

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE USE OF SPEAKING STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE ON IELTS SPEAKING TEST: A STUDY ON CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS

JIN XU¹

Independent Researcher (China)

RESUMEN

Hasta la fecha, se ha alcanzado una serie de logros en los estudios sobre la relación entre las estrategias de aprendizaje de idiomas y la competencia lingüística. Sin embargo, son limitados los estudios acerca de la relación entre el uso de estrategias de expresión oral y el rendimiento en exámenes de expresión oral en lengua inglesa, especialmente en un contexto chino. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo explorar dicha relación entre la aplicación de estrategias de expresión oral y el rendimiento en las pruebas de expresión oral de los exámenes IELTS, mejorando así el rendimiento en inglés oral mediante la elección y formación en la estrategia más adecuada en cada caso. 93 estudiantes chinos de postgrado que han realizado el examen IELTS durante su formación universitaria respondieron a un cuestionario sobre su uso de las estrategias de expresión oral, y los datos se analizaron con el software IBM SPSS Version 22, que aborda específicamente los análisis de correlación, regresión y ANOVA. Los principales resultados muestran lo siguiente: (1) El uso general de las estrategias de expresión oral se encuentra en un rango de frecuencia media, y la estrategia de expresión oral más usada es la compensación, mientras que la menos utilizada es la cognitiva. (2) El rendimiento en la prueba de expresión oral de los exámenes IELTS está positivamente correlacionado con el uso de los seis tipos de estrategias de expresión oral.

Palabras clave: Estrategias para la expresión oral; Rendimiento de la prueba de expresión oral de los exámenes IELTS; Correlación

ABSTRACT

By now, a host of achievements have been made on studies on the relationship between language learning strategies and language proficiency. The relationship between the use of speaking strategies and performance on oral English test, however, is hardly explored, especially within a Chinese context. The research aims to explore such a relationship between the application speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance, thereby improving oral English performance through appropriate strategy choosing and training. 93 Chinese postgraduate students who have taken IELTS at their undergraduate years answered a questionnaire regarding their use of speaking strategies, and the data are analyzed with IBM SPSS Version 22, which specifically involve a correlation analysis, regression analysis and ANOVA. The major findings are as follows: (1). The overall use of speaking strategies is at a medium frequency range; and participants are found to use compensation speaking strategy most frequently while cognitive speaking strategy is the least frequently used one. (2). IELTS speaking test performance is positively correlated with the use of all six types of speaking strategies.

Key words: Speaking strategies; IELTS speaking test performance; Correlation

¹ E-mail: xujin910714@126.com

1. Introduction

Communication plays a vital part in life as it can transfer information by exchanging ideas and thoughts, making plans, tackling problems. The activity of speaking takes the account of 30% in the procedure of communication (River, 1979), thus speaking is a significant tool for communication. According to Widdowson (1990), the ultimate goal of language learning is to obtain communicative competence, emphasising the importance of speaking as well.

IELTS, known as International English Language Testing System, is an international standardized and leading test of English proficiency of the world for higher education and migration (www.ielts.org), which is regarded as the proof of English language proficiency by over 9,000 organisations all over the world (ibid). IELTS measures the test-takers' ability to communicate with the following four skills: "listening, reading, writing and speaking, which are equally weighted with scores reported on a 9 band scale of ability" and increasingly demanded by international employers, education institutions and professional organisations (www.ielts.org). The speaking module is a key component of IELTS. The assessor scores the test-taker as he or she is speaking, but the speech is also recorded for monitoring as well as re-marking in case of an appeal against the banding given.

Since IELTS is such a popular test among English language proficiency tests and it is assumed that the use of speaking strategies can enhance oral English level, the study tries to get some discoveries in the relationship between the use of speaking strategies and learners' performance in IELTS speaking test.

2. Literature Review

This chapter mainly focuses on previous studies concerning the definition and classification of speaking strategies. Additionally, this chapter presents related research and studies on this topic. Finally, IELTS, and its associated speaking test will be discussed.

2.1 Definitions of Speaking Strategies

2.1.1 Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

The following definitions given by some scholars are most widely acknowledged and adopted in the field of research surrounding language learning strategies. Stern stated that "strategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner" (1983, cited in Ellis, 1994, p.531). This implies the suggestion of an unobservable and mind-based concept of language learning strategy. On the other hand, Oxford (1989, cited in Ellis, 1994, p. 531) noted that language learning strategies refer to specific actions or behaviours of the learners which could enhance their language learning, thus making it faster, easier, more effective and more self-directed. According to Weinstein and Mayer (1986, p.315), who considered language learning strategies to be both behavioural and mental, it is something that has the tendency to influence the encoding process in the language learner, no matter whether it relates to behaviour or thoughts.

Over time, the scope of language learning strategies has extended to a certain degree. The notion that conscious or unconscious activities are incorporated in language learning strategies is maintained by Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991, p.212). Similar to Weinstein and Mayer (1986), Chamot (2004, p.14) defined this term as the conscious thoughts and actions taken by the learner in order to accomplish the development goal.

