Tse (2011) conducted research on LLS adoption by university students in Hong Kong, and Asgari and Mustapha (2011) researched LLS in Malaysia. In 2012, Ansarin, Zohrabi, and Zeynali (2012) looked at vocabulary size and LLS in Iran. Other countries include Jordan (AbuSeileek, 2012), Saudi Arabia (Alhaisoni, 2012), and Japan (Yabukoshi & Takeuchi, 2009). In Korea, Park (2013) examined Korean EFL students’ vocabulary learning strategies. Also in Korea, Kang and Pyun (2013) conducted a case study that looked at mediation strategies in the L2 writing process. In short, recent trends have seen a worldwide effort to better understand LLS and how they are utilized in countries all over the world.

In each of these studies, however, challenges often emerge. One such challenge is the role LLS play in successful language learning. The question of which strategies are used exclusively by successful students has never been completely answered. Or more to the point, several studies seem to contradict each other when it comes to strategy use and proficiency levels. Cultural and individual differences likely account for this discrepancy in the literature. So, one issue with the current literature is a lack of context-specific studies that could shed light on LLS use but perhaps not lend themselves to generalizability across multiple cultures (Rose, 2012a).

In addition, whether or not a strategy is used frequently or infrequently in not necessarily an indicator of its effectiveness in learning a new language. “Low reported strategy use is not always a sign of ineffective learning” (Yamamori, Isoda, Hiromori, & Oxford, 2003). This study
describes experiences successful language learners have when it comes to LLS. The question of LLS use from a quantitative standpoint was not addressed in this study; however, chapter four does systematically list which strategies were used by which participant and which ones were used the most frequently. This was done in an attempt to present the data in a coherent, organized, and easily understood fashion.

The majority of strategy research over the past 30+ years has been of a quantitative and mixed methods nature (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Jie & Xiaqing, 2006; Kayaoglu, 2013; Khalil, 2005; Khasawneh & Khasawneh, 2012; Peacock & Ho, 2003; Rahimi, Riazi, & Saif, 2008; Wharton, 2000; Wong & Nunan, 2011; Yabukoshi & Takeuchi, 2009; M. Yang, 2010). This has led to a plethora of information and data but a lack of lived experience perspectives from those who use strategies in their acquisition of a second language. (G. Park, 2010) conducted a mixed methods study concerning learning strategies used by effective and less effective EFL students in Korea. His qualitative results showed effective and less effective learners both employed strategies, but the more effective learners used listening strategies more appropriately than the less effective learners. His study recommends additional data collection methods for future research:

More studies should be conducted among different learners in different learning contexts using different data collection methods to replicate the findings of this study and to shed further light on the strategy differences used by effective and less effective learners. (G. Park, 2010, p. 11)

Quantitative results for the past 30 years have dominated the LLS research and many researchers think a more varied approach could shed light on strategy use and how it affects language learning. This varied approach includes action research and qualitative research that
goes beyond questionnaires and basic queries (Rose, 2012b). This area of qualitative research has yet to be properly developed in the current literature especially concerning Korean university students.

Via the recommendation of current research concerning LLS, this study focused on the meaning and retrospective essence concerning LLS as experienced by successful EFL students at the university level through a qualitative study. Understanding was expanded concerning the “‘what’ (qualis or ti estin) and the ‘how’ (hoti estin) of appearance” (van Manen, 2014a) regarding LLS, not simply which strategies students employed the most.

Those who may benefit from this study will be students who are learning the English language either in Korea or another country (such as those living in the United States). Although generalizability was not the goal of this paper, the experiences and life world of those participating may shed light on strategy use regardless of language and nationality. Therefore, since the experiences described in this study cover several different periods in students’ lives (elementary school, middle school, high school, university, etc.), those who can benefit the most will be students of all ages in Korea learning English as a second or foreign language. By better understanding the experiences of fluent EFL English language learners and the strategies they use, less effective students can better understand what it means to move from non-success to success when studying the English language. In the case of this study, success was used in place of “fluency” because of the connotation that fluency carries. Fluency is often associated with native speaker-like accuracy, however, it is often used in the vernacular to mean “the ability to speak easily and smoothly”. The exact definition and components of English fluency and success are detailed later. These aspects include a fluency scale (FSI scale), comprehension components, and strategy use in conjunction with fluency.
Situation to Self

My motivation in conducting this study was a desire to clearly and articulately teach the English language to EFL learners. I am currently a university professor at a South Korean university where I teach College English Communication, mostly to freshmen students. The strategies fluent and non-fluent students use has been an interest of mine since I began teaching English in Korea in 2008. Throughout my teaching tenure, I have wondered about students’ experiences concerning learning English and the role LLS play in those experiences. Why are some students better than others at English? What was their experience studying English like? What role did LLS play in their English language learning? How did they perceive English via specific lived experiences throughout their academic careers?

English is a big business in Korea. On average, Korean students study English for at least 13 years: Four year in elementary school, four years in middle school, three years in high school, and two years at the university level. Children begin their English education in elementary school with some children taking classes as early as preschool in afterschool English programs called 학원 (hagwon). Many of the participants in this study talked about their time studying in a hagwon. All of the participants in this study started learning English in elementary school, if not sooner. This constant English education continues through middle school and university, encompassing almost their entire academic career. The government and many private institutions have endeavored to skillfully teach English at all levels of education, but this endeavor has been met with various difficulties.

Proficiency and strategy use has been studied in a variety of contexts in the past. “Research in Asia, such as in Thailand (Mullins, 1992), in Japan (Watanabe, 1990), and in Korea (H. Kim, 2000; H. Lee, 2000; H. Lee & Oh, 2001; J. Park, 2001; Y. Park, 1999; Yoon, Won, &
Kang, 2001) showed strong, positive correlations between strategy use and EFL proficiency” (Lee & Oxford, 2008, p. 10). A recent study by Education First lists South Korea 24th on its English Proficiency index (EPI). This is considered an average rating, but a concerning statistic is that in the past seven years, Korea’s EPI has dropped .57 points (See Appendix A). Ideally, a country wants to see their EPI rise each year. Education First writes,

With the vast amounts of time, money, and energy Koreans pour into mastering English, it is surprising that South Korea’s proficiency level dropped slightly between 2007 and 2012. Ranked fifth among Asian countries, Korean adults have moderate English proficiency, but they have not improved in the last six years. ("English First," 2013)

Other Asian nations such as China are increasing their EPI (China’s has risen 2.53), despite spending much less on English education. South Korea has spent double the amount China has on English education, yet China has a population 27 times the size of South Korea ("English First," 2013). The need for language-based strategy integration and proper English instruction has motivated me to conduct this study in an attempt to better understand Korea’s moderate proficiency when it comes to learning English and what steps can be taken to improve that average rating.

The philosophical assumption underpinning this study was an ontological approach. It involved the “being” portion of LLS in the lives of EFL students. The roots of ontological phenomenology can be seen in the works of Martin Heidegger. According to van Manen (2014a), “Heidegger makes a distinction between traditional (epistemological) objectification as it occurs in social science and formal (ontological) objectification as practiced in phenomenological inquiry” (van Manen, 2014a, p. location 2668). Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-
linguistic framework was also used to frame this study. It focused exclusively on the experiences of the participants through interviews, focus groups, and observations.

**Problem Statement**

The qualitative tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology is not necessarily concerned with problem solving but with meaning and explication of hidden things. The issue of strategy use may be understood, not as “a problem to be solved, but as a question of meaning to be inquired into” (van Manen, 1990, p. 24). Marcel (1950) would refer to this study “not [as] a problem in need of a solution but a mystery in need of evocative comprehension”. So the problem statement might be better addressed as a “mystery” statement. Indeed, after more than 40 years of research, strategies and their place in language learning seem more elusive than ever. Unfortunately, the intensity of interest in language learning strategies in the 1980s and 1990s and the high expectations from theorists, researchers, teachers, and learners have left many people frustrated, especially because of the conceptual fuzziness and elusiveness of the LLS construct. (Oxford, 2011b, p. 10)

The mystery of LLS and their use was investigated in this study in search of that evocative comprehension which can be elusive and, at times, seem impossible to elucidate within a given text. While this approach was philosophically foundational in nature, it has great potential implications for the pedagogical realm. As van Manen (1990) (paraphrasing Heidegger) states, “the more important question is not: Can we do something with phenomenology? Rather we should wonder: Can phenomenology, if we concern ourselves deeply with it, do something with us?” (van Manen, 1990, p. 45). The question of learning English can be framed in a similar way. Instead of asking (as many students do at one time or another), “Can we do something with English?” perhaps we should ask, “Can English do
something with us?” The implications may prove important for the student, the teacher, and even the investigator concerning the varied lived experiences of the participants.

There has been abundant literature in recent years concerning which LLS are used the most and the least. Ananisarab and Abdi (2012) looked at LLS and which strategies were favored by Iranian EFL learners. Alhaisoni (2012) also studied favored LLS used by Saudi EFL learners. This study focused on an area that has been overlooked in the literature: The area of qualitative research in the field of LLS. The problem this study addressed was not which LLS are being used the most but what are the experiences and beliefs concerning strategies that successful EFL students hold and what is the meaning of those experiences in a language learning context?

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore shared experiences and beliefs concerning the use of language learning strategies (LLS) among successful English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a South Korean university.

**Significance of the Study**

In the past five years, there have been a variety of studies done concerning LLS and their effect on successful language learning. Chang and Shen (2010) found a moderate correlation between beliefs and strategies that students used. Others have recorded various LLS being used, although their use alone does not specifically make one strategy better than another (Nguyen & Godwyll, 2010). While there are many factors that the literature has focused on such as gender (Alhaisoni, 2012), age (Kaur & Embi, 2011), months spent studying formal English (Magno, 2010) and context of learning (Ananisarab & Abdi, 2012), the area of phenomenological experience has not been examined to its fullest. One study did examine language learning
strategies from a phenomenological perspective concerning Columbian students in South Florida. Paredes’ (2010) focus was on adult English language learners’ selection and use of LLS. She concluded that participants use strategies not found in current classification systems (Oxford’s classification system). Additional explication included the identification of common themes such as learning conditions, problem solving resources, information processing and target language practice (Paredes, 2010).

The significance of this study was the hermeneutic phenomenological aspect of the successful Korean students’ experiences and beliefs concerning LLS. Since some studies suggest there is a direct correlation between use of different strategies and proficiency levels (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012), the lived experiences of these successful students and their beliefs concerning LLS should be explored in a rich, substantial way.

Recent studies have concluded that qualitative research in the area of LLS is needed more than quantitative, which has dominated LLS research for the past 30 years. Woodrow (2005) called for more qualitative methods to be employed in LLS research as did Rose (2012a): “The main suggestion for future methodological design centers on the notion that qualitative, not quantitative, research methods are paramount to future research into strategic learning” (Rose, 2012a, p. 145).

The gap in the literature had to do with a very specific area of study concerning language learning strategies. Strategies have been meticulously studied for the past 40 years over all parts of the globe. Korea has seen many studies done concerning language learning strategies (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007; Joo, Seo, Joung, & Lee, 2012; J. Kim, 2013; Lee, 2005; Lee & Spinner, 2012; Lee & Oxford, 2008; Nam, 2010; G. Park, 2010; Park, 2013). While many of them are quantitative, a few have included a limited qualitative aspect (G. Park, 2010; Yang & Kim,
There were two areas where a gap in the literature needed to be filled and this study addressed both of those issues. The first was the hermeneutic phenomenological nature of the study. Although the Paredes (2010) study was of a phenomenological nature, it seemed to employ a transcendental framework. This study offered different explication of the data and a different method of data interpretation than any other study currently available. Second, the context specific location of South Korea was unique concerning the hermeneutic phenomenological method. All other studies in the Korean context focused on quantitative methods and mixed methods. This was perhaps the first hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry into strategy use by EFL Korean students and, as such, fills a gap in the current research literature.

**Research Questions**

The current literature abounds in quantitative and mixed methods research concerning which language learning strategies are used among successful and less successful language learners (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012; Joo et al., 2012; Kayaoglu, 2013; Khosravi, 2012). In addition, there has also been an effort to examine the belief system of the student via questionnaire and methodological categorization in an attempt to determine which strategies reveal the highest level of efficacy for the student (Bonyadi, Nikou, & Shahbaz, 2012; Dörnyei & Csizer, 2012). This study, however, was concerned with meaning and experience as opposed to categorization and delineation of individual language learning strategies. The research questions looked at the phenomenon of LLS experiences and their meaning within the realm of English language learning among successful EFL university students.

How did the research questions arise? I saw the nature of English language learning in Korea which caused me to “pause and reflect” upon the nature of the phenomenon (van Manen,
There was a sense of the unknown; of wonder. This was a general wonder towards language learning at first then, a narrowing of focus towards the Korean language learner. There was retrospection in my own life where I attempted to learn Koine Greek in college. Also, my time studying and learning the Korean language contributed to that wonder and mystery.

The following questions framed this study concerning students’ experiences and beliefs about LLS.

1. How do successful EFL learners at a Korean University describe their experience using language learning strategies?

2. What, if any, challenges did participants experience using LLS?

3. What, if any, benefits to using LLS do participants identify?

**Research Plan**

The type of study employed was qualitative. A qualitative design was used because it addresses a specific area that has been rarely researched in the literature so far. The research design was phenomenological. This was chosen because it allowed for in-depth interviews with the participants and a rich description of the “essence” of the phenomenon, namely experiences and beliefs concerning LLS. According to Seidman (1998), “The purpose of an in-depth interview study is to understand the experience of those who are interviewed, not to predict or to control that experience” (p. 1259). The type of phenomenology was hermeneutic because I sought to describe and interpret the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). In seeking “to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 41), I examined each individual’s experiences concerning language learning strategies. This interpretation, hermeneutic in its approach, lead to the nature of the lived experience.
Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations for this study included the participants and the setting. Participants were limited to successful, EFL learners at a Korean university. Participants were fluent (able to clearly and succinctly communicate their language learning experiences) students in order to better understand experiences of successful English language learners. EFL students were used in order to better understand students’ English language learning experiences that took place only in the country of South Korea. Participants were selected based on their experiences studying almost exclusively in Korea. Although some participants have studied outside Korea, that time was limited to less than six months. Any candidate studying overseas for over six months was not considered for this study. The reason for this was to focus on the lived experiences of students studying only in Korea. Those students with extensive English experience overseas could be possible candidates for later studies.

Limitations for this study included the location and cultural aspect. This study only examined Korean university students in South Korea. Cultural considerations were taken into account as LLS beliefs have been shown to differ from culture to culture (Maftoon & Shakouri, 2013; Mohamed, Ismail, Esa, & Muhamad, 2012; Saeb & Zamani, 2013). Cultural differences can account for a great divergence in learning styles and attitudes, especially when it comes to students in the east (Japan, China, Korea) and students in the west (United states, Canada, Great Britain) (Nguyen & Godwyll, 2010).

Whereas psychologists have assumed universality, many scholars in other fields believe that Westerners (primarily Europeans, Americans, and citizens of the British Commonwealth) and East Asians (principally the people of China, Korea, and Japan)
have maintained very different systems of thought for thousands of years. (Nisbett, 2003).

Although the participants were successful in their English language ability, it was still a second language for them. Therefore, a loss in translation or limitations in speaking could alter what the participants originally meant to communicate to the researcher. As Vygotsky (1987) writes, “The issue of finding the right word in English or any other language to represent the full sense of the word the participants spoke in their native language is demanding and requires a great deal of care”. Other potential limitations included age, gender, or geographical location (the university used in this study was located in South Korea).

Summary

Chapter one began with an introduction and background to language learning strategies. Strategies were defined as “steps taken by students to enhance their own learning” (Oxford, 1990, p. 1). The situation to myself was presented. I am currently teaching English in Korea and I am interested in the role language learning strategies play in learning English. The problem statement has to do with language learning strategies and their use by successful English language learning students. The purpose of this study was to explore shared experiences and beliefs concerning the use of language learning strategies (LLS) among successful English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a South Korean university. The significance of the study was presented next. This addressed the gap in the literature, namely the phenomenological nature of studying LLS in a Korean context. Research questions were listed and the research plan was described in detail. Delimitations and limitations were also discussed.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Language learning strategies (LLS) have been used as long as languages have been around. They are used by people trying to learn a new language and communicate with people of other cultures. Examples of such strategies may be the use of mime and gesture or using pictures to communicate and learn a new language. It is no wonder learning a new language is one of the most difficult endeavors a person can undertake.

Specifically designed to help with the acquisition of secondary languages, LLS were first identified scholastically by Joan Rubin (1975) in her article, “What the ‘Good Language Learner’ Can Teach Us.” She writes, “Rather than letting him just admire the good student and feel inferior, we need to isolate what the good learner does-what his strategies are-and impart his knowledge to less successful learners” (Rubin, 1975, p. 42). The modern day emphasis on LLS continued with Stern (1975) who chronicled a basic set of ten learning strategies. Rubin and Stern’s work concerning “The good language learner” led to the development of categorized strategies that enabled teachers and students to better understand what strategies they were using and what other strategies were available. This categorization was brought together by Rebecca Oxford (1990) and established a roadmap by which others could determine LLS use as it pertained to the individual student. Oxford (1990) categorized LLS into direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies refers to “strategies that directly involve the target language” (p. 37). Indirect strategies are used indirectly with the target language; however, they are often used in conjunction with direct strategies. Oxford’s (1990) classification system lies outside the realm of classic taxonomies, as there is no substantial hierarchical structure to identify strategies. No
single strategy is more important than another. Like tools, they each have a specific duty and design that can help the learner accomplish a language learning task better and more efficiently.

Language learning strategies have been heavily studied and researched for the past 30 years. Dr. Yongqi Gu states, “After 30 years, language learning strategy (LLS) researchers have accumulated a critical mass of knowledge” (as cited in Oxford, 2011b, p. 10). This plethora of knowledge, however, has led to a “conceptual fuzziness” (Oxford, 2011b, p. 10) and lack of coherence concerning many aspects of LLS. In addition to the vast amounts of studies (most of them quantitative in nature), dozens of books have been written concerning strategies and their use. There have been, however, detractors to the idea of LLS and their efficacy in learning a secondary language. Among those who offered a word of caution concerning the validity of LLS were Zoltán Dörnyei and Lindy Woodrow (Woodrow, 2005). Dörnyei’s critique resided in categorization difficulties (cognitive, metacognitive, etc.) and LLS inventory analysis such as Oxford’s (2006) SILL (Strategic Inventory for Language Learners). Woodrow looked at the problem with measuring LLS: “The article concludes that studies employing LLS scales that use a standard Likert-type scale are not appropriate because of the wide range of possible contextual influences, such as cultural and educational background” (Woodrow, 2005, p. 90). This critique of LLS is not new to strategy research and should be addressed, as there are multiple definitions and categorizations in the literature.

**Theoretical Framework**

Vygotsky’s model of dialogic, self-regulated learning was used for the theoretical framework. Vygotsky wrote that self-regulation in learning is always mediated through a mentor or type of dialogue (books, technology, etc.) (Oxford, 1990). For language learning and the strategies that accompany that learning, self-regulation guides the successful student. A recent
model of this self-regulation was the S^2R model (Strategic Self-Regulation). Created by Oxford (Oxford, 2011b) the S^2R model was built upon Vygotsky’s self-regulated learning theory and allows the student to set goals, concentrate on instruction, organize and rehearse information among other self-sustaining activities (Vygotsky, 1981). Self-regulation, self-motivation, and willingness to communicate seem to be closely related and vital to the success of the language learner.

Wong and Nunan (as cited in Schunk & Ertmer, 2000) wrote, “the development of autonomy appeared to be associated with a view of language as a tool for communication rather than as a subject to be studied in the same way as other school subjects.” By utilizing self-regulation strategies, the language learner employs effective strategies that aid in the proper acquisition of the new language. Autonomous learning via Vygotsky’s self-regulation and mediation guided the research portion of this study.

In order to facilitate autonomous learning, I began with Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), which attempts to locate and facilitate students in the area where they can learn the best. Mediation was used here to mean the person or object (book, computer, website, etc.) that engaged the learner in their ZPD. This was an important concept because mediation too advanced would confuse the student and mediation too elementary would bore the student. For example, if a student was at a second grade reading level, an appropriate book to use in mediation might be *Little House on the Prairie*. If the mediation used a book such as *The Great Gatsby*, it might be too advanced and the student would be lost. If the mediation used a book such as learning the alphabet, the student could quickly become bored with information he or she already knows. A key LLS in this area was “Using resources for sending and receiving messages.” A cognitive strategy, this involved using available resources to understand what was
read or heard in the new language. Books, videos, apps, games, or dictionaries could be used as a mediation device to learn the new language.

Perhaps the most famous example of mediation can be found in the Bible. 1 Timothy 2:5 states, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (King James Version). Mediation comes from the Greek word, μεσίτης, meaning “the middle.” There is a person (or in the case of Christ, a savior) that acts as a go-between, drawing the two parties together. It is this idea of the teacher (God) mediating what is to be communicated to the student that exemplifies the ZPD. In the realm of education, this mediation bridges the gap between what students need as far as assistance and what they can accomplish independently. This mediation is accomplished in the ZPD. As will be examined in Chapter Five, all of the participants in this study recalled experiences where mediation played a crucial role in their language learning.

In the case of language learning strategies, this mediation was accomplished in the form of teachers, parents and even technology. Modern day technology such as social networking, text messaging, blogging, and mobile device usage may be used as the mediating source for the student, though research of this type lay outside the realm of this study. However, it was with this theoretical framework established by Vygotsky that the research questions were constructed and implemented in the subsequent research.

**Related Literature**

Despite the decades of research into language learning strategies, questions and conclusions still remain. Peter Yongqi Gu (Oxford, 2011b) writes, “30 years of research has told us that language learner strategy is a multidimensional and elusive moving target, not a straightforward construct to conceptualize and operationalize” (p. 147). LLS have been assigned
several different definitions. One of the earliest definitions states strategies are “The skillful planning and management of language learning as carried out by the learner or language teacher” (Bialystok, 1985). Oxford (1989) defined strategies as “behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable” (p. 235). Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) defined strategies as, “A deliberate, goal-directed attempt to manage and control efforts to learn a foreign or second language” (as cited in Oxford, 2011b, p. 12). Cohen and Macaro (2009) defined strategies in the following way:

A conscious mental activity. They must contain not only an action but also a goal (or an intention) and a learning situation. Whereas a mental action might be subconscious, an action with a goal/intention and related to a learning situation can only be conscious. (p. 767)

Strategies are deliberate, goal oriented and accompanied by actions. Strategies can be viewed as something special. Something out of the ordinary. Something creative on the part of the learner.

Pre-1990 Strategy Use

The modern day identification of learning strategies began with the study of successful language learning students. Studies in the 1970s focused on successful language learners and what they did to make their language learning successful. The earliest two studies were by Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) which looked at characteristics of good language learners. It was through the investigation of good language learners that identification of strategy use began to emerge. Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978) continued this trend by looking at successful language learners and some of the things they did to achieve that success. In the 1980’s, researchers such as Holec (1980), Bialystok (1981), Reiss (1983), and Anderson (1983) looked at the “good language learner” and compared these individuals to less successful learners.
New and integrated models of strategies were further explored by O’Malley, Chamot, and Walker (1987). With an emphasis on self-direction and learner autonomy, Dickinson (1987) contributed to strategy research and theory.

**Post-1990 Strategy Use**

A division in strategy history was made in 1990 due to the publication of Rebecca Oxford’s (1990) book, *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. This was perhaps the most important publication on strategies and strategy classification in the past 40 years. In it, Oxford introduced her strategy classification system (discussed in the next section) and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The SILL was the most used measurement tool when it came to quantitative data interpretation of strategy use. Having been translated into 20 languages, it has been the foundation for dozens of studies and papers across the globe (Oxford, 2011a, p. 173).

It was also at this time in the early to mid 1990s that language learning strategies began a steady rise in popularity. However, Oxford and Cohen (1992) “cautioned researchers about conflicting or vague strategy definitions (tactics not having been considered), and the necessity of strategy instrument validation and study comparability” (as cited in Oxford, 2011a, p. 173). Because of the conflicting results of multiple studies, others (Dörnyei, 2005a) also questioned the validity and efficacy of strategies, classifications and their place in language learning. In the 2000s, many looked at strategies through the lenses of motivation (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007) or self-regulation (Oxford, 2011b).

Since 2010, researchers have been calling for alternate views to strategy research and strategy classification. Qualitative and phenomenological aspects of research could benefit the study of language learning strategies. Examples of phenomenological works are Schramm
(2001) who studied German readers of English, and Paredes (2010) who looked at Columbian language learners studying English in the United States. In 2011, Oxford (2011b) introduced a new model for LLS, the S²R model. This stood for “strategic self-regulation,” and consolidated and simplified her previous categorization of strategies. Strategies were divided into three dimensions: Cognitive, affective, and socio-cultural interactive. These three areas were then supplemented with three levels of “meta” categories: Metacognitive, meta-affective, and meta-socio-cultural interactive (Oxford, 2011b). Individual strategies were also simplified and re-organized under this new system.

