영어어문교육, 15권 3호 2009년 가을

What Do Learners Do While Planning? Learners' Use and Perceptions of Planning for an Oral Narrative Task[1]

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Park, Sujung. (2009). What do learners do while planning? Learners' use and perceptions of planning for an oral narrative task. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 15*(3), 223-248.

Previous research on the impact of pretask planning on subsequent second language (L2) production has mainly focused on the linguistic quality of planned production, while learners' thought processes and perceptions about planning have been relatively less explored. In addition, few previous planning studies have examined whether the learners did in fact follow the pretask instructions, thus leaving the role of pretask instructions in the planning process unexplored. Therefore, the present study investigated whether pretask instructions affect attentional allocation as well as what cognitive operations planners engage in and what their perceptions about planning are. Forty-three Korean EFL classroom learners were divided into two groups: before having time to plan for an oral story retelling task, one group received general instructions, while the other group received specific instructions. The findings, based on both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, indicated no large effects of pretask instructions on the planners' attentional focus. Rather, the qualitative analysis identified a number of other factors that influenced learners' decision making as well as their general processes and approaches to planning and their perceptions about planning and thinking aloud while planning. Implications for L2 teaching as well as limitations of the study are discussed.

[pretask instructions/pretask planning/picture-based story retelling]

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last 25 years of L2 research in pretask planning, the majority of studies have

[1] This study is part of a larger research project, funded by the 2005-2006 TESOL International Research Foundation (TIRF).

focused on the influence of pretask planning in the linguistic quality of planned output. The consistent inquiry into the effects of planning on the linguistic product is to confirm or unconfirm the theoretical rationale behind pretask planning; that is, when provided with some time to plan, learners' cognitive pressure tends to be lessened, freeing up their attentional capacity and redirecting their attention to the linguistic aspects of task-based performance, eventually enhancing the quality of planned speech (Skehan, 1996, 1998). The results have shown that by having additional planning time before a task, complexity and fluency improved, but accuracy showed mixed results (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 1987; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Wendel, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

However, these largely positive product-based findings do not provide a complete picture of the impact of pretask planning on L2 performance and learning due to the need for a greater understanding of what cognitive operations learners engage in while planning and what their perceptions are about having planning time. These are important questions to explore because learners' allocation of attention and perceptions may directly affect the quality of their subsequent linguistic production (Ortega, 1999, 2005; Tajiama, 2003). For example, Tajima reported that learners who had a positive attitude about planning before a task showed a significant difference between their planned and unplanned performance, whereas no such difference was found for those who had a negative attitude about planning. Similarly, depending on how learners allocate their attention, its effects on the subsequent task performance may differ. Thus, some previous planning studies administered different pretask instructions before giving planning time and investigated whether different instructions lead to different task performances (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Park, 2008, forthcoming; Sangarun, 2005). However, very few of these studies have examined whether learners did behave differently according to the different instructions provided. This is an important issue because when doing a task, learners often focus their attention and their interpretation of the task in a different way from teachers' instructions or expectations (e.g., Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 1991, 1993; Slimani, 1991).

Therefore, the present study explored learners' planning approaches and perceptions about planning as well as the role of pretask instructions in attentional allocation while planning. Following is a detailed review of the planning studies relevant to these issues.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Need to Investigate Learners' Use of Planning Opportunities

Some previous planning studies have investigated whether pretask instructions affect the

subsequent L2 oral production (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Sangarun, 2005). However, as mentioned above, these studies except for Sangarun's (2005) did not examine whether the participants did or did not follow the given pretask instructions. Consequently, it is not clear if the results of these studies could be truly attributed to the effect of pretask instructions. For example, Hulstijn and Hulstijn (1984) investigated grammar- versus content-focused instructions and their effects on the accuracy of L2 Dutch word order. The grammar instructions asked learners to focus on grammar while orally retelling short stories that elicited the word orders, whereas the content instructions asked them to attend to the content of the stories only. The researchers reported that the grammar-focused instructions led to a significant improvement in the word order accuracy, suggesting an effect from the pretask instructions.

Foster and Skehan (1996, 1999) administered similar instructions to those of Hulstijn and Hulstijn (1984). In their 1999 study, intermediate EFL learners were asked to focus on either form or content in a decision-making task. Unlike Hulstijn and Hulstijn's findings, the form-focused instructions did not benefit accuracy more than did the content-focused instructions. In their 1996 study, on the other hand, pre-intermediate EFL learners were asked to plan for a personal information exchange, a picture narrative, and a decision-making task while focusing on content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary versus simply planning for the tasks without such specific guidance. The results showed that the specific instructions led to improved fluency and complexity, but not accuracy. These three studies discussed are different in part of their research designs; however, it is not clear why the similar pretask instructions did not result in a similar outcome. Many variables exist, one of which is whether the participants actually planned as they were directed.

Sangarun (2005) later investigated learners' use of planning time to offer insight into what they actually do while planning as well as the effects of pretask instructions on their linguistic performance. Similar to in Foster and Skehan's (1996) study, meaning-focused, form-focused, and meaning/form-focused instructions were administered to Thai intermediate EFL learners, who were asked to plan two monologic oral instruction and argumentative tasks. Interestingly, all planners, irrespective of task and instructions, focused on meaning significantly more than form, despite a tendency to attend to the focus directed by the different instructions. Unfortunately, this study did not report on the qualitative data analysis in detail, so future research needs to employ qualitative methods and describe learners' cognitive operations and attentional allocation in more detail.

