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Effects of Strategy-Based Instruction on Improving EFL Reading Comprehension for Middle School Students*

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This paper discusses the application of an eight week strategies-based instruction (SBI) training program conducted in middle school English classes in Korea. The program focused on specific instruction in reading strategies: Identifying key words, topics, and main ideas; previewing and making predictions; and understanding logical organization. This paper examined the impact of strategy use by the participants to improve EFL reading comprehension. Findings revealed that the participants possessed a general understanding of EFL strategy use, and were able to improve their reading skills. However, overall practice of strategy use was limited due to the lack of adherence to effective individualized self-study practices and the restricted in-class opportunities to learn and reinforce applicable strategies. In addition, surveys and interviews identified further limitations associated with time restrictions, student workload, and graded requirements for the university entrance exam. These limitations indicated that the application of strategies was less likely to occur in public education and more acceptable in commercial non-graded academic institutes and private settings. Thus, EFL teachers should promote an awareness of SBI as an effective option while reinforcing the requirements essential to aid reading comprehension.

[strategy-based instruction/reading strategies/reading comprehension]

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I. INTRODUCTION

The present study addresses the effectiveness of learner strategy use for improving reading comprehension amongst EFL learners. This study aims to measure the success of Strategy-Based Instruction (hereinafter SBI) for Korean middle school students engaged in English education, then examine the extent to which learner strategy is used effectively, and their relative acceptance. The study discusses the application of an eight week SBI training program conducted on middle school classes. It is related to specific instruction in reading strategies focusing on comprehension: Identifying key words, topics, and main ideas; previewing and making predictions; organizing frames of reference.

Historically, education in Korea reflects a state of teaching whereby parents reinforce the importance of education to each generation, a strong national curriculum exists and pursuing academic excellence is a highly desirable goal. In 1988 The Korean Ministry of Education (MOE) advocated educational objectives towards building a democratic state and promoting the prosperity of all humankind (Fundamental Law of Education).

Such policy was initially aimed at the primary school level, which was an education policy designed to rapidly expand the country's educated population, given the lack of finance available from parents, less than ideal economic stability and unique nationwide circumstances. Following the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, figures indicated a school aged child enrollment of only 65% for primary, 20% for secondary and less than 2% for tertiary education. By 1965 more than 90% of elementary school aged children were enrolled (Kim & Lee, 2002b). Yet, insufficient resource allocation and an inability to respond to increased public demand resulted in the education being offered at a universally low level, thus becoming characterized by vastly overcrowded classrooms, undifferentiated-level education, lack of sufficiently educated teachers and poor study conditions. Rapid expansionist and equalization policies that followed enabled vast numbers of students to compete for prestigious university enrollments (Kim & Lee, 2002a). Over 70% of university students advance to higher education (Kim & Lee, 2002b).

The intensive competition provided the stimulus for businesses to offer educational opportunities in specialized subjects such as math and English. The relationship between wealth and tertiary educational opportunities has become more apparent in this era of globalization and international opportunity. Given this, proficiency in a second or foreign language is likely less considered an option in Korea but rather a necessity for the future of academic learning and international opportunities.

In these circumstances of English education in Korea, more effective teaching and learning approaches, methods and techniques are needed. Thus, how to instruct reading classes through SBI is discussed on the basis of an experiment in this study.

As an alternative learner-centered approach, SBI may be approached from two directions: Explicit and implicit (Bae, 2014; Chamot, 2005; Cohen, Weaver, & Li, 1996). Explicit in this case refers to the direct teaching methods employed to convey strategies to the learners while the implicit form of instruction seeks to integrate and embed such strategies within task and course materials. In practice, though various types and styles of strategies for EFL are in use amongst Korean students, it is more likely at an ad-hoc level and dependent upon the learner to reconcile them through their discovery phase of learning.

It could be argued that formal SBI might offer learners both a long and short-term insight into improving their particular language skills (Han, 2013; Jeon, 2015; Lim, 2013; Park, 2011). As such, this study examines the relationships between SB teacher-led instruction in English education and the practical application of SBI in future classrooms as part of an official national curriculum. Mixed data collection methods were utilized to gain information to support the authors' line of inquiry. That is, strategies were explicitly taught at two designated public Korean middle schools and assessed for the purpose of measuring its level of effectiveness. The aim of this study was to highlight the need and direction of further research in this area and an overall recommendation for the inclusion of formal SBI to be inclusive of the second language curriculum in public schools at an official level.