**Classification Systems**

To begin with, a unified classification system has been elusive for language learning strategies over the past 30 years. Naiman et al. (1978) were among the first researchers to attempt a strategy classification system. Their system consisted of five broad categories and 10 individual strategies:

1. Active task approach
   a. Responds positively to learning opportunity or seeks and exploits learning environments
   b. Adds related language learning activities to regular classroom program
   c. Practices
   d. Analyzes individual problems

2. Realization of language as a system
   a. Makes L1/L2 comparisons
   b. Analyzes target language to make inferences
   c. Makes use of fact that language is a system
3. Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction
   a. Emphasizes fluency over accuracy
   b. Seeks communicative situations with L2 speakers
   c. Finds sociocultural meanings
5. Monitoring of L2 performance: Constantly revises L2 system by testing inferences and asking L2 native speakers for feedback (Naiman et al., 1978).

In Naiman’s system, the roots of several of Oxford’s strategies (which are used in this study) can be seen, such as seeking communication situations with L2 speakers (cooperating with proficient speakers of the new language), finding sociocultural meaning (finding out about the language), and asking L2 native speakers for feedback (asking for clarification, verification, or correction).

Rubin (1981) was the first to delineate between direct and indirect strategy use. Her classification system is as follows:

1. Direct strategies
   a. Clarification and verification
   b. Monitoring
   c. Memorization
   d. Guessing and inductive inference
   e. Deductive reasoning
   f. Practice

2. Indirect strategies
   a. Creating opportunities for practice
b. Production tricks

Palinscar and Brown (1984) and O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, and Russo (1985) were some of the first researchers to establish systems with categories such as cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective strategies. These categories can be seen as the building blocks of Oxford’s 1990 strategy system.

Rebecca Oxford is credited with establishing the most widely used system for classifying strategies (Cohen & Macaro, 2009). Her strategic inventory divides strategies into two classes: direct strategies and indirect strategies. The direct class consists of three groups: Memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. The indirect class consists of three groups: Metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. For a detailed look at Oxford’s classification of strategies, see Appendix B. Over the years, other systems have been introduced in the LLS community, but Oxford’s system was the most widely used. Oxford’s system was the foundation for this study although, as will be explained later, it has been altered and consolidated to reflect additional LLS systems.

As mentioned earlier, Oxford (2011b) established a new system for classifying strategies, the S²R model. This system was a consolidation of previous categories and a reinterpretation of some previous terms such as metacognitive and affective strategies. Not so much a departure from her previous, more popular model of LLS classification, the S²R model streamlined and simplified what was once a large, sometimes conflicting organization of strategies. As Oxford (1990) states, “classification conflicts are inevitable” (p. 17). The S²R model is as follows:

1. Meta-Strategies (metacognitive, meta-affective, and metasociocultural-interactive)
   a. Paying attention
   b. Planning
c. Obtaining and using resources

2. Cognitive Strategies
   a. Using senses to understand and remember
   b. Activating knowledge
   c. Reasoning
   d. Conceptualizing with details
   e. Conceptualizing broadly
   f. Going beyond the immediate data

3. Affective Strategies
   a. Activating supportive emotions, beliefs, and attitudes
   b. Generating and maintaining motivation

4. Sociocultural-interactive Strategies
   a. Interacting to learn and communicate
   b. Overcoming knowledge gaps in communication

There are two important areas of recent research concerning language learning strategies that deserve attention: motivation and self-regulation. For the successful language learner,
motivation and self-regulation work together to facilitate the learning of a new language.

Dörnyei (2005b) lists five categories of self-regulation in light of LLS:

1. Commitment control strategies
2. Metacognitive control strategies
3. Satiation control strategies
4. Emotion control strategies
5. Environmental control strategies

This classification system was in contrast to the Oxford system in that it emphasized motivation and self-regulation. Other LLS systems have been introduced by scholars such as O’Malley and Chamot (1990), Schmidt, Boraie, and Kassabgy (1996), and Schmidt and Watanabe (2001).

Self-regulation and LLS are closely tied together in the current literature (Dörnyei, 2005a, p. 113).

Vygotsky described self-regulated, higher psychological processes (often now called ‘strategies’) such as analyzing, synthesizing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Vygotsky argued that learners internalize these processes through social mediation (interaction with more capable others) and/or mediation by a cultural tool (language, books, or technologies) until the processes become inner speech, at which point they are fully self-regulated. (Oxford, 2011b)

Lantolf and Thorne (2008) also used the Vygotsky framework to frame their study on socio-cultural theory and second language acquisition. Using Vygotsky’s method of mediation, Yang and Kim (2011) conducted a qualitative study concerning two study abroad ESL learners. Their results indicated that language learners’ beliefs were constantly evolving and the role of the remediation process led to different outcomes in the learning process. So the link between
Vygotsky’s mediated learning and LLS has been cultivated and explored in recent research, yet room for a more thorough exploration using this framework still remains.

Motivation and LLS also have been studied together and represent real progress in the current literature (2011). It is the idea of self-regulation that Vygotsky used to determine when a student had exited the ZPD. This self-regulation led to students learning outside the realm of the mediator or instructor. However, without proper motivation, this self-regulation may never occur. Within the ZPD, motivation could be internal, where the student takes responsibility for his or her own language learning, or it may be external; originating from the mediator. LLS can be used to foster motivation and help with self-regulation (Feng, 2010; Y. Liu & Park, 2012; Muir & Dornyei, 2013; Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmitt, 2006; Zimmerman, 2008). From the perspective of the student, LLS can be a key to learning the target language in a deeper, more productive way (Shedivy, 2004). In Oxford’s system, self-regulation can be seen in the metacognitive strategies of self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Self-monitoring allows students to identify and correct errors in their language learning. Self-evaluation involves keeping track of personal language learning in a general sense as well as in specific areas like reading, writing, listening, or speaking.

Student beliefs concerning LLS are at the forefront of current research on strategies and how they affect language learning. An examination of LLS beliefs was especially relevant to a qualitative study because experience and student perceptions shape those beliefs about language learning. One area that belief of strategy affects was the student’s choice of strategy. This choice of strategy also had an inverse effect on strategy. By choosing certain strategies, the student was also shaping his beliefs about LLS (Oxford, 2011b). Kayaoglu (2013) posited the idea of investigating not only those students who were good language learners (as was the case in
the previous literature), but to investigate the beliefs and LLS choice of poor students. Turkish students, some of whom were classified as “poor” and others who were classified as “good,” took part in the study. The results were that good language learners and poor language learners differed significantly in their beliefs concerning the use of LLS. According to Kayaoglu (2013), “It also seems to be fair to say that to a greater or lesser extent the usage of strategies by learners was associated with success” (p. 51). Saeb and Zamani (Griffiths, 2008; Rubin, 1975) also confirmed this hypothesis in their study of Iranian high school students and their beliefs about LLS. However, another study, also Iranian, found no relationship between self-efficacy and LLS use (Saeb & Zamani, 2013). As far as beliefs and LLS, other confounding factors involved in determining their relationship include level of English study such as junior high school (Bonyadi et al., 2012), high school (Chang & Shen, 2010), university (Saeb & Zamani, 2013) or adult learners (Ghavamnia, Kassaian, & Dabaghi, 2011; Maftoon & Shakouri, 2013; Mohebi & Khodadady, 2011), cultural differences (Oh, 2002) and English fluency (Mokhtari, 2007; Rao, 2006; Wang, Spencer, & Xing, 2009).

Another perspective on beliefs was that the student may have very strong beliefs about studying the new language but very little thought as to how he or she uses strategies. A student often thinks about the new language and how he or she is learning, but terms such as “cognitive” and metacognitive” may have very little or no meaning to a language learner. So the way in which a questionnaire or interview question was framed could affect and even lead the student to divulge partial or inconsequential LLS information.

approach were ethnography, discourse analysis, conversation analysis and other qualitative methods.” This current study sought to elaborate upon the aforementioned need for qualitative inquiry via Vygotsky’s socio-linguistic framework.

For the Korean language learner, there have been several studies concerning LLS in the past decade (Heo, Stoffa, & Kush, 2012; Hong, 2006; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2007; Jang, Dasilva, & Ana, 2010; Joo et al., 2012; Jun, 2012; Jung, 2011; Kang, 2012; Kang & Pyun, 2013; Kim, 2005; Kim, 2011; Kim, 2010; Lee, 2010; Lee, 2007; Lee & Oxford, 2008; Liu & Park, 2012; Nam, 2005, 2010; G. Park, 2010, 2011; Park, 2013; Y. Park, 2010; Yang, 2010; Yang, 2011). These studies ranged from direct strategy use to indirect strategy use to student perceptions of LLS. This portion of the review looked to group these interactions into themes and topics concerning the Korean language learner in an attempt to better understand the literature on a holistic level. These specific areas covered ESL as well as EFL Korean students. Additional studies have been included to cover the breadth and depth of the current literature concerning these specific groupings of language learning strategies from a Korean perspective.

**Qualitative Trends in Strategy Research**

Recently, academics have called for a varied emphasis on LLS research. Mixed methods as well as qualitative approaches have been utilized to add to the great wealth of knowledge concerning strategies and their use. The peer reviewed journal, *System* (2014) recently released an issue dedicated almost entirely to qualitative research efforts in the area of LLS. Griffiths and Oxford (2014) write, “This special issue includes largely qualitative research, particularly from the narrative tradition, as well as highlighting mixed-methods research from two countries” (p. 5). *Focus on context: Narratives from East Asia* (Griffiths et al., 2014) looked at several experts’ personal narratives concerning learning a foreign language in countries such as Japan,
Korea, China, and Taiwan. These narratives were used to formulate themes such as social participation and a sense of mission when teaching strategies. This thematic interpretation has the ability to broaden the current understanding of strategies and introduce new elements of research into the field.

Another area discussed in the System issue was that of strategy use in conjunction with music. “Learning languages through music: A strategy for building inspiration and motivation” (Kao & Oxford, 2014) chronicled personal stories of incorporating music into the language learning process. Music that has “linguistically meaningful and culturally relevant lyrics” (Kao & Oxford, 2014, p. 114) can be used as a source of motivation when learning a new language. Music is also part of affective strategies and used to lower the learner’s anxiety. Relaxation, meditation, and laughter are other affective strategies used to control indirect aspects of learning of a second language.

Additional articles in the System issue looked at further narratives from research experts such as Oxford, Rubin, Chamot, and Schramm (Oxford, Rubin, et al., 2014) and a diary study focused on listening and speaking (Ma & Oxford, 2014). In the introduction to the issue, Griffiths and Oxford (2014) wrote, “The combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies produces a number of mixed-methods tools, such as those presented by Creswell (2007)” (p. 4). This additional emphasis on qualitative measures has begun a new and exciting direction for LLS research that will hopefully continue in the years to come.

A Thematic Investigation into LLS Via Categorical Interpretation

As mentioned before, the history of LLS is one of fractured definitions and categorical difficulties. In order to investigate the LLS experiences of university students, this study attempted to delineate certain categories of strategies that I wished to investigate. This
categorization was used to design the interview questions to elicit a rich description of LLS use and experiences among participants. Looking at previous categorizations, some similarities can be seen across taxonomies (Appendix C). The most widely used category among studies was perhaps metacognitive strategies. Next, most studies agreed upon the importance of cognitive strategies. A third category stressed was affective strategies, which dealt with emotions. And a final category that I chose to investigate was social strategies. Dörnyei (2005a) corroborated this four-category system:

Thus, the strategy systems proposed by Oxford (1990) and O’Malley and Chamot (1990) are highly compatible (for a detailed comparison, see Hsiao & Oxford, 2002), particularly if we make three changes on the basis of the arguments just described: (a) exclude communication strategies from the scope of learning strategies, (b) combine Oxford’s memory and cognitive strategies, and (c) separate O’Malley and Chamot’s (1990) social/affective strategies. (p. 169)

What remains are the four basic strategy categories that this study employs:

1. Metacognitive strategies
2. Cognitive/memory strategies
3. Affective strategies
4. Social strategies

In addition to these four categories, five additional categorizations could be viewed as sub-categories of the aforementioned main categories. These sub-categories were: Strategies for vocabulary learning (cognitive strategies), self-efficacy strategies (affective strategies), motivation strategies (affective strategies), willingness to communicate (social strategies), and general beliefs about LLS (multiple categories).
Compensation strategies were removed as they often relate to beginning level students. As can be seen in Lee and Oxford’s study (2008), compensation strategies were the most frequently used strategy among Korean students. A main reason for this may be the college entrance examinations that are so fiercely competitive in Korean high schools. Lee and Oxford (2008) noted,

Since 1969, Korean students have taken multiple-choice entrance examinations, equivalent to the Scholastic Aptitude Test in the U.S., and we speculate that such examinations might promote compensatory strategies for guessing the right choice from the context, even if the details are not fully understood. (p. 24)

The goal of correctly answering multiple-choice questions for this and other tests has led many students to adopt various compensation strategies. However, when it comes to authentic communication among successful students, compensation strategies are rarely used. In participant interviews, compensation strategies were the least used in describing their language learning experiences.

1. Metacognitive strategies (indirect strategies). Metacognitive strategies are strategies that are “beyond, beside, or with the cognitive” (Oxford, 1990, p. 136). As seen in Table 1, Oxford divided metacognitive strategies into three sets: Centering one’s learning, arranging and planning one’s learning, and evaluating one’s learning (1990). These are then divided into 11 individual strategies.
Table 1

Metacognitive Strategies (3 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centering your learning</td>
<td>Overviewing and linking with already known material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paying attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delaying speech production to focus on listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranging and planning your learning</td>
<td>Finding out about the language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting goals and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identifying the purpose of a language task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning for a language task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking practice opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating your learning</td>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been reported that Korean students used the metacognitive strategy of self-regulation (Jang et al., 2010). This involves setting goals, planning for the language learning task, and organizing your studying. Also, known as learner autonomy, this strategy goes beyond passive learning and seeks to be an active agent in learning the target language. “From a sociocultural perspective the concept of self-regulation is associated to voluntary control over higher and culturally organized mental functions such as, for example, focusing attention, planning a course of action, solving a problem, or deliberately remembering something” (Jang et al., 2010). These deliberate strategies were seen in the study habits of Korean EFL students. For example, Liu and Park (2012) did a study on motivation and students’ willingness to communicate concerning Korean EFL learners. They determined that “students’ motivation
affects their WTC, and that students who are more willing to communicate in English are apt to use the language more frequently in the classroom” (Liu & Park, 2012, p. 41).

In Griffith’s et al. *Narratives from East Asia* (2014), students talked about their experiences learning English and using various strategies to accomplish this task. Young Ye Park, a Korean student studying in the United States told about her use of metacognitive strategies even before she was aware of what metacognitive meant: “I organized, set goals, and evaluated my progress regularly. This helped me be persistent in my studies. I did not yet know the term ‘learning strategies’” (Griffiths et al., 2014, p. 54).

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has been used in recent literature to describe the student who proactively learns the target language. Zimmerman (2008) wrote,

SRL (Self-regulated learning) is viewed as proactive processes that students use to acquire academic skill, such as setting goals, selecting and deploying strategies, and self-monitoring one's effectiveness, rather than as a reactive event that happens to students due to impersonal forces. (p. 166)

This deployment of strategies was referred to by Oxford (2011b) as strategic self-regulation (S²R model). By initiating the learning experience through various metacognitive strategies, the student takes ownership of learning the new language and refocuses the attention on personal development as opposed to instructor efficacy. “A thorough individual investigation on initial learner beliefs is essential to foster autonomy” (Oh, 2002, p. x). Therefore, learner beliefs, autonomy and the strategies they employ are critical to understanding what motivates fluent EFL learners.

Other metacognitive strategies employed by Korean students included various reading and writing strategies. Kim (2011) conducted a study on metacognitive online reading strategy
and Korean EFL students. The strategy most incorporated into the study habits of high proficiency readers was the proper use of planning. Also, Kim states, “high proficiency readers tended to be goal-oriented” (Kim, 2011, p. viii). Jun (2012) examined self-regulated learning among adult, Korean learners. Jun’s case study, looked at metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring and evaluation and how these strategies could be used overcoming lexical problems in writing. The proper use of metacognitive strategies such as planning, goal keeping and organization can have a tremendous impact on highly effective language learners.

2. Cognitive strategies (direct strategies). Cognitive strategies deal with practicing, memory techniques, and were among the most popular strategies language learners employed (Oxford, 1990). This study grouped cognitive and memory strategies together in examining their use among language learners since memory strategies are really a subset of cognitive strategies. As shown in Table 2, Oxford listed four subsets for cognitive strategies: Practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. Memory strategies (Table 3) also have four subsets: Creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing actions (Oxford, 1990).
Table 2
Cognitive Strategies (4 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing</td>
<td>Repeating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognizing and using formulas and patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recombining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practicing naturalistically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving and sending</td>
<td>Getting the idea quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>messages</td>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing and reasoning</td>
<td>Reasoning deductively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing contrastively (across languages)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transferring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating structure for</td>
<td>Taking notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>input and output</td>
<td>Summarizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highlighting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3

**Memory Strategies (4 sets)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating mental linkages</td>
<td>Grouping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associating/Elaborating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placing new words into a context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying images and sounds</td>
<td>Using imagery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semantic mapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using keywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representing sounds in memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing well</td>
<td>Structured reviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employing action</td>
<td>Using physical response or sensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using mechanical techniques</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Korean language learner, cognitive strategies fell within the medium use range (Lee & Oxford, 2008). Cognitive strategies were also linked to TOEFL test scores. Park (1997) stated that cognitive and social strategies were the highest predictors of TOEFL scores accounting for 13% of variation in the TOEFL scores. Cognitive strategies and Oxford’s SILL gave insight into the type of person that tends to use cognitive strategies:

Researchers found that cognitive strategy use on the SILL is positively related to the preference for intellectual approach to learning new things on the TDI (rs = .23, p < .001); cognitive strategy users considered themselves intellectual rather than pragmatic. (S. Kang, 2012, p. 27)

How did this apply to the Korean student? As far as personality and cognitive use, Kang wrote, Vulnerability was negatively correlated to memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. This result indicates that the Korean university students who became dependent, hopeless, and panicked due to stress and emergency situations less frequently
used the strategic approaches of coordinating the learning process; storing and retrieving new information; practicing, receiving, and sending messages; analyzing and reasoning; and creating structures of input and output than the students who skillfully tackled difficult, stressful situations. (S. Kang, 2012, p. 175)

This negative correlation, especially in the area of stress and pressure, was explored in this study via beliefs and experiences. Although stress and distress are nothing new to Korean students, the participant’s beliefs about LLS could expand understanding of how these situations detract from cognitive strategy use.

The relationship between stress and cognitive function has also been explored when it comes to strategy use. Kang (2012) wrote, “On the facet level, two facets were found to be significant predictors for less effective use of language learning strategies: impulsiveness for memory strategies and anxiety for cognitive and social strategies” (p. 176). This has significance concerning the Korean student, who frequently encounters stress throughout their English language learning tenure.

3. Strategies for vocabulary learning (cognitive or memory strategies). Vocabulary acquisition is important in the mastery of a second language. Because of the homogenous nature of the Korean language, learning Korean vocabulary could theoretically prove easier for a foreigner (American, Canadian, etc.) to master. The language sees little change and English words are even transliterated with increased frequency. Vocabulary learning for English is key to Korean language learners’ success because of the difficulty in learning the vast variety of vocabulary. English is more complex as far as vocabulary is concerned. Because of the global dissemination of the English language over the centuries, the vocabulary (as well as grammar and syntax) has gone through numerous iterations and cultural changes. American English,
British English, and even Koreanized English change and reinterpret the vocabulary at an accelerated pace. However, for the Korean language learner, this could cause difficulty in mastering vocabulary to the point of being able to identify it either in a written context or in spoken conversation. Park (2004) listed some of those difficulties:

The translation task showed that the Korean EFL writers have three difficulties using vocabulary productively. Their weaknesses in choosing the right word in context were evident; their knowledge about a word's parts of speech was fairly limited; and, it turned out, using verbs appropriately is no easy task for the Korean students. (p. i).

Chin (2009) and Park (2013) wrote about three teaching strategies concerning vocabulary development by Korean EFL students. The first strategy employed was guessing from context. This compensation strategy was difficult yet often recommended to students. The second strategy was semantic mapping or ordering the vocabulary in an organized fashion. This strategy could be seen as metacognitive as it dealt with arranging and planning the learning at hand. The last strategy was a word list strategy, where the student learns the words one at a time from a list.

With regard to the tasks checking the retention of vocabulary, subjects under the context treatment significantly outperformed subjects under the word list treatment on all three types of assessment tasks and they also scored higher than subjects under the semantic mapping treatment (although not to a significant degree). (Chin, 2009, p. 113)

Computer learning and mobile learning have been addressed as far as Korean language learners specifically in the area of vocabulary learning. Kim (2013) looked at computer-based vocabulary learning programs and Korean EFL students. Kim (2013) writes,

Students who participated in versions of the vocabulary learning program with target-word based sentences as well as definitions tended to perform better on receptive and
productive vocabulary assessments than those who participated in versions of the program with definitions of words only. (p. i)

Furthermore, results indicated that the difference in receptive scores from immediately after the program to one week later showed a higher drop-rate than the difference in productive scores. Target-based word sentences were more helpful in vocabulary learning than definition only words. Computer-based learning programs are one strategy now being employed by Korean language learners. Because of the proliferation of mobile computing, more research is needed in the area of computer assisted learning and vocabulary development.

4. Affective strategies (indirect strategies). Affective strategies deal with a student’s “emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values” (Oxford, 1990, p. 140). When it comes to affective strategies, “emotions (motivated, confident, anxious) play a vital role in language acquisition and in promoting or demoting comprehension of input” (Magno, 2010, p. 48). Examples of affective strategies are using music and laughter to lower your anxiety, self-reward for doing well, and writing a language learning diary. As shown in Table 4, Oxford (1990) divided affective strategies into three sets: Lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself and taking your emotional temperature.
Table 4
*Affective Strategies (3 sets)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowering your anxiety</td>
<td>Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using laughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging yourself</td>
<td>Making positive statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking risks wisely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewarding yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking your emotional</td>
<td>Listening to your body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temperature</td>
<td>Using a checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing a language learning diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing your feelings with someone else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students often neglect affective strategies, as they are not directly associated with learning the target language. For the Korean student, affective strategies were used moderately with only social strategies ranking lower in frequency of use (Lee & Oxford, 2008). Park (1997) established the current research about Korean students and affective strategy use. “In addition, considering that social strategy use may require affective demands, the fact that these students used affective strategies least frequently may be related to their less frequent use of social strategies” (Park, 1997, p. 217). So the link between social strategies and affective strategies can be seen in Korean students’ historic lack of use in these two strategy categories.

Korean students may also have a difficult time identifying and incorporating affective strategies into their learning because of the anxiety inherent to English learning in Korea. “Affective strategies can hinder or slow down the learning process due to anxiety especially
among beginners EFL learners (Ariza, 2002; Tanveer, 2007). But, it is possible that learners are not familiar with paying attention to their own feeling” (Magno, 2010, p. 54).

5. Self-efficacy (affective strategies). Self-efficacy falls under Oxford’s affective strategy use. Affective strategies include attitudes, emotions, and personal values (Oxford, 1990). Self-efficacy (or self-esteem) can be an important LLS although many do not think of it as such. One recent study looked at self-efficacy as it related to Korean EFL learners. The results indicated that “learners with different levels of self-efficacy ratings endorsed attributions differently for successful and unsuccessful outcomes. Learners with higher levels of self-efficacy attributed their test results to more internal and personal control factors than those who reported lower self-efficacy levels” (Hsieh & Kang, 2010, p. 606). Other self-efficacy studies in Korea have focused on lexical problems in writing (Jun, 2012) and learning strategies concerning the Korean language in Korean middle schools (Joo et al., 2012). The idea of internal factors such as learner self-esteem can have an even greater effect on performance than external factors specifically when seen through the lens of learning strategies.

6. Motivation (affective strategies). Similar to self-efficacy, motivation can be classified as an affective strategy. Motivation and attitudes can work together to affect language learning (Oxford, 1990). Motivation (or lack of it) can affect reading, writing, listening and speaking. Liu and Park (2012) listed 10 motivational components that affect EFL learners language acquisition: “Instrumentality prevention, motivated behavior, ought-to self and family influence were [the] top four types” (2012). As far as demotivation, Kim (2010) wrote, the dynamism in ESL learning (de)motivation can be coherently explained in a series of longitudinal activity-system models; and (2) that it is not the ESL context per se but each
participant’s recognition of it that plays a pivotal role in creating, maintaining, and terminating ESL learning motivation. (2010, p. 91)

Kim’s (2010) study, however, focused on the ESL student rather than the EFL student.

