'I want to sound like a native speaker and I'm working hard to achieve my goal': Application of pronunciation learning strategies among English philology students

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Abstract

Language learning strategies (LLS) and their role in foreign language class-rooms have aroused great interest among researchers, which has resulted in numerous empirical investigations into their effectiveness in second language acquisition (SLA) (Chamot, 2005; Pawlak, 2008a, 2008b, 2011a, 2011b; Til-farlioğlu, 2005; Trendak, 2015; Vandergrift, 2008; Wong, 2005; Yu, 2007). How-ever, emphasis has mainly been placed on communication strategies or strat-egies that can facilitate vocabulary learning. The area that has so far failed to receive ample attention is that of pronunciation learning strategies (PLS). The aim of the present paper is to contribute to the existing body of research into pronunciation learning strategies and to add to the ongoing discussion pertain-ing to the role of PLS in foreign language learning. The article presents the re-sults of a research project investigating the pronunciation learning strategies deployed by 120 advanced learners of English who were second- and third-year English philology students. The author made use of a questionnaire, dia-ries and the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to obtain qualita-tive and quantitative information about the subjects' application of PLS.

Keywords: pronunciation instruction; pronunciation learning strategies; strat-egies-based instruction

1. Introduction

It goes without saying that language learning strategies (LLS) have received a great deal of attention over the last few decades. After all, it is commonly believed that the implementation of LLS in foreign language learning can significantly facilitate the whole process (Rubin, Chamot, Harris, & Anderson, 2007). However, not all strategy types have garnered equal interest. As the literature shows, listening strategies, which have even been called the *Cinderella of strategies* (Vandergrift, 1997), failed to receive sufficient attention among researchers and practitioners. The same can be said about grammar learning strategies (GLS), which Oxford, Lee, and Park (2007), using the term coined by Vandergrift (1997), called a *Second Cinderella*. The list of, so to say, neglected strategies would certainly not be complete without pronunciation learning strategies (PLS). Pawlak defines them as "observable and unobservable steps, typically used in logical sequences, that learners consciously take with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of their pronunciation learning" (2008b, p. 308). When elaborating on this definition, Pawlak goes on to discuss the importance of pronunciation learning strategies by saying that not only do they help students to comprehend the manner in which pronunciation actually works but also make it easier for foreign language learners to use segmental and suprasegmental aspects in communication. This, in turn, facilitates "the development of both explicit, declarative knowledge and implicit, procedural knowledge" (Pawlak, 2010, p. 191). Bearing in mind the significance of PLS, the author of the present paper resolved to investigate this area more thoroughly. One of the aims of the present paper is to provide the reader with greater insight into some of the most significant studies in the field of pronunciation learning strategies. The author will also discuss the results of a research project that she conducted into PLS employed by 120 advanced learners of English. Since numerous researchers concur that the amount of research on PLS is insufficient, the author decided to explore pronunciation learning strategies in greater detail in the hope of shedding more light on this neglected area.

2. Research into PLS

So far, there have not been many research projects that would investigate PLS choice and use. Taking into consideration the dangers associated with poor pronunciation, such as "communication breakdown, anxiety, stereotyping, and discrimination" (Peterson, 2000, p. 3), it seems perplexing that so little has been done in the field of pronunciation learning strategies. What is more, to quote Pawlak, "bearing in mind the complex character of TL pronunciation and also

the challenges involved in teaching and learning it in the foreign language context as well as the diverse goals learners may wish to achieve, it appears indispensable to foster independence in this area, an undertaking which necessarily involves training students in adept use of suitable strategic devices" (2008b, p. 304).