The following list of features illustrate the ways in which the term 'language learning strategies' is adopted in the current study, based on the views of Chamot (1987, 2004), Oxford (1989, 1990), Ellis (1994) and the above definitions:

1. Language learning strategies could refer to both specific techniques or behaviours and general approaches taken in order to develop L2 proficiency.
2. Language learning strategies could be both mental and behavioural.

3. Language learning strategies are usually problem-orientated, meaning that learners often employ a strategy in order to tackle a specific learning problem.
4. The use of language learning strategies may vary significantly as a result of different tasks and problems as well as individual learner differences.

2.1.2 Definitions of speaking strategies

As proposed by López (2011), the term “speaking strategies” in literature could refer to communication strategies or specifically oral communication strategies (p. 3). Based on the concept that communication is the primary goal of speaking, Corder (1977) presented the techniques adopted by speakers when navigating communication difficulties as ‘communication strategies’. Dörnyei and Scott (1997, p.179) extended the definition to, “every potentially intentional attempt to cope with any language-related problem of which the speaker is aware,” during the process of communication. Whilst problem-solving is still the aim of this definition, the ‘language problem’ – unlike Corder’s (1977) definition – goes beyond the expression of meaning. In this paper, Dörnyei and Scott’s (1997, p.179) view is adopted, which could be summarized as an intentional or potentially intentional attempt to solve language problem in order to achieve L2 communication when considering the situation of Chinese students that the weakest skill is speaking as a result of imbalanced attention paid to speaking compared with other skills (Yuan, 2011, p.143).

2.2 Classification of Speaking Strategies

A number of experts in the field of second language acquisition have presented schemes for language learning strategies. However, just like the definition of the strategies themselves, there are different classifications. In what follows, the classifications of Oxford (1990) as well as Dörnyei and Scott (1995) will each be discussed in turn.

2.2.1 Classification of Language Learning Strategies

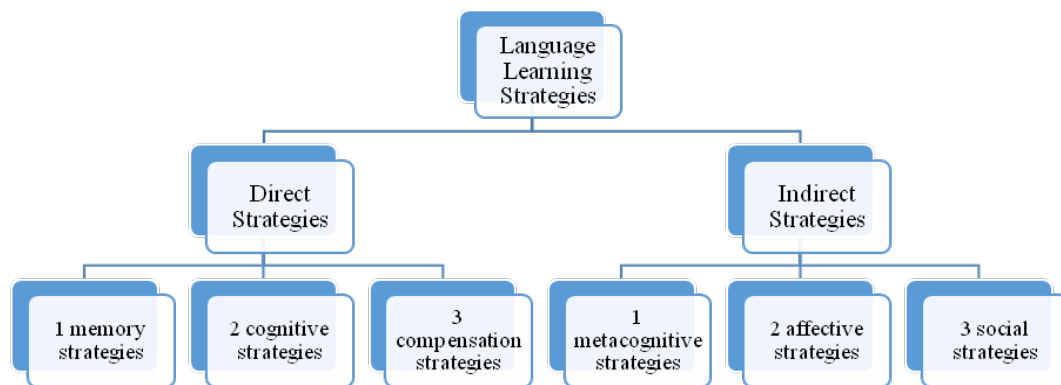


Fig. 1. Oxford's Language Learning Strategy System Diagram (Oxford, 1990, p.16)

Based on the criteria of whether language learning strategies influence learning directly or indirectly, Oxford (1990, p.16) proposed the above scheme, which has been widely accepted up to now. In comparison with the previous classification, the above diagram outlines the consideration of memory strategies, compensation strategies and affective strategies. The following table further illustrates what each subcategory contains.

Table 1. Oxford's Language Learning Strategy Scheme (1990, pp. 18-21)

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
Memory strategies	"Creating links mentally, applying sounds and images, reviewing well, and employing action".
Cognitive strategies	"Practising, reviewing and sending messages, analysing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output".
Compensation strategies	"Guessing intelligently, and overcoming limitations in writing and speaking".
Metacognitive strategies	"Centring one's learning, planning and arranging one's learning, and evaluating one's learning".
Affective strategies	"Lowering one's anxiety, encouraging oneself, and taking one's emotional temperature".
Social strategies	"Asking questions, cooperating with others and empathising with others".

2.2.2 Classification of Speaking Strategies

The taxonomy Dörnyei and Scott (1995) proposed not only referred to strategic behaviour, but it also related the three main categories². to the four main types of communication problems². that second or foreign language learners mostly encountered. The taxonomy is presented in the table below.