One of the leading authorities on motivation and language learning is Zoltan Dörnyei. Dörnyei has been writing about motivation for the past two decades. His latest article (co-written by Muir) has to do with motivational currents and student vision (Muir & Dornyei, 2013). In fact, Dörnyei has worked with a variety of authors in researching a vast number of cultural considerations and differences when it comes to motivation and strategy use (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Tseng et al., 2006). Another interesting contribution to the current LLS literature was Dornyei’s use of retrodictive qualitative modeling concerning language learning students in the classroom. He states,

This approach involves a special type of qualitative system modeling – ‘retrodictive qualitative modeling’ – that reverses the usual research direction by starting at the end – the system outcomes – and then tracing back to see why certain components of the system ended up with one outcome option and not another. (Dörnyei, 2011, p. 80)

This reverse engineering of the usual research methods was just another alternative method of looking at LLS from a new perspective; something that was missing from the previous three decades of LLS research.

7. Social strategies (indirect strategies). Social strategies encompass using the language in light of its communicative nature. Since language is social in nature, this category of strategies is vitally important to learning another language. As seen in Table 5, social strategies include cooperating with peers, seeking out native speakers to practice with, and cultivating cultural understanding of the target language (Oxford, 1990).
Table 5

Social Strategies (3 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions</td>
<td>Asking for clarification or verification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking for correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with others</td>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing with others</td>
<td>Developing cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Korean university student, social strategies were used less than reliance on media such as movies and TV shows. Lee and Oxford (2008) noted,

In general, Korean students depended on mass media, such as English movies, popular songs, and books written in English, in order to compensate for the lack of native English speakers. This seemed a reason that made most students tend not to use social strategies, except for a few university students” (p. 21).

Top performers on the TOEFL test also used social strategies (as well as cognitive strategies) the most (Park, 1997). This is an important distinction in that successful students were using social strategies as opposed to the more commonly used compensation strategies, which were used by a combination of successful and less successful Korean students.

8. Willingness to communicate (social strategies). Jung’s (2011) study on Korean EFL university students’ willingness to communicate (WTC) revealed that Korean students chose silence more often than communicating in English. According to Jung (2011) “The path model proposed in the present study showed that the variables that directly influenced WTC in English were English communication confidence and motivation. Motivation also had a direct path to
English communication confidence” (p. vii). So for Korean students, confidence and motivation were keys to increasing the social strategy use that they were lacking.

Kim and Edwards (2005) interviewed college students to investigate how situational conditions affected Korean participants’ WTC in English. Their study showed that “Korean students had lower WTC with another Korean present than alone with a native speaker” (Liu & Park, 2012, p. 41).

Students had higher WTC when teachers got involved in classroom activities, which may be attributed to students’ familiarity with the traditional dominant role of the teacher in the classroom. Another phenomenon was also obvious: students were much more willing to talk if they were given a chance to do so. This may mean that even if most students in Korea are not likely to initiate a conversation with other people in English, partly because of the culture, they’re still eager to communicate in English if they think it’s a proper circumstance. (Liu & Park, 2012, p. 44)

Fear also played a part in WTC by Korean English language learners. “The fear of being ridiculed by others may have a controlling effect on Koreans’ behavior in English” (Liu & Park, 2012, p. 49). Judgment and the thoughts of others were also paramount in how and when Korean students choose to communicate in the new language.

Korean students seem to be even more sensitive to the judgments of the public upon their language behaviors, therefore, they are less likely to get involved in classroom communication, since there is a potentially greater chance of making mistakes which means losing face (Liu & Park, 2012, p. 49).

The link between motivation, willingness to communicate, and proficiency has been substantial. By increasing motivation, teachers may encourage students to communicate in a
variety of situations. “It can be suggested that teachers should improve students' motivations in order to improve their WTC” (Liu & Park, 2012, p. 50). This motivation may be cultivated by authentic communication situations (Liu & Park, 2012).

9. Perceptions and beliefs concerning LLS (multiple categories). Learners’ perceptions of LLS can have a great impact on which strategies they adopt and which ones they reject. According to Magno (2010), “In acquiring EFL, the learner‘s belief, which is defined as ‘psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true’ (Richardson, 1996, p.102), greatly influences the learner‘s attitudes and his/her level of motivation in the acquisition of an EFL” (p. 44). Park (1997) conducted a study on Korean ESL learners perceptions of LLS. This study examined student beliefs as well as implications for strategy instruction.

More successful Korean ESL learners put more emphasis on overall meaning in their communication, did not carry their unpleasant learning experiences to their next interactions with other native English speakers, and demonstrated either an equal status attitude or a completely submissive attitude toward native English speakers. (Park, 1997, p. ii)

The idea of submission towards the teacher is culturally accurate for the Korean student. Although this study was older than others in this literature review, it listed some important aspects of Korean ESL learners’ perceptions concerning LLS.

Yang and Kim (2011) conducted a qualitative case study concerning second language beliefs. They also applied Vygotsky’s socio-cultural framework to their study. Results were similar to Park (1997) in that beliefs concerning LLS and second language acquisition differ from student to student and are in the process of constantly changing. “The findings suggest that
a learner's L2 beliefs are constantly evolving in accordance with his or her goals and SA experiences, and 2) the learner's L2 belief changes capture a remediation process that leads to qualitatively different L2 learning actions” (Yang & Kim, 2011, p. 325). This is also relevant since Yang and Kim were specifically targeting students studying abroad in their paper.

Beliefs and perceptions inevitably shape the way Korean ESL and EFL students apply LLS. By taking a closer look at perceptions via diverse participants, future studies might shed light on the attitudes successful students have concerning LLS and English language learning. This paper sought to do just that by inquiring about LLS beliefs and experiences from the domestic student’s perspective.

A note on compensation strategies. Korean students used compensation strategies more than any other category of strategy. Magno (2010) noted that “Various studies showed the preferred usage of compensation strategies among Korean students learning the English language, such as in Kim's study (1995), Lee's study (2002) and Grainger's study (1997)” (p. 44). There were many possible explanations for this. One was the intense academic focus of learning English in Korea. Compensation strategies such as guessing intelligently, getting help and using linguistic clues could be an advantage in test taking and formal language use. Another possible explanation was the lower English ability of Korean students. In order to communicate in the L2, lower level students can use compensation strategies such as switching to the mother tongue, using mime or gesture, adjusting or approximating the message, or using circumlocution or synonym.

For these reasons, compensation strategies were not directly addressed in this current study. The advanced nature of the participants did not lend itself to the study of compensations strategies. When the results of this study were analyzed, compensation strategies were used on
13 occasions in participant experiences, the lowest of any of the strategy groups. However, for the benefit of discussion, Table 6 provides Oxford’s (1990) compensation strategy classification to give context for the few compensation strategies that were mentioned by participants.

Table 6

*Compensation Strategies (2 sets)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guessing intelligently</td>
<td>Using linguistic clues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using other clues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming limitations in</td>
<td>Switching to the mother tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking and writing</td>
<td>Getting help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using mime or gesture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding communication partially or totally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selecting the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusting or approximating the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coining words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a circumlocution or synonym</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

For the Korean EFL and ESL learner, there were a variety of LLS to take into account. Oxford’s (1990) classification of LLS can be divided into direct and indirect strategies, both of which the Korean language learner takes advantage of. The most prominent strategies observed seem to be affective strategies and metacognitive strategies. By using direct and indirect strategies in conjunction, learning of the target language seemed to increase. Motivation, self-regulation, and metacognitive strategies seemed to be key to LLS use and have been researched heavily in the recent literature. However, a more detailed focus in the area of qualitative research concerning domestic students’ LLS use and how that has affected fluent language learners in Korea would add to the literature and fill a much needed gap. By closing this gap in the research, this study hopes to shed light on LLS use by those residing in country; studying the English language without the advantage of extensive overseas immersion in the target language.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Whether they realize it or not, language learning strategies are used by every student learning a foreign language. This awareness or lack of awareness of strategies could have an effect on the strategies that students employ (Lee & Oxford, 2008). The problem faced was that although students use language learning strategies to one degree or another, some strategies (or combination of strategies) seem to be more successful than others. This raised the questions, why were some students more successful than others and what role did strategies have to do with that success? What were students’ beliefs and experiences concerning LLS? Research has been conducted quantitatively concerning these ideas (Bonyadi et al., 2012; Chang & Shen, 2010; Ghavamnia et al., 2011; Hong, 2006; Kayaoglu, 2013; Maftoon & Shakouri, 2013; Mohebi & Khodadady, 2011; Mokhtari, 2007; Saeb & Zamani, 2013; Wang et al., 2009), however, the qualitative perspective on LLS literature was noticeably lacking. One notable exception was a study by Yabukoshi and Takeuchi (2006) which addressed the qualitative nature of LLS use among Japanese junior high school students.

This study explored the experiences of Korean university EFL students from a phenomenological perspective. Yang (2011) researched literacy practice among Korean EFL students by way of a case study. Yang and Kim (2011) also conducted a case study concerning two study abroad ESL language learners. Despite the qualitative nature of these papers, a proper phenomenological look at language learning strategy use among successful Korean EFL learners was noticeably absent from the literature. The main goal of this research was to understand and explore the participants’ experiences and beliefs concerning the various LLS they employ while
learning the English language and what kind of effect those LLS had on the language learning success of the participants. Only domestic students were considered for this study.

### Design

The type of study that was conducted was a qualitative study, specifically in the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition. This type was chosen because most of the current research being conducted in the field of LLS was of a quantitative and mixed methods nature. For example, Park (2010) did a concurrent quantitative and qualitative study on LLS and university students in Korea. I expanded the scope of his study and focused primarily on the qualitative aspect, which looked at meaning via a rich, textural description of language learning strategies and their integration in the lives and study habits of successful EFL university students. An in-depth hermeneutic phenomenological study into the meaning of LLS led to “an interpretive description of the primordial meaning structures of [the] lived experience—a graphic depiction of phenomena just as they give and show themselves in what appears or gives itself” (van Manen, 2014a, pp. 1588-1590).

The design used was phenomenological. This was in the style of van Manen (van Manen, 2014a) and was hermeneutic in nature. To explore the lived experiences of the participants requires a hermeneutic approach in which the experience was not only described but interpretation of the phenomenon was addressed. Van Manen (1990) elaborates upon this interpretation stating, “Phenomenological human science is discovery oriented.” This discovery was guided, not by procedure or method as much as by the process of reflective writing and rewriting. The abandonment of procedural methods reserved strictly for quantitative work (questionnaires, Likert scale and other attitudinal scales, etc.) led to a type of freedom of discovery which van Manen likens to a reimagined singularity or subtleness that is all but lost in
the over-technologization and objectification of whatever it is one is studying (in this case, language learning strategies). “Any method, in a procedural sense, inevitably technologizes and objectifies what it studies and thus fails to grasp what is singular, subtle, or what can only be grasped with inventive and vocative means of reflective writing” (van Manen, 2014a, pp. 830-831).

This discovery-oriented method should not be confused with the act of factual recall. It is a recognition of a “personal stirring with perhaps lasting significance” (van Manen, 2014a, pp. 830-831). Then, in the case of strategy use, one would be led to ask, “What gives that particular experience significance?” Here was the quantitative perspective: Do more successful language learners engage in more LLS than less successful language learners? Is the frequency of strategy use associated with gender? With cultural factors? With educational levels? However, phenomenology asks, “What is the nature, meaning, significance, uniqueness, or singularity of this or that experience as we live through it or as it is given in our experience or consciousness? How does this experience present itself as a distinguishable phenomenon or event” (van Manen, 2014a, pp. 1017-1018)?

This study used van Manen’s hermeneutic approach over Moustakas’ transcendental approach because of the interpretational aspect hermeneutic phenomenology employs. Moustakas, citing Hegel, referred to Phenomenology as, “knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience” (van Manen, 2014a, p. 1048). This description of perception to Moustakas and others such as Husserl, unfolded in a greater knowledge that Kockelmans (1967) described as “the absolute knowledge of the absolute” (p. 24). Concerning language learning, this approach could prove beneficial when ascertaining beliefs and
perceptions of individuals who have been studying a foreign language for years. The absolute
knowledge referred to was not a theological endeavor (which would seem at odds with a Biblical
worldview) but a search for a deeper and more saturated knowledge of the process of learning a
second language through the experiences of those who have lived the process.

Husserl’s writings, what he termed the *epoché* or the rejection of presupposition in
conducting phenomenological research, are a reason I chose to begin with Moustakas (1994) in
the phenomenological process but ultimately ended with the hermeneutic approach of van Manen
(1990). This elimination of presupposition, along with bracketing myself out of the research,
were best left behind once the hermeneutic approach was initiated at the end of the research
period. In order to find meaning in the interviews and conduct the hermeneutic of the
participant’s experiences, a presupposition such as a Biblical worldview was needed to make
sense of the data collected. It was the setting aside but not the abandonment of my
presuppositional attitude that lent itself to the interpretive nature of hermeneutic phenomenology.
Van Manen’s approach lent itself to this position, however Moustakas’ approach did not.
Ultimately, this was not a great difference to the research being conducted but an important
distinction when it came to the results of the research and the interpretation of shared
experiences. If fact, using Creswell (2013), as a starting point, this study employed Moustakas’
steps (horizonalization, clusters of meaning, structural descriptions, etc.) in conducting the
phenomenological research as it was more succinct and clearly stated than anything offered by
van Manen.

Van Manen’s research and scholarship was foundational to the interpretive aspect of this
study. His guiding works such as *Researching Lived Experience* (1990), *Writing in the Dark*
(2002), and *Phenomenology of Practice* (2014a) grounded this study not only in the
Philosophical history of phenomenological research but in the most recent discoveries and trends of hermeneutic phenomenological design. According to van Manen, (2014a) “The main task of phenomenological research is an interpretive description of the primordial meaning structures of lived experience” (p. 1588). In this case, primordial was referring to that fundamental beginning of the participant’s experience—what was lived through before reflection. In other words, the study and interpretation of pre-reflective experiences was the ultimate destination of this paper.

Finally, phenomenology itself rejects the codification and classification that many previous studies have used. It seeks a description of the lived experience as the participants describe it from their own recollection.

Phenomenology differs from almost every other social and human science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, largely without taxonomizing, classifying, codifying, or abstracting it. So phenomenology does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world; rather, it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world. (van Manen, 2014a, p. 1705)

Phenomenological tradition and historic insight grounded the study without relying on codification to constrain where the experiences would lead.

Research Questions

The following research questions framed this investigation:

1. How do successful EFL learners at a Korean university describe their experience using Language Learning strategies?

2. What, if any, challenges did participants experience using LLS?

3. What, if any, benefits to using LLS do participants identify?
Setting

The setting for this study was at a local Korean university. The university itself was not as important as the students that participated in the study. The criteria for the participants was only that they currently attended the university at the time of the study and they met the fluency criteria outlined in the previous section. The university location was an hour south of Seoul in the Cheonan, Asan area. The university was a mid-level Korean university with over 13,000 students. Freshmen students were required to take *College English Communication* (CEC) their first or second semesters. Freshmen students were mainly the focus of the interviews, focus groups, and observations however; others such as sophomores and seniors were also used as participants.

Participants

The participants for this study were 12 Korean university students from a university in South Korea. Sampling was determined according to the quality of fluency (successful English ability) possessed by the individual students and not according to university English class ranking. The sampling procedure was purposeful sampling followed by snowball sampling. Snowball sampling was important, as it provided the opportunity to find participants within a select circle of academic acquaintances and peers.

Criteria for the selection was first determined by examining the students’ Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) scores. TOEIC is the standard English test that most Korean students take their freshman year. It measures everyday English skills such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. This was a good starting point as a score above 710 indicates an advanced level of English proficiency. Park (2010) wrote, “The TOEIC scores of effective learners were ranged between 710 and 820 (the FSI level 2 or 2+) in total scores and between
365-440 in listening comprehension scores” (p. 6). However, the TOEIC score alone could not always account for speaking ability, so additional criteria were used. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) level for participants was used based on the criteria listed on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) website. This website is the repository for the FSI scale that measures language fluency for the federal government. The ILR scale is a numerical scale that ranges from 0 to 5 with 0 being “no proficiency” and 5 being “native proficiency.” For this study, the participants’ FSI scores were examined to see how they evaluated themselves when it came to communicating in English (“Interagency Language Roundtable,” 2014). FSI score criteria was successfully used in Betty Lou Leaver’s study, *Achieving native-like second language proficiency: A catalogue of critical factors* (Leaver, 2003). For participant FSI test results, see Appendix D.

Perhaps the most important criteria was assessed by me in the form of pre-interviews. By speaking directly to the participants in English, it was clear who could respond to the interview questions and who could not. I felt this subjective approach was still better than reliance upon test scores alone, which did not always reveal the true communicative abilities of the participant. Also, referrals by fellow professors, peers and students were entertained, lending credibility to the participant selection process. Interviews took place in a classroom at the chosen university. Pseudonyms were used for the students and the university involved.

A note should be made concerning the difference between EFL and ESL students. Oxford (2003) wrote,

A second language (ESL) is a language studied in a setting where that language is the main vehicle of everyday communication and where abundant input exists in that language. A foreign language (EFL) is a language studied in an environment where it is
not the primary vehicle for daily interaction and where input in that language is restricted.

(p. 1)

Since the participants were students studying in Korea where English is restricted, the term EFL was used.

**Procedures**

Procedures followed Creswell’s (2013) design which was based on the work of Moustakas (1994). After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix E) and all possible approvals from the local university, the first step was to identify the shared experience. The shared experience, in this case, was fluency among students who successfully utilize LLS and their experience in learning the English language at a Korean university. Next, data were collected through interviews, focus groups, and observations. The study concentrated on fluency attainment and the role LLS played in the students’ success with the English language. Data analysis included horizontalization and developing clusters of meaning concerning LLS and English fluency. Next, a description was formed utilizing the clusters of meaning and what the participants experienced. Phenomenological reduction and the epoché were included in data analysis and were discussed in depth in the data analysis section. Finally, a holistic essence of the experience was described (via the vocative; writing and rewriting) leading to a better understanding of the phenomenon. These holistic experiences were finally presented in the form of themes and LLS descriptions.

**The Researcher's Role**

I have been teaching English in Korea for over six years (2008-2015). I have been involved with teaching English at the university level for the past five years. My interest in this study began with my passion for teaching English to non-native speakers. English as a Foreign
Language (EFL) learners can range from excellent speakers to very poor. LLS have always interested me, as they are so diverse in their application by each individual student. No two students are the same and no two students use the same types of strategies. Dörnyei (2005a) writes,

As the term suggests, individual differences… are characteristics or traits in respect of which individuals may be shown to differ from each other. Admittedly, for many psychologists such differences constitute mere distractions to their work: How much easier it would be to formulate valid conclusions and generalizations about the human species if everybody was alike! (p. 1)

This lack of similarity among individuals has been a problem in the research of LLS as there are conflicting data on strategy use such as which ones may be more effective than others. Student experience and beliefs with LLS can shed light on strategy use and possibly lead to better utilization of those strategies in and outside the classroom.

I currently teach English to freshmen at a local Korean university, however, I did not use any students that I am currently teaching as participants. I brought a set of beliefs to this study that included trying to learn a language myself (Korean) and understanding the difficulty involved in such an endeavor. Implications for the data collection and data analysis included bettering my role as a teacher of Korean university students and also trying to learn a language myself (in my case, Korean). LLS apply not only to my students and the students in this study, but to me. Perhaps the understanding of the experiences and beliefs of this group of university students could aid others in their goal to speak a foreign language fluently and with native-like accuracy.
Data Collection

Data collection for this study consisted of interviews, focus groups, and observations. The current literature has focused mainly on questionnaires such as the SILL, LLSI and the BALLI (Ananisarab & Abdi, 2012; Fazeli, 2012). This study focused, however on semi-structured interviews as they are the primary means of data collection in a phenomenological study. The participants’ English level was high enough to properly express their thoughts and experiences; therefore interviews were conducted exclusively in English. Any Korean words or terms were translated into English (See Appendix F). Focus groups were conducted for group dynamics and interchange of ideas. The classroom observations were used for more direct information concerning the daily lives of the students.

Interviews

Interview questions consisted of five to six questions total. There were one or two “ice-breaker” questions followed by four content questions related to LLS. I recorded these interviews using multiple digital recording devices to ensure accuracy. The questions were designed to elicit responses from the participants that dealt with core experiences concerning LLS and its place in their English language learning. Below are the interview questions with the rationale for why they were chosen.

Directly asking each participant about his or her strategy use could prove to be insufficient and even misleading. According to Oxford (2011b), “Advanced learners are less strategically aware than intermediate learners, because advanced learners have made strategies automatic and unconscious” (p. 51). Because of the advanced nature of the participants, questions were chosen which would elicit a specific or several specific experiences as well as a broad range of strategy use.
Experiences concerning LLS (as it pertains to English language learning at the university level)

1. (Ice breaker) Tell me about an average day in your life.

This icebreaker question was used to acclimate the participant to the interview process. This was an open-ended question used to allow the participant freedom to choose where the question went. It was the first of two “Grand tour” questions (Spradley, 1979) that allowed the participant to overview their average day and English language learning experiences in a general sense. The information participants shared about their average day was used sparingly in the data results. The reason for that was that most of the participants’ recollections of their average day had very little to do with English learning or strategy use.

2. (Ice breaker) Tell me about your English language learning experience. When did it start?

This was the second open-ended or “grand tour” question. It was chosen to continue the process of acclimating the participant to the interview and preparing them for the more difficult content questions (questions 3-6).

3. (Affective strategies) Describe an experience you had concerning learning English that was very emotional (could be positive or negative). What was it like? How did you deal with it?

This was the first content question dealing directly with a specific experience learning English and using language learning strategies. The emotional aspect of the question was used to elicit an experience where the subject would perhaps be inclined to use affective strategies, although that was not always the case. Because learning a new language can have a deep impact on those who strive to master it, emotional content can lead to a striking or memorable lived experience, as was the case with almost all of the participants.
4. (Social strategies) Describe an experience you had where someone (friend, teacher, classmate, etc.) influenced your English learning for better or for worse. How did you react? What was that relationship like?

This question was used to elicit an experience dealing with learning English in the company of another person. Perhaps it was a friend or classmate or even a sibling. Oxford (1990) noted that “Learning a language is a form of social behavior; it is communication, and communication occurs between and among people” (p. 144). Since learning any language entails a huge social component, experiences with others were shared by each one of the participants. This is especially true for those who are successful in the language.

5. (Metacognitive strategies) Describe an experience where you were learning English alone. Describe your self-management and self-motivation. What was that alone-time like?

This question looked at the participants’ experiences studying English alone. While this question was asked to elicit metacognitive strategy use (such as planning, organization, self-monitoring, etc.), participants did use other strategies when they studied the language alone. Studying English alone is a common occurrence in Korea. Students spend months studying for particular tests in order to get into the best university and, later in life, the best career. Answers to this question were rich and descriptive in the participants’ responses.

6. (Cognitive strategies) Describe an experience where you went from “learning about English” to “using English.” What was that transition like?

The final question looked at cognitive strategy use. Cognitive strategies include getting the idea quickly, practicing naturalistically, and formally practicing with sounds and writing systems. This question was asked to find out about experiences where the participants were not
just studying English (as was the case with question 5) but where they were actually speaking the language. Because of the nature of English learning in Korea, most students have knowledge of English (grammar, vocabulary) but very little ability to speak it. Because of the success of these students, I felt it was beneficial and informative to look at experiences where they went from a formal studying of English to using English in a naturalistic setting. The participants’ experiences took place in real world settings without tests and grades. An interview protocol is located in Appendix H.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were held during the weeks of the individual interviews. These participants were the same participants from the observation and interview group. The focus groups allowed time to understand LLS and how Koreans see them through group interaction. Although LLS are very individualistic (Dörnyei, 2005a), the implementation of these strategies might be better understood when allowing groups of successful EFL speakers to get together and talk about their experiences. I conducted the focus groups at the university campuses. Focus group one was held at the Cheonan campus and focus group two was held at the Asan campus. The focus groups were recorded via video (iPhone) to make sure the right participants were identified when multiple people were speaking or when there was crosstalk. In addition, an audio recording was used to ensure all speech was clear and intelligible in the event the video could not pick up lower audio levels due to quiet voices or whispering.

There were two parts to the focus groups. The first part was an exercise using a strip story (Gibson, 1975; Paredes, 2010). This was used in an attempt to see how the participants would work together and perhaps what strategies they would use to solve the story. The strip story was about the Titanic and was divided into 18 individual sentences (Appendix G). The
participants had 10 minutes to rearrange the sentences into the proper order. They were encouraged to talk aloud and vocalize their strategy in solving the story.

The second part involved a question and answer session. Questions for the focus group included:

1. What is the biggest difficulty in learning English in Korea?
2. What do you personally do to improve your English proficiency?
3. What is some advice you would give to other Korean students struggling to learn English?

The focus group protocol is located in Appendix I.

