



ISSN 2185-3762

Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal

<http://sisaljournal.org>

'After Mom Gets Some Books, Then I'll Make a Selection': A 5-year-old ELL's Decision-making in Book-related Home Play Research

Heeyang Park, University of Warwick, UK

Corresponding author: H.Park@warwick.ac.uk

Publication date: December, 2015.

To cite this article

Park, H. (2015). 'After Mom gets some books, then I'll make a selection': A 5-year-old ELL's decision-making in book-related home play research. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 6(4), 332-351.

To link to this article

<http://sisaljournal.org/archives/dec15/park>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Please contact the author for permission to re-print elsewhere.

Scroll down for article

‘After Mom Gets Some Books, Then I’ll Make a Selection’: A 5-Year-old ELL’s Decision-making in Book-related Home Play Research

Heeyang Park, University of Warwick, UK

Abstract

The main theme of this article is examining the active role that young English language learners (ELLs) play in making important choices that affect their own language learning and research participation. I will consider the growing emphasis in child Second Language Acquisition (SLA) on the importance of exploring children’s perspectives about their participation in research and English language development as a second language. The first part of this article discusses the new paradigm in child SLA, which takes note of the voices of young children in research rather than overlooks their agency in favor of an adult perspective, while the second part describes an exploratory case study of a 5-year-old Korean-English learner and illustrates how a very young ELL makes decisions as an active research participant in engaging English storybooks as self-access resources in the child’s spontaneous play at home.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, decision-making, self-access learning, child SLA, book-related play, ELL, research with children

From the early 1980s onward, contemporary research on language learning has shifted the focus of research, theory and practices from the traditional teacher-oriented teaching environment to the learner-centered learning environment that promotes autonomy. According to Holec (1981), learner autonomy is characterized by “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). An autonomous learner is an “active participant in the social processes of learning” (Bergen, 1990, p. 102), in which both the contents and the learning processes should be negotiated, determined, monitored and evaluated by the learners themselves out of mutual interaction with the facilitative teacher (Rogers, Lyon, & Tausch, 2014).

While Holec (1981) originally derived his notion of autonomy in language learning from formal institutional settings in the adult education, Little (1991) has maintained that the autonomy can expand into much broader areas of life and ages.

Given the digital and technological nature of 21st-century life in particular, language learning is no longer confined to the classroom context as the internet, the media and the social network along with the increasingly advanced digital devices have made various self-access learning resources and tools more readily available beyond the classroom (Alhinty, 2015; Castellano, Mynard, & Rubesch, 2011; Jeon, 2014; Kuure, 2011; Nunan & Richards, 2015; Richards, 2015). As regards the ages, a growing number of studies suggest that even young children can be ready for accepting responsibility for some aspects of their own learning with careful guidance (Dam, 1995; Kirsch, 2012; Kristmanson, Lafargue, & Culligan, 2013; Little, 1991).

This shift in focus from teachers to learners in increasingly wider contexts and age ranges has also applied to undertaking research on children's English language learning in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Copland & Garton, 2014). Not only do researchers in child SAL encourage participating children to exercise autonomy in various aspects of language learning but to make informed decisions in the research processes including whether to participate in or withdraw from research. If the research is to be undertaken with very young children aged 5 and under (Ellis, 2014) with limited linguistic and cognitive capacity for expression, it will require even more careful research design to make sure that their ideas and views are taken into serious consideration.

The main theme of this article is thus to examine the active role that young English language learners (ELLs) play in making important choices that affect their own language learning and research participation. I will consider the growing emphasis in child SLA on the importance of exploring children's perspectives about their participation in research and English language development as a second language (L2). The first part of this article discusses the new paradigm in child SLA, which takes note of the voices of young children in research rather than overlooks their agency in favor of an adult perspective (Pinter, 2014), while the second part describes a case study of a 5-year-old Korean-English learner and illustrates how a very young ELL makes decisions as an active research participant in engaging with English storybooks as self-access resources in the child's spontaneous play at home.