Table 2. Dörnyei and Scotts' (1995) taxonomy of speaking strategies relating to communication problems

CATEGORIES STRATEGIES PROBLEMS	DIRECT STRATEGIES	INTERACTIONAL STRATEGIES	INDIRECT STRATEGIES
Resource-deficit problems	Message abandonment; reduction; replacement; Circumlocution; restructuring; code switching;	Appealing for assistance	
Own-performance problems	Self-repair; Self-rephrasing	Understanding check; own-accuracy check	Verbal strategy markers
Other-performance problem	Other-repair	Requesting clarification; requesting repetition; requesting confirmation; Inference; expressing non-understanding	Feigning understanding
Processing time pressure problems			Repetition; Using fillers

To summarise, Dörnyei and Scotts' (1995) direct strategies refer to the use of an alternative method, which is more manageable and self-contained in order to convey the intended meaning. Oxford's (1990) subcategory of cognitive and compensation strategies reflects this as well, which belong to the main category of direct strategies. In contrast, indirect strategies do not directly deal with resource deficit-related problems, but rather provide support for mutual understanding (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997), such as making use of fillers or feigning understanding to prevent the conversation from breaking down (ibid). Similarly, Oxford (1990, p.135) saw indirect strategies as those that support learning without the direct involvement of the target language. This being said, determining whether or not it should be included in this category is challenging since indirect strategies are far less associated with meaning. Rubin (1987) believed that language learning strategies should have a direct impact, taking the aim of speaking, communication and mutual understanding into consideration. However, indirect strategies play a vital role in managing communication problems and may influence the degree to which mutual understanding occurs (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997). For this reason, the present study adopts indirect strategies. Interactional strategies, places its primary emphasis on the cooperative conduction of problem-solving exchanges (e.g. providing clarification, requesting confirmation or asking for help). This is also close to Oxford's (1990) definition of social strategies, but the difference is that social strategies belong to the main category of indirect strategies instead of parallel to indirect strategies according to Oxford (1990).

This study adopts Oxford's (1990) framework of language learning strategies as well as the specific strategic behaviours proposed by Dörnyei and Scott (1995). Oxford's classification aimed at overall language learning but this study will only focus on the skill of speaking. Thus it will also adopt Dörnyei and Scott's (1995) matrix, which is assumed to be more problem-orientated and process-based, explains the three main categories in detail and matches specific strategic behaviours with four types of communication problems.

Table 3. Speaking Strategies Scheme Used in the Study

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIC BEHAVIOURS AIMED AT SPEAKING (SOME EXAMPLES ARE LISTED)
Meta-cognitive speaking strategies	Managing learning by centring, arranging, planning, organising, evaluating, or monitoring learning.	Setting up oral English learning goals at different learning stages; paying attention when hearing English; monitoring and evaluating the oral learning process.
Cognitive speaking strategies	Enhancing learning through various ways (practising, repeating, translating, deductive reasoning).	Practising oral English through songs and films or using structured patterns; making use of L1 (Chinese) to translate when encountering difficulty expressing in English.
Memory speaking strategies	Structuring the process of reviewing; building mental links; retrieving.	Putting a new word in a meaningful context for easier memory and use; periodically revising previously learned knowledge in oral English; connecting new words with known words (in sound, meaning and function).
Compensation speaking strategies	Overcoming limitations; guessing based on clues.	Selecting or adjusting topic; inferring the meaning of a new word; approximating the meaning by using a synonym.

Affective speaking strategies	Reducing anxiety; making positive statements; viewing risks and mistakes wisely.	Taking a deep breath, using laughter or simulating reality in order to control anxiety; encouraging oneself to learn oral English; feeling free to make mistakes while speaking.
Social speaking strategies	Asking others for help; cooperating with others; enhancing mutual understanding	Asking someone to correct mistakes; asking for confirmation; practicing oral English with peers or proficient users of the target language; using body language to emphasise speech.

2.3 Relevant Research on this Field

In the field of language testing, researchers have become more interested in identifying and ascertaining individual characteristics that influence language test performance. Language learning strategy is undoubtedly one of these according to Bachman and Palmer (2010) and Purpura (1999). Many researchers, including Zhang and Zhang (2012), Song and Cheng (2006) and Gan et al. (2004) have conducted research in the Chinese context. Most of this research focused on overall language proficiency or the specific skill of reading. For example, based on the results of the interviews conducted by Gan et al. (2004), more successful learners (participants who scored over 80% in College English Test Level 4, known as CET-4 on a 100% scale) have used more types of learning strategies to facilitate learning. Zhang and Zhang's (2012) research focused on the sub-skill of reading only, which showed the use of monitoring strategies in metacognitive strategies has a highly positive relationship to the performance in the CET-4 reading test. This being said, the shortcoming of these studies is that it is difficult to determine the success of the learner, or the accuracy of using test performance as a reflection of language competence, since these researchers were unable to prove that CET-4 was valid and reliable. According to Huang (2013), the more detailed research orientation, such as the relationship between the use of speaking strategies and spoken language performance, was only studied by a few experts and scholars, who called for further exploration and investigation, especially in the Chinese context (Huang, 2013; Seong, 2014).

2.4 IELTS Speaking Test

As mentioned in the previous section, the majority of former research has shown that most language learning strategies have positive effects on oral performance. Therefore it is assumed that the use of language learning strategies can advance speaking test performance to a certain extent. This study focused on one typical model found in speaking tests; the IELTS speaking test. An IELTS speaking test generally lasts for 11-14 minutes and consists of three sections, with each one having a varied time limit, content, form and focus. This is explained in detail in the table below.