**Observations**

Observations were preplanned. I scheduled them in advance with select participants to better understand how LLS are incorporated throughout their English studies. I was a non-participant during one of the observations, only collecting audio and writing notes about the event. I was a participant in one of the other observations, actually teaching a short 10 minute lesson then asking some content questions at the end of the session. These observations took place after the interviews and the focus groups. I observed two participants during one of their English classes. Each observation lasted between one and two hours. An observation protocol is located in Appendix J.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis began with listening to the recorded transcripts over and over again. This provided me with a rich, detailed description of the participants’ ideas and beliefs concerning LLS. I then transcribed 4 of the 12 interviews as well as both focus groups. I also used an Internet service to transcribe the other 8 interviews. The observations consisted of me taking
notes and recording any pertinent observations. No transcription was done for the observations, as audio recording was not used.

Significant statements were highlighted and coded. These codes were used to determine clusters of meaning. I looked for the “essence” of the phenomenon at this time. Van Manen’s (1990) hermeneutic approach was utilized as I searched for meaning as well as interpretation of those results. These clusters of meaning were gathered into themes that I used to develop the essence of the phenomenon and then record the results.

The question that led to a proper mode of phenomenological data analysis was “How can phenomenology gain access to the pre-reflective experiences as they occur in the taken-for-granted spheres of our everyday lifeworld?” (van Manen, 2014a, 5370). The answer could be found in two main areas: The epoché and the reduction. The epoché refers to the suspension or removal of “what obstructs access to the phenomenon” (van Manen, 2014a, p. 5373). Husserl also used the term bracketing as in a mathematical equation; bracketing oneself out of the study to achieve a level of openness apart from preconceived ideas and presuppositions. This epoché eventually led back to the phenomenon itself and the reduction. The reduction consisted of “reachieving a direct and primitive contact with the world as we experience it or as it shows itself—rather than as we conceptualize it” (van Manen, 2014a, p. 5499). It was by various forms of reduction (heuristic, hermeneutic, experiential, etc.) that this study investigated and interpreted the experiences of the participants concerning LLS.

I used several different apps to catalog the vast amounts of data. The first app was ATLAS.ti 7. This program allowed clusters of meaning and significant statements to be organized and cataloged in conjunction with the audio from the interviews and focus group. ATLAS.ti 7 was best suited for organizing and making sense of the large amounts of data and
multimedia that the study examined. A secondary app I used was Evernote. This app was an organizer app that synced across multiple devices and stored all content in the cloud. This was utilized more for backup of data than analysis. Finally, all citations were organized and catalogued using Endnote X6. All information was secured via encrypted password protection in all apps.

The analysis of the interviews, observations, and focus group was similar. This triangulation was used to further develop the themes I found throughout the recorded interviews and notes taken throughout the observations. Focus group activity was recorded and transcribed as well.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness consisted of bracketing myself out of the study as per Moustakas (1994). Bracketing is, “how one must take hold of the phenomenon and then place outside of it one’s knowledge about the phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990). One particular area I bracketed outside the phenomenon was my own ideals about learning a language, specifically Korean. Just because I have experienced certain things concerning my attempt to learn Korean does not mean those experiences are indicative of the participants in this study. By clarifying researcher bias, I could add credibility to the study.

A rich, thick description of participants’ experiences was used to ensure trustworthiness. By providing a rich, thick description of events, vague or open-ended ideas could be eliminated. Laverty (2003) pointed out that “For a hermeneutic phenomenological project, the multiple stages of interpretation that allow patterns to emerge, the discussion of how interpretations arise from the data, and the interpretive process itself are seen as critical” (p. 23). Multiple stages in this study included transcribing the interviews, focus groups, and observations. Then reading
and rereading the transcripts were done allowing patterns to emerge. Finally, writing and rewriting were used to establish the participants’ descriptions of events and provided interpretation.

Triangulation was utilized by gathering information using the three methods previously stated (interviews, focus groups, and observations). This ensured a wide range of experiences and beliefs that could be checked and rechecked against each of the three methods.

Member checks were performed by letting the participants read the transcribed interview segments, focus groups, and observations. Any discrepancies were noted and appropriate changes were made within the text. All but two of the participants participated in the member checks. Martin was unable to check the transcripts because he was in the Korean military and Cindy was unable because she was studying English overseas and could not be reached.

The dissertation committee members served as my peer review for the subsequent drafts of the study. Each member reviewed the manuscript and provided appropriate feedback at each stage in the editing process.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations for this study began with protection of the participants’ anonymity. Aliases were used as well as no direct mention of the university itself. These aliases were English names the participants had chosen well in advance of our interviews. This is common in Korea, especially in education. Instead of changing the names and giving the participants all new English names, these original English names were used so as not to cause confusion on the part of the participants and the researcher. The participant’s aliases were sufficiently common so as not to jeopardize their anonymity. Additionally, when the participants mentioned specific
teacher’s names, the teacher’s proper names were omitted and a general title was applied (for example, native teacher or English teacher).

Also, digital anonymity was employed by password protecting all files and any subsequent databases that would be storing participants’ information. One other consideration was how much information I would be sharing with the participants during the interviews. I was careful to withhold any information that could alter the participants’ answers or cause them to give false answers because of personal information that I mentioned during the interview. I did not use any current students, however, some of the participants were previous students of mine (Cindy and Stephanie). The other 10 participants and I were only acquainted through this study.

**Summary**

This chapter introduced the methods that were used to conduct this study. A qualitative method was selected to interpret the participant’s data. Specifically, a hermeneutic phenomenological design was used, as this approach was new to current literature concerning Korean university students. The research questions were restated and the study’s setting and participants were discussed. Procedures were listed according to Creswell (2005) and the researcher’s role was made clear. Data collection was addressed and data analysis was conducted according to van Manen’s hermeneutic approach. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations were also described in detail.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter addresses the results of the participants’ experiences learning English in Korea and their use of language learning strategies. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore shared experiences and beliefs concerning the use of language learning strategies (LLS) among successful English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a local South Korean university. This exploration of experiences was conducted with three research questions in mind:

1. How do successful EFL learners at a Korean university describe their experiences using language learning strategies?
2. What, if any, challenges did participants experience using LLS?
3. What, if any, benefits to using LLS did participants identify?

Chapter four begins with participant portraits. This was used to give a detailed description of each participant so the reader could understand his or her life and what they brought to the study. Next, results of the interviews, focus groups, and observations are listed. A summary of the findings is provided at the end of the chapter.

Participants

Participant portraits are an important key to entering the lifeworld they describe. These portraits, in depth in nature, allow the reader to identify and connect with the experience. Similar to setting a foundation, the portraits establish the “what” and “how” of the research questions in a general sense. The data collection was scheduled for 10-12 participants. After the twelfth interview, data collection stopped as data saturation had been reached. As Seidman (1998) noted, “A number of writers (Douglas, 1976; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba,
1985; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Weiss, 1994) discuss a point in a study at which the interviewer begins to hear the same information reported. He or she is no longer learning anything new” (p. 1345). Ten females and two males were chosen for individual interviews, focus group participation, and observations. For a summary of each experience reported by the participants, see Appendix K.

Each of the participants seemed eager to tell their stories. Some saw the interview as an opportunity to practice their English. The very act of participating in an interview and a focus group allowed the participants to use several language learning strategies such as seeking practice opportunities, cooperating with peers, cooperating with a proficient user of the new language, and practicing naturally. However, just the opportunity to tell their stories and experiences was a motivation for participating in the study. These were voices that were seldom heard in Korean education.

As we began, I sensed a general hesitation with almost all the interview candidates. This could have several explanations. Nervousness speaking with a foreign teacher and interviewing in a foreign language could be a primary cause. Another reason could be their unwillingness to make a critical mistake. Perhaps they did not want to be corrected or feel as if they are not good at English. So their unwillingness to make a mistake occasionally resulted in slow responses, as I had to wait for the answers after a long pause. Also, when some students did answer, they said. Each. Word. Very. Deliberately. So as not to make a mistake.

This hesitancy did lead to a quiet examination of the silence of the participants. Laverty (2003) noted that van Manen acknowledged the significance that could be found in silence:
[van Manen] supported the importance of paying attention to silence, the absence of speaking, the silence of the unspeakable and the silence of being or life itself, as it is herein that one may find the taken for granted or the self-evident. (p. 19)

This silence even led to a discovery of new dimensions of the lived experience. In fact, this idea of creative silence is supported, not just in the interview process, but also in other mediums such as the novel, movies, and poetry. Van Manen (1990) suggested that “Even in the most profound and eloquent poem it seems that the deep truth of the poem lies just beyond words, on the other side of language” (p. 112). Deep truths were often just beyond the communicated words of the participants. Whether or not the researcher was able to grasp any of those truths remains to be seen.

After the completion of the interviews and focus groups, I started the process of listening to the interviews and focus groups several times. At this point, I was not looking for themes but simply listening to what each participant had to say without pretense, presuppositions, or pre-reflective motivations. In Moustakas (1994), Husserl refers to this as the epoché: “In the epoché, we set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (p. 85). This allowed for a fresh look at the experiences; a new perspective.

After listening to the interviews, the transcription process began. The participants’ interviews and focus groups were transcribed, word for word. Appendix D summarizes the information for all 12 participants.

**JoAnne (Female)**

JoAnne, an 18 year old freshman English Literature major, quietly entered the room at the start of the interview. She did not speak until I greeted her and she seemed to have a general hesitation throughout the interview. She began by talking about some American dramas she
likes to watch such as *Game of Thrones* and *The Walking Dead*. One of her earliest experiences learning English was a phone class with an Australian teacher when she was eight. She also visited the Philippines for three months when she was 13 years old. Looking back, I can see how short her answers were to each question. She gave succinct answers with no additional information. This was perhaps her nervousness or a product of not looking at the questions beforehand. However, that does not mean her interview lacked valuable experiential information. JoAnne continued to talk about her recent English learning experiences with a test called IELTS, an Australian test. She also spoke of her cousin who encouraged her to learn English by watching TED Talks. Recently, JoAnne used a computer program called Speaking Max to practice her English as well as a site called Interpals.net, which is a pen pal site. These programs and Internet sites allowed her to communicate with native speakers of English even if she could not leave Korea.

**Alicia (Female)**

Alicia, a 21-year-old sophomore English Literature major, sat down at our interview with a quiet confidence. She spoke quietly and thoughtfully when I asked her each question. She had never been overseas to study but her English ability was very natural. Not perfect, but very conversational and easygoing. She was prepared to share with me her experiences studying English. She talked about learning English as far back as kindergarten and a difficult experience she had concerning a foreign teacher. She talked of competition in her elementary school and how that shaped her learning style. Watching movies and reading books were another highlight of Alicia’s goal to learn the English language. She was proactive in middle school where she participated in activates such as translating for the teacher and translating for her classmates. This activity made her very happy and increased her confidence in speaking English. At
Claire (Female)

Claire, a 24-year-old senior English Literature major, entered our interview in a very happy, upbeat mood. She had an infectious smile and even sent me a message before the interview. She was not sure she could even answer the questions, which I gave to the students beforehand so they could think about their particular answers. I asked her to attend the interview anyway and soon found out her English speaking ability was excellent. Her answers were in-depth and had meaning, even if she struggled at times to find the correct words to say. Claire spoke about traveling to Irvine, California when she was a freshman at the university. She stayed there a month but did not speak a word of English. She only spoke Korean with fellow Koreans on the trip. “I was very stupid,” she said. After that, she began learning more English and seeking practice opportunities. Her skills improved as she attended the local EMC (English Multilingual Café) at the university. The EMC is a place for Koreans to practice with native English speakers, mostly from India. Her English also improved through memorizing English pop songs and participating in English lessons over the phone. The phone lessons proved to be too expensive for the time, so Claire continued to go to the EMC and practice whenever she could. She also spoke about working with her aunt who is the CEO of an English Academy
(Hagwon). This experience was both rewarding and difficult. Today, Claire studies English in a “systematic” manner preparing for the TOEIC test and memorizing 100 vocabulary words a day.

**Romeo (Male)**

Romeo, a 26-year-old senior, entered the interview very confident and energetic. He was taller than the average student and carried himself with a sense of pride. Even the name he chose for himself, Romeo, had a recognizable history of drama and pride. Romeo was the only Theology major I interviewed. His desire to learn English was so great, that he ended up majoring in Theology as well as English Literature. His experiences learning English started with the stress of learning in high school. Having never traveled abroad, he felt he was at a handicap when it came to learning English. His sister and cousin would prove to be motivating factors for Romeo to learn English and to speak English whenever he could. In fact, the prospect of one day traveling to the United States motivated Romeo to improve his English speaking ability. He stumbled often throughout the interview when it came to correct grammar and pronunciation, however, his zeal for the language was apparent in his inflection. He seemed to be focused on the goal of substantially improving his speaking ability. He spoke briefly about translating for a Pilipino friend at a jewelry shop. Helping others by speaking English seemed important to Romeo as well. Recently, Romeo has been involved in reading English books and using a notebook and dictionary to aid in his English language learning.

**Angela (Female)**

Angela, a 22-year-old sophomore English Literature major, began our interview with a quiet attitude. Like JoAnne, Angela gave very short, succinct answers to the questions. She recalled taking Internet classes with a native speaker in preparation for the Korean SAT test. She made a point to distinguish between beginning to study English and beginning to study “in
earnest.” For Angela that time of earnest study was her second year in high school. However, like many other Koreans, she began formally learning English in elementary school. She spoke of the Internet lectures and “loving” the teacher due to his professionalism. His teaching really impacted her English learning. Also at that time, Angela found herself bored with English classes in high school. This was mainly due to the mundane way in which the English classes were taught. The teacher would enter the room, open a book and do reading exercises. There was not any opportunity for speaking or interaction. At the university, her motivation for continuing her English studies was to become an English teacher in Korea. These days, she spends her time working part time at a local bakery.

**Jamie (Female)**

Jamie, a 22-year-old junior English Literature major, seemed friendly yet reserved in our interview. She spoke very softly, so much so that at times I had a hard time hearing her. It could have been fear of speaking with a native English speaking professor or just her personality. Jamie did spend one month in Oklahoma learning English and even wanted to share some of those experiences with me. She began her English education at an English kindergarten, which was specifically designed to help her enter a good school later in life. The kindergarten focused on test-taking as opposed to speaking. In high school, Jamie had a very interesting teacher who showed the students that there were other ways to learn English as opposed to only reading a textbook. He introduced them to Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech, “I have a dream.” He also exposed them to the poetry of Robert Frost (*The Road Less Traveled*). This unorthodox approach affected Jamie and how she thought about the English language. Recently, she spoke of “free talking” with a foreign professor. This exercise had its benefits and detriments. While it was helpful to speak with a native speaker, she said there was a time constraint of 15 minutes,
which made her very nervous and stressed. She also added that it was extremely helpful if a student could travel overseas at least once. The benefits of studying overseas, even for a short time, were learning about the culture first hand and learning the language from native speakers.

**Martin (Male)**

Martin, a 20-year-old freshman Mechanical Engineering major, met me before the interview and we had dinner together. During dinner, I got a chance to know his interests better including what music and movies he liked. When the interview began, he was focused on the questions and was one of only three students who prepared something written beforehand. He had read the questions and prepared to answer them to the best of his ability. One of the recurring themes with Martin was his disdain for grammar. He talked about it on several occasions in the interview. He made it a point to learn spoken English before learning academic English (mainly for test taking), which is really the opposite of most Korean students. He seemed special in his outlook—different. He did struggle to understand that I was trying to elicit his personal experiences with English as opposed to his opinions. However, with some guidance, I was able to get him to relay some interesting experiences learning English. One important class Martin was taking at the university was an English language learning strategies class taught by a Canadian professor. He was learning about learning. An interesting anecdote was his inability to recall many of the strategies he was learning about. It seemed easier to just talk about certain experiences and let the strategies emerge naturally through reflection, retrospection, and natural conversation.

**Sue (Female)**

Sue, a 21-year-old freshman English language major, was the only participant who did not attend the same university as the others. I was introduced to her through my wife. Sue is my
wife’s cousin and we met on two occasions before our interview. I was impressed with Sue’s handling of the English language even though she had never been overseas to study. We had our interview outside on a park bench in the middle of Seoul. Sue was very confident but also chose her words carefully. Sue talked about writing for her university’s English newspaper. She was currently working on an article dealing with gentrification in Korea. She was in the process of interviewing local Korean businesses and homeowners about the issue. Her English writing skills were excellent and they needed to be. For her newspaper articles, she would interview the individuals in Korean and then translate the quotations into English. This is something that required immense skill on the part of the writer. Interestingly enough, she did not have a response for the first question about the emotional experience. Not because she did not understand it, but because English was always just a part of her life. Not good or bad, just there. “I took it for granted,” she said. Sue’s father is also an English teacher and certainly influenced her, although that was not explored in the questioning. Sue gave a very detailed description of studying for the Korean SATs, something every Korean high school student does. However, Sue studied many hours and used several strategies that may be of interest to researchers and future studies. Sue continues to study English by reading novels such as *The Da Vinci Code* and preparing to take the TOEFL test this year.

**Cindy (Female)**

Cindy, a 21-year-old sophomore Airline Services major, arrived at her interview ready to answer the questions. She had experience with interviews in the past, which helped her with this interview and the questions that were asked. Along with Stephanie, Cindy was a former student of mine. I had her in an English conversation class and I remembered she was an accomplished speaker, willing to seek out practice opportunities. Like all the other participants, Cindy began
studying in elementary school. She also had a private tutor when she was nine years old. This tutor, a native speaker from the United States, really helped Cindy learn the language at an early age. In high school, Cindy received inspiration from a friend who was more advanced in her English speaking ability. Inspiration, as well as jealousy of her friend’s proficiency, led Cindy to study harder and expand her English learning. During the interview, she was confident and relaxed. She explained that her familiarity with English interviews began when she had a very high-pressure interview at one of Korea’s top universities. She was extremely nervous. “It was the hardest interview that I ever had,” she said. This summer, Cindy plans on traveling to Oklahoma to study English and immerse herself in American culture. Her goal was to speak like a native English speaker and use this advantage in furthering her career in Airline Services.

**Stephanie (Female)**

Stephanie, a 21-year-old sophomore Airline Services major, began the interview by telling me about her experience learning English when she was seven years old. She began learning phonics at an English academy. In high school she had two definitive experiences. The first was attending an English camp, which is very common in Korea. The second was a pen pal relationship with a native speaker. Stephanie’s growth in English was due in part to her cooperation with friends in studying for the TOEIC test. She talked about meeting at one of her friend’s house and studying English in preparation for Airline Services. Airline Services is a major dedicated to producing flight attendants, but it is a very competitive field. Fluency in English is important for a candidate’s success in the major. Stephanie also enjoyed watching movies, but not just watching them once. She would repeatedly watch them, stopping them to try and understand what each character was saying. Sometimes one viewing would take several
days. Today, she is busy studying TOEIC speaking because her dream is to one day become a flight attendant.

**Annie (Female)**

Annie, a 21-year-old sophomore Airline Services major, entered the interview with a smile. She answered the questions often with laughter, which led me to believe she was in a good mood. Her interview proved to be the shortest one I would conduct for this study (27 minutes), but it also yielded some excellent experiential details. Annie told one of the most emotional stories during her interview. She recalled how a teacher at an English academy she attended would hit her on the hand if she scored too low on a test. She was in middle school at the time and it made her hate English at that time. Oddly enough, the punishment was a motivating factor, as it caused Annie to study harder to avoid the teacher’s harsh punishment. In middle school, Annie also had a very handsome teacher she was constantly trying to impress. This Korean teacher spoke English only in the English class even though most of the students did not understand him. Many students in the class slept or were bored, but there was at least some motivation for Annie in that she tried to engage in conversation with the teacher to win his approval. Like Stephanie, Annie liked to watch TV dramas, like *Sherlock* and *Dr. Who*, while at home. She also watched them repeatedly to understand the characters’ dialogue and general plot of the story. Recently, Annie spends time speaking with a foreign friend from Europe. She says he gives her confidence even though it is hard to understand his English most of the time.

**Rina (Female)**

Rina, a 21-year-old sophomore Airline Services major, had a quiet demeanor about her at the time of our interview. Although her interview was longer than others, like Annie’s, I found myself repeating the questions often to her. She had some interesting experiences, but it took
time to get to them. She told of an elementary school teacher who she thought of as a mother. This mentoring—via games, songs, and an overall fun atmosphere—caused Rina to study English harder than she normally would have. Another valuable strategy Rina picked up was from a high school friend who encouraged her to make a schedule for her studying. This helped Rina schedule her language learning in a manageable way. At the university level, Rina talked about her English conversation class and how much she enjoys it. She always tried to engage in the conversations and used the class as a chance to practice her English. “I speak English in the class. Always,” she said. Playing some engaging games and searching for vocabulary in a fun way made the class come alive for Rina.

Results

The results of participant experiences and beliefs are presented in themes, which can be seen as collections of the shared experiences of participants. Or, as van Manen (1990) states, “phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience” (p. 79). These structures can be seen as simplifications and a type of abstract look at the mass of data. Themes help us gather and elucidate information that may be too difficult for the reader to do on his or her own.

What follows are the three themes that emerged from and were observed in all of the participants’ experiences concerning language learning strategies. They are:

1. Individual strategy use in light of Vygotsky’s ZPD,

2. proactivity, willingness to communicate, and motivation among successful EFL students, and

3. interrelation of individual strategies via strategy chains.
The remaining portion of this chapter describes the themes and gives examples found within the previously stated results. However, theme identification was only the start. Van Manen (2014a) stated, “Obviously the phenomenological work is not completed with the identification of themes. The themes are only abstractions of the interpretive descriptions that must be constructed at the hand of the themes” (p. 302). Therefore, in Chapter Five, explication and implications of themes will be discussed.

**Theme One: Individual Strategy Use in Light of Vygotsky’s ZPD**

Participants recalled experiences that dealt with a variety of situations and emotional states. Some were in high school or middle school while others were at university or even kindergarten (for a complete chart of Participant’s recollections of experiences from a lifelong learning perspective, see Appendix L). Some participants recalled joy or fun in a certain situation while others described pain, envy, or even hate. Despite these significant differences in experiential descriptions, there were some interesting factors that all of the participants shared.

One of the unifying factors in the participants’ experiences was the use of mediation in learning English. This is best defined as learning with the help of a more capable mediator such as a person, book or even electronic device. Vygotsky (1978) pioneered theory and research concerning the role a mediator plays in the learning of a new language, especially in the life of children. For Vygotsky, this area of mediation was called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It was the crucial area where a learner would meet with a more knowledgeable person (or other mediation device) and scaffolding would occur. This scaffolding would then be replaced with the learners’ own personal motivation and learning ability when mediation was no longer needed.
The participants in this study exhibited ZPD use in several of the top strategies used and several other codes. Table 8 shows the top seven codes discovered in the individual interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Table 8

*Top Seven Codes Including Non-Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages (Strategy)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language (Strategy)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native speaker</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with peers (Strategy)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking practice opportunities (Strategy)</td>
<td>38</td>
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</table>

Among the top seven codes, four were individual strategies used by participants. Each of these strategies involved mediation. Using resources for receiving and sending messages used mediation in several forms. Movies, books, audio tapes, Internet sites, and TV shows were just a few of the ways students used the ZPD to move from one level of learning to the next. Cooperating with peers and cooperating with proficient users of the new language were quintessential strategies for mediation use. Other people, who either know the language or are in the process of learning the language, helped the participants to navigate learning via the ZPD. Seeking practice opportunities also aided in the mediation process. By proactively looking for speaking opportunities, participants were willfully entering the ZPD and actively looking for opportunities of mediation when it came to their English language learning.
In addition, other codes were identified that were not specifically strategies but had a connection to the idea of mediation in learning English. The third and fourth most referenced codes were “study” and “native speaker.” Study is a big part of any Korean’s educational lifestyle, but these students used study opportunities in conjunction with native speakers, often leading to scaffolding opportunities. These students were not just learning alone but sought out mediators (they would refer to them as tutors, friends, or teachers) to guide them through the ZPD. Another code widely identified was “speaking.” This is important as it shows the proactive nature of the participants. In order to take full advantage of mediation, the participants chose opportunities that encouraged or required speech. They had to actually use the language they were studying. The theme of mediation and its implications are discussed in Chapter Five, but this seemed to be a unifying theme as all of the participants recalled several examples of mediation used throughout their academic careers.

Participants described their strategy use through various experiences. These experiences were elicited through common questions that focused on the lived experience rather than trying to ask each participant about individual strategy use. The research questions were as follows:

1. How do successful EFL learners at a Korean university describe their experience using language learning strategies?

2. What, if any, challenges did participants experience using LLS?

3. What, if any, benefits to using LLS do participants identify?

These questions were addressed in a phenomenological manner by rephrasing them in the form of a phenomenological inquiry. What was the nature of learning English in Korea like? What was the nature of using language learning strategies in Korea like? Additionally, the interview questions could be addressed in a phenomenological manner. What was the
phenomenon of studying alone like? What was the phenomenon of using English as opposed to just studying from a book like? What was the phenomenon of an emotional language learning experience like? There were additional questions as well, but proper orientation to the main content questions was paramount for this study to succeed.