There are a few reasons why pronunciation in the foreign language classroom has not received sufficient attention from researchers and practitioners. To start with, learning TL pronunciation is a demanding task as it is susceptible to L1 influence and also maturational limitations (Pawlak, 2008a). In addition to this, learning about numerous aspects of target language (TL) pronunciation might seem less important when compared with, for instance, the lexis of grammar of the language. What is more, many practitioners point to the limited amount of time they have at their disposal in the EFL classroom. Hence, they cannot cover as much material connected with TL pronunciation as they would like to. That is not to say that no progress has been made in the field of pronunciation learning strategies. As Pawlak (2010) reports, researchers have started to investigate, among others, the effectiveness of particular instructional techniques and classroom practices or students' as well as practitioners' views on pronunciation (Trendak, 2015). The studies conducted so far can be divided into three main types with the first two being the dominant and frequent ones (Rokoszewska, 2012, p. 192):

- studies focusing on the identification and description of PLS (e.g., Droździał-Szelest, 1997; Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978; Osborne, 2003, Pawlak, 2008b);
- studies focusing on classifying PLS (e.g., Eckstein, 2007; Peterson, 2000);
- studies investigating PLS training (e.g., Bukowski, 2004; Varasarin, 2007).

One of the first research projects exploring pronunciation learning strategies dates back to the 1970s. It was then that Naiman et al. (1978) and Rivers (1979) identified a group of tactics associated with learning TL pronunciation. Nearly twenty years later Droździał-Szelest (1997) identified six cognitive and four metacognitive PLS. The most frequently applied ones were repetition and selective attention. Osborne (2003) identified eight categories of strategies aimed at improving target language pronunciation (e.g., imitation, relying on memory). In one of his studies, Pawlak (2008b) examined the techniques most frequently deployed by advanced learners of English. It turned out that the PLS which proved to be most popular were repeating after the teacher or the tape (58.5%), listening carefully to the target model (35.8%), and making use of phonetic transcription (21.7%). On the other hand, using a dictionary, reading aloud, noting down words, following instructions or highlighting appeared to be less popular among the respondents. Finally, 23% of the students relied on planning their learning, setting new goals, or self-evaluating their progress.

While there are several studies focusing on the identification and classification of pronunciation learning strategies, there are few which address the concept of strategic intervention. One of the few research projects that deal with this aspect is the one carried out by Bukowski (2004). In his study the researcher investigated strategy use among first-year EFL college students. When exploring the impact of PLS instruction, Bukowski (2004) concluded that providing the subjects with strategic intervention in metacognitive and affective strategies can result in considerable improvement in pronunciation. Another study that is certainly worth mentioning is the one by Vitanova and Miller (2002). The two researchers were among the first who focused on the influence and the role of reflection in learning target language pronunciation and they set out to depict how it can help students become more cognizant of pronunciation learning strategies. The subjects were EFL students who participated in a graduate pronunciation course in a university setting and represented a varied level of linguistic advancement. In the light of the findings of the study, Vitanova and Miller (2002) concluded that practitioners ought to "teach students how to learn pronunciation, not just how to produce sounds or patterns. In other words, learners should be able to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and have the strategies to transform themselves into confident speakers of English" (2002).

3. The study

The action research was conducted in a Polish university setting. The author wanted to learn more about the pronunciation strategies employed by advanced learners of English. The subjects included 120 second- and third-year English philology students. The study lasted six weeks and was divided into three stages. The first stage of the research project included a background questionnaire introduced with a view to obtaining more information about the subjects (e.g., age, reasons for learning English, etc.). The second stage was devoted to implementing diaries, while the final one to completing the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL) (Oxford, 1990).

3.1. Aims

One of the reasons why the author decided to conduct this research project was to gain greater insight into the pronunciation learning strategies that English philology students employ. The author believes that learning more about PLS could greatly facilitate the process of learning target language pronunciation. The results obtained could form a basis for the creation of a specially designed program that would directly address the participants' needs. In addition to this,

by carrying out the study, the researcher wanted to make the subjects more reflective of their learning and encourage them to try out new strategies more frequently. Since there is scant research that would address the area of pronunciation learning strategies, the author believes that her study could contribute to this important area and serve as a point of reference for researchers who would like to explore it in greater detail.

3.2. Participants

The research project involved 120 second- and third-year English philology students participating in an integrated skills course held once a week. The respondents were on average 20.48 years old and had been learning English for 11.79 years prior to participating in the study, with the minimum length of previous instruction being 10 while the maximum 15 years. The subjects declared that at the time of the study they had on average 4.48 hours of practical English a week. This included two hours of phonetics classes but only during the second year of studies. Third-year students did not have any phonetics lessons at all as the course, at that particular institution, lasted only four semesters. Additionally, the participants were asked to self-assess their level of proficiency. The vast majority of the students (80%) described their level of advancement as upper-intermediate, 12% as advanced, and 8% as intermediate. As for the perceived level of phonetic advancement, 90% of students claimed that they would describe their pronunciation skills as good, 9% as very good, and only 1% as poor. Surprisingly, there were no students who regarded their pronunciation as proficient.