Table 4. The procedure and form of IELTS speaking test (www.ielts.org, n.d.)

PART	TIME	FORM	CONTENT	FOCUS
1	4 to 5 minutes	Interview	Test-takers are going to be asked about some general topics such as hobbies, interests, school and subject, hometown, family members and so on. To ensure the quality and consistency, questions are usually selected from the examiner's scripted frame for this part.	Here, the candidates are asked a number of questions relating to common situations or typical experiences in order to evaluate his or her basic conversational abilities.

2	3 to 4 minutes	Self-talk	Test-takers will get a topic card randomly selected by the examiner and then have one minute to prepare for the topic, after which they have to conduct a self-talk for approximately two minutes on the given topic.	This part measures the test-taker's ability to talk on a topic given with no further prompts at length from the assessor. Candidates will be scored based on the extent to which their language use is appropriate and how coherently their ideas are organised.
3	4 to 5 minutes	Discussion	A discussion, generally on deeper and further topics in part two will be conducted between the examiner and the examinee (this part is considered to be the most difficult section).	This part aims to test the candidate's ability to express ideas on the topic and to justify, analyse as well as discuss opinions and issues which are more abstract.

A qualified IELTS examiner assesses the test-taker's speaking proficiency based on the learner's pronunciation, grammatical range and accuracy, lexical resource, as well as fluency and coherence (see Appendix 3), which consist of the four main criteria for IELTS speaking test assessment. The test-taker is going to be awarded a whole or half band score ranging from 1 to 9 (see Table 2.7; and Appendix 2 for detail). These scores are based on equally-weighted criteria components. The assessment band could be seen as the table below.

Table 5. IELTS Band Scores

BAND	PROFICIENCY (OF ENGLISH)
9	Expert User
8	Very Good User
7	Good User
6	Competent User
5	Modest User
4	Limited User
3	Extremely Limited User
2	Intermittent User
1	Non-User

3. Research Design

In this chapter, the aim and rationale of this study will be presented along with a description of the research questions. Following this, a presentation of the participants and chosen sampling method is offered along with a description of the research instrument used in this study. The procedure of data analysis will then be discussed. At the end of this chapter, it deals with relevant ethical issues.

3.1 Rationale Aim and Questions

In this study, Chinese college candidates are asked to answer questions regarding their use of speaking strategies and their reported IELTS speaking test score in order to explore the relationship between speaking test performance and the application of speaking strategies. It is expected that the particular types of speaking strategy that learners with higher scores usually use most frequently will be discovered. It is hoped that this study can help to improve IELTS speaking test performance by offering a number of suggestions with regards to learners' use of speaking strategies, and by highlighting the importance of speaking strategies training in IELTS to teachers. The research questions are as follows:

(1) When preparing for IELTS speaking test, which speaking strategies are adopted by Chinese college candidates?

(2) What is the relationship between IELTS speaking test performance and the application of speaking strategies under each subcategory?

3.2 Participants

In this research, 93 Chinese postgraduate students from various universities in China have been selected as samples with a snowball sampling method. All of the participants study English as a Foreign Language (EFL) alongside their academic majors and have taken an IELTS speaking test at their undergraduates. Some of the participants are currently studying for their master's degree at the University of Edinburgh so they had to take IELTS before they came to the UK for further studying, while others took IELTS at their undergraduate years in order to prove their English language proficiency for their future career development. It is believed that the students experienced a similar language learning environment prior to taking IELTS, since none of the students had the experience of studying abroad at the point of completing the examination. All of these students have finished a one-year spoken English college course according to the relevant regulations of the Chinese national college English curriculum. Snowball sampling, categorised under non-probability sampling (Robson, 2011), was applied in order to ensure that the aforementioned requirements were fulfilled. Whilst this allowed certain guarantees in terms of response rate, it should be noted that this strategy might have resulted in a sample that was not largely representative of the larger population. However, in spite of the sampling method, the participants were from different levels of universities in China.

3.3 Research Instrument

The main instrument adopted in this research is a questionnaire on investigating the use of speaking strategies using the Oxford's SILL (Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, cited in Oxford, 1990) and some communication strategies proposed by Dörnyei (1995), and is designed with the Likert-scale, which will be discussed in detail. As Dörnyei and Csizér (2012) proposed, the research method of survey questionnaires could provide us with information such as the language behaviours, attitudes and opinions, beliefs and feelings, as well as the basic background of the participants. Furthermore, the greater sample size means the research result would be more generalisable if compared to qualitative research (Bryman, 2012).

The questionnaire is designed according to Oxford's (1990) classification of language learning strategies as well as Dörnyei's (1995) strategic behaviour on speaking strategies. The questionnaire comprises six parts that are; metacognitive speaking strategies (from Item 1-5), cognitive (from Item 6-10), memory (from Item 11-15), compensation speaking strategies (from Item 16-20), affective (from Item 21-25) and social speaking strategies (from Item 26-30), respectively.