In conclusion, it seems that there are a number of factors affecting learners' use of planning time in addition to pretask instructions. In some studies, learners may follow the given instructions, whereas in others, they may not do so. The next section will review the

qualitative findings on what learners do while planning and what their perceptions are about having pretask planning opportunities.

2. Qualitative Findings on Learners' Use and Perceptions about Planning

Wendel (1997) was the first researcher to look into learners' planning processes and strategies. Japanese intermediate EFL learners were asked to plan about lexis and the sequence of events in a film that they were going to watch and retell orally. Their immediate post-task interviews indicated that all planners focused on having a coherent and chronological organization and on searching for specific vocabulary as instructed. In contrast, only three learners reported having thought about grammar (i.e., writing past tense forms of verbs) but they also commented that this was not helpful during the actual retelling because they forgot what they had planned. In terms of planning strategies, they reported saying out loud what was going to be said, writing out the story in Japanese then translating it into English, and/or avoiding talking about events if they did not know the appropriate vocabulary. From these interviews, Wendel suggested that planning time may be better spent for planning content, not grammatical forms, and if useful strategies are taught and learned.

Similarly, Ortega (1999), employing a retrospective interview, investigated advanced EFL learners of Spanish. They were asked to listen to an L1 version of a story while looking at pictures depicting it, to be followed by orally retelling the story after having a 10 minute planning time. The findings were that while planning, the learners focused on solving the problems identified and rehearsing and recalling what they were planning. In addition, it was reported that the planners' attention to form was influenced by task demands/requirements, their task interpretations, and their usual orientation to form and meaning when learning an L2. Ortega concluded that the learners had focused on form voluntarily. However, this study used a post-task interview similar to that of Wendel (1997), which means that some memory loss and impreciseness in learners' responses were possible. Future research should add concurrent data elicitation methods (e.g., think aloud protocols) to increase the validity and reliability of the studies.

While the previous two studies (Ortega, 1999; Wendel, 1997) examined learners' use of planning time, Tajima (2003) focused on their subjective attitudes towards planning and their effects on the subsequent performance. Post-beginning Korean learners of Japanese were provided with 10 minutes to plan before leaving two messages on an answering machine. Their post-task written questionnaires revealed that while most of the learners found planning time helpful, the necessity for planning seemed to be judged by task complexity. In addition, those with negative attitudes towards planning expressed the lack of authenticity of planning time in the real world and their inability to plan effectively. In

terms of the effects of their subjective feelings on the quality of their planned speech, a significantly positive correlation was found, suggesting that individual perceptions about planning are another important factor in assessing the effectiveness of planning time in task performance.

Perhaps the most exhaustive study on learners' planning processes, strategies, and perceptions is Ortega's (2005). She combined two of her previous studies (1995[2], 1999) on this topic, following the same research procedure except for the participants' proficiency. The earlier one had low intermediate English learners of Spanish, while the later one had advanced learners, as described previously. The most frequent strategies employed consisted of writing/outlining/summarizing, production monitoring, organizational planning, lexical comprehension strategies, translating, empathizing with the listener, and rehearsing. Five themes were also identified from the interviews: planners' explicit focus on form, their sensitivity to having a listener, their perceptions of planning availability, individual differences in orientation to meaning or form, and different uses of planning time depending on different proficiency levels. This study sheds light on the pretask planning literature by providing the most comprehensive findings including differences in the way planning time was used by learners at two levels of proficiency (Lim, 2006; Wigglesworth, 1997). Nevertheless, this study together with Tajima's (2003), had a limitation in gathering precise and in-depth findings of learners' concurrent planning processes due to employing a post-task data elicitation method only.

Lastly, Ojima (2006) investigated whether concept mapping instruction, provided as a way to help learners make effective use of planning time, affects their writing processes and performance. Japanese ESL adult learners with intermediate or above proficiency were asked to write four compositions, two of which were to be written before, and the others to be written after the instruction. It was found that planning time led to better compositions. However, the learners' written questionnaires, concept maps and logs, and retrospective interviews also showed that their use of planning time in the form of concept mapping was easily influenced by their previous experience with concept mapping and task nature such as the length, complexity, and discourse types.

In summary, the planning studies discussed above present a number of factors that seem to affect planning process, and consequently, the L2 production that follows. However, these findings come from the studies that used a post-task data elicitation method only, rendering the validity and reliability of these findings uncertain. Also, as shown previously, few planning studies have investigated whether learners did follow their pretask instructions while planning. Therefore, the current study employs both post-task and concurrent data sources to overcome the methodological limitations. It explores the

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[2] This study did not report on the qualitative results of planning use.

following two questions: (a) Do pretask instructions affect learners' attentional allocation while planning? (b) What kinds of cognitive operations do learners engage in while planning? What are their perceptions about having pretask planning time?[3]

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The participants were 43 EFL college learners (33 women and 10 men) at a Korean university. They were taking intermediate English conversation classes and majoring in American Studies, English Literature and Language, or European Studies. Their ages ranged from 20 to 37 (M: 23, SD: 3.39), while their years of previous study of English ranged from 8 to 15 years (M: 11, SD: 2.55). The participants' proficiency followed the pre-assigned course level, and their intermediate proficiency was largely confirmed by their instructors, who were three native speakers of English and one Korean non-native speaker of English.