3.3. Instruments

In order to collect the necessary information, the author made use of three data-collection tools: a questionnaire, diaries and the SILL (see Table 1). The instruments were used during the subjects' integrated skills classes. The main aim of introducing a questionnaire at the initial stage of the research project was to obtain background information about the respondents, such as their age, years of learning English, reasons for learning this particular language, or the perceived level of linguistic advancement. However, the questionnaire also addressed more in-depth issues such as, among others, the subjects' attitude to perfecting their pronunciation or the aspects of English pronunciation that they found difficult to master. In one of the questions the subjects were to state how important correct English pronunciation is. The questionnaire was introduced once, at the beginning of the class.

Table 1 Research timetable

Time	Instruments used
Week 1	Questionnaire, diaries
Week 2	Diaries
Week 3	Diaries
Week 4	Diaries
Week 5	Diaries
Week 6	The SILL, diaries

The second instrument was a diary. The reason why the researcher decided to make use of this particular tool was the fact that diaries can help raise learners' metacognitive awareness of the process of language learning (Trendak, 2015). In addition to this, many researchers believe that diaries can play a significant role in fostering learner autonomy (e.g., Nunan, 1992; Riley & Harsch, 1999; Rubin, 2003). Another important reason is that diaries provide background information which might prove very useful when analyzing the obtained results. It is often mentioned that when students are asked to write about their linguistic behavior, rather than to talk about it, they are more likely to open up and produce more complex and in-depth entries. The reason for this might simply be the fact that they do not feel the pressure they might experience when talking to an interviewer.

The third instrument was the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*. In her study the author used the version of the SILL created by Całka (2011), who based her work on the original SILL developed by Oxford (1990). Altogether, there were 65 Likert-type statements, where 1 stood for *never or almost never* and 5 for *always or almost always*. The SILL was divided into six parts reflecting Oxford's (1990) classification system, that is memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies. The first three types fall into the category of direct strategies which require mental processing of the language being learned. As the name implies, memory strategies are responsible for re-membering and retrieving new pieces of information, cognitive strategies are deployed to comprehend and produce the language, while compensation strategies are aimed at making up for the existing deficits in the language (Pawlak, 2010, p. 191). The remaining three strategy types represent indirect strategies whose role is to facilitate the process of language learning and do not necessarily require the use of the target language (Pawlak, 2010). Metacognitive strategies are applied with a view to planning, organizing and assessing the learning process, social strategies are deployed when learning the language with other students, and affective strategies are used to regulate emotions (Pawlak, 2010, p. 191). There are a few reasons why the researcher used the SILL. First, this instrument has been used by many researchers worldwide and has received a great deal of praise (Griffiths, 2003; Hsiao & Oxford, 2002; Lan & Oxford, 2003;

Peacock & Ho, 2003; Yamamori, Hiromori, & Oxford, 2003; Wharton, 2000). Second, the fact that makes the SILL so extensively used is that it has undergone standardization, it is reliable and effective. Of course, there has also been some criticism leveled at this instrument such as the fact that the SILL focuses too much on the quantitative and not qualitative aspects of strategy use. This is why the researcher also included diaries to be able to collate the necessary data.

3.4. The results

The aim of the present section is to report on the findings obtained in the course of the conducted research project. To make these findings easy for the reader to follow, the author will present them in three subsections, each addressing a different tool.