Considering the definition of self-access learning, which features students' selection of materials and work on tasks on their own (Sheerin, 1991), children's story reading/listening in the home environment can provide rich and powerful self-access learning opportunities for young ELLs. While substantial research attention has been drawn to the resultant benefits of home reading on children's L2 development (Cameron, 2001; Chow, McBride-Chang, & Cheung, 2010; Kim & Hall, 2002; Uchikoshi, 2006), few studies have highlighted how young ELLs actively take the initiatives in these valuable learning processes such as deciding which books to read and which book-based tasks they engage in. In many studies, books are normally selected by adults (Jones & Buttrey, 1970; Kim & Hall, 2002) and young children's spontaneous book-related play in L2 is inherently limited because child-initiated play tends to occur in their first language (Mourão, 2014). It is, therefore, worthwhile to explore how a 5-year-old ELL develops the knowledge and skills she needs to be able to take control of her own learning as well as her participation in research in response to the decision-making opportunities offered by an adult researcher.

Paradigm Shift in Child SLA

Contemporary research on childhood has recently witnessed the elevation of children's status in research from passive objects to more active participants (Kellet, 2010). This new paradigm has shifted its focus from research 'on' or 'about' children to research 'with' children (Kellet, 2010), with children taking on more active roles in deciding research agendas by speaking in their own rights and reporting valid views and experiences (McTavish, Streelasky, & Coles, 2012). The value of listening to children's voices, therefore, enables a fuller understanding of childhood in child-focused research.

Despite increasing weight being given to 'listening to children's voices' in recent sociological, anthropological and educational child studies, however, Pinter (2014) has claimed that this perspective shift has largely been neglected in child SLA, which is still "overwhelmingly adult initiated and adult focused" (p. 169). In many studies, research findings are expressed in numerical terms and children's acquisition of a new language is interpreted in terms of "normality and deviation" (Pinter, 2014, p. 170). The enduring issue of single one-off

measurement of children's language learning achievement is still prevalent, as Pinter (2014) shows in her review of literature on age factors in child SLA. In addition, there seems to be little improvement with regard to unfamiliar task types (Vandergrift, 2005), incomprehensible language use in research design (Macaro & Erlier, 2008) and lack of linguistic means available to children to articulate their thoughts and concerns (Gu, Hu, & Zhang, 2005).

While still a fledgling phenomenon as it remains, however, a new set of research tools have begun to emerge for undertaking research on children's English language learning (Copland & Garton, 2014). In this line, one of the mainstream applied linguistics publications, *ELT Journal*, published a Special Issue focusing on pre-/primary-school learners in 2014 and introduced a number of innovative research methods (Besser & Chik, 2014; López-Gopar, 2014). This perspective shift from a paternalistic approach has recently been promoted by child-centered SLA researchers such as Kuchah, Pinter and Zandian, who suggest using various participatory activities and engaging children's participation in developing research instruments such as questionnaires, interview questions or activities.

Kuchah and Pinter (2012) encouraged 10-11 year old children in Cameroon to engage in a co-constructed dialogue with the adult researcher, where all the interview concepts and processes were mutually agreed and negotiated. Children were able to challenge adult conceptions and make unexpected, spontaneous comments and suggestions about 'good teaching' and 'good teacher', which showed a profound difference to the views of teachers who had also been interviewed. The resultant amendment to the intended research processes in this case signifies that the whole research plan should be revisited and reconstructed in accordance with the adoption of child participants' voices about the project.

Moving beyond the interactive methods 'during' the data collection stage, Pinter and Zandian (2015) have explored children's retrospective reflection of their participation in research. Revisiting the earlier project in a follow-up session with the demonstration of the physical results of the research such as the MA dissertation in this case proved to be conducive to both stakeholders. On the one hand, the participating children understood more fully what the research had really been about and how they were represented in the project by asking questions about pseudonyms and transcribing. On the other hand, the researchers

were able to reinterpret the original research findings with a deeper understanding of how the work with children should be. As Pinter and Zandian (2015) have suggested, better understanding of children's conception about research will lead to more effective research design in subsequent studies.

Voices of Very Young Children

The growing emphasis in child SLA on the importance of exploring children's perspectives about their L2 development is a welcome development, though examination of current research has demonstrated that there have been few observations or experiments that take note of the voices of very young learners aged 5 and under. Part of the reason for this gap in research may be attributed to the view that at this earlier age, children are neither able to articulate their thoughts or concerns nor report their experiences and views in a logical fashion even in their first language (Bongartz & Schneider, 2003; Gu et al., 2005; Philp, Mackey, & Oliver, 2008).