The participants' responses to the each of the questions would be measured by using the Likert-scale, which scores from 1 to 5 according to the frequency of strategy use. Option "1" represents, "the statement is never or almost never true of me" and Option "5" is "always or almost always true of me". In addition, some background information is needed as well, such as the participants' undergraduate university, and IELTS speaking test score (See Appendix 1). The 93 selected students who have taken IELTS at their undergraduate years answered the questionnaire. To ensure the quality of the questionnaire results, they were informed of the importance and the aim of this study in advance.

3.4 Data Analysis

The whole questionnaire was analysed with every five questions within the same subcategory of speaking strategies being synthetically evaluated. Calculating the mean and standard deviation with descriptive statistics would enhance our understanding of Chinese college students' use of speaking strategies, for example, their frequency preference of strategy use. In order to investigate the relationship between participants' IELTS speaking test score and their use of speaking strategies, which is the main aim of this research, three statistical techniques are carried out. This begins with a correlation analysis: the correlation coefficient between speaking performance and use of metacognitive, cognitive, memory, compensation, affective, and social speaking strategies would be determined out one by one with the assistance of IBM SPSS Version 22, making it appropriate to figure out the Spearman's rho using SPSS (ibid).

4. Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the research results in the form of tables with relevant discussions and explanations will be presented and in light of the three research questions. The questions include what speaking strategies Chinese college students use when they prepare for the IELTS speaking test; what the relationship is between the participants' use of speaking strategies and test performance. This chapter ends with the pedagogical implications of this research.

4.1 Research Question 1: Chinese college candidates' use of speaking strategies when preparing for the IELTS speaking test In order to address the first research question, the average values, which represent the frequency of strategy application amongst students, were obtained from the questionnaire data. By comparing these averages referring to the students' use of overall and specific strategies under each subcategory, the frequency could be ranked so that what strategies Chinese college students use most and least frequently would be known.

4.1.1 The overall use of speaking strategies

This part focuses on the participants' overall use of speaking strategies, which is presented as the table below.

Table 6. The Overall Use of Speaking Strategies

STRATEGY TYPE	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Metacognitive Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	5.00	3.23	0.67
Cognitive Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	5.00	3.16	0.66
Memory Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	4.60	3.41	0.62
Compensation Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	4.80	3.59	0.64
Affective Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	5.00	3.27	0.66
Social Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	5.00	3.41	0.62

In this study, the average coefficient is set at 3.0. As indicated in Table 4.1, above, the mean average for the application of speaking strategies within each subcategory is higher than 3.0. According to Oxford and Burry-Stock's (1995) summary of strategy frequency studies using the ESL/EFL SILL, a mean within the range of 3.5-5.0 is assumed to be higher strategy use; averages of 2.5-3.4 are regarded as medium strategy use; and 1.0-2.4 seen as lower strategy use. Having a look at the table above, all the mean values are from 3.16 to 3.59, from which it could be concluded that the frequency of the overall use of speaking strategies is of a medium to high level, somewhat similar to the results of previous research (Oxford, 1989; Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995; Oxford and Ehrman, 1995). Under each subcategory is a

variance in the frequency of strategy implementation. Based on the frequency of strategy implementation, the following ranking is proposed:

Compensation Speaking Strategy > Memory Speaking Strategy >= Social Speaking Strategy > Affective Speaking Strategy > Metacognitive Speaking Strategy > Cognitive Speaking Strategy

It is surprising that social strategies have ranked in second place, the same as memory speaking strategies, which contradicted the results found by Liu (2012) suggesting that social strategies were least frequently used by Chinese students among the six strategies. This may be due to the specific skill this study focuses on; speaking, which makes it more related to social strategies than Liu's research that pays more attention to overall language learning strategies.

4.1.2 The use of speaking strategies within each subcategory

In this section of the paper, subcategory-based implementation of speaking strategies is outlined (see Table 4.2). Specifically, this section addresses students' use of metacognitive, cognitive, memory, compensation, affective and social speaking strategies one by one:

Table 7. The use of metacognitive speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Metacognitive Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	5.00	3.23	0.67
Code					
Q1	93	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.04
Q2	93	1.00	5.00	3.43	1.14
Q3	93	1.00	5.00	3.22	1.09
Q4	93	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.13
Q5	93	1.00	5.00	3.01	1.24

As illustrated in the Table, students' application of metacognitive speaking strategies achieved a mean value of 3.23. This indicates that metacognitive speaking strategies were neither greatly accepted nor rejected by participants. The highest mean average value is 3.43, which refers to the statement given in Q2 of the survey: the students' use of mental language preparation prior to speaking in English. This indicates that when preparing for the IELTS test, the students involved in this study applied this strategy more often than other strategies within the metacognitive subcategory.