3.4.1. The questionnaire

The first part of the study included a questionnaire. In one of the questions, the subjects were to state how important correct English pronunciation is. The findings reveal that 70 students (58.33%) perceived it as very important, 42 (35%) as important, and 4 (3%) found it hard to say. There were 4 students who said that other skills or subsystems were more important. Unfortunately, they did not reveal which subsystems or skills they had in mind, even though they were asked to do so. In another question, the participants were asked about their feelings and reactions when they mispronounced a word in English. While there were a few (8%) students who claimed that they simply ignored the mistake or corrected it and moved on, an overwhelming majority (75%) said they felt "horrible", "extremely embarrassed" and also "stressed". Some students (17%) also said they had the impression they were "uneducated". Bearing in mind the number of years they had dedicated to learning English and the fact that they were English philology students, they were of the opinion that such mistakes should no longer occur.

Yet another question addressed the most challenging aspects of English pronunciation. The most frequently mentioned answer was British accent. Many respondents (75%) admitted to experiencing great difficulty in mastering this feature. Some (12%) even said they sounded "too Polish", which was something they were not particularly proud of and which often led to a feeling of frustration. Other students (25%) pointed to correct intonation as something they frequently found challenging. Aspiration (10%) also proved to be a problematic issue. What is more, there were students (12%) who said they found it rather difficult to stress certain words in English. Despite many years of continuous practice, they claimed they still found themselves not knowing which syllable should be stressed. There were only four (3%) students who said that there were no

aspects of English pronunciation that they would like to work on because they felt they had mastered all of them to a satisfactory level. Regrettably, they did not explain what they meant by using the word *satisfactory*.

The researcher also wanted to know how many hours a week the subjects devoted to improving their pronunciation in the target language. On average it was 1.8 hours. However, it is impossible to treat this number as final since not all the participants provided a straightforward answer. Some of them (15%) said it was "a lot" or "not enough", while others answered (4%) that "it depends". Unfortunately, the subjects did not elaborate on those answers, which makes it difficult to talk about conclusive results. When asked about the ways in which they work on the pronunciation, the respondents mentioned different websites (83%), using podcasts (39%), reading aloud (12%), or watching English movies (80%). They also reported using dictionaries and checking the phonetic transcription of difficult words. These findings seem rather optimistic as they show that students seek different learning opportunities and do not limit themselves to one strategy only.

The questionnaire also addressed the role that the teacher plays in the process of learning pronunciation. The vast majority of subjects (85%) stated that the teacher plays a pivotal role since he or she provides students with proper guidance. Additionally, the teacher is extremely helpful as he or she identifies students' errors and provides them with immediate correction, which is highly valued. Some respondents (9%) said that it is necessary for the teacher to possess extensive knowledge concerning pronunciation because then he or she is perceived as a role model. One of the students wrote that he memorized the way the teacher pronounced a given word and then modeled himself on the teacher. Some students (5%) also pointed out that the teacher plays a key role as one cannot learn pronunciation just from a coursebook; however, at the same time the students said that without their effort and willingness to improve nothing could be achieved, no matter how knowledgeable and dedicated the teacher is.

3.4.2. The diary

In the second stage of the study the author made use of a diary. The main idea behind the application of this instrument is to allow the subjects to freely express their opinions and emotions concerning a given learning situation, experience, target form, etc. However, very often researchers call for the inclusion of extra guidelines and questions in order to limit the number of irrelevant entries and to direct the respondents' way of thinking (Pawlak, 2009; White et al., 2007). This is why the author decided to introduce eight additional questions (adapted from Pawlak, 2008a) provided in English and in Polish to avoid any possible misunderstanding and confusion on the part of the studnets:

1. Do you monitor your progress in learning English pronunciation?
2. Which learning strategies do you use most often when you learn English pronunciation? Why?
3. Which learning strategies do you use least often when you learn English pronunciation? Why?
4. Have you ever thought about ways of learning English pronunciation more effectively?
5. Do you use additional resources to learn English pronunciation?
6. How do you cope when you do not know how to pronounce an English word?
7. Do you plan how to learn English pronunciation?
8. Do you think that a diary can help to raise students' awareness of PLS?

The subjects were informed that the questions provided were there to guide them and serve as a point of reference. However, if they did not wish to, they were not obliged to answer them.