II. BACKGROUND

1. Evidence of Learner Strategies

English education is a viable resource and advantage that continues to expand due to its increasing importance in the Korean employment marketplace and overall global positioning. However, a number of issues remain including how effective public forum teaching can become in the face of the pervasive wealth requirements for ever higher-levels of education access and materials offered within the opportunistic market of private education. Surprisingly, some studies (Kim, 2001; Kim & Lee, 2002a; Kim & Lee, 2002b; Seth, 2002) have examined the impact of this rise of academies and tutoring, the additional expense resulting from it, and whether the ends justify the means. It is suggested that the ongoing curriculum changes in public schools will more likely have a long term impact provided that the skills of the available teachers reflect the teaching requirements and that students can be guided towards the attainment of SLA through the realization and assistance of SBI with an emphasis on autonomous learning practices.

Cohen et al. (1996) offered a broad version of the definition for learner strategies that suggests such methods consist of steps or actions selected by learners to better learning and use of a foreign language. Though, it could be suggested this definition lacks certain clarity

when differentiating between learning styles and strategies. While learning styles and strategies are linked there is a subtle difference. Learning styles refer to an individual's natural and habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Christison, 2003). Further to this, is the distinction placed upon tactics and strategies. While strategies are arguably a particular approach taken, tactics are the actual steps and activities taken to assist or enhance comprehension (Goh, 1998). Weinstein and Mayer (1986) described learner strategies as behaviors or thoughts that a learner engages in during learning which have the intention of influencing the learner's encoding process. Lewalter (2003) added to this by noting how learning strategies are seen to be a schematic structure combining a sequence of specific learning strategies for the purpose of gaining new knowledge for the learner once executed.

Oxford (1990) was more specific in her statement that learner strategies are operations employed by the learner to assist in the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. However, in this regard, Bremner (2000) suggested "the situation had evolved to where there was no clear agreement on a definition for strategies but rather a variety of classification schemes and elicitation methods" (p. 493). Yet despite the plethora of available and varying resources of the concepts of strategies, the authors tend to focus on a single definition as provided by Brown (2014). Brown stated that strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. In addition, Brown defined that strategies are those specific actions that we take to solve a given problem, and that vary considerably within each individual. Differentiating what a strategy pertains to be is far from simple task. It has been suggested by Macaro (2006, p. 325) that there are three underlying propositions to features of learner strategies:

(ⅰ) Researchers should describe strategies in terms of a goal, a situation, and a mental action
(ⅱ) Strategies are the raw material of cognitive processing, and their effectiveness or non-effectiveness derives from the way they are used and combined in tasks and processes.
(ⅲ) Strategies need to be distinguished from subconscious activity, language learning processes, skills, learning plans, and learning styles.

Macaro (2006) further reasoned that in order for a learner strategy to be identified, described, or constituted as such, then a number of certain features must be prescribed to them as categorized by the following: Location of strategies, size of strategies, incorporation of goals, and being both situation-specific and transferable to other situations or goals. Ideally such classification lends itself to reward the learner through the provision

of an instrument to identify and individualize strategies that best suit them. Brown (2014) also noted that there needs to be greater attention given to SBI whereby teachers can imbed awareness into their pedagogy. SBI and autonomous self-help training as strategy use have been documented and researched. For various learners and in a range of contexts, such strategies have been demonstrated to be effective (Cohen, 1998; Hill, 1994; McDonough, 1999; Wenden, 1992).

Strategies themselves, in some cases at least, beget other strategies. Nairn and Im (2010) noted that in the accompaniment of SBI for the schema theory, it enlightened the need for certain pre-reading learner strategies to be implemented. Kramsch (2011) suggested that concerns related to the schema theory may be addressed through the use of different strategies appropriate to cultures which can then be adopted and adapted to the students' own needs. According to Rubin (1990) including Thompson and Rubin (1996), L2 listening comprehension has been shown to be enhanced following training through the use of listening strategies.

In respect of Communication Strategies (CS), it continues to be debatable whether it is even necessary to provide instruction in such, as it is argued that strategic competence develops in L1 and is transferrable to target language use (Dörnyei, 1995).