2. General Data Collection

Six English conversation classes were visited during regularly scheduled hours once a week in the two successive weeks. The first visit was to give a practice task so that the participants could become familiar with thinking aloud while planning as well as the target task the following week. In the target session, each class was divided into two groups and received either general or specific pretask instructions[4] from the researcher or a trained research assistant in separate rooms. The general instructions asked the learners to pair up and orally retell a picture-based narrative in English (Heaton, 1975, see Appendix A for the picture), but they were also told that before the collaborative story retelling, they were going to have an individual 10 minute planning time to prepare for the retelling. The specific instructions contained these general instructions for task performance but also

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[3] If the reader is interested in the effects of pretask planning and instructions on the subsequent task-based production, please refer to Park (in press).

[4] The difference between these instruction types followed that of Foster and Skehan (1996) because they administered the most comprehensive and extreme ends of instruction types in the planning literature; that is, the specific instructions were the most detailed instructions, while the general instructions were the least detailed instructions with no specific guidance on how to use planning time.

included additional, specific guidelines that the learners should focus on (a) detailed content, (b) smooth organization, (c) grammatical utterances, and (d) appropriate vocabulary (see Appendix B for the specific instructions[5]). After the learners had completed the solitary planning session followed by the collaborative story retelling task, the learners were asked to fill out a written questionnaire regarding their planning time (see Appendix C for the questionnaire). To check the fidelity of the research procedure administered by the different researchers, a non-participant observer was with the researchers in each classroom, taking notes for later comparison. When the research procedure was reviewed later, no evidence of disparity was found.

3. Data Types

To increase the trustworthiness of the data analysis, triangulation was used by eliciting data from multiple sources: (a) the transcription of the planners' think aloud protocols, (b) their written notes taken while planning, and (c) their written responses to post-task questionnaires.

1) Think Aloud Protocols

The think aloud protocols were elicited to complement non-concurrent data sources by capturing learners' concurrent planning processes and approaches. The participants were first provided with a five-minute think aloud demonstration using a math problem (Ericsson & Simon, 1993, see Appendix D) and a practice task, where they could practice thinking aloud using six pictures to retell the picture-embedded narrative. The pictures for the practice task were different from those for the target task. In order to gather as much useable data as possible, the planners were explicitly told that they should constantly and loudly say everything that they were thinking into the microphones of their individual tape recorders. Furthermore, their overt planning behaviors were carefully monitored to ensure that they were thinking aloud as instructed. For example, if some of the planners stopped talking but were still looking at the pictures, they were quietly approached and reminded to think aloud as long as they still had preparation time. In terms of language, they were free to use either Korean or English, whichever one they felt comfortable with in thinking aloud. Finally, the think aloud protocols were transcribed and analyzed by the researcher.

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[5] The general instructions were exactly the same as the specific instructions except that they lacked the following statement: "While you plan, please pay attention to detailed content, smooth organization, grammatical utterances, and appropriate vocabulary."

2) Planning Notes

The second source of the data was the notes taken by the learners while planning. Since some learners prefer writing when they plan, I provided all planners with a piece of paper on which they could jot down notes if they wanted to. This was also to ensure that the learners did plan when given time to plan. These notes were collected after the 10 minutes was over.

3) Post-Task Written Questionnaires

The final source of data came from the learners' individual responses to the retrospective questionnaire administered after the story retelling task. The questionnaire consisted of seven questions in a Likert-scale form as well as open ended ones. Specifically, the questions asked the learners how much they thought about content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and why; what kinds of difficulties they had while planning; what they recalled about planning as well as what they thought about planning before a task and thinking aloud while planning. In order to collect precise and sufficient information, the learners were allowed to respond in the L1, Korean.

4. Data Analysis

The three sets of data described above were analyzed to see whether learners' allocation of attention is influenced by pretask instructions as well as what kinds of cognitive operations learners engage in while planning and what their perceptions are about planning. To analyze the effects of pretask instructions on the learners' attentional focus, their questionnaire responses to question 1 were examined quantitatively[6]. Only the first four components (content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar) were considered for analysis because the specific pretask instructions did not mention pronunciation. The qualitative data analysis explained below was also considered in confirming the quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data.

To investigate what kinds of cognitive operations learners engage in while planning and what their perceptions about planning are, an inductive approach was adopted so that themes and patterns emerged from the data. In the first phase, I read the entire corpus, identifying eight initial themes and patterns regarding planning patterns and procedure, attentional allocation influenced by task nature and requirements, attentional allocation

[6] Question 2 was not analyzed because it is not easy to process rank order items statistically considering that the items indicate order rather than extent of endorsement (Dornyei, 2003).

influenced by IL (Interlanguage) competence, attentional allocation influenced by usual orientation to a language study, advantages of having planning time before a task, disadvantages of having planning time before a task, positive aspects of speaking out loud while planning, and negative aspects of speaking out loud while planning. These themes and patterns, however, were combined and renamed later as I carefully reviewed each data source again to pool segments for each theme and pattern across participants and data sources. The refined themes and patterns consisted of general thought processes and approaches to planning, attentional allocation while planning, perceptions about planning, and perceptions about thinking aloud while planning.