As far as the first question is concerned, 70 students (58.3%) admitted to monitoring their progress, 20 (16.7%) said they sometimes did it, and only 3 of them (0.02%) said they never used this strategy. Regrettably, there were subjects who did not provide an answer to this question. The second question focused on the most frequently applied pronunciation learning strategies. The ones mentioned most often were cognitive strategies. When asked to give examples, the participants mentioned the following: practicing naturalistically, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, repeating, analyzing and reasoning, using resources, and highlighting. The respondents also made use of memory strategies, such as placing new structures in context, rote learning, and grouping. The two last types were metacognitive strategies (i.e., linking with already known material and looking for practice opportunities) and social strategies (i.e., cooperating with proficient users of the language). There was no mention of affective strategies. While this information might seem useful when it comes to gaining insight into the PLS applied by advanced learners of English, it might seem a bit disappointing that the subjects declined to provide justification for their choices. Learning more about the reasons why the respondents opted for certain strategy types would surely contribute to the discussion about strategy choice and use. The strategies that proved to be less popular were, surprisingly, also cognitive strategies (e.g., practicing naturalistically and formally practicing with sounds and writing systems) and metacognitive strategies (e.g., finding out about pronunciation learning and planning). Somewhat surprisingly, a few students openly admitted that they saw little point in listening to the radio or watching TV in the target language and they did not regard these strategies

as useful when learning TL pronunciation. Reading about theoretical aspects of correct pronunciation was also not a valued strategy to many respondents.

In the diaries the researcher also wanted to know whether the subjects had ever thought about learning English pronunciation more effectively. Given the profile of the target group (English philology students), the findings are rather disconcerting as they reveal that as many as 72 students (60%) had never analyzed the ways in which they could improve their TL pronunciation (Figure 2 below). One would expect more reflection among students whose top priority should be mastering different target language skills. There were also subjects who, apart from merely providing a *yes/no* answer, decided to name the strategies they deployed, such as, for instance, revising, taking notes, recording oneself, or using additional resources. There was also a student who claimed that the only possibility of perfecting his pronunciation was moving abroad as only then could he fully benefit from listening to English on a daily basis. There was also one respondent who said that he had never thought about any ways of improving his pronunciation since "my university lecturer should show me what to do". If this comment is to be taken seriously, one can conclude that some students lack the initiative and prefer to shift responsibility onto the teacher.

The next question in the diary pertained to the subjects' usage of additional resources when it comes to learning English pronunciation. As many as 100 (83.3%) participants, which is an overwhelming majority, admitted to employing additional resources, which is a very optimistic finding as it shows the students' willingness to try out other methods of enhancing their pronunciation. As was the case with questionnaires, the students provided numerous examples of additional resources, such as watching videos on *YouTube*, using the *SuperMemo* platform, or listening to increasingly popular podcasts, going through dictionaries with a view to finding appropriate pronunciation or using recordings for classes in phonetics. This finding, however, contrasts somewhat with the previous point in which students revealed they did not think about ways of learning target language pronunciation in a more effective manner, which might make it extremely hard to obtain conclusive results.

In one of the final questions in the diary the respondents were requested to say how they cope when they experience difficulty in pronouncing a word in English. Regrettably, the students did not share many strategies and limited themselves to four most frequent ones, namely guessing (compensation strategy), avoiding (compensation strategy), using additional resources (cognitive strategy), and asking for help (compensation strategy). Bearing in mind the fact that the subjects were English philology students, some of whom were close to completing their BA theses, the limited repertoire of strategies might again come as a surprise.

The next point addressed the strategy of planning. The researcher wanted to know if and to what extent the participants planned their pronunciation learning. To reduce the risk of confusion or misunderstanding, the researcher added some hints next to the word *planning*, such as setting a time limit, selecting materials to be used, choosing appropriate strategies, etc. Surprisingly, as many as 101 (84%) respondents never planned their pronunciation learning, which means they might be missing out on a perfect opportunity to improve in this area. Similarly to the previous points, the subjects failed to provide any explanation, which leaves it up to the researcher to guess the reasons for such disturbing results. One of them could most surely be laziness and a considerable lack of motivation. Insufficient knowledge pertaining to pronunciation learning strategies and their effectiveness could also be at play. However, without the subjects' justification, these reasons are nothing more but a shot in the dark.