2. Impact and Measurement of Learner Strategies for EFL

Numerous forms of research have been conducted on the effect of learner strategies demonstrating the varied effects and worth of such method training (Cohen et al. 1996; Dörnyei, 1995; Oxford, 1990; Weaver & Cohen, 1994). In one particular study conducted by O'Malley and Chamot (1990), improvements in language tasks were compared amongst three learner groups based on performance and it was determined that the group trained in strategies was significantly more effective than that of the control group. A further study by Chamot and EI-Dinary (1999) noted that while both high- and low-level students engaged in strategies use, the quality and flexibility of such strategy employment was greater for the high-level learners.

Yet, if this is so, the question begs whether it takes into consideration the metacognitive abilities of older or adult students. Metacognitive strategies are indicated as the primary difference between the inexperienced and experienced learners, based on a broad set of abstract systems of knowledge and language specifics both discrete and at the discourse level (Rivers, 2001). Fundamentally, however, strategy teaching would likely be more successfully taught and understood at a metacognitive level for learners of a certain maturity. Simply put, it is more likely a case of individual maturity being able to have the appropriate cognizance to handle matters of greater complexity. Other researchers focused on the prevalent strategic ability of 'effective' learners when noting that research with older

students showed that effective language learners use strategies more appropriately than less effective language learners and that learning strategies can be taught to both secondary and college-level L2 students (Chamot, 2005; Chamot & EI-Dinary, 1999; Cohen, 1998). As such, it seems possible to contend that this may be a simplistic take on the notion that effective strategy use relates to age and maturity. The benefit of past research has been to identify strategies used by good language learners and determine how these may be conveyed to other learners (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Cohen, 1998). Bremner (2000) noted that there are three ways of viewing strategies and their relationship to proficiency: (ⅰ) to see them as outcomes of proficiency (which questions to even investigate strategies), (ⅱ) to see them as having a uni-directional causal role in increasing proficiency, and (ⅲ) to see them as having a bi-directional role. It can be argued then that a strategy is useful and becomes more effective and transferable to new situations when certain conditions are met: "(ⅰ) the strategy relates well to the L2 task at hand; (ⅱ) the strategy fits the particular student's learning style preferences to one degree or another; and (ⅲ) the student employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies" (Oxford, 2001, p. 362). A direct example of an effective strategy that can be employed by L2 learners relates to the listening comprehension of academic lectures through the use of markers. These organization markers signal the informational structure of text. Elder and Golombek (2003) determined in their study that markers oriented the learner to the overall discourse structure and were effective signposts to help them incorporate information in the ongoing discourse. Goh (1998) conducted a study on listening strategies deducing that although her participants had not received any explicit strategy training, they had nevertheless been able to successfully use strategies and tactics from their L1. Listening strategies evidently appeared to be in use by learners regardless of whether explicit instruction is received. Field (1998) proposed that awareness has developed as to the extent to which L2 listening has become linked to strategic activity. Within a study conducted by the same author, Field (1998) determined that learners compensated for lack of adequate bottom-up information through inferences formed when listening, so as to use knowledge of the context to make 'intelligent guesses' about the ideas.

As emphasized previously, strategies need be individualized for each learner and strategies themselves have their limitations. Another key to strategy use then lies in the flexibility of execution. Bremner (2000) found that unsuccessful learners used strategies considered to be useful, as did by successful learners. Thus, the difference lay in the degree of flexibility and the appropriateness of their application in a given situation.

3. Learner Strategy Instruction in the EFL Classroom

Application of strategies for the classroom is likely to fall under the ubiquitous umbrella