In order to verify the identification of the four themes and patterns and corresponding segments, I read the entire corpus again two months later, slightly revising the initial coding. Five segments missed were added, and three segments incorrectly coded were coded properly. In short, the final coding resulted in four themes and patterns: general thought processes and approaches to planning, attentional allocation while planning, perceptions about planning, and perceptions about thinking aloud while planning.

IV. RESULTS

1. Did Pretask Instructions Affect Learners' Allocation of Attentional Resources?

Table 1 presents both descriptive and inferential statistics for the learners' perceptions of what they attended to while planning under general versus specific instructions. Specifically, it displays the responses when they were asked to what extent they had planned about content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. The Mann-Whitney test was used because the assumption of normal distribution was not met for any of the four variables. As the table indicates, all planners produced almost the same medians irrespective of different pretask instructions. Consequently, no statistically significant differences were discerned, meaning that pretask instructions did not have a significant role in learners' planning focus. This statistical finding was further supported by the following qualitative data analysis results of the think aloud protocols, planning notes, and open-ended questions of the questionnaires.

TABLE 1

Rated Learners' Use of Planning Time and Mann Whitney Test Findings

Planning focus	General (n = 18)		Specific (n = 25)		Z	P
	MED	IQR	MED	IQR		
Content	4	1	4	1	-.422	.673
Organization	3	1	3	2	-.803	.422
Vocabulary	3	1	3	1	-.890	.374
Grammar	3	1	2	1	-.304	.761

Note. Two-tailed.

2. What Kinds of Cognitive Operations Did Learners Engage in While Planning? What Were Their Perceptions about Having Planning Opportunities?

The inductive analysis of the transcribed think aloud protocols, written notes, and questionnaires revealed four themes and patterns: general thought processes and approaches to planning, attentional allocation while planning, perceptions about planning, and perceptions about thinking aloud while planning.

1) General Processes and Approaches to Planning

All planners, both general and specific, engaged more or less in the following thought processes and approaches:

1. Work on main ideas, organization, or both, then work on details.
2. Translate the story into English almost verbatim (except for the words and expressions they did not know).
3. Rehearse content and/or language.
4. Identify and/or work on problematic spots.
5. Elicit from the instructor additional explanations about task completion or a solution to a language problem.
6. Concentrate on picture drawings (rather than content).
7. Estimate time to complete task planning on time.
8. Consult a dictionary to solve a language problem.
9. Write notes, plan out loud, and/or plan silently.

To explain some of these findings, both specific and general planners first tried to

understand the main ideas in each picture and the organizational relationships between them. As they went through the pictures a couple of times, they began noticing the details in the pictures, for example, remotely situated characters or items in the background that they had missed previously. Except for 6 specific (24%) and 6 general (33%) planners, the rest of the planners worked on the story in Korean first, then translated it into English. It was surprising that 2 specific (8%) and 4 general (22%) planners used the entire 10 minute planning time to concentrate on the content and organization of the story in Korean while paying no attention to the English counterpart, at least on the surface level. In terms of their means of planning, most of the learners (88% specific, 83% general) took notes on their planning sheets while planning out loud, though the extent of their use of planning sheets varied from extensive to little. One last finding worth commenting on is a few learners' concerns about the idiosyncrasies of some of the pictures. Unfortunately, they spent much of their planning time figuring out the particular pictures rather than on the immediate task of English story preparation.

2) Attentional Allocation While Planning

The planners seemed to allocate their attentional resources in terms of task nature and requirements, L2 competence, and usual orientation to a language study. In terms of task nature and requirements, a majority of both specific (80%) and general (67%) planners considered the task goal to be story retelling, thus prioritizing their attention to the content and organization of the story. The following example[7] illustrates this:

I thought that the story organization was the most important, followed by content, because when it comes to storytelling, content and organization are more important than grammar or pronunciation. [specific planner, 4525777]

Two general planners considered the modality of the given task, thinking that correct grammar is not important in a speaking modality.

I thought I needed to know the relationship between the pictures and the entire story outline. I didn't think grammar was important because I just needed to speak. [general planner, 4590101]

Some other learners' planning behaviors (12% specific, 39% general) were affected by listener sensitivity and communicative need embedded in pretask instructions, as shown in

[7] All examples were translated into English by the researcher.

the following:

When telling a story, good pronunciation, a lot of vocabulary and correct grammar are important. However, if the story content or organization is good, it can attract the listener's interest. [general planner, 4620442]

The learners' L2 competence was another factor that seemed to affect their decision making on what to plan. Out of 11 planners, 6 (or 75%) specific planners and 2 (or 67%) general planners particularly avoided planning their weak areas, mostly grammar, assuming that they would not benefit from this anyway, while only 2 (or 25%) specific planners and 1 (or 33%) general planner tackled their weak areas, as shown in the examples below.

I'm not always good at grammar. So why bother with it. [specific planner, 4455231]

I'm not good at grammar, so I attended to it more than other things. [specific planner, 4620027]

Finally, the learners' usual orientation to language study (9% out of 43) also played a role in their allocation of attentional resources. As the example indicates, this learner had his own preferences and usual style in learning, which seemed to affect how he prioritized his attention during the planning time.