In the last point the author wanted to learn whether a diary could help raise students' awareness of pronunciation learning strategies. Predictably, opinions were divided. There were several subjects who believed that implementing a diary could exert a positive impact on pronunciation learning. Their entries include the following: "Yes, definitely. From now on I pay much more attention to pronunciation", "Yes, because it makes you think how to learn more effectively", "(...) a diary can help control progress and show what still needs to be done", "Writing a diary can be helpful because during the week we don't have time to think about our pronunciation". The last entry is a bit baffling as it is certainly hard to believe that the only time when students can actually think about their pronunciation is when they complete their diaries. There were also subjects who, thanks to their diaries, noticed that one can learn pronunciation in many different ways, not necessarily by limiting oneself to memorization: "(...) yes, because such a diary can help students realize that good pronunciation is not just rote-learning". Another student pointed to another significant and pertinent fact, which is students' participation and willingness to benefit from diaries: "(...) if the students don't want to learn, a diary will not help them at all".

Obviously, not all the participants showed equal enthusiasm when it comes to completing their diaries. When asked if diaries could help them in the process of pronunciation learning, some subjects were rather skeptical. One of them said: "not really and if so, only to a limited extent". Regrettably, again, no justification was provided. A different student said: "no because we have access to it [diaries] only during our classes". At this point, it seems warranted to explain that the researcher collected all the diaries after each integrated skills session. One of the reasons was the possibility of some students not completing their diaries at home on a regular basis because of laziness, absent-mindedness,

etc. They might also have been tempted to complete them one or two days before the end of the project. The author wanted to encourage students to fill in their entries systematically and, thus, hopefully to promote greater reflection on their part. There was also a student who openly stated that diaries did not help him at all to raise his awareness of PLS and that "the university has to show us how to do that". Again, we have a case of shifting responsibility from the student onto the teacher and institution, which is very disconcerting, to say the least, as it is a blatant example of lack of initiative and willingness to improve target language pronunciation on the part of that student.

3.4.3. The SILL

In the last stage of the research project, the participants were asked to complete the SILL. As mentioned earlier, the author used the SILL developed by Całka (2011). The data collated by means of this instrument revealed that the most frequently applied pronunciation learning strategies were metacognitive ones (Figure 1). The most popular strategies within this group were paying attention to more proficient speakers' pronunciation (100%), monitoring one's own pronunciation (98.3%), and looking up pronunciation when preparing a speech in English (95%) (Tables 2 and 3). On the other hand, the strategies which were hardly ever used by the respondents were planning pronunciation learning since as many as 68.3% of the participants said they never or almost never used it. This might seem somewhat surprising considering the fact that the subjects were second- and third-year English philology students. Even more disturbing might be the fact that 60% of the students questioned never or almost never employed the strategy of self-evaluation.
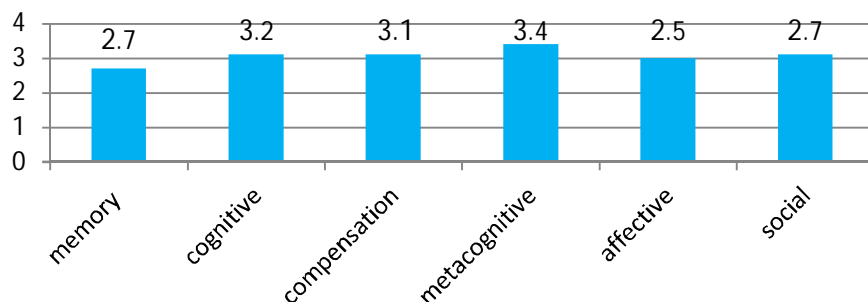

Figure 1 Results obtained in the SILL

The second most often deployed strategy type were cognitive strategies. The participants expressed a strong preference for transcription (85%), reading

aloud (81.6%), and looking up pronunciation in a dictionary (80.8%). The strategies that seemed much less appealing were exercising speech organs, with 88.3% of subjects never or almost never using this strategy, imitating native speakers speaking my mother tongue to feel the differences between the languages (75.8%), and repeating simultaneously with TL speakers imitating their voice, gestures, etc. (65%).