heading of SBI as a learner-centered approach. Cohen et al. (1996) suggested that there are two such approaches to the classroom. The first whereby teachers describe, model, give and elicit examples, lead a discovery process and encourage students to experiment. A second approach involves integrating and embedding strategies into classroom tasks. They suggest that a practical approach of combining explicit strategy teaching and implicit integration of strategies into tasks would be of greater effect and a more balanced approach. It can be noted within the class instruction example that strategies such as schema, inferencing, strategic guessing, brainstorming, and even frame of referencing are all already being employed by the learner to some degree though not always consciously intended. General study skill courses, research-oriented training, awareness training, peer tutoring, strategy workshops, text with embedded strategies, multi-media courses, and integration of strategies within an EFL classroom are adept examples for the provision of strategic instruction (Weaver & Cohen, 1994). Strategy instruction helps students, particularly beginners, it has been argued by Vandergrift (1997), to enhance communication and solve problems. Goh (1998) suggested a further consideration for strategy training is that learners be instructed to adopt not only broad strategic approaches but also specific tactics. A number of researchers have advocated the teaching of learner strategies to L2 learners (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1992). Though, Hsiao and Oxford (2002) advised that such instruction was proven to be more successful when strategies are explicitly taught and integrated with language learning tasks normally accomplished by students. Dörnyei (1995) advocated instruction in the use of communication strategies to aid students in coping with performance problems. However, he served to mention that several researchers have called into question the validity of strategic training. Aside from the classification tools, Oxford (2001) asserted that many assessment tools are available to uncover the strategies used by L2 learners: Self-report surveys, observations, interviews, learner journals, think-aloud techniques, and other measures.

III. METHOD

In order to validate the results of the SBI class lessons provided within the program, through measurement, an experimental design was implemented with the assistance of the seven middle school classes and NNS English teachers from the two Korean middle schools. A training program in SBI was provided in L2 and limited L1 as determined (though the designed small text and accompanying assessment was written in English only) by the allocated teachers to a total of the five classes participating in the experiment in the respective schools. Written pretests were completed by all seven classes though posttests

were completed by all ongoing participants of the SBI program only (two classes). Analysis was conducted to measure the difference in mean scores following assessment of reading comprehension skills for the seven classes. In respect of the interview data method collection, a group of eight students in total were randomly chosen, from the treatment classes and interviewed posttest at the Korean middle schools in Daejeon and Cheonan cities respectively, in Korea. All students were characterized by varying levels of English ability and differing skills bases and understanding of effective strategies to draw upon in their language acquisition process.

1. Participants

An initial testing instrument and quantitative survey (with a Korean translation) was conducted with 199 students from two publically-funded middle schools in Korea. 5 classes (SBI treated and non-SBI) participated in the eight week program. The SBI participants in this study comprised of a total of 24 3rd year middle school students, aged 16 years old (2 classes) while the non-SBI participants totaled 72 3rd year students (3 classes). Student gender ratio included an approximate majority (60%) of females to males (40%).

2. Procedure

All participants were informed of the survey requirements and provided sufficient instructions on how to complete it. The first phase questionnaire concerning a broad spectrum of students in 3rd middle school consisted of items representing variables that included second language reading hours, learner strategies, use of strategies and experience, and general rate of instruction in reading strategies. The final testing, second phase survey and feedback survey were both quantitative and qualitative and completed by the program participants which required responses to the development of their strategy use and effectiveness of the SBI program in general. All surveys were provided in the participants' L1 and English to ensure understanding and general comprehension of their requirements. The third phase interview conducted with eight randomly chosen participants from the SBI classes contained mostly questions that were designed to elicit a response in the form of an explanation based an open-ended questions. Questions were provided on a separate sheet in English and an explanation was offered to the student to assist in understanding the relative complexity of the topic. The style of interviewing focused on possible responses in the form of indicated perceptions, beliefs and attitudes in respect of strategy use.

3. Instrumentation

In this experiment three kinds of testing instrument were used: (i) Reading tests which consisted of 'cloze test' types and wh-questions(Cf. Appendix II & III in Nairn, 2011); (ii) Quantitative survey I(for recognition of benefits of 'self study' and 'study skills') and Quantitative Survey II for using SBI (Cf. Appendix I & IV in Nairn, 2011); (iii) Qualitative Survey for using SBI (Cf. Appendix V in Nairn, 2011).