Table 8. The use of cognitive speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Cognitive Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	5.00	3.16	0.66
Code					
Q6	93	1.00	5.00	2.96	1.19
Q7	93	1.00	5.00	2.62	1.27
Q8	93	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.20
Q9	93	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.06
Q10	93	1.00	5.00	3.38	1.22

The average score for cognitive speaking strategies only was 3.16, showing that the participants were neither favourable nor unfavourable towards the use of cognitive speaking strategies. Comparatively speaking, Q9, “When I don’t know how to express something in English, I will try translating from Chinese which has the similar meaning to English,” scored the highest, revealing a tendency that participants may use this strategy more frequently. While the average of Q7 is 2.62, in proximity to the low frequency of strategy use (Oxford and Burry-stock, 1995), which meant the participants have shown disapproval to the use of this strategy of repeating to some extent.

Table 9. The use of memory speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Memory Speaking Strategy	93	1.60	4.60	3.41	0.62
Code					
Q11	93	1.00	5.00	3.68	1.13
Q12	93	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.19
Q13	93	1.00	5.00	3.68	1.10
Q14	93	1.00	5.00	3.37	1.03
Q15	93	1.00	5.00	3.19	1.22

As illustrated in the above Table, it appears that the participants possessed a neutral to relatively positive view of memory speaking strategies based on the mean value score provided. Additionally, it can be seen that Q11 (memorising the pronunciation of a new word first when learning it) and Q13 (placing a new word in a meaningful context like a sentence or conversation for easier memorisation) scored 3.68, belonging to the high frequency range, which shows how the participants believed these two strategic behaviours were more relevant compared to other strategies within this subcategory.

Table 10. The use of compensation speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Compensation Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	4.80	3.59	0.64
Code					
Q16	93	1.00	5.00	3.56	1.17
Q17	93	1.00	5.00	3.72	1.11
Q18	93	1.00	5.00	4.02	0.96
Q19	93	1.00	5.00	3.59	1.06
Q20	93	1.00	5.00	3.37	1.13

It appears that the students’ application of compensatory speaking strategies falls into the higher frequency range based on the mean score (3.59). In other words, participants have shown some preference towards the use of compensation speaking strategies, among which Q18 scored 4.02, even higher than 4, suggesting that participants usually use this strategy, which is, “When practicing oral English, I try to explain a word that I cannot clearly express with easier vocabulary, or replace it with its synonym.” Q17 scored relatively highly as well, meaning that the samples showed a tendency to infer the meaning of an unknown word or phrase when they don’t understand.

Table 11. The use of affective speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Affective Speaking Strategy	93	1.80	5.00	3.27	0.66
Code					
Q21	93	1.00	5.00	3.59	1.03
Q22	93	1.00	5.00	3.30	1.11
Q23	93	1.00	5.00	2.87	1.21
Q24	93	1.00	5.00	3.13	1.11
Q25	93	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.18

The data presented in Table 4.6 indicates that participants possessed a neutral view of general affective speaking strategy implementation, with a mean average of 3.27. Q21 seemed to be the most popular affective strategy employed by the participants, which is to believe in oneself that he/she can do well in oral English. While Q23 scored only 2.87, at a low-medium frequency level, from which it could be concluded that Chinese college students may do not prefer to talk to others on their own initiative very much. This might be explained by the phenomenon that oral English skills are not often included in final university exams in the national Chinese English curriculum, which results in less attention being paid to oral English compared to other English skills like reading and writing (www.pep.com.cn, n.d).

Table 12. The use of social speaking strategies

	N	MIN	MAX	MEAN	SD
Social Speaking Strategy	93	2.00	4.80	3.41	0.62
Code					
Q26	93	1.00	5.00	2.89	1.17
Q27	93	1.00	5.00	3.28	1.09
Q28	93	1.00	5.00	3.27	1.10
Q29	93	1.00	5.00	3.95	0.93
Q30	93	1.00	5.00	3.66	0.96

Social speaking strategies scored 3.41 on average, the same as memory speaking strategies, which shows a certain degree of approval from the sample and therefore the participants may use social speaking strategies relatively frequently. Q29, which represented making use of eye contact, facial expressions and gestures to help express thought or emphasise speech, was the most frequently employed strategy. Furthermore, it appears that the students adopted the 'pause appropriately' strategy relatively often when needing time to generate further ideas whilst speaking in English. This is reflected in the high frequency score of Q30. These findings conflict with those of O'Malley and Chamot's (1990) study, which indicated that Asian learners showed a preference for learning a foreign language through written language rules rather than the application of social strategies. However, they are in accordance with Wharton's (2000) study, which showed a preference for the use of social strategies amongst language learners in Singapore.

4.2 Research Question 2: The relationship between the use of speaking strategies and performance in the IELTS speaking test

This section presents the findings of the second research question from the survey questionnaire, which aimed to explore the relationship between participants' use of speaking strategies and their performance in the IELTS speaking test using correlation and regression analysis with the help of SPSS Version 22.

4.2.1 The relationship between the overall use of speaking strategies and performance in the IELTS speaking test

A general impression on the relationship between the use of speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance could be got based on the table and the figure presented below.