Table 2 The most frequently deployed pronunciation learning strategies

Metacognitive strategies	Cognitive strategies	Compensation strategies	Memory strategies	Affective strategies	Social strategies
When somebody uses English, I pay attention to their pronunciation (100%)	I do transcription exercises (85%)	I use proximal articulation (95%)	I repeat a word (aloud or silently) several times (87%)	I encourage myself to speak in the TL (96.6%)	When I do not know how to pronounce a word I ask for help (78.3%)
I monitor my pronunciation (98.3%)	When I read aloud I pay attention to my pronunciation (81.6%)	I guess the pronunciation of the new words (66.6%)	I use phonetic transcription (74%)	I encourage myself to work on TL pronunciation (75%)	I ask native speakers for correction (63%)
When I prepare a speech in English, I look up the pronunciation of new words (95%)	I look up the pronunciation of new words in a dictionary (80.8%)				

Table 3 The least frequently deployed pronunciation learning strategies

Metacognitive strategies	Cognitive strategies	Compensation strategies	Memory strategies	Affective strategies	Social strategies
I plan pronunciation learning (select materials, exercises, strategies) (68.3%)	I exercise speech organs (88.3%)	I use L1 pronunciation if the word in the TL and L1 is spelled in a similar way (75%)	I repeat a word (aloud or silently) several times (87%)	I reward myself for effort out in pronunciation learning (68.3%)	When learning the TL pronunciation I cooperate with peers or native speakers (33.3%)
I record myself to evaluate my pronunciation (60%)	I imitate native speakers speaking my mother tongue to feel the differences between the languages (75.8%)		I associate sounds with mental or actual images (62%)	I analyse my feelings connected with pronunciation learning (66.6%)	

Compensation strategies also proved to be popular. The strategies worth mentioning are using proximal articulation, deployed always or almost always by 95% of subjects and guessing pronunciation of new words (66.6%). The least frequently applied strategies within this group were (1) using L1 pronunciation if the word in the TL and L1 is spelled in a similar way, which was never or almost never used by 75% of participants, and (2) avoiding words whose pronunciation is unknown (56.6%).

   The three remaining strategy types attracted less attention among the respondents. Memory and social strategies both reached the mean of 2.7. As far as the former ones are concerned, students frequently opted for repeating a word (aloud or silently) several times (87%), using phonetic transcription (74%), and visualizing the transcription of a given word (used always or almost always by 47% of the students questioned). The least frequently used memory strategies were using mechanical techniques such as flashcards (78%), listening to recorded lists of words several times to memorize their pronunciation (73%), and associating sounds with mental or actual images (62%).

   As for social strategies, it is reassuring to learn that nearly 80% of the participants reported asking others for help when they do not know how to correctly pronounce a word in English. Nearly 62% of them said they asked native speakers for correction, which is also an optimistic finding. More worrying is the fact that one third of the subjects questioned never or almost never cooperated with peers of native speakers, which is surely regrettable as by cooperating with other students, especially more proficient ones, one can learn much more and improve TL pronunciation. Furthermore, one fifth of the students never or almost never engaged in peer tutoring. Unfortunately, the subjects did not provide any explanation for such a decision.

   Affective strategies proved to be the least popular among the six types with the mean of 2.5. This fact should not come as a surprise, though, as even in their diaries the students failed to show any preference for this particular group of strategies. The strategies that did attract the participants' attention were encouraging oneself to speak in the TL (96.6%) and encouraging oneself to work on TL pronunciation (75%). Almost 70% of the respondents did not reward themselves for success or effort put in pronunciation learning. As many as 67% never or almost never analyzed their feelings connected with pronunciation learning. Finally, 65% of the students did not find the strategy of talking to others about feelings connected with pronunciation learning to be effective.

4. Discussion

The aim of the research project was to obtain greater insight into the pronunciation learning strategies applied by advanced learners of English. Another goal set by the author was to help raise the subjects' awareness of the PLS they have at their disposal and to encourage them to be more self-reflective strategy users. In their diaries the subjects mentioned cognitive strategies as the most frequently applied strategies. What is more, as the findings reveal, thanks to diaries the participants became more cognizant of the significance of pronunciation learning strategies. They also admitted to becoming more reflective as far as

pronunciation learning is concerned. This finding might serve as an incentive for practitioners to implement diaries more frequently in their phonetics class as this could prompt students to devote more time to perfecting their target language pronunciation. It might also encourage students to analyze their repertoire of strategies and opt for a wider variety of PLS.