The authors utilized Excel for the initial spreadsheets and then conducted an analysis of the data using SPSS for Windows for the purposes of coding the survey data. Frequency and mean tables corresponding to the results of the data gathered from the participants were examined. The items that appear in the survey tables have been marked as the following:

SM1-1 until SMI-7 : Middle Schools Survey 1- Questions relating to the Hours of Study
SM2-1 until SM2-14: Middle Schools Survey 2- Questions relating to SBI Program

For the purposes of assessing the non-quantifiable responses resulting from the interviews, content analysis in the form of qualitative data was gained through an examination of the direct responses of the participants.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCCUSION

The results and tables below are divided into distinct research inquiry sections. Items and questions were designed to provide quantifiable results that indicated the following: (ⅰ) The quantifiable and qualifiable results that indicate how students perceive learner strategies; (ⅱ) The significance of the relationship between learner strategies and their performance in regard to reading comprehension; (ⅲ) The results of second survey by SBI class participants; (ⅳ) The relevant responses gained as a result of the feedback survey and personal interviews of the randomly selected applicants. The results were obtained from the specifically designed instruments such as reading tests, surveys and interviews.

1. How Learner Strategies Are Perceived

The following results are described based on the initial range of participants' responses of the first experimental test and also the first survey submitted and completed with regard to their previous English learning experiences including the length of their English study, types of instruction offered, and their previous learning experience with and main attitude towards learner strategies and learner autonomy for English studies.

TABLE 1

Pretest Results of Reading

Group	Results: Average (perfect score 15)	No. of students
Cheonan Class 1	7.46	26
Cheonan Class 2	6.56	27
Daejeon Class 1	8.93	29
Daejeon Class 2	8.67	30
Daejeon Class 3	8.0	30
Daejeon Class 4	9.1	31
Daejeon Class 5	11.5	26
Total Classes: 7	Total Average Score: 8.60	Total: 199

As can be noted in Table 1, the results show a significant difference between schools though only one class out of the seven tested (Daejeon Class 5) scored higher than 70% for the average score against the pretest.

TABLE 2

Middle School Partial Survey Results: Experience of Strategies in English Reading

ITEMS	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	often	Always
SM1-1 Time to study English in free time?	49 (34.8)	48 (34)	28 (19.9)	13 (9.2)	3 (2.1)*
SM1-3 Teachers advise how to best self-study?	42 (29.8)	27 (19.1)	31 (22)	24 (17)	17 (12.1)
SM1-4 I think self-study is effective to learn English?	15 (10.6)	26 (18.4)	55 (39)	18 (12.8)	27 (19.1)
SM1-5 Use leaner strategies to make study more effective?	19 (13.5)	25 (17.7)	49 (34.8)	27 (19.1)	21 (14.9)
SM1-6 Teachers instruct how to use strategies?	24 (17)	20 (14.2)	45 (31.9)	30 (21.3)	22 (15.6)

* The number indicates the percentage displayed in boxes

Upon assessment of the initial survey students (total of 141 surveyed students in 5 classes – 3 Daejeon, 2 Cheonan), it was expected that the majority of students would have sufficient time to engage in self-study. In contrast, however, Table 2 identifies only 11.3% of students considered that they had sufficient available time (Often/ Always) to engage in self-study (Mid SM1-1). In contrast 68.8% of students responded that they never or rarely have available free time to self-study. For research purposes it indicates that the majority of students are likely inundated by regular school classes, after-school programs and private education. It could be suggested that the current workload, most likely influenced by the need to achieve better scores on the University Entrance Exam, is already having an impact upon the predilection and risk-taking attitude towards employing alternative types of learning, in this case untried learner strategies.

This may have been considered significant since it was further determined that 100 (70.9% - Sometimes/Often/Always) students at the time of the initial survey indicated that they agreed with the need for self-study while 97 (68.8% - Sometimes/Often/Always) students engage in the application of learner strategies (SM1-4 thru SM1-5). Despite the previous suggestions of the need for greater use of learner strategies and self-study practices, there appears to be limited response to actual pro-active encouragement of such practices. Student responses indicated that only 29.1% of teachers (Often/Always) advised how to best self-study (SM1-3), and 36.9% of teachers (Often/Always) instruct in the use of strategies (SM1-6).

2. Results of Reading Tests: Pretest and Posttest (SBI/Non-SBI)

Based on the following outcomes in Table 3, it might be suggested that the SBI program (12.17) had a significantly greater impact upon the final overall performance of the participants in comparison to pretest reading scores. Especially so, given the overall average score outcomes of the Non-SBI participants (6.08) actually resulted in a lower figure in comparison to the original figure of all students tested (8.60).