Next, I like organizing a story coherently, so I thought about organization for some time. In terms of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, I just focused on them to the same extent that I do in a usual day. [general planner, 4127475]

3) Perceptions About Planning

Regardless of the different pretask instructions, most of the learners favored planning (89% specific, 90% general). The identified benefits were that pretask planning reduced task difficulty and boosted their confidence by providing the learners with the chance to rehearse, lessened their cognitive pressure during the main task by giving the opportunity to think about the story in advance, facilitated their noticing processes in the IL system, and may have been particularly useful for less proficient learners who cannot think and speak in English at the same time. As for the limitations of pretask planning, it produced a lack of spontaneity, and similarly, learners tended to be restricted to saying only what had been planned. Some of the corresponding examples concerning the benefits are as follows:

We can speak while thinking again about what we had planned. Also, it felt easy because I'd already planned on it. [specific planner, 4477681]

First of all, since I prepare by myself, I can certainly understand what I don't know very well. [specific planner, 4525183]

4) Perceptions about Thinking Aloud While Planning

The think aloud protocols were implemented in this study to gather more precise and rich data on learners' thought processes and use of planning time. Although the intent was methodological, it would be interesting to examine how learners perceive the use of think aloud protocols while performing a task. Sixty percent of the specific planners thought that planning aloud facilitated their planning processes, while 39% of the general planners agreed. The identified benefits and disadvantages of planning aloud were quite similar between the two types of planners. In terms of the benefits, thinking aloud while planning facilitated learners' noticing processes of their IL holes and raised their metalinguistic awareness by producing and hearing what they themselves had just produced (i.e., auto input). It also helped them retrieve information more easily and retain it longer as well as helped them identity a problematic spot and pay focused attention to it. Similarly, planning aloud enabled them to think in a more concrete way in terms of the story, vocabulary, and grammar. Finally, it boosted some learners' confidence. In terms of the limitations of thinking aloud, it rather disrupted the learners' planning processes. For some learners, taking notes was sufficient, and thinking aloud was neither their preferred learning style nor something they were familiar with. Two contrastive examples that illustrate these findings are shown below:

It seems more effective to speak and hear what I've spoken again. [general planner, 4541031]

Saying out loud what I was thinking rather seemed to make me concentrate less. [specific planner, 4619749]

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study explored whether pretask instructions affect allocation of attentional resources as well as what kinds of cognitive operations the learners engage in while

planning and what their perceptions about planning might be. The findings, based on both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, indicated that the planners were not greatly influenced by pretask instructions. Instead, a number of other factors seemed to influence the learners' attentional allocation while planning.

Task nature and requirements were often considered by both specific and general planners. Many of them expressed that because the task goal was to tell a picture-based story to somebody else, they focused on understanding the pictures first, that is, attending to meaning and lexis more than to formal aspects of the language. In addition, some of the pictures (pictures 1 and 2) were not clearly connected, and learners indeed focused on those pictures, thinking about their relationships. Some of the learners also considered the listener sensitivity and communicative orientation of the task, focusing on how to make the story the most interesting and fun. These findings are meaningful in that they corroborate those of previous planning studies, which further verifies the validity and reliability of the post-task data elicitation methods used in these studies (Ojima, 2006; Ortega, 1999, 2005; Sangarun, 2005; Tajima, 2003; Wendel, 1997). Indeed, Ortega (1999) stated that this type of task (or a story retelling task) may be an ideal one for focus on form (Doughty & Williams, 1998) because learners tend to prioritize their attention on meaning due to the story retelling aspect of the task.

In terms of balanced attention to meaning and form, however, the pictures used in this study may not have been the best ones. Skehan and Foster (2001) stated that given that humans have limited information processing capacity, if a task is complex or puzzling, it is likely to demand a lot of attention to the content, thus allowing less attention for the language. In fact, Ortega (1999, 2005) reported that her planners had voluntarily attended to the formal aspects of language, while most of the learners in this study paid little attention to grammar. One of the reasons for this difference may be that in the former study, the planners were provided with an audio-recorded L1 version of the story in addition to the pictures, while in the present study, they were only provided with the pictures. Thus, Ortega's studies ensured that the participants clearly understood the storyline, while the current study left room for various interpretations of the pictures, giving the learners the responsibility to figure it out.

Learners' minimal attention to grammar (despite the specific instructions that included a focus on grammar) may also be attributed to their intentional avoidance of grammar planning. Some of them commented that they knew that they were weak in grammar, so even if they had planned about grammar, this would not have helped. This passive attitude towards grammar is contrastive to that of the learners in Ortega's (1999) study, and may be due to their proficiency level. In her study, the learners had advanced proficiency, and as mentioned above, they voluntarily focused on the formal aspects of language. However, the learners in this study were considered intermediate. Wigglesworth (1997) hypothesized

that planning may have a different impact on learners of different proficiency levels. That is, the higher proficiency learners can focus on both meaning and form, while the lower proficiency learners focus only on meaning. This seems to be supported by Ortega's (2005) low intermediate and Sangarun's (2005) intermediate learners, who paid the most attention to content and lexis while planning.