Although the study can serve as a point of reference for researchers wanting to explore the area of pronunciation learning strategies, it is not free from flaws. First of all, the number of students participating in the study was not large enough to allow for generalizations and conclusive results. It might prove more helpful to include a larger group of advanced learners of English in future research projects as it would allow obtaining more comprehensive data about the deployment of PLS. What is more, the study would certainly have benefited from the application of more instruments, such as, for instance, interviews or think-aloud protocols. Another limitation pertains to the implementation of diaries. The subjects were asked to complete their diary entries ten minutes before the end of the classes. Therefore, some of them did the task quickly and, unfortunately, rather carelessly and without due attention, as they were tempted to leave the lesson earlier. In addition to this, in many cases, the respondents failed to justify their choices, even though the researcher clearly asked them to do so. Such a situation makes it somewhat difficult for the researcher to gain greater insight into issues connected with strategy choice and application. Predicting such obstacles, the researcher also applied the SILL which helped to collate more quantitative data.

The SILL revealed that the most frequently deployed pronunciation learning strategies were metacognitive strategies, with the mean of 3.4, while the least popular strategies were affective ones, with the mean of 2.2. It should be mentioned, though, that the differences referring to the frequency of strategy use are by no means spectacular and can only help to show certain tendencies among that particular group of respondents. Therefore, the results obtained do not allow the researcher to draw far-reaching conclusions. Furthermore, while it is comforting to know that English philology students do employ pronunciation strategies, the repertoire of these strategic devices is extremely limited and leaves much to be desired, especially if one takes into account the participants' course of studies and the exposure to the English language on a daily basis. The employment of more data collection tools might have helped the researcher to learn more about the participants' strategy use.

Despite the limitations of the study, the findings do show potential. Since the existing body of research into pronunciation learning strategies is still limited, every research project conducted in this field helps practitioners and theoreticians to learn more and look at PLS from a different perspective. What is more, as far as

future studies are concerned, emphasis needs to be placed on how to combine research findings with the needs of language learners who want to master the pronunciation of the target language. Raising strategic awareness by means of, for instance, diaries is something that also merits consideration. Additionally, thought should be given to introducing strategic intervention into university classes since it can exert a beneficial impact on developing learners' strategic competence.

5. Conclusions

Although the study failed to produce conclusive results, it did reveal certain tendencies among advanced learners of English and their use of PLS. It is the author's belief that introducing strategic intervention into her future research projects could produce more in-depth data and benefit learners of English more in terms of raising their strategic awareness but also when it comes to PLS selection and use. Researchers and practitioners frequently state that language teachers should go beyond simply exposing their students to the target language. They should also show them the widely available tools, namely language learning strategies, that can facilitate the process of language learning and make it more effective (Rubin et al., 2007). That is why, implementing strategy training in phonetics classes would surely positively affect students' performance. However, if it is to be efficacious, the training needs to be conducted over an extended period of time. Another salient point that needs to be taken into account when introducing strategy training in future studies is that, to quote Pawlak (2008b, p. 318), "(…) a systematic, long-term and coherent program of this kind is indispensable rather than a string of unrelated, randomly-chosen, one shot activities". Strategic intervention programs can only be fruitful if they are based on "detailed taxonomies of pronunciation learning strategies used by different groups of learners in different circumstances, and are informed by research findings concerning the values of specific behaviors" (Pawlak, 2008a, p. 305). Summing up, it would be beneficial for the subjects if more strategy training programs were implemented during their phonetics classes. It can be assumed that becoming familiar with a plethora of strategic devices and learning how to deploy them may exert a positive impact on students' pronunciation. Finally, as Pawlak (2010) suggests, when conducting research into language learning strategies, we need to learn more about the reasons why students opt for particular types of strategies. Hence, there is a great need to launch research projects that would investigate the reasons that affect not only PLS choice but also use. Possessing this data could certainly help not only the students but also practitioners, especially when designing their courses and adjusting them to students' needs and expectations.

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