This feature of very young children then leads to the concern on their freedom of choice with regard to participation in and withdrawal from research (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Christensen & James, 2000; Coady, 2010). Young children who are not yet linguistically and cognitively competent lack the capacity to express their views and must rely on their parents or guardians to give consent on their behalf. Further, wishing in general to please their significant adults or being influenced by adults with authority, pre-primary children tend to decide to remain in research even if they feel uncomfortable and anxious (Cameron, 2001; Langston, Abbot, Lewis, & Kellet, 2004).

This does not mean, however, that there is no way for researchers to recognize their verbal or non-verbal messages regarding participation and refusal. Even children aged 3 and upwards can understand and talk about what a project is about and what we would like them to do. In an attempt to gain children's consent for participation, O'Reilly, Ronzoni and Dogra (2013) advise that we should familiarize ourselves with children's vocabulary, the types of tasks they enjoy or dislike and the way they generally interact with adults. Considering their age, cognitive ability and preferred ways of communication, we need to think about what we are asking children to do and how we deliver it.

Verbally incompetent as they may be, children of the pre-primary stage can signal their likes or dislikes in a number of different ways. As Langston et al. (2004) have admitted, even very young babies can indicate their dislike of a research procedure by crying, looking uneasy and anxious, or simply not responding to the researcher. It is, therefore, important for us to remember that the children's best interests are always paramount and to carefully monitor their facial expressions and body language throughout the course of the research in order to identify messages of dissension.

The Case of Jihu

In the following, I consider the points mentioned above with reference to the findings of an exploratory case study of my own daughter Jihu, 5 years old at the time of data collection, in England for three months from March to May 2014. The aim of this study was to explore what kind of book-related play that an English learning child spontaneously engages in at home after shared reading. The research findings are connected with an ELL's language learning, but the research processes also illustrate how a very young child can make important choices as an active research participant in response to the decision-making opportunities offered by her mother researcher.

Background

In early September 2013, I moved from South Korea (Korea hereafter) to England to take the one-year Master program in English Language Teaching. Before coming to England, Jihu had not studied English except for very limited instruction at her Korean kindergarten for one year. During the 8-month period from late September 2013 through May 2014, she attended a reception year class in a British public elementary school and gradually learned how to speak, read and write in English. At home, Jihu took great pleasure in watching children's English animations and reading children's English books and enjoyed performing story-based role-plays with me as playmate.

My role as mother and intimate playmate as well as researcher presented me with both advantages and disadvantages in conducting child research. As family member, I could capitalize on the "complete membership role" (Adler & Adler, 1987), which allowed me to fully enter into my daughter's life world

without restrictions and closely examine the lived experiences of childhood at home. As a result, not only could I gain in-depth knowledge of my child but I could also have wide access to multiple sources of language data, both spontaneous and planned. However, if the parental role becomes stronger than the research role and parent researcher tips the balance in such hybrid roles toward membership, it is possible to imagine the researcher's right to know taking precedence over the participant child's right to privacy and need for autonomy. In order to preserve the balance between both sides regarding my status as mother researcher, I tried to maintain as much as possible my sensitivity to the autonomy and confidentiality of the child both as an empowered research participant and a capable language learner.

Deciding to participate

When the idea of conducting research with my daughter began to emerge, I explained to her about the research objectives and overall process in words she could understand and obtained her approval for participation. She was very excited that I would make a 'big book' on her, where she could see her name '100 번 {a hundred times}'. For this reason, she disliked the use of pseudonym for the sake of privacy protection. Rather she strongly demanded that her real name, Jihu, should be used. After making careful references to other family-based research (Bongartz & Schneider, 2003; Lee, 2005; Rowe, 1998), I agreed to her request.

Deciding what books to read

Stories and books for very young children are normally selected by adults (Jones & Buttrey, 1970). It is mainly the adults' judgment or assumptions that will determine the criteria of book choice for children, in the belief that such books will be interesting and valuable to the children or will meet their academic needs (Kim & Hall, 2002). In choosing the right materials, Little (1991) admits that even adult learners are likely to need assistance because they do not have proper knowledge or experience to find them. The responsibility for the selection of learning materials, therefore, can be a "compromise" (Little, 1991, p. 49)

between learners and teachers since the teacher's professional expertise cannot simply be handed over to the learners.

For this study, I had originally selected 10 English storybooks that have the qualities of content, illustrations, organization and language use (Cameron, 2001; Leicester, 2009; Linse, 2005). Prior to the full-scale data collection procedure, Jihu had demanded that she should make a final decision as to which books to read and in which sequence to read them. Excerpt 1 below shows Jihu's wish to exercise her rights in the book selection process.