In terms of the learners' thought processes and general approaches to planning, both specific and general planners showed similar processes and strategies, and many of these were documented in previous planning studies as well (Ortega, 1999, 2005; Sangarun, 2005; Tajima, 2003; Wendel, 1997). One of the strategies most frequently observed in this study was the translation of a Korean story into English in a relatively verbatim manner. Some people may disagree with the use of the L1 in an L2 task; however, the L1 use has been well documented in the L2 learning literature as a cognitive tool to make meaning and retrieve language from memory (Ortega, 1999, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Wendel, 1997). In this study, most of the learners used the L1 extensively to make sense of the given pictures and create a detailed and organized story. Also, when they identified a problematic spot either regarding content or language, they resorted to the L1 from using the L2 to engage more deeply in thought processes and work on the problem (Chon, 2009). Thus, learners' L1 use or translation should not be prohibited for planning processes (but neither should it be encouraged as it may substitute for L2 learning).

However, the analysis of the think aloud protocols showed that when the learners could not express their ideas in English, many of them became frustrated and often went back to repeatedly rehearsing the L1 version of the story. It may be that they were using an avoidance strategy, as reported in Tajima (2003)'s study. No matter what the reason may be, some learners commented that with a list of useful words and expressions, their planning processes might have been more effective and more language-oriented than occurred in the current study.

The final observation made from the think aloud protocols was a few planners' strong interest in the idiosyncrasies of some of the pictures they received. It was evident that they kept going back to these pictures, wondering about them and trying to understand them. Though not many learners noticed these pictures, a future study should prepare clearer pictures so that planning time is not wasted on the pictures.

Learners' perceptions about planning are also important aspects of planning research. This is particularly so given that learners' experience or awareness about the benefits of planning may lead them to use planning time effectively or just waste it, thinking that planning is not going to benefit them. This was implied in Tajima's (2003) study on the relationship between learners' subjective attitude towards planning and their planned

output. The findings of the present study showed that planning was valued by most of the learners in the study, whose reasons support L2 acquisition theories[8]. For example, some learners commented that if they had not had time to think about the content of a story first, they might have been overwhelmed with creating individual sentences without sufficient understanding of the story when working with their classmates during the main task. They further mentioned that having had some individual planning time enabled them to listen and speak better during collaborative task performance. These comments corroborate the theoretical arguments for planning, asserting that pretask planning may ease the communicative and cognitive pressure on the learners' limited working memory, thus enabling improved task performance (Skehan, 1996, 1998). Some other learners mentioned that planning made them easily realize what they did not know, which supports Swain's (1995) output hypothesis that L2 production allows learners to notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say in the target language. However, as stated previously, some kind of assistance should be provided when implementing pretask planning in a classroom so that learners can make the best use of planning time for acquisitional purposes.

Concerning the use of think aloud protocols while planning, almost equally proportional positive and negative comments were expressed when both types of planners' comments were combined. Some of the positive attitudes were that thinking aloud facilitated learners' noticing processes of their IL holes and raised their metalinguistic awareness by producing and hearing what they had just said themselves. This is an example of the auto-input hypothesis (Schmidt & Frota, 1996), which extends Swain's (1995) output hypothesis and states that learners can attend to the input provided by their own productions. Given that input and noticing are crucial elements of L2 acquisition (e.g., Krashen, 1985; Schmidt, 2001), planning out loud can serve as an additional learning opportunity that L2 learners can make use of. In contrast, those with negative attitudes towards thinking aloud expressed that it rather hindered their thought processes, interrupting their concentration on the task itself due to the burden of having to say out loud everything they were thinking[9].

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[8] An anonymous reviewer insightfully commented that by engaging in the planning process, learners may utilize explicit knowledge only, prohibiting the development of implicit knowledge in the IL system. What kind of knowledge learners use and/or develop during planning time has not been directly researched in the pretask planning literature; however, it is speculated that the type of knowledge planners use and/or develop may be dependent upon learners' proficiency levels and the manner in which planning time is administered. For those who are interested in the relationship between planning and acquisition, please refer to Park (2009).

[9] An anonymous reviewer commented that this might have led to the small difference between the general and specific instruction types in their planning behavior. This is a possibility which needs to be eliminated in a future study.

This can be considered an indication that the one-time practice session was not sufficient for some learners to become comfortable with this technique. Using the think aloud protocols was intended as a methodological advance from previous planning studies (Ojima, 2006; Ortega, 1999, 2005; Tajima, 2003; Wendel, 1997). However, the intention presupposes that learners are fully trained for thinking aloud. Future research needs to make sure that all participants receive enough training in thinking aloud before the data are gathered for analysis.