Research question one dealt with the overall student experience of learning English and using LLS. This question proved the easiest to explicate from the experiences, as it was basically a direct description of events. Question two, which dealt with challenges, and question three, which dealt with benefits of strategy use, were more difficult when it came to determining meaning. Because the interview questions were indirect as far as strategy use, experiences were communicated in a general sense, devoid of direct strategy description. In other words, since the participants were not directly asked about individual strategies, answers about strategy use were always imbedded within the stories, anecdotes, and descriptions of the lived experiences.

Question two—challenges students face—was the most difficult to determine. When students talked about their language learning experiences, especially when it came to strategy use, the descriptions were overwhelmingly positive in nature (206 beneficial occurrences vs. 40 challenging occurrences). This was advantageous for question three, which dealt with the benefits students described in their language learning strategy experiences. So the benefits of strategy use seem to far outweigh the challenges, however, this assumption could not be maintained in this study as neither question was asked directly to the participants.

Results were reported via interviews, focus groups, and observations. The interviews provided rich, vivid details about the direct experiences of the participants. The focus groups also provided experiential accounts but also described participants’ general beliefs and attitudes towards learning English and using strategies. The observations did not provide a direct
description of strategy use but provided me with valuable firsthand knowledge of the lived world of some of the participants. This firsthand knowledge aided in constructing the framework for description of the lived experiences, mainly in the area of the participants’ university classes.

The strategy group most referenced in the interviews was the cognitive strategy group. Cognitive strategies are often the most popular among strategy users (Oxford, 1990) mainly due to the practicing component. Practicing and using resources for receiving and sending messages were among the most common concerning the participants’ experiences. Mediation was used frequently with these cognitive strategies. Overall, 15 cognitive strategies, 11 metacognitive strategies, eight affective strategies, five social strategies, and four compensation strategies were referenced in the interviews. For a detailed description of strategy category use by percentages and individual use, see Appendix M.

Block quotes are provided for context with pertinent information bolded. If there is no bold information, the entire quote represents the pertinent information. For a detailed look at total strategy use by percentage, see Appendix N.

**Using resources for receiving and sending messages (cognitive strategy).** This specific cognitive strategy deals with using mediation resources to discover meaning and understand the new language (Oxford, 1990). Examples of specific resources include dictionaries, tapes, videos, books, and Internet resources. This was the most referenced strategy that the participants spoke about, with 71 coded instances. All 12 participants spoke about some form of using resources to receive and send messages. The top three categories of resources were movies, TV shows and books. Additional resources for mediation include music, Internet usage, multimedia classes, games, and presentations.
**Using movies as a resource.** Eight out of the 12 participants used movies to improve their English. In many cases, movies were watched alone, at the participant’s home.

Stephanie: Since I was young, I like to study English alone, so I often watch a movie, repeatedly. They spoke their normal sentences in their country, so I had experience by watching the movie. I studied a sentence-sentence and grammar.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about that? Where did you watch the movies?

Martin: In my house, alone. Maybe I watched “Edge of Tomorrow.” I like SF, but I can't understand all of the story but, I can understand whole story, like regular story.

Alicia: when I watch a movie, there was, that room has only books. Books and the screen to watch the movies. And I usually, when the school was finished, I usually, I go home. I usually go to that room and watch a movie or read books.

For Alicia, using English movies to learn English was made more challenging by covering up the Korean subtitles.

Alicia: this method is, when I was younger, I just used this method. But I usually watch English movies without subtitles so I can't see the subtitle and I just try to understand what the actors say. My mother tells me always when I see the English movies there were Korean subtitles but my mother always covered with papers.

Interviewer: How about the room? Where did you watch these movies or TV shows?

Cindy: Oh, I downloaded in my laptop so I watched in my room.
Claire: the last one- movie. **I try to study with movies. “Notting Hill.”** But I forget because it's too long.

Still others watched movies provided in class. Their recollection of the teachers and their styles was usually followed by a description of how English was presented. Movies were a vivid recollection that several students had in their formal classroom settings.

Interviewer: so you talked to the professor about some music and things?

Romeo: yes some music and **movies** and all of the entertaining, some issues we...

Jamie: And the other is… he's a man. He was not focused on just our school book. He always turn on **video** like “**I Have A Dream**” or Ban Ki Moon.

**Using English TV shows as a resource.** In addition to movies, American or English TV shows were used as a main resource for learning English. Four of the 12 participants referenced TV shows in their English language learning. TV shows can be used as an ongoing practice situation due to the length of the show, depth of characters, dialogue, and cultural connection.

For Cindy, watching English TV shows became an addiction. She began watching a series and could not wait to finish it. She could identify with the characters and the situations presented in the show.

Cindy: Actually I could say, **I was like addicted to watch TV drama** because its story was fun and like I thought that it would be the most fun English studying in the world.

This connection with the culture through TV shows had several benefits. First, Cindy felt as if she was becoming more American by identifying with the TV shows she was watching. For her, this signified an emotional connection to the language.

Interviewer: How about now? Are you watching anything currently?
Cindy: Yeah, “Agent of Shield.” It's like action drama like spying. It is fun whenever I learned each abbreviation, I *feel I like I am American.*

Additionally, Cindy was introduced to specific vocabulary and abbreviations (e.g., ASAP) that she might not have been exposed to in a formal setting. Additionally, she watched a crime drama where she was exposed to new vocabulary (anatomy and criminology terms) and situations that drew her into the culture. Again, she equates being “American” with a high standard of English speaking.

Cindy: Yeah, anatomy yeah. And whenever I listen and understand what that mean, I *feel, I was like, Wow, I am American.* I can do English well. Like it encouraged me to think. I have courage to do English. Yeah, and it made me to feel comfortable when I do English.

Jamie spoke about a competition TV show she watched. She was particularly interested in the show because it dealt with a topic she was very interested in: art.

Jamie: Yes, at university. *I watched English show program,* this competition program called “Work of Art.” I like art, so I watch without subtitles.

She enjoyed watching the show because of the competition and the topic of art. These elements kept her attention and helped with her English learning in a fun way.

Interviewer: *Okay. Is it fun? Do you enjoy watching it?*

Jamie: *Yes. Because there's a competition.*

In addition, Jamie identified with a contestant on the show who was also not a native English speaker. This similarity helped Jamie to immerse herself in the show and empathize with one of the contestants.
Jamie: I looked very carefully how they speak, what vocabulary they use. There was a person who is not an English, he is maybe English-Chinese. He is not a native, so I think he is very similar to me, so I try to look at him very carefully.

JoAnne used American TV shows to learn about natural conversation.

JoAnne: and then I go to home, and I watch drama and movie and at 9 o'clock I sleep, usually.

Interviewer: Korean drama?

JoAnne: Oh no, I like American drama.

Interviewer: What do you watch?

JoAnne: I like Game of Thrones and Walking Dead.

Annie, also spoke of her experience watching British dramas and using this to help her learn conversation.


Because of the nature of natural speaking, sometimes the actors speak too fast. Because of this natural tendency among native speakers, Annie would compensate by re-watching each show again and again.

Interviewer: Don't you think that Sherlock speaks very fast?

Annie: Very fast.

Interviewer: Isn't it difficult?

Annie: Yes. First time I can't understand, it's very fast, so I'm watching repeat, repeat, repeat, again, again, again so I understand now.
Using books and printed materials as a resource. Books and printed material constituted a major part of participants’ experiences with using resources. Children’s books, novels, psychological works and English textbooks were used by ten of the twelve participants. Alicia and JoAnne remembered using children’s literature.

Alicia: I have a lots of **fairytale books**, the English books in my house. So I usually read those books.

Alicia: I'm very active in that class and I'm active in (native English teacher’s) class too. That is **children's literature class**. So we usually learn about children's books. And we read the books and comment on the books.

Alicia: actually **those books are only children's books, fairytales**, like many pictures in the books. And I have lots of books like that in my house. So sometimes they are the same books in my house and the English teacher’s class.

Interviewer: What books? Can you tell me about the books?

JoAnne: **Kid's story and scary book, and my favorite books and dictionary, and many novel books**.

Interviewer: In English?

JoAnne: Yes.

Romeo also used books to enhance his English. However, instead of children’s books, he tried to use advanced psychological texts to expand his knowledge. The book he was reading at the time of the interview was **Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia**.
Interviewer: so now, do you do some studying by yourself?


Interviewer: a story?

Romeo: not a story but the, some actually it was French writers who wrote, she was a psychologist. He wrote the book and some English, it was changed to English.

The majority of participants recalled using textbooks or books of some type in school as more formal way to learn English. In this case, the book was chosen for them but they still had an experience using that resource.

Interviewer: So… what was his teaching style? How did he teach the class?

Annie: He only read a book. And he teach himself, nobody else answer the question, so he study only himself.

Rina: I often study English for test and in our major class book and I read that.

Claire: Ok, first one is as I said, I memorized some sentences in high school but also in college. My aunt is a CEO of the English academy and I ask her, “What should I do if I want to increase the...” and she said, “You should memorize some sentences, regularly.” so I memorized sentences...

Interviewer: Where do you get the sentences?

Claire: In the vocabulary books.

Alicia used a textbook in her English class called, “Active Skills for Reading.” Later, during her observation, Alicia would do a presentation based on an article in this textbook.
Romeo talked about his English textbook, “The Principle of Language,” which focuses on philosophical and psychological aspects of learning English. Martin’s textbook for his language learning strategies class was created by the teacher specifically for that class.

Interviewer: Okay, do you use a textbook?

Martin: Yes, I used textbook.

Interviewer: Okay, is it a textbook that you buy from the store, or did the teacher create the textbook?

Martin: I think teacher created textbook in this class.

Sue talked about competition when it comes to English textbooks and taking high-pressure tests. She also talked about reading for pleasure. Reading modern English novels helps her with grammar and new vocabulary.

Sue: Some students steal others' who do well- other's notebooks, or EBS book.

Interviewer: Stole the book?

Sue: Yes, but very few students did that. Also, there was a hidden competition. When a student buy a new book, that means that book is very good for preparing Korean SAT and we imitate that and buy that book, buy the same book.

Sue: These days, I just read many novels, English novels, and articles. I try to read many articles and novels.

Interviewer: For example, what kind of a book?

Sue: Now, I'm reading Da Vinci Code.

Finally, Claire also showed interest in modern novels, this time in the romance category.
Claire: yeah. But after that, I realized that increasing my ability. And read English novels.

Interviewer: ok what are some examples? Can you tell me some examples?

Claire: I read many books but the book that I finished is only one: The Notebook.

Other resources used. Music was another resource that many participants recalled using to better their English language learning. This was different than the affective strategy of using music for the purpose of lowering your anxiety. In this case, music was used as a resource to better learn the language through songs and lyrics. Six of the 12 participants referenced music and its role as a resource in learning English.

Romeo used music in his discussions with a native speaker. He used the strategy of “choosing the topic” and “cooperating with a proficient user of the language.” In addition, he used English music to learn the language directly.

Romeo: Yes right. Maybe some music I really like. USA and European music. I really like heavy metal… very, very noisy songs. And I really like to play the guitar.

Learning English through music was an experience that some of the participants referenced early in their academic careers. For Jamie, it was in kindergarten and for Rina, her experience with music was in elementary school.

Jamie: I went to English kindergarten when I was five years old. There were many English teachers in there, English foreigners, and so there was time to talk in English, learn English songs. So that's the first time I studied English.

Interviewer: Okay, so tell me about that relationship. Why was she such a good teacher?
Rina: She always sing a song, English, sing a song, sing an English song. So it is very fun and excited.

Claire and Stephanie used music to memorize the lyrics to songs and increase their English vocabulary.

Claire: And also I memorize the lyrics of my favorite songs.

Interviewer: Some English pop songs?

Claire: Pop song of course.

Stephanie: In high school, I listened to a pop song and sing a song together by one teacher. It helps me improve my English skill.

Interviewer: How does that help you? What does that do?

Stephanie: My pronunciation is improved and my grammar...

Internet usage as well as multimedia classes were part of the participants' experiences. This could include Internet classes, using search engines to define terms, or using websites such as YouTube to enhance the language learning experience.

Romeo: So in English study Internet is better [than a] teacher I think. I always use YouTube. And some messages: preaching or some teaching and “Minute physics.”

Interviewer: on YouTube?

Romeo: Yeah, on YouTube. “Minute physics” is very fast speaker and introduces some physical, relative theory, or something like that. Introduce in English. I can find huge information through YouTube.

Angela used an Internet lecture to help her grammar and listening abilities in preparation for the Korean SAT test.
Interviewer: So, did you view some online lectures?

Angela: Yeah, **online lectures**.

Interviewer: Okay.

Angela: I like online lecture.

JoAnne used the Internet to conduct a search about the IELTS test, which is an Australian English exam. Rina also used the Internet, in this case to search for vocabulary word definitions.

JoAnne: So, because I want to study New Zealand and Australia so I studied IELTS. First, it was very hard because I don't have information about that, so **but I search it in Internet**, so I started again and again.

Rina: If I don't know vocabulary, **I search Internet dictionary** and then I understand that.

Games were another resource that several participants mentioned. Not surprisingly, games were associated with fun and pleasure when learning the language. JoAnne, Rina, and Cindy mentioned the use of games in helping them learn English. All three participants’ experiences revolve around the teacher using, or not using games in a formal learning situation.

JoAnne: [We played] **bingo, bingo or hangman**, and he (the teacher) sometimes tell me interesting story, so I feel funny.

Interviewer: Can you give an example? How did she make you happy? How did she help you learn?

Rina: **She [is] good at playing games; an English game.**
Rina also talked about her University English class. These English conversation classes rely heavily upon bookwork and repeating pre-planned conversations so games are a way to bring life to the class and get each student involved.

Interviewer: What do you do that makes it fun? Why is it fun?

Rina: He play a game, an English game, often. He is often playing an English game.

And his class book is better than a high school student book.

Interviewer: What are some examples, what kind of a game?

Rina: **Quiz. Hangman game.**

Cindy talked about how she liked her native teacher better than the Korean teacher because of the games and movies they used in class. It made the learning process fun and not boring.

Cindy: Yeah, I feel, I had compared with foreign class and Korean teacher class because in high school we had both class but I liked the foreigner class most because we had like game, **English game** and like playing movie. It was fun but Korean teacher didn't have any program like that.

**Cooperating with proficient users of the new language (social strategy).** This strategy involved interaction with a proficient user of the new language—primarily a native speaker—although any proficient speaker could be of help to the student. Oxford (1990) noted that “Because language in all its aspects is a social act, cooperating with other people is essential” (p. 170). Cooperating with proficient users as well as cooperating with peers was often associated with practicing naturalistically (cognitive strategy) and seeking practice opportunities (metacognitive strategy). This strategy was the second most popular strategy
among participants, with 65 coded instances. All 12 participants talked about experiences that included cooperating with proficient English users.

Alicia: I went to the English kindergarten in Korea. And I should study only English in there. So I studied English with native speakers teacher.

Romeo: Yeah teacher and he used the blackboard. And we read some textbook and studied English. Maybe it was because he is native speaker so it was speaking and listening in class. And some grammar- we also [learned] listening, speaking and reading.

Interviewer: Okay, so that's when you started studying hard?

Angela: Yes.

Interviewer: Because you got to know the teacher. Can you tell me about the teacher?


JoAnne: First, I started at eight, I [used a] display phone. I talk with Australian teacher, or we sometimes [play] bingo and talking, talking about routine life, so at the time I get interested in English… and I study it academically.

Interviewer: Okay, who do you speak with now, for practice?

JoAnne: Sometimes alone, and I have pen pal friends.

Interviewer: Um, how do you communicate with them? How do you speak to them?

JoAnne: There's a site named, "Interpals." And I find friends, who interest in Korea, and I exchange the e-mail address or Kakaotalk ID, and one time I met a friend.
Martin: When I was in elementary school, we studied phonics and basic grammars. And when I was in middle school I experienced native speakers, American people, talk with her many times I had confidence in speaking English.

Interviewer: Let's talk about the elementary school; you said your teacher liked you?
Rina: My teacher is like my mother. She's very friendly and she is very bright. She's very… her teaching is very good. So I like studying English and I study English hard.

Stephanie: When I was seventeen years old, I started video chatting with native [speaker].

Cindy: When I was nine years old my mom gets a tutor for me, English tutor.
Interviewer: A private tutor?
Cindy: Yeah, a private tutor. So, it was the first step of my learning English.

Sue talked about a teacher that she communicated with and even had a disagreement with. The teacher was kind and explained to Sue why she taught a certain way. This openness and exchange of ideas helped Sue in her communication with proficient users of English.

Sue: And, also I complained her with seemingly ineffective teaching style. For example, she always when we… in listening class, she tried to listen to all the sentences, all the single sentences. So I complained to her, “It is too ineffective to listen all the single sentences, why don't we just listen to all the context, content?” But she didn't just ignore
me, but explained specifically the reason why she did like that. So, I remember I just trust her very much.

Claire: And I think you already know about it. And in college, it just kind of different way to learn English because there are so many foreigners that I can talk to. I try to have some opportunities to communicate with foreigners, like this time (this interview). Or going to the EMC: English Multilingual Cafe.

Claire spoke of telephone classes where she would call and talk with a native speaker. These were excellent ways to improve her English ability, however, they were also very expensive and therefore limited her exposure to this method.

Claire: Learning English over the phone, ok. There are so many companies, which are dealing with this one. And if I want to do that, I should find a company and register. I mean pay for calling and you know, it's too expensive.

**Cooperating with peers (social strategy).** Similar to cooperating with proficient users of the new language, cooperating with peers allows the participants to practice English with someone they know like a friend or classmate. This was the third most common strategy reported in the individual interviews with 45 coded instances. Eleven of the 12 participants recalled experiences where they cooperated with peers in learning the language. The only student not to recall having an experience involving cooperation with a peer was Annie.

**Cooperating with friends.** Several participants remembered experiences cooperating with Korean friends or foreign friends. Foreign friends could also be categorized as proficient users but they were included here as the participants interacted with them at school or in a peer setting.
Alicia: I have many Korean friends but they have to say only English with me. So Koreans should say only English with each other.

Alicia also cooperated with her classmates by translating for them when they did not understand the native English teacher. This was also the first time Alicia went from learning about English to using English.

Alicia: um, the students are very thankful to me, maybe. Because I usually help them.

Because I was the only student to speak with them in English. And they can't speak Korean. So I just, I was the only student that could converse with them in English.

Romeo had an experience with several foreign friends from the Philippines and India.

Romeo: And I have more foreign friends, Philippines, Indian. So one of my friends, he's Korean, his mother and father has a big church. He needs foreign, native English speakers to get his church and to make some contents to study English. But he isn't good at English so he needs me to help advertise them to [hire] employees.

Martin: Because first reason is we, surviving in Korea we must have English. And second I like English conversation to people, and I like make a friend because I am… my characteristic is outgoing. So I like to talk to people.

Rina: I often study English with my friends because it is, we make presentation and speak, speak. We make a presentation. And we are practice that. So three or four friends in my room, going up, one place, my room.
Stephanie: Teacher gave us a free talking in English, so we are talking in English.

So, my relationship is improved by this program.

Cindy: When I was middle school first year, my friend had a very good listening ability and her pronunciation was really good so in that time I thought, "Oh wow, she is gorgeous, speaking very gorgeously." So I was, I wanted to be like her. I asked her, how come your pronunciation is good? How come you understand a lot of English? And she said, she enjoys to watch English, American TV shows or U.S. drama without subtitle or with subtitle and following the sentences.

Claire: I think I am influenced with friends who are very familiar to me. Very close to me. So when I heard my friends speaking in English I decided to study more harder.

Cooperating with family members. Another area of cooperation with peers is with family members. Usually a brother or sister, this person can help the individual practice naturalistically and fill the need for seeking practice opportunities even in the student’s home.

Jamie: My mother is English teacher in high school so when I have an English problem in grammar or vocabulary, I ask mom to help me. We talk about the grammar and she helped me and I also helped her.

The second question in the focus group was “what do you do personally to improve your English speaking, mostly speaking and listening?” This led Alicia to recall conversations she often had with her family.

Alicia: I try to talk in English with my family.

All: Ohhh! (Amazement)
Alicia: because my father thinks it is important to do English conversation. So we are not very good at English but we always try to talk in English to my family.

All: oh, very good. (Approval)

JoAnne: I think… it's not me, but I study with my cousin, so she went to Australia, and they met. So, teacher tell me about their meeting, so at the time I think I want to visit Australia to meet him.

Interviewer: So your cousin studied with you?

JoAnne: Yeah, yeah.

Cooperating in a group setting. Another source for cooperating with peers was in a group setting.

Alicia: I have one class.

Interviewer: What is it? Is it English?

Alicia: Yes. And then we answer the questions and talk about it with our group.

Rina: Yes. And search textbook and he say a page, only page, and he speak vocabulary in his book. And we're team group.

Stephanie talked about not only working in a group, but also starting the group herself as a way to study for the TOEIC test.

Stephanie: I had a group meeting.

Interviewer: Group meeting?
Stephanie: Yeah, with my friends. We studied TOEIC and read a book and read a magazine in English. So, it is helpful for my high school English score and my TOEIC score. **I made the group.**

Claire: **I heard someone was preparing a study group** and the study group is studying TOEIC speaking so I joined that study group for two months and now it's finished but we talked in English. Three people.

**Envy and cooperating with peers.** Three students talked about envy when it came to cooperating with peers. Alicia, Cindy, and Rina were envious of the advanced level of someone they knew in school. This led them to try harder and compete with that person to improve their English skills.

  Alicia: When I was in elementary school, there were about 40 students in one class. And there were a lot of students that can speak English very well. And they had always good grade on English test. Some students. **So I usually envied them.** So I want to do English better than them so I studied hard.

  Cindy: At first, I didn't have any courage to say anything but since she was keep talking and keep asking some questions very bravely to teacher, I decided to follow like her. Actually since **I might envy her.**

  Rina: First, my friend is good at studying, so she is best in English in my class. So, I [was] influenced [by] her. She teaches me in English and I don't understand it, so she teach me.
Interviewer: You didn't understand it?
Rina: Yes. So I say, “I don't understand the problem,” so she teach me. And… her speaking ability is very good, so I envy her. So I study hard in high school.

**Seeking practice opportunities (metacognitive strategy).** This strategy often overlapped with the previous two strategies: Cooperating with peers and cooperating with proficient users of the language. Nine out of the 12 participants talked about seeking practice opportunities. These opportunities could be participating in class as opposed to passively listening, practicing outside of class, or joining groups or clubs to practice English. Seeking and taking advantage of practice opportunities were interchangeable in this contest as not every situation was sought by the participants. However, their proactive use of the situations that presented themselves allowed them valuable practice opportunities, mostly with native speakers of English. This can also be seen in the section on practicing naturalistically.

**Seeking practice opportunities with native speakers.** The most sought after practice method reported by participants was seeking opportunities with native speakers. This could be a friend from England (Annie), a native English teacher (Alicia, Rina) or an extracurricular activity involving native speakers who are neither teachers nor friends (Claire).

Alicia: usually I'm very active now in my English conversation class. With the native English teacher. We read the books and comment on the books. I like activity so I'm very active. And I like to read English books.

Annie: I have my foreigner friend and I talk with him using English, only English. But, yeah, it's very hard. It's difficult for me. I usually talk with once a week.
Interviewer: So do you speak in the native teacher’s class, often?

Rina: Yeah… always asking our student, our class and I often… I usually, I speak English in the class, always.

Claire: Yeah, and there is always spare time between classes. I usually go to the EMC (English Multilingual Café).

**Using the Internet for practice opportunities.** Other participants recalled using the Internet to seek additional practice opportunities. In addition to the Speaking Max program mentioned earlier, JoAnne also visits a site called interpals.net. Here she can speak with friends and practice her English.

Interviewer: Um, how do you communicate with them? How do you speak to them?

JoAnne: There's a site named, Interpals.com.

Interviewer: Okay. What was an average class like with the video chatting? What did you do?

Stephanie: We all had a book and there is a story, so one person reads the story and another student reads the story in Korean. And teacher asks me a question and I answer the question correctly.

**Additional examples of seeking practice opportunities.** Other examples of seeking practice opportunities included proactivity, choosing the specific class they wanted to take, writing for the school newspaper, and asking the interviewer for suggestions for further reading material.
Martin: For example “how to learn English very well” I participate. We have
motivation in English.

Interviewer: Okay, so participating is speaking?

Martin: Yes, speaking.

Rina: Last year I took the native English speaker’s class. It is very fun. So now I select,
I chose the, I chose the same teacher’s class so I feel nervous.

Sue: After school, I go to private tutoring or write articles as a reporter of our university.
And I also do tutoring volunteer because I have, I should fill out the required hours
because I am a student of the college, Education College.

Interviewer: What do you like? Do you like drama or romance or science fiction...

Claire: Drama. Can you recommend something?

Interviewer: I can think of some that I would recommend.

**Developing cultural understanding (social strategy).** Developing cultural understanding involved learning about the new culture as well as understanding a native speaker’s role in that culture. Developing cultural understanding may involve empathy. Several participants sought to better understand English by understanding the culture. This mediation took place in the form of watching English movies or TV shows, visiting English websites, asking questions to native speakers about the culture or planning to travel to another country in order to learn English in a natural setting.
Jamie: Foreigner professors teach us. And they teach how Americans, they'll speak, their usual conversation. And how they use proper vocabulary.