Excerpt 1 (Audio recorded on 26 Feb 2014)

Jihu ():	여 (...) 엄마가 책 찾으시면 (..) 그 다음에 이런 책이 있다 저런 책이 있다 이렇게 말하면 (..) 내가 고를게.	Well (...) after Mom gets some books (..) and tells me about this and that book (..) then I will make a selection.
-------------	---	--

Table 1 illustrates the list of storybooks Jihu chose for the study, which confirms Cameron's (2001) suggestions about a good quality story. The characters, settings and events in these books are relevant and engaging to the child in one way or another. For example, the famous character Lola from the *Charlie and Lola* series written by Samantha Hill is a genuine reflection of a girl in Jihu's age. The bunnies from the *Peter Rabbit* series contain lots of details in terms of a mischievous boy Peter and his good-natured little sisters, one of whom, Mopsy, Jihu felt great attachment to. Even though the big furry tiger from *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* initially had not been well accepted to Jihu but the settings and events, in which the tiger is invited to tea with a similar-aged girl Sophie and her mother at home, bore enough resemblance and familiarity to Jihu's real world to enable her to empathize with the character. Apart from the features described thus far, author factor cannot be overlooked because Jihu becomes strongly motivated to read books of her favorite storybook authors such as Eric Carle, Julia Donaldson, Jill Murphy and Oliver Jeffers.

Table 1. Selected Storybook List

English Storybook *	Author	Published Date
---------------------	--------	----------------

1	<i>The Tiger Who Came to Tea</i>	Judith Kerr	2006
2	<i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny</i>	Frederick Warne	1997
3	<i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	Eric Carle	2002
4	<i>My Wobbly Tooth Must Not Ever Never Fall Out</i>	Samantha Hill	2012
5	<i>Snow is My Favorite and My Best</i>	Samantha Hill	2012
6	<i>Lost and Found</i>	Oliver Jeffers	2006
7	<i>Room on the Broom</i>	Julia Donaldson	2002
8	<i>Peace at Last</i>	Jill Murphy	2007

Note: * Storybooks are listed up in the chronological order of Jihu's play.

While learners may not be able to find the right learning materials such as storybooks in this case only with their own resources (Little, 1991), it is essential that the adult stakeholders should offer opportunities to the learners for negotiation and review about the content of learning and support the initiatives the learners take (Dam, 1995). Given the early age of the learner in this case, sufficient adult support may be inevitable but it is important to remember that learning can be enormously effective and meaningful when we give her the right to choose (Schouten-van Parreren, 1989). After all, it is the learners who can judge which materials are genuinely appropriate for them.

Deciding whether to record

Once the storybooks were arranged in order as requested by Jihu, we used a strategy of repeated reading for the purposes of pleasure and effective reading (Cameron, 2001). One story was read multiple times during shared reading, mostly in bed at bedtime while I was reading and Jihu was either looking at the pictures or simply listening. In this way, we covered one story repetitively until Jihu began to create activities based on the story. Over the course of three months from March to May 2014, I collected 15 video recordings (3.21 hours) and 9 audio recording (1.22 hours), with accompanying pictures of Jihu's artifacts and a detailed journal kept by me. From these data, I selected 9 video clips (34.36 minutes) and 2 audio recordings (3.15 minutes) for transcription.

The use of audio and video recordings for this project had clearly been explained to Jihu at the initial stage of the research and was accepted. From the 2nd week of March, however, she began to demonstrate her discomfort with my role as researcher rather than playmate. During a filming session on 13 March 2014, she articulated her dissatisfaction with my videotaping by complaining in Korean, ‘엄마, 카메라 끄고 그냥 나랑 놀아요. {Mom, turn off the camera and just join in my play.}’ Since then, Jihu’s initial positive attitude to filming gradually changed into resistance. After consultation with Jihu and reflection over child-centered research, I determined to stop taping sessions from 20 March and pay more attention to recovering the naturalness of my relationship and play with Jihu.

It was not long before Jihu became willing and excited again to take part in the research from the 4th week of March. While her performances always emanated spontaneously, we sometimes set a certain day for recording if she felt ready. There were even a couple of times when Jihu finished preparation for play on her own and called out, ‘엄마, 나 준비 끝났어요. 나 동영상 찍어줘요. {Mom, I’m ready now. Film me, please.}’ In the same way, I became more flexible and negotiable with my role. Whenever Jihu wanted more of me as mother and play partner, I gladly listened to her and fully immersed myself in our play. At these times, recording was done, not with audio or video equipment but through diary keeping as soon as possible after the event while my memory remained fresh.