In conclusion, the present study largely corroborates the findings of previous planning studies (Ojima, 2006; Ortega, 1999, 2005; Tajima, 2003; Wendel, 1997) by employing a concurrent data source together with non-concurrent data sources. It revealed a number of factors that influence allocation of attentional resources, which L2 teachers can consider when implementing pretask planning in their classrooms. Specifically, there seemed to be no large differences due to the different pretask instructions. This is a caution to L2 teachers that they cannot rely on task instructions alone to affect learners' planning focus (e.g., Coughlan & Duff, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 1991, 1993; Slimani, 1991)[10]. Instead, other factors seem to play a role separately or in combination with one another, including pretask instructions. This is even more so considering the individual differences in what learners do while planning. Thus, L2 teachers need to be sensitive to a number of possible factors when creating or adapting a task for teaching purposes. In addition, for learners who have negative perceptions of planning, offering some kind of explanation of the benefits of planning before a task may facilitate more effective planning use. In terms of the limitations of the study, the major one has already been mentioned. Some of the learners in this study did not produce sufficient data from their thinking aloud, most likely due to their being unfamiliar with thinking aloud. Future research needs to make sure to provide sufficient training sessions for learners to become comfortable and think aloud freely. The second limitation is that the present study only provided two types of pretask instructions. Similarly, as an anonymous reviewer pointed out, it is possible that the difference between the general and specific instructions may not have been seen as a big enough difference by the learners, despite the intent behind administering them in the current study. This point is well taken. A future study may explore various types of pretask instructions with noticeable differences between them and examine the effects of pretask instructions on what learners do while planning. The third limitation, addressed by another anonymous reviewer, is the lack of an objective proficiency test in this study. As previously mentioned in the literature review, learners' planning time may be differently

[10] However, this interpretation should only be valid within this particular context of the study. In Park's study (in press), both planners and nonplanners received general versus specific instructions, showing the effect of pretask instruction on subsequent L2 task-based interaction.

used depending on their proficiency levels (e.g., Wigglesworth, 1997). As a measure of the participants' proficiency level, the current study adopted the pre-assigned class level. Though confirmed by the instructors, some of the participants' proficiencies may have been noticeably different. Future planning research needs to take this into consideration for both empirical and pedagogical purposes. The final limitation (and strength) is that this study focused on the planning process, not the product, offering more balanced insight into the role of planning in L2 task-based production. However, what is still lacking is a direct explanation of the link between process and product. In other words, the theoretical assumption of pretask planning is that by planning form or content in advance, the cognitive burden is reduced during the main task, resulting in improved performance. However, little is understood about how exactly learners use the freed-up attentional resources during the main task. This might be a difficult question to explore, but an investigation of this issue would significantly further our understanding of the learning processes activated by pretask planning.

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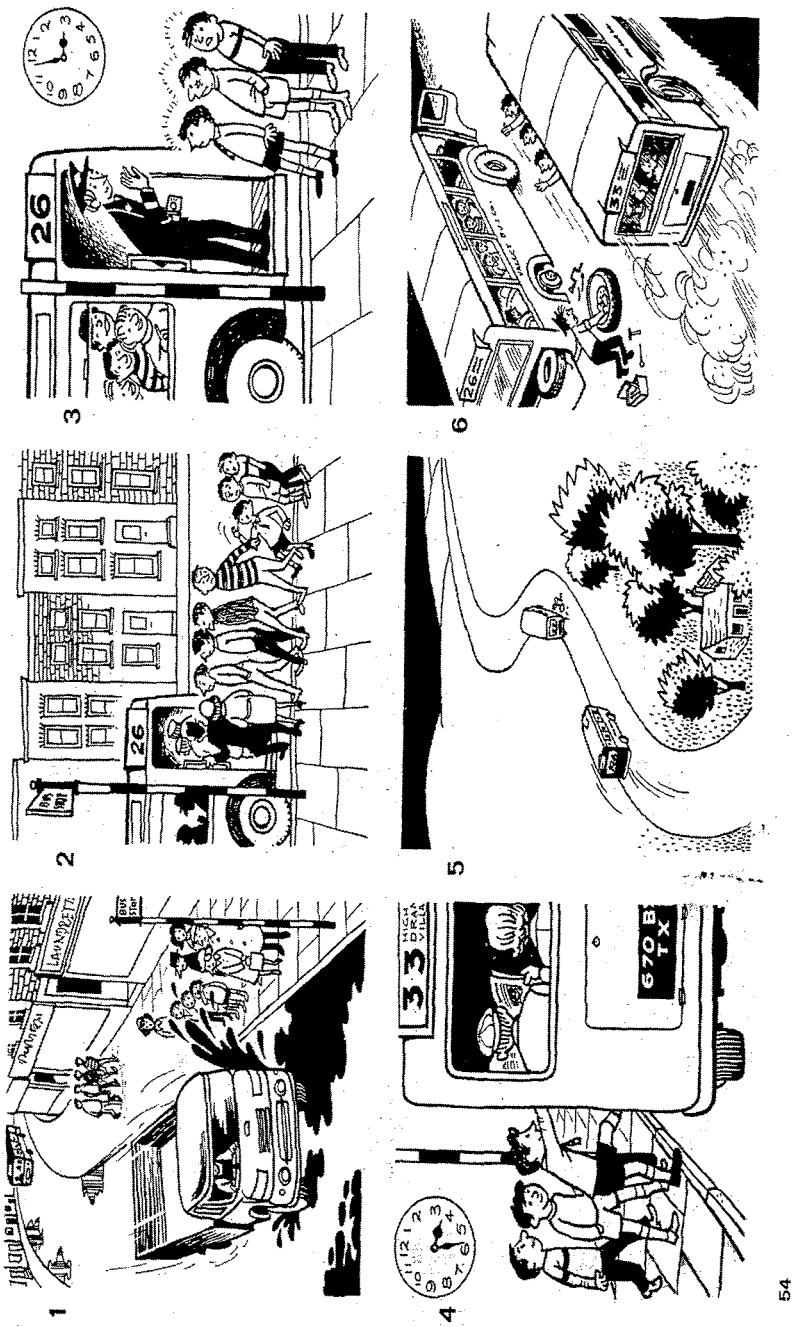
APPENDIX A