TABLE 3

Combined Pretest and Posttest Results of Reading

Test Type	Average Score		Number of Participants
Pretest	8.60		199
Posttest	SBI classes	12.17	24
	Non- SBI classes	6.08	72

3. Responses of Post-SBI Program: Second Survey

As can be noted in Table 4 below, responses from the SBI program participants indicated that they were engaged in activating metacognitive skills (87.5%) related to checking their own work (SM2-1). Supporting this, responses suggested there was a greater ratio of students who regularly engaged in thought about and checked their own understanding (SM2-2 - 75% / SM2-3 - 83.3%). In addition, the responses attributable to SM2-5 & SM2-6 suggested that over 80% were now actively involved in conscious strategy use to achieve their objective, and a positive result was obtained which demonstrated a figure of over 74% of responses. Thus, it can be suggested that students were engaged in self-conscious metacognitive strategy use in respect of self-correcting errors and changing strategies as required (SM2-8 & SM2-9). However, there was a slightly lower figure in comparative responses which indicated that less than 67% of students were actively applying multiple techniques of strategies, according to their own understanding of the process (SM2-10).

TABLE 4

Post-SBI Program Survey Results: Recognition and Application of Strategies

ITEMS 1 - 10	No	Yes-low	Yes-medium	Yes-high	No Answer
SM2-1 I checked my work while reading and answering questions		2(8.3)	6(25)	15(62.5)	1(4.2)
SM2-2 Thought about how information in readings compared to what I already knew	1(4.2)	5(20.8)	11(45.8)	7(29.2)	
SM2-3 Checked I understood questions before answering them		2(8.3)	8(33.3)	12(50)	2(8.3)
SM2-4 Aware of my own thinking process and how effective it was for reading	2(8.3)	3(12.5)	1(4.2)	9(37.5)	9(37.5)
SM2-5 Tried to identify keywords, topic ideas and main context	2(8.3)	1(4.2)	2(8.3)	19(79.2)	
SM2-6 Thought through meaning of readings before answering		1(4.2)	9(37.5)	13(54.2)	1(4.2)
SM2-7 Determined how to best solve the questions	2(8.3)	1(4.2)	10(41.7)	11(45.8)	

SM2-8 Corrected my errors during activities	1(4.2)	3(12.5)	13(54.2)	7(29.2)	
SM2-9 Changing strategies when needed	1(4.2)	5(20.8)	15(62.5)	3(12.5)	
SM2-10 Used multiple techniques or strategies	2(8.3)	6(25)	6(25)	10(41.7)	
SM2-11 English reading skills improved by learning about strategies and how to apply them	1(4.2)	5(20.8)	9(37.5)	8(33.3)	1(4.2)
SM2-12 Program has assisted my skills	1(4.2)	5(20.8)	10(41.7)	8(33.3)	
SM2-13 Aware of which strategy to use and when	3(12.5)	6(25)	10(41.7)	4(16.7)	1(4.2)
SM2-14 Will apply strategies to self-study	1(4.2)	3(12.5)	4(16.7)	15(62.5)	1(4.2)

Interestingly, the recognition by the participants of the effectiveness of utilizing learner strategies and the corresponding improvement was openly favorable. There was a clear majority in favor of the program, over 95%, yes (low-high) (SM2-11/SM2-12) and less than 5% responding that it was of little benefit to them. This may result from the attention given to direct education in strategy use or the demonstration of what a strategy actually entails and when they are being actively used.

4. Feedback Survey and Interview Questions

TABLE 5

Feedback Survey Results

ITEM NO.	Yes	Yes (high)	No
SM3-1 Were the question set out clearly and easy to understand?	22(91.67)		2(8.33)
SM3-2 Have you previously thought about the best methods to learn English?	20(83.33)	1(4.17)	3(12.5)
SM3-4 Did the survey encourage you to question your role as a learner?	16(66.67)		8(33.33)

SM3-6 Do you want to learn more about effective strategies and self-study practices?	22(91.68)	1(4.16)	1(4.16)
SM3-7 Has the strategy training program changed your perception about how best to spend your time learning English in terms of self-study practices and learner strategies?	13(54.17)		11(45.83)

* The total number of students is 24 students (2 experimental classes of 12 each).