JoAnne: I think… it's not me, but I study with my cousin, so she went to Australia, and they met. So, teacher tell me about their meeting, so at the time I think I want to visit Australia to meet him.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about that experience when you started using English?

JoAnne: Using?

Interviewer: Yes.

JoAnne: Sometimes I watch American drama. I'm learning about routine conversation.

Cindy: And whenever I listen and understand what that mean, I feel, I was like, Wow, I am American. I can do English well. Like it encouraged me to think. I have courage to do English. Yeah, and it made me to feel comfortable when I do English.

Cindy: So, since we have a lack of speaking class or lack of English class I decided to go to Oklahoma as exchange student because it would be very helpful but it is kind of extreme method but I have no choice to improve my English skill because time is running [out].

Interviewer: What's that experience at the English Multilingual Café like?
Claire: if I go there, they think of us as a friend. Not a student. So they want to talk with us as a friend.

This theme looked at participants’ experiences with language learning strategies in light of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. Five strategies were addressed. Using resources for receiving and sending messages, cooperating with proficient users of the language, cooperating with peers, seeking practice opportunities, and developing cultural understanding. Within the participants’ experiences, each of these strategies used mediation to bridge the gap between knowledge the students possessed and knowledge they needed to acquire.

Theme Two: Proactivity, Willingness to Communicate, and Motivation Among Successful EFL Students

Participants recalled specific instances of proactivity. This proactivity was seen in students’ willingness to communicate. Willingness to communicate has been an issue with Korean students when it comes to speaking English. For example,

With regard to foreign language learning, Korean students seem to be even more sensitive to the judgments of the public upon their language behaviors, therefore, they are less likely to get involved in classroom communication, since there is a potentially greater chance of making mistakes which means losing face. (Liu & Park, 2012, p. 49)

All of the participants exhibited proactive English learning in their lived experiences. This proactivity was mainly conveyed via willingness to communicate. Willingness to communicate is the student’s active effort to use the new language without specific prompting or command. It is born in the student without outward influence from a friend, teacher, or other individual. This proactive element of language learning is rare in Korean education. It is one of
the main reasons many Korean students study only for test taking and not for communicative ability.

Alicia: usually I'm very active now in my English conversation class. With the native English teacher. I'm very active in that class and I'm active in the other native English teacher's class too.

Interviewer: Does he speak to everyone one-on-one?

Martin: Everyone but I participating. (Raises his hand)

Interviewer: Oh, you raise your hand.

Martin: Yes, I raise my hand and I talk to him.

Interviewer: Okay so you really participate a lot?

Martin: Yeah, maybe 10 times in two hours.

Interviewer: But then it got better?

Stephanie: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why did it get better? What did you do?

Stephanie: I tried to study more alone to communicate with students and teacher, so I can improve my English skills and I feel confident.

Interviewer: So, the native teacher would ask questions. Did the teacher call on you or just ask? Did she call on individual students?

Stephanie: Yeah, that was sometimes, she called on individual students. I think there is a volunteer.
Interviewer: Did you volunteer?

Stephanie: Sometimes.

During the first the focus group, Alicia talked about her willingness to communicate with her family in English.

Alicia: I try to talk in English with my family.

All: Ohhh (amazement)

Alicia: Because my father thinks it is important to do English conversation. So we are not very good at English but we always try to talk in English to my family.

Situations involving motivation were recalled by participants. Motivation to learn the new language was a vital component in English success. Motivation can come from outward influence (teacher, movie, friend, etc.) or internal influence. Internal influence was seen in many of the participants’ experiences. It was this internal motivation that drove many participants to study and learn in different ways. From visiting an English Multilingual Café to practicing with native speakers, participants’ internal motivation helped them expand their English language ability.

Romeo: maybe my sister. My sister and my cousin. The two… really made my English learning better.

Martin actually took a class on language learning strategies. He learned how and when to use certain strategies in learning English. This class helped him in various ways, chiefly in the realm of motivation.

Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about the language learning strategies class? What kind of strategies do you learn about?
Martin: I think we [are] very good at motivation, to speaking English and how to learn another language.

Sue: For example, we didn't fight each other, but we just compete in one's mind or just in front of teacher we present our jealousy of other students.

Interviewer: So, you didn't say to the other student, “I'm going to beat you.”

Sue: Not that competition. But just I thought it was a motivation to study more. And to motivate myself, I didn't make additional effort to motivate myself because the Suneung Korean SAT was coming, so I just studied very hard. My friends also studied very hard. I just see them whenever I don't want to study and I'm so tired, I'm sleepy. I just see them, and, “ah they study very hard. I, me too, I have to do hard.” In that way, I motivated myself. Dreaming I go to Korea University, I enter Korea University.

Claire: I am influenced when I meet a person who is very good at speaking but not studying abroad. Just study by himself or herself. Because in my case, that is my case. So when I meet them I want to ask her or him “how did you study?”

Claire: when I want to motivate myself, I usually watch the YouTube. Yeah. In YouTube I want to watch a person who are not a native person and he or she is talking in English. I usually hear that and I motivate myself.

Motivation is not in and of itself a learning strategy, however it has influence on almost all other strategies and their use. This is seen specifically in Dörnyei’s (2005a) strategy classification mentioned in the literature review. Motivation and self-regulation can be observed
to work together. The students took control of their learning via strategies such as seeking practice opportunities, keeping a language learning diary, cooperating with others, or organization. Proactivity, willingness to communicate and motivation among the participants could be seen in five specific language learning strategies. Planning for a language task, setting goals, becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings, organizing, and practicing naturally were some of the top strategies used for this theme. There were some overlapping strategies observed in theme one as well as in theme two such as seeking practice opportunities and practicing naturally.

**Planning for a language task (metacognitive strategy).** This strategy goes beyond just seeking practice opportunities and involves identifying the nature of a task and planning for that task. Oxford (1990) lists four components to this strategy: Identifying the general nature of the task, identifying the specific requirements of the task, identifying resources available to the learner, and identifying the need for additional learning aids (p. 159). Planning for a language task can be used in conjunction with pre-planning strategies such as using a checklist (Affective strategy), organizing (Metacognitive strategy) or identifying the purpose of a language task (Metacognitive strategy).

Jamie: **There was a time to prepare the teaching**, so students must prepare the teaching and show the teacher is this okay or is this right. So they practice again and again.

Jamie: **I prepared a lot because that class was very interesting to me.** But I didn't want to speak in Korean because there are Chinese students, they can't speak Korean well. So English is the language they can understand so I try to speak in English. I prepared a lot so I can speak good.
JoAnne: I made a study planner. And I plan before I study, I plan to study… such as one, I finish the writing, two, I finish the listening, just like that, I make the study planner, and finish the study, I check it.

Sue: When I studied for Suneung (Korean SAT) was my first time to study English by myself. So, at that time, to manage myself, I tried to study English every day at the appointed time. So, for example, I said I had EBS books I had to study for taking Suneung because it was reflected to Suneung questions.

Sue: Do you know 독서실 (doksashil)? Study room, and for a personal. I had a compartment besides both sides of me so I can't see other things, other students or other things, so I can concentrate on my studying well. So, my desk was like that. It should be very quiet. So, and also I used earplugs to concentrate better, yes.

**Setting goals and objectives (metacognitive strategy).** Setting goals and objective are “expressions of students’ aims for language learning” (Oxford, 1990, p. 157). These could be short-term objectives (days or weeks) or long-term goals (years). Setting goals and objectives allows the student to meet these goals and see progress in their language learning, thus increasing motivation. The participants used goals such as studying abroad, becoming an English teacher, becoming a flight attendant, and speaking English more fluently.

Interviewer: what's your motivation? Is there something that motivates you?

Romeo: um, yeah. I must study; I want to go to... I will go to United States and study.

So, I must take TOEFL [test] and get more than 80 points.
Interviewer: And how about your motivation.

Angela: **I want to be a teacher so…**

Interviewer: Do you want to be an English teacher?

Angela: Yes.

JoAnne: **Every day I studied one hour a day,** and there is four parts. Listening, reading, speaking, and [writing].

Interviewer: What are you doing today, or nowadays, to improve your English speaking?

Stephanie: **I study TOEIC and TOEIC speaking because my dream is flight attendant.**

Interviewer: What are some of your goals?

Cindy: Like, **I would like to speak English without any "ah" sound and like I would like to speak perfectly like native.**

Sue: Yes, that is Suneung. So at that time I studied by myself, and I just used EBS books, so **I solved about 12 questions a day for about one hour and 15 minutes, and every question I checked the time, how long it takes.** So, by that way, I managed myself to study every day.

Interviewer: ok, what kind of picture did you get in your mind. Like an example.
Claire: I really wanted to go to the America when I was a high school student. **So I imagined that. I go to the USA and talk with native people.**

**Becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings (social strategy).** Becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings was the eighth most referenced strategy. This strategy deals with empathy towards others’ thoughts and feelings when learning a second language. Participants became aware of the thoughts and feelings of classmates, teachers, and family members when it came to learning English. This awareness helped the students to understand others and possibly increased their willingness to communicate in certain circumstances. On a few occasions, this awareness was demonstrated by a teacher towards one of the participants, making it easier for him or her to study the new language.

Alicia: *There was only student… that could speak English so they can't concentrate on the class when I was not there. So I usually helped them.*

Alicia: um, **the students are very thankful to me, maybe. Because I usually help them.** I usually translate for them.

JoAnne: When I was eight, I studied with an Australian teacher. He always tried to speak English and he is… **At the time I was not good at English, but he always said, “It's okay, take more time.”** So, I get interest in English and I love English since that time. And I'm still in touch with him, so when I have a question I text him, he answers me, so I think he influenced my English learning.
Annie: Yes, so I am very afraid of my English speaking, but he (English teacher) always says, “That's okay, speak English, speak slowly.” He gives me confidence.

Stephanie: We were talking about our hobbies, so teacher's hobby is running and jogging and badminton and also we were talking about our hobby, so we knew our information about hobby and hometown and favorite foods and favorite movie, so I knew our friend's information. It was useful for me.

Cindy: Like we have to worry about every single situation but the foreigner teacher class was, he accepted any grammar problem and he gently corrected us and oh yeah, he understood even though we have all wrong grammar.

Claire: I met someone in the EMC. He was very, he has a lot of confidence to talk in English but I didn't ask the question that I want to. So I plan to ask that but I didn't yet. And I asked one of my friends who are friends with him, and I asked about him, “How did he study?” and she said he struggled to speak in English well. But I don't know how.

Interviewer: so maybe you can ask later?

Claire: yeah. I want to. I will.

Organizing (metacognitive strategy). Organizing one’s language learning could lead to better student concentration and less distraction from the task at hand. Organization involves preplanning and proactivity on the part of the language learner. Some examples of organization include “creating the best possible physical environment, scheduling well, and keeping a
language learning notebook” (Oxford, 1990, p. 156). Participants demonstrated organization in several ways. Romeo kept a notebook with highlighted passages. Rina made a schedule for learning English in high school. Sue organized her study schedule for English learning, specifically for the Korean SAT test. Finally, Claire established a schedule for studying from the beginning of her day.

Romeo: yes I highlight and some sentence is really powerful so I write in my notebook.

Interviewer: do you use a dictionary?

Romeo: yeah of course.

Interviewer: Yeah, tell me about you making a schedule. How about your schedule?

Rina: She help me my, write my schedule. I write on average day, every day, school to in the morning to night.

Sue: What I could do with those 13 hours because I had many subjects to study. So there was Korean, English, mathematics, and social studies. So, whenever I'm bored with one subject, I changed it. And so, and I have scheduled according to the subject. So at morning, I studied Korean, and then I studied mathematics. After lunch, I studied English, and for night, at night I studied mathematics and social studies.

Claire: usually when I wake up, I schedule what I should do today. And I try to live this schedule. And as I said… I am a lack of will person. Yeah so um, I think when I'm with someone I do well. Yes.

Interviewer: studying with someone?
Claire: yeah studying. **Planning and studying with someone.**

**Practicing naturalistically (cognitive strategy).** Practicing naturalistically goes well with the strategy, cooperating with proficient users of the new language. This was a good example of the combination of mediation with willingness to communicate in a strategy chain that was used several times by participants. Practicing naturalistically involved use of the new language in communication, usually with a native or advanced speaker. The participants recalled experiences with native teachers and their role in naturalistic practice. This was the tenth most used strategy and the last strategy to have more than 10 occurrences in the data.

Alicia: When I was in middle school, there were teachers who were native speakers. But in my classroom there were not many students that speak well in English. So I was learning English a long time, since I was 6 years old to maybe 14 years old, middle school student.

Martin: When I was in middle school I experienced native speakers, American people, talk with her many times I had confidence in speaking English. And then when I [was] in high school I can have a natural conversation [like] American people.

Interviewer: What are a couple things you like about it? What are some things you've learned in that class?

Martin: **How to study English naturally.**
Claire: *If I want to call with a native person, I should pay more. Almost double. So I usually talk with Pilipino.* So and I can choose the type of the calling. High level or talking about business. Talking about news. Like that. But I choose just free talking.

In Alicia’s observation, she used the strategy of practicing naturalistically in front of the class by giving a presentation. This was not a memorized speech but an effort to communicate a given topic to the class of other English language learners in a natural manner. The topic she spoke on was the Bermuda Triangle.

In this theme, participants recalled specific experiences dealing with proactivity, willingness to communicate in English, and motivation. Five strategies were examined. Planning for a language task, setting goals and objectives, becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings, organizing, and practicing naturalistically. Proactivity, willingness to communicate, and motivation often worked in conjunction with the aforementioned mediation in participants’ strategy use.

**Theme Three: Interrelation of Individual Strategies via Strategy Chains**

In analyzing codes and subsequent strategy usage, it became apparent that some strategies were often used together. These strategies constitute what Rebecca Oxford (2011b) calls combined strategies or strategy chains. This combination of two or more strategies, used in conjunction or in consecutive order, allows the student to maximize strategy use and open new avenues of learning. All of the participants used strategy chains to some degree. In analyzing the participants’ experiences, some students used only three or four chains while others used over 10. For a detailed look at strategy chain use by participant, see Appendix O. What follows are the 10 most commonly observed strategy chains found within the participants’ lived
experiences (See Appendix P for a comprehensive chart of the top 10 strategy chains). Results will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language and cooperating with peers (eight occurrences). This was the most commonly used strategy chain. Participants often recalled cooperation with a proficient speaker such as a native English teacher as well as cooperation with a peer such as a friend or classmate.

Alicia: I went to the English kindergarten in Korea. And I should study only English in there. So I studied English with native speakers teacher. And then I have many Korean friends but they have to say only English with me. So Koreans should say only English with each other.

Stephanie: Me and another student had a private meeting.

Interviewer: Did you have a teacher?

Stephanie: Yes, one teacher.

Interviewer: One teacher, two students?

Stephanie: Yes.

Sue: There was this one teacher who taught us both reading and listening. We were very close, and also she tried to counsel each student very frequently. So we were very close. And also, between the classmates, we always had meals together so we were also very close.
Claire: Yeah. So, there are so many experiences in my whole life like this but I remembered only one case. **Last year, I brought one of my friends to the EMC** and that friend was very close to me.

**Cooperating with proficient users of the new language and seeking practice opportunities (seven occurrences).** This was the second most used strategy chain. Often when looking to cooperate with a native speaker, the student began by actively seeking that practice opportunity.

Jamie: My major office made for **an opportunity to talk with foreigner professors**, so I join it.

Interviewer: Did all the students join?

Jamie: No. Whoever wants to talk with professor.

Interviewer: So, some of them, not all of them.

Annie sought out practice opportunities with a native speaker from England. In addition, she was learning to develop cultural understanding meeting with him twice a month for two years.

Annie: I have my foreigner friend and I talk with him using English, only English. But, yeah, it's very hard. It's difficult for me. I usually talk with once a week.

Interviewer: Where is he from?

Annie: **He's from England.**

JoAnne used a program called Speaking Max. This was used to communicate with native speakers. By using this, she sought practice opportunities with proficient users of the new language. JoAnne also used a third strategy in this chain: Planning for a language task.
JoAnne: Speaking Max is the program name, and there is many class, telephone class, or video class, just watching.

Interviewer: How does it work?

JoAnne: Just buy the program, and… I just… Speaking Max. Speaking Max. And buy program and calling.

Interviewer: You call who?

JoAnne: **They call me and we schedule the [class].**

Martin talked about his weekly schedule. This included speaking with proficient users, seeking practice opportunities and selecting the topic in a study group.

Martin: My English like in weeks, one week, routine is Monday I enjoy liberal arts learning lecturing strategies, native English teacher’s class. And I have lot of participating in class. And Tuesday I enjoy the conversation English class, another native speaker’s class.

**Cooperating with proficient users of the new language and using resources for receiving and sending messages (5 occurrences).** Cooperating with proficient users appears five times in the top 10 strategy chains. It is one of the most popular individual strategies and it is one of the most used in strategy chains as well. Here, it is paired with using resources for receiving and sending messages.

Claire used a phone class to speak with native speakers. Although it cost some money, she was using resources (in this case a phone) to communicate with the native speaker. She was also using the previously mentioned strategy of seeking practice opportunities.

Claire: and call.

Interviewer: tell me about that. What is that? What do you do?
Claire: but what should I say? The word? Calling? Calling English?

Interviewer: Learning English over the phone.

Claire: Learning English over the phone, ok.

Angela: I like online lecture.

Interviewer: What kind. Can you tell me about it? What kind of online lecture?

Angela: Internet lecture. I have, I like a teacher- he is Internet lecturer. He helps out with all English grammar and listening. I studied with him.

Stephanie: When I was 17 years old, I started video chatting with native [speaker]. First I have a big hard time.

Interviewer: Hard time?

Stephanie: Yes, there are many students to study this, so I'm motivated to study more [with] this teacher.

JoAnne: I take a class [on a] display phone with an Australian teacher.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

JoAnne: And calling teacher.

Interviewer: Okay.

JoAnne: And in Internet class.

Interviewer: Okay. How old were you when you did those things?

JoAnne: First, [using the] display phone, maybe I think eight. When I was eight.
Organizing and planning for a language task (five occurrences). Organization and planning for a language task go together well when it comes to English language learning. Participants used these two strategies in conjunction to meet goals effectively and efficiently.

Sue: When I studied for 수능 (Suneung) was my first time to study English by myself. So, at that time, to manage myself, I tried to study English every day at the appointed time. So, for example, I said I had EBS books I had to study for taking Suneung because it was reflected to 수능 (Suneung) questions.

Sue: I'm kind of sensitive, so I couldn't study with my friends, but I had to study alone. So, my desk was look like a square so I have wall besides me. So, I can’t see either way. Do you know 독서실 (doksashil)?

Interviewer: Is it like the room, study room?

Sue: Study room, and for a personal.

Claire: Usually when I wake up, I schedule what I should do today. And I try to live this schedule. And as I said, I'm not will. I am a lack of will person. Yeah so um, I think when I'm with someone I do well. Yes.

Interviewer: studying with someone?

Claire: Yeah studying. Planning and studying with someone.

Cooperating with peers and using resources for receiving and sending messages (four occurrences). Similar to cooperating with proficient users, this strategy chain involved the participants using resources (movies, books, TV shows, presentations) in conjunction with cooperating with those they know such as friends or classmates.
Rina: I often study English, English, with my friends because it is, we make presentation and speak, speak. **We make a presentation.** And we are practice that. So three or four friends in my room, going up, one place, my room. And we make presentation and practice that and reading a book and studying time.

Cindy cooperated with friends and used resources to understand how her friend learned English so well. Another strategy that Cindy used in this particular instance was self-evaluation.

Cindy: When I was middle school first year, my friend had a very good listening ability and her pronunciation was really good so in that time I thought, "Oh wow, she is gorgeous, speaking very gorgeously." So I was, I wanted to be like her. I asked her, how come your pronunciation is good? How come you understand a lot of English? **And she said, she enjoys watching English, American TV shows or U.S. drama without subtitle or with subtitle and following the sentences.** So, I tried and actually it did well but this method was very suitable.

JoAnne: My mother's friend's daughter, she's in New Zealand now, so she send me a tip.

Interviewer: What kind of tip?

JoAnne: Tip? Exam tip. She tell me every day… I listen to English music or drama and she recommend TED.

Interviewer: TED [Talks]?

JoAnne: TED. Just like many, many, many tips. So, she always would motivate me, and she impressed me, so I studied hard.

**Using resources for receiving and sending messages and developing cultural understanding (four occurrences).** When participants spoke about using resources, on a few
occasions they were used in conjunction with a desire to understand the culture. This was often evident when a participant was studying using American movies or TV shows.

JoAnne: Sometimes I watch American drama. I'm learning about routine conversation, so I remember that, and when I was studying calling, I use that.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example, what did you like to watch?

Cindy: My first American TV drama was Bones, you know it?

Interviewer: Bones, yes.

Cindy: …science, a criminal.

Interviewer: Criminal show?

Cindy: Yeah, yeah criminal show and I liked that genre so I could watch it very, in very interesting way and yeah. Since I have an interest in of the criminal science so I could learn some advanced vocabulary like some Bones name.

In addition to Cindy using resources for receiving and sending messages and developing cultural understanding, she also incorporated practicing naturalistically into her workflow.

Cindy: I had an idea that I could... watch other genres and have more interest in all kinds of U.S. drama because I was like crazy about those things and yeah. So, that would be self-motivation because Bones characters made me to watch another TV shows and it helps me listening skill improve my listening skill and some vocabulary and naturally I could say some of correct grammar sentences because they are all native and since I keep listening what they're saying, I think my brain is now have some correct grammar rules. So, I could learn grammar also without any negative thinking, it was really fun and still I am watching.
In the observation of JoAnne’s class, she used a combination of strategies in approaching a classroom assignment. Understanding the culture was addressed via an activity concerning American funerals, sweet 16 birthday parties, and marriage. Resources used included PowerPoint presentations and YouTube videos. JoAnne’s involvement in the class (she was seated in the second row) was apparent throughout the presentations. She also asked questions at the end of the presentations.

This theme dealt with the use of strategy chains. These chains of two or more strategies were identified in many of the participants’ experiences. Using resources for receiving and sending messages, cooperating with proficient users, and cooperating with peers were often used in conjunction with one another. All twelve participants recalled experiences that contained strategy chain usage.

**Research Questions Answered**

There were 3 main questions that this study sought to address.

1. How do successful EFL learners at a Korean university describe their experience using language learning strategies?

2. What, if any, challenges did participants experience using LLS?

3. What, if any, benefits to using LLS do participants identify?

The first question was sufficiently addressed in the first portion of chapter four via the three main themes:

1. Individual strategy use in light of Vygotsky’s ZPD,

2. proactivity, willingness to communicate, and motivation among successful EFL students, and

3. interrelation of individual strategies via strategy chains.
Through these areas of inquiry, participants’ described, in detail, their experiences using language learning strategies.

The second question, concerning challenges participants faced, was seen in several occurrences throughout many of the participants’ experiences. Not every experience with language learning strategies was beneficial to the participants. What follows are a few examples of challenges students spoke about.

One challenge was the emphasis on learning grammar and vocabulary. Although a variety of strategies were used, the experiences concerning the memorization of grammar and vocabulary words were decidedly negative in nature.

Cindy: I think **Korea education for English only emphasizes grammatical things** so I believe many Koreans cannot understand or speak well but they can only see if [the grammar] is correct or not. And they have a lot of stress about grammatical things. So I think Korea actually do not encourage them to speak and learn and learn some culture and make friends. Verbally. So it was difficult when I was in high school.

Cindy: My favorite subject was English but I hate the grammar of English because **Korean middle school or high school only focus on grammar**. But I was like sick of grammar and actually my English teacher in Korean school was, they were not that good a teacher because they didn't explain well and they just forced me to memorize all like substances.

Cindy: Yeah, I could say but grammar class messed my mind.

Interviewer: Messed up your mind?
Cindy: Yeah, messed up my language ability because, yeah. We, in Korean teacher class, we focused on reading and writing with grammar checking but on the other hand, the foreigner did listening and speaking the most.

Claire: it's very difficult to memorize many vocabulary [words].

Claire: I wanted to go out of the classroom. It was too boring. I didn't want to study because they always taught the same way. With the English sentence and translate it or point to one person to translate it. And memorize the vocabulary and the end. Listen, write, listen, write, so I was very bored and not good. So I don't want to take the class. Another emphasis was on reading and writing as opposed to speaking. This led to many Korean students not being able to communicate in a natural way. Stephanie and Cindy discussed this issue in the second focus group.

Stephanie: Most Koreans focus on...

Cindy: Reading and writing...

Stephanie: Reading and writing. So many Koreans can't speak English well.

Interviewer: So a focus on reading and writing.

Cindy: Not listening and speaking.

Another challenge was the motivation for studying only to enter a university. Annie and Cindy talked about this situation in the second focus group.

Annie: We study only to go to university.

Cindy: Only for entrance.

Interviewer: Taking a test?
Annie: Yes.