Table 13. The overall use of speaking strategies of groups from different proficiency levels

IELTS SPEAKING TEST SCORE	N	OVERALL USE OF SPEAKING STRATEGIES
5	5	2.83
5.5	10	3.15
6	17	3.06
6.5	20	3.30
7	28	3.53
7.5	8	3.66
8	5	3.86

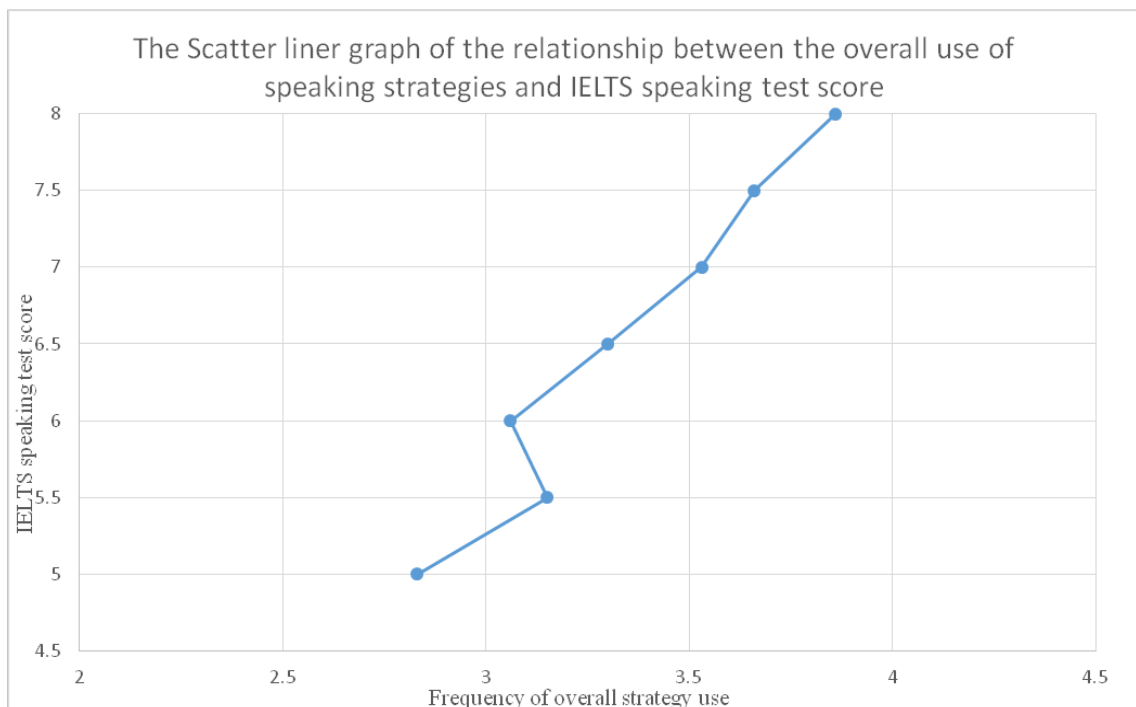


Fig. 2. The relationship between the overall use of speaking strategies and performance in the IELTS speaking test

Based on the above data presentation, it appears that in general, the more frequently use of speaking strategies, the higher IELTS speaking test score would be. Interestingly, participants who achieved an IELTS speaking test score of 5.5 generated an average frequency score of 3.06 for speaking strategy implementation; whilst those who achieved an IELTS score of 6 generated an average frequency score of 3.06 only for speaking strategy implementation. The possible reason may be that according to the rating scale (see Appendix 3), the score of 6 means effective command in general of English while 5 represents only partial command of English, which illustrates that the gap between 5 and 6 is pretty wide (see Appendix 2 and 3). Therefore participants who scored 6 may originally be better at oral English in terms of lexical resources, accuracy and fluency, regardless of their lesser strategy use, could still get a higher score than those who scored 5.5. Generally speaking, the graph suggests that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Therefore, in order to further explore the strength of the positive relationship, a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient analysis is conducted.

Table 14. The correlation between speaking strategy use and IELTS speaking test performance

		IELTS SPEAKING TEST SCORE	OVERALL USE OF SPEAKING STRATEGIES
Spearman's rho	IELTS Speaking Test Score	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	93
Overall use of Speaking strategies		Correlation Coefficient	.650**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	93

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in the above table, a positive correlation is presented by the Spearman's rho analysis. The magnitude of the positive relationship could be judged by the concrete value of the correlation coefficient of Spearman's rho. According to Qin (2004, p.238), the absolute value of the coefficient in statistics is lower than 0.20 and is called the lowest correlation, which could normally be ignored. The absolute value between 0.20 and 0.40 is defined as low correlation while anything between 0.40-0.70 is seen as cogent correlation, which means a relatively significant correlation. An absolute value ranging from 0.70 to 0.90 is high correlation, namely, very significant. In the study, the correlation between spoken English learning strategies and IELTS speaking test performance is relatively significant with an index of .650 and significance at the 0.000 level, which means that the correlation value in this study can be supposed with nearly 100% confidence. In other words, the correlation is fairly high; and the research results are assumed to be stable and reliable.