A majority of the SBI program participants (96%) responded in the feedback survey in Table 5 that they wished to learn more about effective strategies and self-study practices (SM3-6). However, only a slight majority of student responses (54%) indicated that the strategy program had influenced their consideration of how to do so effectively (SM3-7), which suggested that while SBI is desirable, the relatively short-term program provided was in itself insufficient. A further majority of student responses indicated that the survey itself encouraged them to question their role as a learner (SM3-4) despite having previously considered the best methods to learn English (SM3-2).

In regard to the interviews, the student responses were almost uniformly positive in respect of Question 5 (Do you think that strategies provide a good opportunity to improve your English?). It became clear from this line of questioning that students view the utilization of strategies in English education for reading comprehension at schools as being a useful tool. Student responses in respect of Question 7 (What do you think about teachers providing instruction about English language strategies?) determined in general that it would be of assistance if able to be done. Question 8 (What do you think about learning English privately with tutors?) noted that students were generally mixed (only half of the participants were receptive to the necessity of tutoring to improve English) which appears to strengthen the idea of continued schooling. When asked for their reasoning in Question 9 (What do you think about learning English only at school?), students initially indicated that the school's English education program was generally okay though lacking the means to be sufficient for their needs.

In retrospect, this may be accounted for due to the lack of opportunities for self-study which in turn result in an increased desire to learn autonomously in response to the study pressure students are faced with in Korea. In regard to the interviews, student responses to Question 15 (How much time do you spend each week learning English as self-study in your own time?)indicated that time spent on self-study was record as being relatively low and generally 1 hour or less per week. Question 16 (Do you think your own self-study practices and strategies (if any) are effective to learn English? Give example of effective strategy), however, noted that 50% of the participant responses indicated their own

practices were insufficient for their study needs. However, in response to Question 20 (Do you think that learner autonomy and self-study practices should be widely encouraged and taught?), the following responses were 100% in favor of this practice.

In regards to interview Question 13 (Do your teachers encourage you to study in your free time and teach you effective self-study practices?) again a mixed response with 50% either way which in turn indicates a lack of organized or curriculum-based strategy learning programs and only ad-hoc assistance in autonomous learning practices. Despite this, Question 18 (Do you think school, academy, and private tutors have a responsibility to encourage you to do more self-study, teach learning strategies and provide guidance?), the responses obtained were overwhelming in favor of schools, academies and tutors being as responsible to provide more guidance in these areas (100%). The authors noted that there appears to be some lack of understanding about how to obtain effective learning strategies and self-study practices. Consequently, it appears that there is, at least to some extent, a direct lack of strategy-based learning in schools and self-study practices are not being reinforced at an academic level to encourage learners to further participate in their own studies.

V. CONCLUSION

It can be argued that the effective use of learner strategies is more an attribute of the learner than the situation. However, it is questioned whether such a contentious theory is still applicable given that Korean students scholastic positioning in a competitive academic marketplace are more likely assisted by their reliance upon the higher quality education facilities and teaching offered by the after-school private education market. In addition, it could be further determined that there is a role and responsibility of the educator to assist the learners to focus on the long term goals of useful self-study practices. As such, this study sought to determine the relationship between the effectiveness of SBI for middle school students and the impact upon their EFL reading comprehension in respect to the potential application of SBI for the purposes of improving study and testing practices.

Successful strategies may be undermined due to a limitation of application based on personal and classroom factors such as the lack of adherence to effective individualized self-study practices and restricted in-class opportunities to learn and reinforce applicable strategies. In addition, surveys and interviews conducted with participants in this study identified further limitations associated with restrictions of time to study, student workload, and graded requirements for the university entrance exam, etc. Despite this, it is suggested that an integrated form of learning styles and strategies should be more useful to the students. Teachers in this regard, the authors suggest, are essential to assisting the students

to learn and identify what works best for them, and then helping those same students to learn and appreciate the other techniques or activities which could lead to a balanced learning experience. Thus, the authors specifically performed this study to examine this relationship and the issue that raises concerns about the possible lack of teacher adherence to providing effective instruction in learner strategies and self-study practices resulting from an increasing reliance upon the after-school private education market and alternative commercial-based teaching resources. Last but not least, ELT teachers should continue to develop essential teaching qualities such as the 'art' of English instruction, providing learners with higher motivation, and operation of creative intuition.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
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