My data collection procedures demonstrated the researcher’s general tendency to consider children’s initial attitudes as a “simple formality” (O’Reilly et al., 2013, p. 151). Furthermore, the episode above confirms Little’s (1991) and Dam’s (1995) suggestion that when applied to child research, participant children should actively be encouraged to monitor and evaluate their involvement, while adult researchers should be willing to reflect the learner’s ideas and suggestions and amend the original plan at any stage of the research.

Deciding what types of play to do

Unlike adult-led guided play, in which adults generally take the lead in terms of play type choice, preparation and in-play interactions (Massey, 2013), this project highlighted the self-initiated spontaneous play of a preschooler as a

way of representing the books she had read. As might be expected from the child-initiated play, various types of unstructured play ideas emerged by the child's own efforts and enacted with the resources available in her immediate environment. The resultant book-related play that Jihu created was categorized into role-playing, miming, book-reading events, story retelling and book art (Table 2). For the purpose of this article, I define 'book-reading event' as a pre-literacy activity where prereaders pretend to read largely by guessing and memory without applying phonological and orthographical strategies for text decoding (Chall, 1983), and 'book art' as a collaborative work which involves children's planning, designing and producing their own books in letters and art work (Johnson, 1998).

Table 2. Types of Book-related Play

English Storybook	Play Type
1 <i>The Tiger Who Came to Tea</i>	book-reading event, story retelling
2 <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny</i>	role-playing
3 <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	miming, role-playing, book art
4 <i>My Wobbly Tooth Must Not Ever Never Fall Out</i>	book-reading event
5 <i>Snow is My Favorite and My Best</i>	book-reading event
6 <i>Lost and Found</i>	book art
7 <i>Room on the Broom</i>	role-playing, story-retelling
8 <i>Peace at Last</i>	book art

As evident in Table 2, it is not uncommon that one story sometimes produced different types of play. For example, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* was enacted in three different patterns: miming, role-playing and book art. More surprisingly, the agreed roles and rules even within a single play activity did not always remain intact throughout the whole event but was subject to amendment and adaptation in response to the child's instantaneous ideas, interest and needs. Excerpt 2 illustrates the natural transition of Jihu's role from a responsive mime performer more towards an initiative script developer.

Excerpt 2 (Video recorded on 8 April 2014)

- J: (Still lying on the bed) No- no, uh pretend it's (.) not the same, mom.
M: Ah, not the same story?
J: Yeah.
M: Okay, so on Fri- on Saturday, she ate this one, she ate that one, she ate candy, she ate corn, she ate (.) uh a slice of watermelon:::n. AND THEN? She FELL ASLEEP. (Asking Jihu) Is that what you mean?
J: No. Ah, it's (.) alright. (Sitting up on the bed) Apple, one apple, two pears, three plums, four strawberries, five oranges (..) is RIGHT.
M: Yes?
J: But, I DON'T LIKE TO HAVE (..) the (.) xxx On Fri- Saturday, she ate through one slice of cup cake, (..) that (.) I don't want to have that. I just need to
M: Ah, okay. So on Friday, on Friday night, (..) the hungry caterpillar (.) fell asleep.
J: (Jihu pretends to sleep on bed.)
M: And then. Oh Jihu, is the (.) is the caterpillar still hungry, or is- is she full now?
J: (Opening her eyes) I'm a FULL now.
M: Ah, she's full now! She's NOT hungry ANY MORE. And then she fast fell asleep.
J: (Closing her eyes for a couple of seconds and then opening them and sitting up) Now I eat through one lea- one nice leaf. Owp, owp, owp!
M: And the next morning, she woke up and she ate through one big nice leaf. And then, she fell asleep too.
J: No, I just rest.

At the initial stage, Jihu only mimed the caterpillar to my narration. This concept of play was suggested by Jihu; she assigned our roles, made a set of rules and managed the play session from the beginning. This pattern, however, changed from the middle of the session, when Jihu gradually took the lead with more verbalization. Jihu demanded story re-creation by clearly verbalizing that she did not want to follow the same storyline. From that point, she became more responsible for script adaptation and I responded naturally.