One of the biggest challenges in learning English in Korea was addressed in the focus groups. Several students talked about challenges they and others face in learning a second language.

Interviewer: Let me ask the first question. What do you think is the biggest difficulty in learning English in Korea? What's the biggest difficulty?

Jamie: Afraid. When I'm talking to you, *I'm afraid that I make a mistake*. Grammar, or vocabulary or something like that.

Again, Jamie spoke about fear or nervousness when speaking with a native speaker.

Interviewer: But you wanted to have English practice?

Jamie: Yes. But something is very strange.

Interviewer: Something is strange?

Jamie: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think is strange?

Jamie: Because I'm not ready to speak in English very good. That's problem, I think.

Interviewer: Okay. So you said that you felt nervous.

Jamie: Yeah, nervous or very scared.

Romeo: *I think exposed is very poor*. Whenever I heard in Korean class, even in English class, maybe the professor is Korean. They might speak more Korean than English.

Sue talked about the competition within Korean academics. This was a challenge for many students even to the point of some students resorting to theft of academic materials.
Sue: I think the competition was more overt than I was a middle school student. Some students steal others who do well—other's notebooks, or EBS book.

Interviewer: Stole the book?

Sue: Yes, but very few students did that. **Also, there was a hidden competition.** When a student buy a new book, that means that book is very good for preparing Korean SAT and we imitate that and buy that book, buy the same book.

Sue also spoke of the difficulties, physically, in studying for so long. The stress and pressure manifested in exhaustion and bodily aches and pain.

Sue: After I come back to home, after studying all day, I was very tired, so I just washed, took a shower and just slept. **And I couldn't do anything. I was too tired.** And also, I had a habit to study like this, so my shoulder and back I had pain with these parts of my body.

Interviewer: So, you kind of bent over the desk?

Sue: Yes.

Sue: Of course, it was very hard to study for that long time. And also, I had much stress as Korean SAT upcoming, was upcoming. If you asked me how I felt with that days, it was terrible.

Stephanie spoke of the difficulties of studying with a native speaker. Although cooperating with a proficient user of the new language was one of the most popular strategies used, students still had a difficult time when it came to actually conversing with the other person.

Stephanie: I have one experience that I had a native tutor, but I have had a difficult time to talk to him. **Because he's native and sometimes I didn't understand his words,** so I
tried to understand his words and I can't speak what I think because my English skill is not good.

Cindy talked about the challenge of interviewing in English. She had an English interview for entrance into a top university but ultimately she failed the entrance requirements.

Interviewer: And what was the interview for? What was it for?

Cindy: The university entrance, I mean.

Interviewer: And what university?

Cindy: Yonsei University in Wonju campus.

Interviewer: So, what was the result of the interview?

Cindy: I failed it.

The third and final question dealt with the benefits the students recalled concerning language learning strategies. The benefits far outweighed the challenges by almost 5 to 1. Like the first research question, these benefits have already been listed and developed in the previous results section. The vast majority of strategies used and experienced by the participants were of a positive and beneficial nature. From using resources such as movies and TV shows to cooperating with others in learning the new language, overall strategy use was a positive addition to the participants’ English language learning.

Summary

Chapter four described the results of the data collection. Data collection consisted of individual interviews with participants, two focus groups, and two observations. This description was presented according to individual strategy use (Oxford’s 1990 classification system was used to interpret this categorical approach) in conjunction with three themes: Strategy use in light of Vygotsky’s ZPD, proactivity, willingness to communicate, and
motivation among English language learners, and use of strategy chains. Finally, benefits and challenges were addressed. According to participant experiences and beliefs, the benefits of using language learning strategies far outweighed the challenges.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Chapter Five begins with a summary of the findings reported in Chapter Four. A discussion of findings in light of relevant literature and theory follows. This discussion looks at the meaning and explication of themes and individual strategy use that were presented in chapter four. Implications of the study, both methodological and pedagogical, are discussed. Study limitations are listed and recommendations for future research are presented. Chapter Five concludes with a summary of the study, and a general description of the phenomenological process when it came to making sense of the data presented by participants.

Summary of Findings

Data collection consisted of individual interviews with participants, two focus groups, and two observations. This description was presented according to individual strategies. Oxford’s 1990 classification system was used to interpret this categorical approach to LLS. Additionally, three themes were discussed: Strategy use in light of Vygotsky’s ZPD, proactivity, willingness to communicate, and motivation among English language learners, and use of strategy chains. Although there were several challenges, the benefits of using language learning strategies far outweighed the challenges.

Discussion

The writing process in a phenomenological study is unlike any other research work. For a hermeneutic (interpretive) approach, the writing does not come after the research. The writing is a continuation of the research: “One does not write primarily for being understood; one writes for having understood being” (van Manen, 2014a, p. 721). Additionally, description of themes is the beginning of what we hope to accomplish in phenomenological writing:
This kind of text cannot be summarized. To present research by way of reflective text is not to present findings, but to do a reading (as a poet would) of a text that shows what it teaches. One must meet with it, encounter it, suffer it, consume it and, as well, be consumed by it. (van Manen, 2014a, p. 153)

It is this meeting with the text and the reflection upon the experiences and shared experiences that causes pause and hermeneutic interpretation.

For many of the participants of this study, there seemed to follow a certain progression in their English language learning experiences. At first, there was a period of difficulty; even dislike or hatred of English. Then came a time of mediation where the participant was helped and guided by either another person or an object of mediation. The mediation continued to the point where the student began forging his or her own path. Scaffolding was completed and the participant began proactively learning English. This proactivity led to a willingness to communicate and extended the initial motivation. This cycle repeated in several of the participants’ lifelong English learning experiences. Finally, a desire to continue expanding their English skills to the point of fluency was evident in almost all the participants. Throughout this cycle, language learning strategies were used extensively by each participant. This cycle of language learning was a key to answering the three research questions as each portion of the participants’ narrative addressed either a benefit or challenge of using LLS.

The nature of discussion, when it comes to phenomenological discourse, asks questions of what and how. Ordinarily people choose to ask “why” concerning just about everything in their lives. It starts at childhood, doesn’t it? Why do I have to brush my teeth? Why do I have to eat my vegetables? Why do I have to go to bed? Why?
This line of questioning extends to philosophical areas, theological topics and general daydreaming. In Judges 12, why did God allow the deaths of 42,000 people when they could not pronounce “shibboleth?” Why do some believe and other do not? The Bible is perhaps the best example we can look at for why something happens and why we are left sometimes with no answer. This questioning continues in the realm of education, specifically in the area of language learning strategies.

The idea of reading certain passages with “what” and “how” never crosses people’s minds. It is the “why” that preoccupies us. In this study, we set aside that old question and look at the “what” and “how” surrounding the participants’ pre-reflective experiences. Perhaps it is via the “what” and “how” that God wishes for us to examine such Biblical experiences and events. What can we learn? What is being said and how is it being communicated?

The same goes for language learning strategies. Let us look at the “what” and “how” of the experience. The “why” will take care of itself in the various volumes of work created each passing year. It is the “what” and “how” of the experience that holds mystery for us.

Insight cultivators are ideas or thematic insights gleaned from philosophic and other sources of the human sciences. They aid in the reflective interpretive process. Insight cultivators are often found in the reflective writings of philosophers and other scholars of the humanities and human sciences. They may give us the sense of “Oh, now I see” and help us: To interpret our lived experiences. To recall experiences that seem to exemplify these insight cultivators. To stimulate further creative insights and understandings with respect to the phenomenon under investigation. (van Manen, 2014b)

The “what” and “how” are further addressed in the explication and elucidation of the three themes from chapter four.
Explication of Themes

The themes reported in Chapter Four represent some of the shared experiences of participants concerning language learning strategy use and its role in English language learning in Korea. However, reporting the facts is only the beginning of a deeper look at themes. If themes are the underlying structure of pre-reflective experiences, then exploration of those themes can lend itself to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) stated that “Themes are the stars that make up the universe of meaning we live through” (p. 90). By their light we can see. Themes guide us and direct us. This can be as a light in a dark room or a map to find a way in uncharted territory. Whatever the analogy, themes and their exploration serve an integral purpose in a phenomenological study. Since the themes discussed in this study are limited in nature, they can also serve as a starting point for future research.

Individual strategy use in light of Vygotsky’s ZPD. The Zone of Proximal Development is the area in which a concept (English language learning) is brought into the student’s level of understanding and eventually becomes internalized. What was once a shared educational opportunity has now become independently owned by the student. Independent proficiency in the language is key. Vygotsky (1987) talks about this development in the case of children, but the ZPD and its components can be applied to those learning the English language in Korea:

The role of the human mediator is defined in Vygotsky’s (1978) theory through the notion that each psychological function appears twice in development, once in the form of actual interaction between people, and the second time as an inner internalized form of this function. Because of this, one of the central concerns of the sociocultural studies inspired by Vygotsky was to elucidate how the activities that start as an interaction
between the child and the adult become internalized as the child’s own psychological functions.

Vygotsky referenced higher-order psychological functions in his writings. These functions can be seen as strategies as they are not simply standard attempts at learning a language but a concerted effort to strategically master a given task (Oxford, 2011b):

Another influence is learner self-regulation, arising partly from Vygotsky’s 1930’s sociocultural, ‘cognitive-historical’ work (in Russian), published in English translation in the West in the 1970s. Vygotsky described self-regulated, higher psychological processes (often now called ‘strategies’) such as analyzing, synthesizing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Vygotsky argued that learners internalize these processes through social mediation (interaction with more capable others) and/or mediation by a cultural tool (language, books, or technologies) until the processes become inner speech, at which point they are fully self-regulated. (Oxford, 2011b, p. 169)

The participants often referred indirectly to mediation as was listed in chapter four. This mediation helped bridge the gap in what the student originally knows about the language and what they desire to know. Also, Oxford (2011b) lists strategy education as a result of mediation. “Strategies can be learned through mediation or assistance. Not every student has strategic expertise at the outset” (p. 27). Among the top seven coded words (See Table 8), it can be noted that mediation had a part in each one.

There are generally two methods of mediation Vygotsky writes about: Mediation through human beings and mediation through symbolic mediators. For the participants, the human mediation took the form of native English teachers, friends, family members, and even strangers.
Symbolic mediation used objects, techniques, or other means to scaffold the learning experience and draw the learner into the ZPD. “Among the most ancient of these symbolic mediators Vygotsky mentioned ‘casting lots, tying knots, and counting fingers’” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 23). Symbolic mediation was used by participants in the form of books, movies, games, and various other non-human methods.

Each participant used mediation at a time when they needed help. This mediation was perhaps offered by others or sought by the student. Regardless, the mediation drew the student into a prime arena of motivation, proactivity, and a vibrant willingness to communicate thereby furthering their English language learning.

**Proactivity, willingness to communicate, and motivation among successful EFL students.** Along with mediation, proactivity was observed throughout the participants’ experiences. Again, the top seven codes (Table 8) found within the interviews, focus groups and observations show the very proactive nature of the participants’ experiences.

Perhaps it would help to look at the issue from a different perspective. In the Christian faith, people sometimes wait for motivation in sharing their faith. But it might be more beneficial to reverse the order: people should share their faith and the motivation will follow. Could this be similar in the realm of language learning? The participants did not get motivated to learn the language. The way in which they proactively learned English cultivated that motivation in them. Instead of saying, “Let me find motivation to learn English,” we could say, “Let me learn English to initiate my motivation.” Then the motivation would be cultivated during and after the act of using the language. People do not learn English to speak it. People speak English to learn it.
Willingness to communicate and motivation seemed to go together in the minds of the participants. By exhibiting motivation, the students sought more opportunities to communicate in the new language. This could be seen especially in the strategies of cooperating with peers, cooperating with proficient users of the new language, and seeking practice opportunities.

**Interrelation of individual strategy use.** As stated in the Literature Review, language learning strategies are deliberate, goal-oriented and accompanied by actions. But strategies are much more than a standard definition. Perhaps that is why 40 years of study has yet to develop a single, unified definition. Strategies can be viewed as something special, something out of the ordinary, something creative on the part of the learner, and even something provocative. A strategy is something others wonder about: “How did he learn the language so well? What is his strategy?”

One is often told about how many elements make up the average human. A certain part hydrogen, oxygen, water, etc. Monetarily, if one were to quantify these elements, this comes to a little less than $2,000.00. However, it is not typical to describe a person’s worth in the context of these individual parts. People are worth so much more! The whole is worth more than the individual parts. One often describes others using terms such as “friendly” or “melancholy” or “abrasive personality.” Perhaps it is important to ask, “What does friendly mean anyway?” This can lead into a discussion of etymology or personal background knowledge concerning words and meaning. These descriptions are more akin to describing the worth or worthlessness of the person. It is from this perspective that one can better understand who and what a person is.

This view of individual human elements is exactly how people have traditionally approached language learning strategies. It is time to start looking at it from the bigger picture. This study’s qualitative approach is the key difference between social science and human
science. Human science looks at the person, not from the quantitative approach of simply categorizing individual elements that may or may not have purpose or meaning but from the whole. Human science lends itself to the qualitative realm because it looks at the person from a “meaning” perspective.

Meaning, when it comes to language learning strategies, is of the utmost concern. The individual elements are often misunderstood as a formula to be applied as in a natural science equation. But human science is different. Individuals are different. Meaning must be explicated concerning the whole of language learning strategies if we are to better understand them on a pedagogical level. For to simply describe strategies in an academic sense leads no further than the page in which the formula is printed. For this reason, I believe a qualitative approach to strategies (on a broad as well as focused scale) could lead to answers researchers did not even realize they were looking for. These answers could be revealed in the form of new questions concerning strategies, taking one in various and uncharted directions that open up the possibility of greater understanding pedagogically and in the realm of pure research.

Like humans, strategies are greater than their individual parts. There is a certain mystery to them that is difficult to classify and categorize. Each strategy in and of itself may seem of little value but it is the grand scope of strategies and their use that garners meaning. This meaning can be seen through the use of strategy chains. Strategy chains are “a group or sequence of strategies (sometimes called a strategy cluster) working together in a systematic, coordinated way” (Oxford, 2011b, p. 298). It is the gathering of strategies in the language learning realm that increases their worth. Just as a human is made up of chemicals and smaller processes, it is the total being that one sees and engages with daily. Strategies can get lost in the goal of seeking individual meaning. It is the whole realm of strategies that intrigues but finding
a starting point for such a view of strategies can be difficult. What follows are two examples of participant experiences and how multiple strategies (not just a strategy) influenced their English language learning.

Cindy used four total strategies in speaking about her future goals. Those strategies involved in this chain are: Cooperating with proficient users of the new language, developing cultural understanding, setting goals and objectives and self-evaluation.

Interviewer: What are some of your goals?

Cindy: Like, I would like to speak English without any "ah" sound and like I would like to speak perfectly like native. So, since we have a lack of speaking class or lack of English class I decided to go to Oklahoma as exchange student because it would be very helpful but it is kind of extreme method but I have no choice to improve my English skill because time is running [out] and particularly our major is very, our major and English or other foreign language is very related and very important. So, yeah but I became lazy.

Rina used a large strategy chain in working with another student. Rina used four strategies in this chain: Planning for a language task, using a checklist, organizing and cooperating with peers.

Interviewer: How did that help you learn English? How did that help… how did she help you learn English?

Rina: She help just a little.

Interviewer: Okay. How?

Rina: She teaching how to learn English.

Interviewer: Your friend?
Rina: Yes. She teaching me how to learn English and she speaking is very good. She make schedules, time schedule in her day. Study schedule. She write study schedule. Yes, she always study.

Interviewer: Did you make a schedule?

Rina: Yes. I made, my schedule.

Strategy chains can be as small as using two strategies or as many as a participant can imagine. Most chains were two or three strategies in length. The most observed were five strategies used in conjunction. By using strategies together, participants maximized their language learning and opened new avenues of learning. The interesting thing was, they probably were not even aware that they were using strategy chains to begin with. For the participants, proactivity, motivation, willingness to communicate, and active mediation led to the use of multiple strategy chains. It my hope that this study that the participants’ experiences and beliefs would open up greater avenues of inquiry into LLS research. A bigger picture could be just out of view, ready to be identified by future scholars.

**Implications**

Implications delineate conclusions and consequences drawn from the results of the data. Implications concerning the participant experiences are divided into methodological and pedagogical categories. Both state important conclusions that can be applied to language learning strategies and the students that use them. However, the foundation for the two categories is quite different. Van Manen (2014a) commented that “It may be helpful to remind ourselves that the word practice has long been used in contrast with the term theory” (p. 1781). The opposition of methodological (theory) and pedagogical (practice) implications has been a source of philosophical writing for many years. When it comes to participant experiences, this
study seeks to address this opposition, and perhaps provide some reconciliation. Hopefully the two opposing categories can coexist, providing a foil for each other in terms of things not explicitly stated in the text.

**Methodological Implications**

Methodological implications can include language learning strategy and the use of hermeneutic, phenomenological research. What did this study reveal? What are the implications of the results and subsequent discussion in Chapter Five? What are the implications as far as theory? Phenomenological implications?

Methodologically, one must first look at hermeneutic phenomenology and ask what it has done with strategy use in the lived experiences of the participants. This study examined the results and discussed what they mean in light of the relevant literature and theory. Implications of this study can be seen in three main areas. First is the qualitative nature and advantage of experiential explication when it comes to language learning strategies. This supports a recent trend in research focusing on narratives and beliefs of language learners (Oxford, Griffiths, et al., 2014). Second, the implication of the phenomenological focus of the study yields a rich new area of research for language learning strategies and the students that use them. Finally, phenomenological terms such as “taken-for-grantedness” and “thoughtfulness and tact” were used throughout the research process. Beginning with the initial interviews, orientation to the research questions, and concluding with the writing process, these special phenomenological terms helped frame the study and elaborated on hidden meanings that may not have been readily apparent.

Taken-for-grantedness is the idea of glossing over those things which one thinks he or she may already know. The reflections people have sometimes give them insight into any
number of phenomena they pre-reflectively lived through. However, people often find themselves misplacing their importance, or as van Manen (1990) says, taking them for granted. Misplaced importance is one of the areas addressed in this study. In light of language learning strategy research, there are a number of areas of a taken-for-granted nature. One area is the personal stories of participants. The methodological implication here is that one should highlight the importance of a variety of design methods when it comes to LLS experiences.

Thoughtfulness and tact are other methodological areas to consider when it comes to language learning strategies. Thoughtfulness in addressing the experiences of the participants and tact in becoming a part of their delivery of that experience in the form of interviews, focus groups, and observations. This thoughtfulness, in a methodological sense, continues in the writing process. One gives his or herself over to the writing, not of words on paper, but a lived experiences that must be told in a thoughtful manner. This forward-thinking from the researcher can make a difference in whether or not the experience was communicated with an earnest urgency or with a dull stereotyping.

**Pedagogical Implications**

Pedagogical implications lead to thinking of those things that are practical in nature. Outside of speculation or theorization, pedagogy is where the teacher meets with the student. In the case of phenomenology, the pedagogy is not just mechanical skills but a reflective attitude and additional sensitivities that can give a greater descriptive meaning into the language learning process. It beckons one to act.

The reason that professional practitioners in the health sciences, pedagogical disciplines, education, psychology, counseling, and so on are intrigued with phenomenological human science inquiry is indeed that it may offer plausible insight, and these insights
speak not only to our intellectual competence but also to our practical capabilities. These practical abilities are not technical kinds of skills. Rather, phenomenology tends to foster ethical sensitivities, interpretive talents, and thoughtfulness and tact in professional activities, relations, and situations. (van Manen, 2014a, p. location 1730)

This study revealed three specific areas of cultivation in the realm of pedagogy. The first is a call to cultivate conversation as opposed to passivity. A proactive attitude from both teacher and student is a possibility. Proactive use and discussion of LLS should be explored, not only in research areas, but in the classroom as well. This cultivation of a proactive nature can be established when one looks at the next two points: thoughtfulness and tact and openness via wonder in the classroom.

Second, this study addressed the orientation of the teacher to the student. A certain thoughtfulness and tact can lead students into a broader understanding of what the instructor desires to accomplish in the class. They can also open the eyes of the instructor to the needs of the language learning student. Thoughtfulness and tact are variables visited in the methodological implications section, but their utility can be seen pedagogically as well. As was mentioned earlier, thoughtfulness and tact can be used methodologically in addressing the participants’ lived experiences. It can also be used in the classroom in addressing students. Engagement and an atmosphere free from fear cultivate thoughtfulness and dialogue. Tact is co-foundational in approaching the student from a legitimate desire to see them succeed.

Third, this study addressed the idea of looking beyond the “taken-for-granted” nature concerning language learning strategies. As with thoughtfulness and tact, taken-for-grantedness is also methodological in nature. However, because of the focus on language, this area of implication can be used in the pedagogical realm also. One can look, not simply at individual
strategy use, but at the complete student. Individual aspects run the risk of a taken-for-granted attitude when the educator should be open to the student as they present themselves. The opposite of taken-for-granted is openness and wonder. A sense of wonder (cultivated by a freedom from fear) in the classroom can lead to the type of pedagogy that makes a distinct difference. Cindy spoke about courage when it came to learning the English language:

Cindy: First of all, I think courage is very important when a student speaks English because I realized that I was too shy in middle school or high school to speak English because I was afraid of saying incorrect word or incorrect grammar. But now I don't care because constantly speaking with correct or not would be- finally improve my language skill.

Strategy use can be examined and taught in this atmosphere but the foundations of thoughtfulness, tact, and wonder must first be established.

## Limitations

Limitations for this study included the location and cultural aspect. The study only looked at Korean university students in South Korea. Cultural considerations must be taken into account as LLS beliefs have been shown to differ from culture to culture (Maftoon & Shakouri, 2013; Mohamed et al., 2012; Saeb & Zamani, 2013). Cultural differences can account for a great divergence in learning styles and attitudes, especially when it comes to students in the east (Japan, China, Korea, etc.) and students in the west (United States, Canada, Great Britain, etc.) (Nguyen & Godwyll, 2010). Nisbett (2003) commented on this difference:

Whereas psychologists have assumed universality, many scholars in other fields believe that Westerners (primarily Europeans, Americans, and citizens of the British
Commonwealth) and East Asians (principally the people of China, Korea, and Japan) have maintained very different systems of thought for thousands of years (p. 123).

Although the participants were successful in their English language ability, it was still a second language for them. Therefore, a loss in translation or limitations in speaking could alter what the participants originally meant to communicate to me. Other potential limitations included age, gender, and geographical location.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

**For Future Research**

One area that could be explored would be to look at experiences of university students with different majors than those studied in this paper. This study dealt mostly with two majors: English Literature majors and Airline Services majors. In addition, one participant was a Mechanical Engineering major and another was a double major (English Literature and Theology). Exploring the experiences of a variety of majors could expand the understanding of how these students learn English and how strategies play a part in that process.

Other context sensitive studies would be beneficial to the literature on LLS. Phenomenological studies dealing with other cultures and countries could expand research and allow other voices to be heard. Expanding the participants’ stories to those experienced while studying overseas would add a new dimension to the research. While this study touched on studying abroad, a new study detailing participants’ experiences studying English overseas could be an important addition to the literature.

Another area of suggested future research would be to continue the qualitative inquiry started with this study. Exploration of student experiences could be examined through the
diversity of ethnographies, narratives, or case studies. New focuses could be on student gender, age, or geographic location specifically in the country of South Korea.

A final recommendation would be an investigation into the technological experiences of participants and their effect on learning English. Because of the proliferation of technology in this study, a proper discussion and evaluation of the subject would be a welcome addition to the current literature. With current technological advances, research of a phenomenological nature could open new areas of meaning into the lived experiences of participants and their use of technology in learning the English language.

**Practice Related Recommendations**

What follows are some general recommendations for language learning instructors. Recommendations for language instructors follow the general guidelines presented in the implications section, specifically pedagogical implications. These suggestions are broad and general in nature due to the constraints of this study. The first is to set aside the taken-for-granted nature that instructors often bring to the classroom. This attitude can manifest itself in the form of knowing what is best based on what one thinks will work for the student (or what has worked in one’s own life). As this study shows, at least in the realm of LLS, one size does not fit all. An attitude of wonder and discovery would do one well when preparing for the lesson, during the delivery of the content, and in review and assessment at the end of the lesson.

The second recommendation is thoughtfulness and tact toward the student. Nowhere is this more appropriate than in the realm of English language learning in Korea. Thoughtfulness towards their needs and tact in delivering those needs is paramount in incorporating LLS into their daily language learning routine. Just as the researcher must orient himself to the research question, so must the instructor properly orient himself to the students in his or her classroom.
These are more a recommendation of attitude and emotional position as opposed to recommending a list of strategies to use and avoid.

**Summary**

Chapter five began with a restatement of the results mentioned in chapter four. These results were then discussed via individual categories and themes. Vygotsky’s ZPD was discussed in light of strategy use. Proactivity, willingness to communicate and motivation were discussed. Individual strategy use was also discussed as well as strategy chains used by participants. Methodological and pedagogical implications were listed and examined. Limitations were also listed. Finally, recommendations for future research were discussed.