Waiting for a Bus



APPENDIX B

Specific Pretask Instructions

Student A and student B will each receive a paper that contains six pictures. If you describe the pictures in the given order, it will make a story. Now I would like you to retell the story in English. When you do so, please make it as detailed as possible as if you were going to tell it to somebody who has never seen the pictures before. If you think that some of the pictures do not go together, you may add new content in order to make them work. So, what A and B should do is to work together to make one English story. In discussing it, you may choose to speak English, Korean, or both, but do not write. However, when you actually retell the story from picture 1 to picture 6, you should only speak English as much as possible. You have 20 minutes. Your story should start with the following: One day, three boys…

Before you work with your partner, in order to assist you to prepare, you will be given a sheet of paper to take notes on. But please do not write a complete sentence either in Korean or English. Also, to assist you to prepare, you will be given 10 minutes of planning time. Please don't forget to think aloud loudly and clearly. When thinking aloud, you can choose either Korean or English, whichever language you feel comfortable in. In 10 minutes, your notes will be taken away and you will begin to retell the story in English with your partner.

Now you will be given the paper containing the six pictures. (Students received the papers.) While you plan, please pay attention to detailed content, smooth organization, grammatical utterances, and appropriate vocabulary. If you do not have any questions, please start thinking aloud now. (10 minutes have passed.) It's time for you and your partner to begin. Please begin now.

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire

1. While planning for 10 minutes, how much did you think about

	A lot			Not at all
content	4	3	2	1
grammar	4	3	2	1
organization	4	3	2	1
pronunciation	4	3	2	1
vocabulary	4	3	2	1

1.1. List anything else that you thought about while planning.

2. While planning for 10 minutes, what did you think about most in the following components? Please rank from 1 to 5. 1 means what you thought about most, while 5 means what you thought about least.

Content__ Grammar __ Organization __ Pronunciation __ Lexis__

2.1. You have ranked the five components from 1 to 5. Please explain the reasons behind this ranking.

3. While planning for 10 minutes, have you realized something about the following? If yes, please write in detail what it was with examples. If not, please go to question 4.

3.1. I could not use grammar correctly. (Please explain with examples.)

3.2. I could not organize a story well. (Please explain with examples.)

3.3. I did not know how to pronounce certain words correctly. (Please explain with examples.)

3.4. I did not know what vocabulary to use to express certain meaning. (Please explain with examples.)

3.5. Other than what you wrote above, please write anything else that you realized that you did not know.

4. While planning for 10 minutes, what did you realize that you did not know most in the following components? 1 means what you realized that you did not know most, while 4 means what you realized that you did not know least.

Grammar __ Organization __ Pronunciation __ Lexis__

5. Do you think that planning before talking with your partner helps your English to improve? (For example, you planned for 10 minutes before you worked with your partner to make an English story.)

A lot			Not at all
4	3	2	1

Please write the reason for your answer above.

6. From the 10 minute planning session, do you remember

6.1. Content?
a) Write which pictures you remember most.
b) What were you thinking while you were describing them?

6.2. Grammar?
a) Write all examples of grammar you remember.
b) What were you thinking while you were using these examples?

6.3. Pronunciation?
a) Write all examples of pronunciation you remember.
b) What were you thinking while you were pronouncing these words?

6.4. Vocabulary?
a) Write all examples of vocabulary you remember.
b) What were you thinking when you were using these words?

6.5. Other than what you wrote above, please write anything else that you remember now and state what you were thinking at the time.

7. Do you think that think aloud was helpful for preparing an English story? You have two options below. If both apply to you, please respond to both.

Yes? Please write the reasons in detail.
No? Please write the reasons in detail.

APPENDIX D

Think Aloud Demonstration and Directions

When we solve math problems, we often tend to say aloud what we are thinking. This is called "think aloud." I will show you what think aloud is using a math problem. Please

watch carefully: At a store, there is wine contained in a red bottle. The price reads 10,000 won, and the wine is 8,000 won more expensive than the bottle. Then how much is the red bottle?

Red bottle: X
10,000 won = red bottle + wine
10,000 won = X + (X + 8000 won)
10,000 won = 2X + 8000 won
10,000 won – 8000 won = 2X
2000 won = 2X
X = 2000 won / 2
X = 1000 won
Red bottle: 1000 won

Now do you understand what think aloud is? Think aloud is saying out loud everything that you are thinking. When you plan for an English story, you should constantly say out loud everything you are thinking. You do not need to plan ahead what you are going to say nor explain why you are saying what you are saying out loud. Just say what you are thinking as if you were alone in a room and telling yourself. And please think aloud clearly and loudly enough into the microphone of your tape recorder. If you mumble and/or speak softly, I cannot hear you and use your data. Please remember that while you are thinking aloud, I will not be able to help you in any way. You can use either English or Korean, whichever language you feel more comfortable with when thinking aloud. Now, do you understand what I want you to do?

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary and tertiary

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Received in July, 2009
Reviewed in August, 2009
Revised version received in September, 2009