As regards the book art activity, which Jihu was able to do alone without the limitation of places and number of playmates, the self-made book on *Lost and Found* was created independently during her free time in school. It was when Jihu engaged in more self-initiated book making in school, including the binding of the pieces of paper with glue and sticky tape as well as emergent writing inside. Her title (*Lost end fawd*) shows that Jihu used the letter-sound correspondence from phonics in order to spell words (Figure 1).



Lost and Found



Once there was a little boy

One day he met a penguin.



In the morning, he go to the South Pole.

Then he is in the trouble



Then now he travel safe.

Figure 1. Jihu's Self-made Book on *Lost and Found*

Taking the best use of freedom afforded to her in re-enacting and representing storybooks in any ways she preferred, not only did Jihu take more control of both the contents and processes of her language play but she also demonstrated significant linguistic development in her English learning as an L2. Fluency in her oral language improved considerably with the repetitive use of key phrases and expressions from a story through various activities such as role-playing, story-reading events and story retell. In addition, her early literacy development was fostered when Jihu engaged in the literacy-related behavior of making a book based on the story he had read or heard (Johnson, 1998; Pellegrini, 1980).

Deciding to record herself with an app

Within the context of informal out-of-class language learning, the educational benefits of mobile learning for ELLs have been confirmed in a number of studies over the past ten years in terms of motivation, agency and autonomy (Jones & Issroff, 2007; Richards, 2015; Traxler, 2013). While considerable research has been conducted on young ELLs' collaborative learning with peers and other language groups such as in online gaming and chat rooms (Alhinty, 2015; Jeon, 2014), however, little research attention has been paid to a single young learner's use of mobile devices in his/her spontaneous language play.

Excerpt 3 below describes a child's ability and enjoyment in incorporating mobile technology into her free language play. Wishing to record her story retell of *Room on the Broom* with my Smart Phone, Jihu found a filming App on her own and started self-recording. Then she changed her mind and searched for a voice-recording App. Immediately after the recording, Jihu listened to her story retell very intensively several times before repeating the same procedure until she was eventually content with her performances. Encouraged by her successful first attempt, Jihu undertook the second round of self-recording four days later based on *Peace at Last*. This time, there was no need for her to check the procedure with me because she already knew how to do it.

Excerpt 3 (Video recorded on 12 May 2014)

- J: (Jihu turns off the filming App and is searching for another App.)
J: (Pointing to a voice recording App) 요거, 요거! {This one, This one!}
M: Ah! Just voice, voice mail? But I think videotaping is better, but- (..) but do you like audio taping?
J: (Jihu keeps looking at the phone.)
M: If you WANT, if you want the audio recording BETTER, you can go with it. Which way do you want to do?
J: (Jihu shows the audio recording App to mother.)
M: Ah, AUDIO RECORDING? Great!
J: Th- (Then Jihu stops her speech and shows the audio recording App to mother again.)
M: (Checking if the App is turned on) >Okay<, [let me see.
J: [Is it working?
M: Yes, it's WORKING! OH! You're very good at the machine.
J: (Brining the phone closer to her mouth) The witch had a cat (..) and the long ginger hair when- (..) no (..) and the tall hat (..) when you (..) and the lo::ng ginger hair when you wore in the plant. (Chewing gum) Bu- how the- (..) how the cat purred

Given the fact that the rising generation are increasingly adept at and thus motivated towards working with mobile technologies in all aspects of their lives (Jones & Issroff, 2007), it is not surprising that even a 5-year-old child can utilize mobile devices fairly easily and skillfully despite their apparently complicated layout and functionality. Jihu's capacity to act independently and purposefully using the "tools and resources available in the surrounding environment" (Kalaja, Alanen, Palviainen, & Dufya, 2011, p. 47) can be referred to agency and autonomy, while repeated listening and speaking practices to perfect her story retell can contribute to the ELL's oral language skills and fluency development. Based on the observations and field notes in this study, I suggest that a child's ability to incorporate mobile technology into his/her free language play should be further examined.

Conclusion

In this study, a 5-year-old ELL demonstrated considerable capability and willingness in taking charge of her participation in research and book-related language play as self-access learning at home. Not only did the child explicitly approve her participation in research but she determined which storybooks to focus on, negotiated on whether to record, and made spontaneous decisions on what type of play to do and which resources to use including the state-of-the-art mobile device. While more care is to be taken to ensure autonomy for very young children, it is important that parents, teachers and researchers understand the power of learner-centeredness in child SLA. By offering decision-making opportunities to young learners as empowered research participants and capable language learners, we adults can be ready for any wonders they will bring back.