**Conclusion**

It is often said that quantitative studies conclude with answers while qualitative (phenomenological) studies often conclude with more questions. This study is no different in that it concludes with more questions than when it started. Van Manen (2014a) noted that “Phenomenology is more a method of questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in that mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed with sources and meanings of lived meaning” (p. 749). If the study has merit and is conducted in the tradition of previous phenomenological work, the wonder that began the process is serendipitously passed to the reader. This wonder plants the seed of question. In the case of this study, the seed for further qualitative research in the area of language learning strategies.

One may observe a sterility of taxonomies and hierarchies that are common throughout research today. Lest this sterility is portrayed as wanting, we should recall that cleanliness and sterility is of utmost importance in hospitals and the medical industry. However, with this phenomenological study I have endeavored to leave the cleanliness of patterns and methods in
order to engage participants in a real world setting. This real world landscape is never sterile, seldom clean, and affords the privilege of engaging participants in their own “messiness of life.” By this path, one enters into the shared experiences of these individuals in a way that no questionnaire possibly could. One does not just ask questions. He or she is part of the process. The interviewer, the participant, and the reader are drawn in together is a special way (if all goes as planned, anyway).

Van Manen (1990) stated, “When you listen to a presentation of a phenomenological nature, you will listen in vain for the punch-line, the latest information, or the big news” (p. 13). The punch-line is, there is no punch-line. The big news is, there is no big news. There is a stir to action. To question. To wonder. This wonder is best expressed in the stories and experiences of participants. Questionnaires and statistical observations overlook the critical aspect of the one area that Korean English language learners are willing to share: Their personal stories. It is through these and future explorations of participant voices that we can begin to dig up the fallow ground of the English learning experience in Korean education. Perhaps the conclusion to the matter is best stated by Voltaire in his satire, Candide. “All that is very well”, answered Candide, “but let us cultivate our garden.”
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APPENDIX A

EF English Proficiency Index Score Change (2007-2013)
## APPENDIX B

*Individual strategy use organized by groups and sets*

### Metacognitive Strategies (3 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Coding Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centering your learning</strong></td>
<td>Overviewing and linking with already known material</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paying attention</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delaying speech production to focus on listening</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arranging and planning your learning</strong></td>
<td>Finding out about the language</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluating your learning</strong></td>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cognitive Strategies (4 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Coding Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practicing</strong></td>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognizing and using formulas and patterns</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recombining</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Receiving and sending messages</strong></td>
<td>Getting the idea quickly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analyzing and reasoning</strong></td>
<td>Reasoning deductively</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing expressions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzing contrastively (across languages)</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Translating</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transferring

Creating structure for input and output
- Taking notes 1
- Summarizing ---
- Highlighting 1

Memory Strategies (4 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Coding Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating mental linkages</td>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associating/Elaborating</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placing new words into a context</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying images and sounds</td>
<td>Using imagery</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semantic mapping</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using keywords</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Representing sounds in memory</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing well</td>
<td>Structured reviewing</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employing action</td>
<td>Using physical response or sensation</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using mechanical techniques</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affective Strategies (3 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Coding Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowering your anxiety</td>
<td>Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using music</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using laughter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging yourself</td>
<td>Making positive statements</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking risks wisely</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewarding yourself</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking your emotional</td>
<td>Listening to your body</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temperature</td>
<td>Using a checklist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing a language learning diary</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing your feelings with someone else</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Strategies (3 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Coding Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asking questions</td>
<td>Asking for clarification or verification</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking for correction</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with others</td>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathizing with others</td>
<td>Developing cultural understanding</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Compensation Strategies (2 sets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Coding Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guessing intelligently</td>
<td>Using linguistic clues</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using other clues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing</td>
<td>Switching to the mother tongue</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting help</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using mime or gesture</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoiding communication partially or totally</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selecting the topic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusting or approximating the message</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coining words</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a circumlocution or synonym</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Individual strategy use organized from most used to not used at all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Coding Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking practice opportunities</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for a language task</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing cultural understanding</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting goals and objectives</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming aware of others’ thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing naturalistically</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning deductively</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making positive statements</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting the topic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-monitoring</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing your feelings with someone else</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting help</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using imagery</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying attention</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding out about the language</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying the purpose of a language task (purposeful listening, etc.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to your body</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a checklist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using laughter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for clarification or verification</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the idea quickly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overviewing and linking with already known material</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking risks wisely</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding yourself</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associating/Elaborating</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placing new words into a context</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using mechanical techniques</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and using formulas and patterns</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing expressions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking notes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlighting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaying speech production to focus on listening</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using music</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using other clues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding communication partially or totally</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The following strategies were not mentioned at all in any of the participant’s experiences: Grouping, semantic mapping, using keywords, representing sounds in memory, structured reviewing, using physical response or sensation, recombining, analyzing contrastively (across languages), transferring, summarizing, using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation, writing a language learning diary, asking for correction, using linguistic clues, switching to the mother tongue, using mime or gesture, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words, and using a circumlocution or synonym.
## APPENDIX C

Language learning strategy system comparison chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy System</th>
<th>Metacognitive</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Memory</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S²R model, 2011</td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Meta-affective</td>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Socio-cultural</td>
<td>Meta-socio-cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dörnyei, 2005</td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Emotion</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Satiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Malley, Chamot, 1990</td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Socio-effective</td>
<td>Socio-effective</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmidt, Boraie, Kassabgy, 1996</td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>Rehearsal and rote</td>
<td>Inference</td>
<td>Resource management</td>
<td>Organizational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmidt &amp; Watanabe, 2001</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Study skills</td>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown and Palinscar, 1982</td>
<td>Metacognitive</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Socio-effective</td>
<td>Socio-effective</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Name</td>
<td>School Year</td>
<td>Male/ Female</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>TOEIC Score</td>
<td>Studied Abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JoAnne</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>English Lit</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English Lit</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>English Lit</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Theology/ English Lit</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>English Lit</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>English Lit</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>English Language Education</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>Airline Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Airline Services</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Airline Services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Airline Services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
April 2, 2015

Eric Hall  
IRB Approval 2097.040215: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Inquiry into the Meaning of Language Learning Strategies as Experienced by Successful English Language Learners at a South Korean University

Dear Eric,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.  
Professor, IRB Chair  
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX F

Definition of terms:

Hermeneutic circle: The interpretation of data that consists of reading, reflective writing and interpretation. (Creswell, 2013, p. 112)

Hermeneutic reduction: “The method of the hermeneutic reduction consists of the epoché of bracketing all interpretation and explicating reflectively whatever assumptions seem to need attention in writing the research text.” (Kafle, 2011, p. 192)

Translation of Korean words:

수능 Suneung: Korean SAT test
학원 Hagwon: After school English academy
독서실 Doksashil: Korean study room
한복 Hanbok: Traditional Korean dress
Titanic strip story for use in the focus groups. Each sentence was actually printed out at a much larger size so it was easier for the participants to rearrange them on the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One of the greatest tragedies that has ever happened was that of the Titanic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was the first trip of the giant ship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were more than 2,000 people aboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were on their way to the United States from England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was on the night of April 14, 1912.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sea was calm and the weather was beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People were dancing in the beautiful ballroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music, laughter, and singing could be heard everywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The thought of danger was far away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddenly, just before midnight, the sailor on guard cried: &quot;Iceberg!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the ship could change course, it crashed into the iceberg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It tore a huge hole in the bottom of the ship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing could be done to save the ship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ship was supposed to be unsinkable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, it was now sinking rapidly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within minutes, the new ship had sunk beneath the surface.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1,500 people lost their lives on that tragic night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who survived never forgot how close to death they had come.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX H

Interview Protocol:

- Time of interview:
- Date:
- Place:
- Interviewer:
- Interviewee:
- Position of the interviewee:
- This interview involves asking a series of questions to a Korean university student concerning their experiences with learning English and their experiences with using language learning strategies.

Questions:

- (Ice breaker) Tell me about an average day in your life.
- (Ice breaker) Tell me about your English language learning experience. When did it start?
- (Affective strategies) Describe an experience you had concerning learning English that was very emotional (could be positive or negative). What was it like? How did you deal with it?
- (Social strategies) Describe an experience you had where someone (friend, teacher, classmate, etc.) influenced your English learning for better or for worse. How did you react? What was that relationship like?
(Metacognitive strategies) Describe an experience where you were learning English alone. Describe your self-management and self-motivation. What was that alone-time like?

(Cognitive strategies) Describe an experience where you went from “learning about English” to “using English.” What was that transition like? (van Manen, 1990, p. 47)
APPENDIX I

Focus Group Protocol

The focus groups revealed some strategy use and some experiential material from the participants. The majority of the focus group dealt with beliefs and value judgments concerning learning English in Korea. Because of this, the focus groups and observation results are reported separately from the interview results.

Focus Group One (Claire, Alex, Romeo, Alicia, Jamie)

Focus group one took place at the Cheonan campus. All the participants took part in the individual interviews the previous week except for one, Alex. Because of scheduling conflicts, Alex took part in the focus group but I was unable to find a time to do an individual interview with her. All of the participants’ were majoring in English Literature. Romeo was a double major in English Literature and Theology. The participant responses were presented in chronological order. The focus group lasted for about 31 minutes.

The focus group was divided into two parts: An exercise where the participants had to work together to solve a “Titanic strip story” and a question and answer time. We began with introductions. I introduced myself and the students said some basic information like name and major, although most everyone knew everyone else.

The students were given the Titanic strip story and told to put the 18 sentences in order. They were given 10 minutes and told to talk out loud so we could all hear their strategy to solve the problem.

Focus Group Two (Annie, Rina, Ellen, Stephanie, Cindy, Irene)

Focus group two took place at the Asan campus. All the participants took part in the individual interviews the previous week except for two students, Ellen and Irene. Ellen was a
guest of Irene and wasn’t part of the original group of individual interviews. Irene was scheduled to be a part of the original interviews. I began interviewing her (this was actually a few days after the focus group) but I stopped the interview after a few minutes when it was clear she was having trouble formulating answers to the questions. All of the participants’ were majoring in Airline Services.

The focus group was divided into two parts: An exercise where the participants had to work together to solve a “Titanic strip story” and a question and answer time.
APPENDIX J

Observation Protocol and results

- Length of activity: 1 to 2 hours
- General: What are the experiences of English language learners at a Korean university?
- Arrive at English language classroom or other English language setting.
- Record student participation and student reaction throughout the class.
- This will be done via observation and reflective note taking.
- Additional observation can be recorded via charts and description of the physical environment such as the classroom or other setting. (Creswell, 2013, p. 165)

Observation Results

Observations allowed the researcher to enter the lived world of the participant in a special way. The researcher became both the observer and participant in the life of the subjects.

The method of close observation requires that one be a participant and an observer at the same time, that one maintains a certain orientation of reflectivity while guarding against the more manipulative and artificial attitude that a reflective attitude tends to insert in a social situation and relation (Phenomenology Online).

Two observations were conducted in participants’ English classes. The first observation was with JoAnne. The second was with Alicia. Notes and general observations were recorded during the classes which both lasted about two hours each. Those notes and additional comments are listed below in the order I wrote them down during and after the two observations. A vocabulary quiz was administered during the second observation with Alicia. Students took this quiz at the beginning of class.
JoAnne’s Observation

Observation one took place on June 10, 2015. This observation was a class that JoAnne was in. The teacher was Korean and the class was on English culture. JoAnne sat near the front of the class, in the second row. What follows are the descriptions of the observation.

- Hour One: A group of students began the class by giving a presentation on American anniversaries. The students spoke Korean but the PowerPoint was in English.
- The presentation spoke about coming of age: Korea vs. USA. The topics covered were drinking, voting, and marriage.
- Sweet 16 party in the USA. A YouTube video was shown.
- American weddings were discussed. Best man, receptions, maid of honor, etc.
- JoAnne was seated in the second row. She was paying attention and listening to the presentation.
- American funerals were discussed. Obituary, the viewing, embalming, etc.
- Most students seem to be engaged in the presentation and paying attention. They seemed to be enjoying it.
- There were around 40 students in the small classroom. The presentation took about 30 minutes. 10 minutes per student.
- Hour Two:
- I was asked to give a short 10-minute presentation on cultural differences between Korea and the United States.
- JoAnne responded to several questions and answered them specifically when I asked. She responded to questions about vocabulary and cultural questions.
• She also asked me a question, “What was the most difficult part about coming to Korea?”

I told the class about not being able to find chicken my first night in Korea. The language barrier was difficult. The buildings and lack of nature were very different for me.

• A test was given. “Konglish” words (Korean version of English words) were given and the students must say the correct English words. The students had fun with it.

• End of class (End of observation 1)

Alicia’s Observation

Observation two took place on June 10, 2015. Alicia was in the class early preparing to give an oral presentation. I spoke with her briefly about the presentation. She would be giving the presentation in English on the subject of “spontaneous human combustion.” What follows is the description of the observation in bullet points.

• I arrived at the classroom about 10 minutes before the class started. The teacher had not yet arrived but there were about six or seven students who were in the class early.

• Alicia was there studying and preparing for her presentation.

• The class was a writing class. The textbooks were on writing and TOEIC. The professor teaching the class was Korean.

• The teacher started by taking role then giving some instructions about the day’s activities.

• Alicia was sitting with her group members. She was chatting with them and in a good mood before the presentation. They were laughing and talking. She seemed relaxed.

• Around 23 students were in the class.

• I was introduced and the students were told what I was doing there. Observing the class and specifically observing Alicia.
• A vocabulary test was administered (I was given a copy of the test). It seemed difficult but they had something to study from. The tests were exchanged and graded. Then the students said their grades to the teacher and the grades were recorded.

• Alicia’s presentation began. Her PowerPoint was very professional. Motion and graphics were entertaining. A male student began the presentation with a background on SHC.

• Second, another student (female) continued the presentation with additional examples of SHC.

• Alicia began talking about the Bermuda Triangle, another unsolved mystery. Her English was good and she had memorized the majority of the presentation.

• There was a question and answer time.

• Alicia did a great job with her presentation.

• After her group, another group of students presented on “the lottery.”

• End of class (End of observation two)
## APPENDIX K

### Participants’ experiences in summary form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JoAnne</td>
<td>An experience studying abroad in the Philippines</td>
<td>Studying with a native Australian teacher via a video class</td>
<td>Studying for the IELTS. TED talks</td>
<td>Telephone class. Speaking Max app</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>In kindergarten the teacher got angry when Alicia hit the table singing a song</td>
<td>Elementary school friends. Competition to speak better English</td>
<td>Watching movies and reading books at home</td>
<td>Translating in middle school for her classmates and the native English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Boring high school English classes</td>
<td>Bringing a friend to the EMC. Claire was impressed with her friend’s ability to speak English</td>
<td>Memorizing English pop songs. Also, learning English over the phone. Expensive!</td>
<td>In college speaking with foreigners. Also, she was a teacher at an academy so she spoke English there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo</td>
<td>In high school. Stressed to get a degree, a high English score</td>
<td>Sister and cousin traveled abroad. They motivated Romeo to study and learn English</td>
<td>Study at university for the TOEFL exam. Motivation was to study in the United States</td>
<td>Using English with a Pilipino friend to translate at a jewelry shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Internet class with native speaker</td>
<td>Friends in high school</td>
<td>Studying for TOEIC at the library</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free talking with a foreign professor at university</td>
<td>Watching TV shows at home without subtitles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school teacher who wore strange clothes &amp; taught the Robert Frost poem</td>
<td>English conversation class (multicultural communication) with a foreign professor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She went abroad to study - in Oklahoma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Martin</th>
<th>books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle school where the foreign teacher said grammar is not important</td>
<td>Watching English movies at home without subtitles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school where the Korean teacher said grammar is important</td>
<td>Using English in the Language Learning Strategies class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of the word “CAN” - positive affirmation in learning English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No positive or negative emotional experience. Took English for granted</td>
<td>Studying for Korean SAT alone in a study room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her father and a teacher who taught TEPS. The teacher counseled her well</td>
<td>When she entered university, she began using English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying for TOEFL test. Reading novels like <em>The Da Vinci Code</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cindy</th>
<th>books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sick of studying grammar. Comparison of Korean teacher and native teacher</td>
<td>Watching TV shows to improve listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A friend in high school could speak really well and Cindy was jealous</td>
<td>Interview at Yonsei University talking about “Abe”nomics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will study abroad in Oklahoma to increase her speaking proficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stephanie</th>
<th>books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In high school video chatting with a native speaker</td>
<td>Repeatedly watch movies. English subtitles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group meeting with friends to study TOEIC. Meeting at each person’s home</td>
<td>On a plane trip to Saipan, she had to translate for her family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying TOIEC speaking in the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annie</th>
<th>books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English academy teacher would hit her if</td>
<td>Middle school dramas at home. Repeatedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school she had a handsome</td>
<td>Speaks with a foreigner friend from England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her score was too low</td>
<td>Teacher she tried to impress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rina**

| In elementary school - the teacher that she thought of like a mother | A high school friend helped her learn English (making a schedule) | Studying alone in her dormitory. Reading books | English communication class at the university - very fun and enjoyable | Not asked |
APPENDIX L

Participant’s recollection of experiences from a lifelong learning perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>English Kindergarten</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
<th>Academy (Hagwon)</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Private Tutoring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JoAnne</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX M

Individual strategy use chart (Organized by percentage of use)

[Diagram showing various strategies with percentages and a pie chart highlighting the top four strategies: Using resources for receiving and sending messages (17%), Cooperating with proficient users of the new language (16%), Cooperating with peers (11%), Seeking practice opportunities (9%).]
APPENDIX N

Strategy chart organized by strategy category use (total percentage)

Strategy chart organized by strategy category use (individual strategies used per category)
APPENDIX O

*Individual participants’ strategy chain use*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Strategy Chain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Angela  | Cooperating with proficient users of the new language  
Using resources for receiving and sending messages  
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language  
Developing cultural understanding  
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language  
Using laughter  
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language  
Seeking practice opportunities  
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language  
Selecting the topic |
| Jamie   | Using resources for receiving and sending messages  
Overviewing and linking with already known material  
Finding out about the language  
Developing cultural understanding  
Planning for a language task  
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings  
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language  
Cooperating with peers  
Cooperating with peers  
Translating  
Practicing naturalistically  
Cooperating with peers  
Using mechanical techniques  
Using resources for receiving and sending messages  
Cooperating with peers  
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings  
Seeking practice opportunities  
Using resources for receiving and sending messages  
Taking notes  
Developing cultural understanding  
Rewarding yourself  
Organizing  
Planning for a language task |
| Alicia  |  
5 chains |
| Romeo   |  
6 chains |
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Making positive statements
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Practicing naturally
Formally practicing with sound and writing systems
Cooperating with peers
Translating
Practicing naturally
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Highlighting

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Selecting the topic
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Practicing naturally
Cooperating with peers
Seeking practice opportunities
Seeking practice opportunities
Setting goals and objectives
Identifying the purpose of a language task
Self-monitoring
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Self-monitoring
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Reasoning deductively
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Practicing naturally
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Practicing naturally
Making positive statements
Setting goals and objectives

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Getting the idea quickly
Repeating

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Developing cultural understanding
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Making positive statements
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Making positive statements
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
Getting help
Cooperating with peers
Developing cultural understanding
Planning for a language task
Setting goals and objectives
Planning for a language task

Identifying the purpose of a language task
Using a checklist
Cooperating with peers
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Developing cultural understanding
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Planning for a language task
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Seeking practice opportunities
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Seeking practice opportunities
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Paying attention
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Using laughter
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
Cooperating with peers
Getting help
Asking for clarification
Cooperating with peers
Discussing your feelings with someone else
Cooperating with peers
Planning for a language task
Using a checklist
Organizing
Planning for a language task
Setting goals and objectives
Organizing
Cooperating with peers
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Listening to your body
Discussing your feelings with someone else
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Seeking practice opportunities
Planning for a language task
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Cooperating with peers
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Cooperating with peers
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Using resources for receiving and sending messages

Rina
14 chains

Stephanie
11 chains
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Cooperating with peers
Planning for a language task
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Cooperating with peers
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
Cooperating with peers
Planning for a language task
Organizing
Cooperating with peers
Discussing your feelings with someone else
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Repeating
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Repeating
Recognizing and using formulas
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Analyzing expressions
Practicing naturalistically
Making positive statements
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
Cooperating with peers
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Self-evaluation
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Developing cultural understanding
Cooperating with peers
Asking for clarification
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Developing cultural understanding
Practicing Naturalistically
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Placing new words into a context
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Associating/Elaborating
Guessing intelligently
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Repeating
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Developing cultural understanding
Overviewing and linking with already known material
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Developing cultural understanding
Developing cultural understanding
Asking for clarification
Getting help
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Making positive statements
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Developing cultural understanding
Setting goals and objectives
Self-evaluation
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Discussing your feelings with someone else
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Finding out about the language
Identifying the purpose of a language task
Reasoning deductively
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Repeating
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Cooperating with peers
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings
Discussing your feelings with someone else
Organizing
Planning for a language task
Organizing
Setting goals and objectives
Using a checklist
Self-monitoring
Self-evaluation
Organizing
Planning for a language task
Listening to your body
Setting goals and objectives
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Cooperating with peers
Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Seeking practice opportunities
Making positive statements
Setting goals and objectives
Using imagery

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Cooperating with peers
Seeking practice opportunities

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Selecting the topic
Developing cultural understanding
Delaying speech production to focus on listening

Cooperating with peers
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings

Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Getting help

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Seeking practice opportunities
Seeking practice opportunities
Setting goals and objectives

Organizing
Planning for a language task

Using resources for receiving and sending messages
Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language
Cooperating with peers
Seeking practice opportunities

Cooperating with peers
Seeking practice opportunities
Formally practicing
### APPENDIX P

*Top 10 most used strategy chains found within the participants’ experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Chain</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking practice opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for a language task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing cultural understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using resources for receiving and sending messages</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with peers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming aware of others thoughts and feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making positive statements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating with proficient users of the new language</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking practice opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practicing naturally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX Q

CONSENT FORM

A Phenomenological Study Concerning Korean University Students’ Experiences With English Language Learning And Language Learning Strategies

Eric Hall
Liberty University
Education

You are invited to be in a research study of Korean university students and their experiences using language learning strategies. You were selected as a possible participant because of your high TOEIC score and advanced proficiency in speaking English. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Eric Hall, a doctoral candidate in the Education Department at Liberty University is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to better understand the meaning of Korean university students’ experiences concerning English language learning, in particular, language learning strategies.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
Participate in two interviews, a focus group and possibly observations of your day in and out of class. Data will be collected primarily via interviews. Each student will be interviewed twice with each interview lasting less than an hour. The first interview will deal with English language learning in general while the second interview will focus on language learning strategies. There will also be observations of the students in their academic settings such as in class and before and after class preparation. This portion of the data collection will take place during one day, for between 90 minutes and 2 hours (or however long the particular class lasts). Other data collection will include focus groups (3 to 4 students in each group), possible documentation such as written journals or notes that the student has taken and finally any audio or video materials that the student would make available.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks:
Risks to the participants may include discomfort in giving up personal time to be a part of this study as well as talking about experiences that may be unpleasant or distressful to remember.

The benefits to participation are:
There are no direct benefits to the participants other than knowing that they are contributing to the current academic literature by participating in a hermeneutic phenomenological study on language learning strategies.
Social benefits include increased information about the experiences of learning English in Korea and using language learning strategies. The qualitative nature of the study could also add a much needed dimension to the current research literature concerning language learning strategies.
Compensation:

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study other than the sincere appreciation of the researcher.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Aliases will be used and a chart identifying the original participants and their aliases will be kept electronically. This chart will be stored in a password secured folder on a local computer. All research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Steps that will be taken in keeping records confidential will include using password-protected files, and keeping all electronic information (audio and video recordings) on a local computer. Backups of this electronic information will be made to a password-protected file on the Internet. Only the researcher will have access to this password, folder and local computer.

Data will only be used for this specific dissertation.

Data will be destroyed after 3 years of safe keeping in accordance with Liberty University’s policy. The data will be erased from the local computer as well as any additional backup sources.

Limits of data confidentiality include the focus group and observations. Since multiple individuals will be present during the focus groups, it is not possible to completely keep all conversations confidential. However, the recorded video for the focus groups will be kept in a password secured folder on a local computer. Similarly, any observations will be in public and the researcher cannot guarantee total confidentiality concerning spoken words and actions in the public setting. Any observation notes by the researcher will be taken electronically and secured along with the audio and video recordings in a password secured folder on a local computer.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, Hoseo University, or Korea University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How To Withdraw From the Study:

You are free to withdraw from this study at anytime. Please contact me, Eric Hall at (omitted) or via phone at (omitted). All audio and video recordings of the participant will be erased from the local computer and any backup sources immediately.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Eric Hall. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact Eric Hall at (omitted) or via phone at (omitted).
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(Note: Do not agree to participate unless IRB approval information with current dates has been added to this document.)

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and/or video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature:__________________________________________________ Date: ______________

Signature of Investigator: _________________________________ Date: ______________