Notes on the contributor

Heeyang Park has worked as an English teacher, materials developer and teacher/parent trainer for young learners for ten years in South Korea. She completed her MA in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the University of Warwick in England in 2014 and is currently pursuing a PhD with a major in Applied Linguistics and ELT at the same institution. Her research interests

include early literacy development, research with children and teacher/parent education.

References

- Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1987). *Membership roles in field research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Alderson, P., & Morrow, V. (2011). *The ethics of research with children and young people: A practical handbook*. London, UK: Sage.
- Alhinty, M. (2015). Young language learners' collaborative learning and social interaction as a motivational aspect of the iPad. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning*, 10(2), 24-29.
doi:10.3991/ijet.v10i2.4313
- Bergen. (1990). *Developing autonomous learning in the foreign language classroom*. Bergen, Norway: Universitetet I Bergen, Institutt for Praktisk pedagogikk.
- Besser, S., & Chik, A. (2014). Narratives of second language identity amongst young English learners in Hong Kong. *ELT Journal*, 68(3), 299-309.
doi:10.1093/elt/ccu026
- Bongartz, C., & Schneider, M. (2003). Linguistic development in social contexts: A study of two brothers learning German. *The Modern Language Journal*, 87(1), 13-37. doi:10.1111/1540-4781.00176
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Castellano, J., Mynard, J., & Rubesch, T. (2011). Student technology use in a self-access center. *Language Learning & Technology*, 15(3), 12-27. Retrieved from <http://llt.msu.edu/issues/october2011/actionresearch.pdf>
- Chall, J. (1983). *Stages of reading development*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Chow, B. W., McBride-Chang, C., & Cheung, H. (2010). Parent-child reading in English as a second language: Effects on language and literacy development of Chinese kindergarteners. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 33(3), 284-301. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9817.2009.01414.x
- Coady, M. (2010). Ethics in early childhood research. In G. M. Naughton, S. A. Rolfe, & I. Siraj-Blatchford (Eds.), *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice (2nd ed.)* (pp. 73-84). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press

- Copland, F., & Garton, S. (2014). Key themes and future directions in teaching English to young learners: Introduction to the special issue. *ELT Journal*, 68(3), 223-230. doi:10.1093/elt/ccu030
- Christensen, P., & James, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Research with children: Perspectives and practices*. London, UK: Falmer Press.
- Dam, L. (1995). *Learner autonomy 3: From theory to classroom practice*. Dublin, Ireland: Authentik.
- Ellis, G. (2014). 'Young learners': Clarifying our terms. *ELT Journal*, 68(1), 75-78. doi:10.1093/elt/cct062
- Gu, P. Y., Hu, G., & Zhang, L. J. (2005). Investigating language learners' strategies among lower primary school pupils in Singapore. *Language and Education*, 19(4), 281-303. doi:10.1080/09500780508668682
- Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press.
- Jeon, S. A. (2014). The impact of playing commercial online games on young Korean EFL learners' L2 identity. In S. Rich (Ed.), *International perspectives on teaching English to young learners* (pp. 87-103). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Johnson, P. (1998). *A book of one's own: Developing literacy through making books* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton Educational.
- Jones, A., & Buttrey, J. (1970). *Children and stories*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Jones, A., & Issroff, K. (2007). Motivation and mobile devices: Exploring the role of appropriation and coping strategies. *Research in Learning Technology*, 15(3), 247-258. doi:10.3402/rlt.v15i3.10934
- Kalaja, P., Alanen, R., Palviainen, A., & Dufva, H. (2011). From milk cartons to English roommates: Context and agency in L2 learning beyond the classroom. In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Beyond the language classroom* (pp. 47-58). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kellet, M. (2010). *Rethinking children and research: Attitudes in contemporary society*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Kim, D. J., & Hall, J. K. (2002). The role of an interactive book reading program in the development of second language pragmatic competence. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86(3), 332-348. doi:10.1111/1540-4781.00153
- Kirsch, C. (2012). Developing children's language learner strategies at primary school. *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and*

Early Years Education, 40(4), 379–399.
doi:10.1080/03004279.2012.691372

- Kristmanson, P., Lafargue, C., & Culligan, K. (2013). Experience with autonomy: Learners' voices on language learning. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 69(4), 462-486. doi:10.3138/cmlr.1723.462
- Kuchah, K., & Pinter, A. (2012). 'Was this an interview?' Breaking the power barrier in adult-child interviews in an African context. *Issues in Educational Research*, 22(3), 283-297. Retrieved from <http://www.iier.org.au/iier22/kuchah.html>
- Kuure, L. (2011). Places for learning: Technology-mediated language learning practices beyond the classroom. In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Beyond the language classroom* (pp. 35-46). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Langston, A., Abbot, L., Lewis, V., & Kellet, M. (2004). Early childhood. In S. Fraser, V. Lewis, S. Ding, M. Kellet, & C. Robinson (Eds.), *Doing research with children and young people* (pp. 147-160). London, UK: Sage.
- Lee, C. N. (2005). *Supporting English learning in the family: An ethnographic case study of a young Korean-English learner* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Southampton.
- Leicester, M. (2009). *Early years stories for the foundation stage: Ideas and inspiration for active learning*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Linse, C. (2005). *Practical English language teaching: Young learners*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems*. Dublin, Ireland: Authentik.
- López-Gopar, M. E. (2014). Teaching English critically to Mexican children. *ELT Journal*, 68(3), 310-320. doi:10.1093/elt/ccu017
- Macaro, E., & Erler, L. (2008). Raising the achievement of young beginner readers of French through strategy instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, 29(1), 90-119. doi:10.1093/applin/amm023
- Massey, S. L. (2013). From the reading rug to the play center: Enhancing vocabulary and comprehensive language skills by connecting storybook reading and guided play. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41(2), 125-131. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0524-y
- McTavish, M., Streelasky, J., & Coles, L. (2012). Listening to children's voices: Children as participants in research. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 44(3), 249-267. doi:10.1007/s13158-012-0068-8

- Mourão, S. (2014). Taking play seriously in the pre-primary English classroom. *ELT Journal*, 68(3), 254-264. doi:10.1093/elt/ccu018
- Nunan, D., & Richards, J. (Eds.). (2015). *Language learning beyond the classroom*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- O'Reilly, M., Ronzoni, P., & Dogra, N. (2013). *Research with children: Theory and practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Pellegrini, A. D. (1980). The relationship between kindergarteners' play and achievement in prereading, language and writing. *Psychology in the Schools*, 17(4), 530-535. doi:[10.1002/1520-6807\(198010\)17:4<530::AID-PITS2310170419>3.0.CO;2-A](https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6807(198010)17:4<530::AID-PITS2310170419>3.0.CO;2-A)
- Philp, J., Mackey, A., & Oliver, R. (2008). Child's play? In J. Philp, R. Oliver, & A. Mackey (Eds.), *Second language acquisition and the younger learner: Child's play?* (pp. 3-23). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Pinter, A. (2014). Child participant roles in applied linguistics research. *Applied Linguistics*, 35(2), 168-183. doi:10.1093/applin/amt008
- Pinter, A., & Zandian, S. (2015). 'I thought it would be tiny little one phrase that we said, in a huge big pile of papers': Children's reflections on their involvement in participatory research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 235-250. doi:10.1177/1468794112465637
- Richards, J. (2015). The changing face of language learning: Learning beyond the classroom. *RELC Journal*, 46(1), 5-22. doi:10.1177/0033688214561621
- Rogers, C., Lyon, H., & Tausch, R. (2014). *On becoming an effective teacher*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Rowe, D. W. (1998). The literature potentials of book-related dramatic play. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 33(1), 10-35.
- Schouten-van Parreren, C. (1989). Vocabulary learning through reading: Which conditions should be met when presenting words in texts? *AILA Review* 6, 75-85.
- Sheerin, S. (1991). Self-access. *Language Teaching*, 24(3), 143-157. doi:10.1017/s0261444800006315
- Traxler, J. (2013). Mobile learning: Shaping the frontiers of learning technology in global context. In R. Huang, Kinshuk, & J.M. Spector (Eds.), *Reshaping learning: Frontiers of learning technology in a global context* (pp. 237-251). London, UK: Springer.

- Uchikoshi, Y. (2006). English vocabulary development in bilingual kindergarteners: What are the best predictors? *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 9(1), 33-49. doi:10.1017/s1366728905002361
- Vandergrift, L. (2005). Relationships among motivation orientations, metacognitive awareness and proficiency in L2 listening. *Applied Linguistics*, 26(1), 70-89. doi:10.1093/applin/amh039