4.2.2 *The relationship between the use of speaking strategies within each subcategory and performance in the IELTS speaking test*

The following table outlines the results of a more specific and detailed analysis, which was conducted in order to further explore the relationship between the implementation of speaking strategies and subcategory-based IELTS speaking test scores.

Table 15. The correlation between each category of speaking strategy and IELTS speaking test performance

CORRELATIONS		
		VALUE
Metacognitive Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	93
Cognitive Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	93
Memory Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.521**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93
Compensation Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93
Affective Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.451**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93
Social Speaking Strategy	Spearman's rho	.415**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	93

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the table above, it can be seen that the coefficient of correlation between the use of the six strategies and IELTS speaking test score are all greater than 0.3, of which the coefficient is even greater than 0.4 in terms of the last four strategies. The results are believed to be reliable to 99% or more of the population based on the 0.01 level of significance.

Therefore, the table suggests that IELTS speaking test scores are positively correlated with the use of the six speaking strategies, and especially cogently correlated with the use of memory, compensation, affective and social speaking strategies. In general, this research result is in accordance with that of Li's (2005) empirical studies, which suggested a positive relationship between the use of oral English learning strategies and oral proficiency. The revelation that the more often students apply the memory strategy, the better they will perform on the IELTS speaking test represents the strongest correlation in this study. Since these two variables have a common variation trend, this finding appears to be logical. Reasons for this tendency can be assumed because the memory strategy helps students to remember relevant knowledge of spoken English with correct skills (Oxford, 1990). Taking items belonging to memory strategy in the questionnaire for example, placing a new word into context and linking to previous knowledge can enhance students' memory of the new word because when they need to use it is a real communication situation, they can build a connection and imagination to help recall the word (Krantz, 1991, p. 101). In particular, high achievers in the speaking test benefit from continuous practice and repetition of sentence patterns that normal students cannot make by themselves (ibid). These patterns are chiefly idiomatic English, which made them more easily understood by examiners. In addition, remembering these structures could enhance the candidates' fluency in speaking, which is considered an important criterion in the assessment of IELTS speaking test as well (see Appendix 3 for detailed band descriptors). As a result, it is clear that these students can achieve higher scores. Furthermore, by a phased review of what has been previously learnt about oral English, a student can create a solid foundation for his or her oral English learning and enhance their spoken English knowledge.

Additionally, a cogent positive relationship has been revealed between IELTS speaking test score and the student's application of a compensation strategy, with correlation coefficient being 0.464. This result deserves emphasis as well. According to Karbalaeei and Taji (2014, p. 91), the use of compensation strategies could help people deal with their lexical and grammatical limitations, thus making it vital in maintaining a conversation especially for ESL/EFL learners. In the questionnaire, one strategic behaviour within this category is trying to explain a word that one cannot express clearly in English with easier vocabulary, or replace it with a synonym. This seemed to be quite useful because if the speaker does not choose to explain or replace the word, he would be more likely to encounter speech difficulties, which will definitely influence the candidate's speaking fluency and thus may have a negative effect on the final score he will get (see Appendix 3 on Page 75). However, it is interesting that this result seemed to be contradictory with that of Fewell's (2010) research, which indicated that participants from a lower language proficiency group used more compensation learning strategies. This may be due to the different education

contexts, which would definitely influence the choice of strategies. Another potential explanation for this finding is that whilst the present study only aimed to explore speaking proficiency, Fewell's research adopted a more generalised perspective of language skill and language learning strategy application.

Out of the six strategies, cognitive strategies showed the least favourable relationship with the IELTS speaking test score, although O'Malley and Chamot (1990) pointed out that cognitive skill is considered to be the most important in language ability development. This may be explained by the skill focus; cognitive strategies involve practising, creating input and output structures and reasoning (Oxford, 1990), which might have a more significant effect on learner's other language skills such as writing, which pays much more attention on analysing as well as logic.

4.3 Pedagogical Implications

The major findings of this empirical study, the significant correlations and linear relationship between the use of speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance, may provide evidence that the use of speaking strategies is in relation to the IELTS speaking test performance, or L2 oral proficiency, which might suggest there are some pedagogical implications in oral English learning and teaching.

The findings outlined in this paper indicate that if Chinese students wish to enhance their English speaking skills, they should consciously implement appropriate speaking strategies. From the findings, it can be seen that participants who scored higher in the IELTS speaking test use memory, compensation, affective and social speaking strategies more frequently than others at a significant level, thus learners may try to employ these strategies more to improve their IELTS speaking test score. Item 12 belonging to memory strategy shows a statistical significance among the higher and lower achievers in the IELTS speaking test, from which it could be recommended that periodical reviews of previously gained knowledge is necessary (Gan et al., 2004). In terms of affective speaking strategies, students may need to challenge themselves to take responsibility for their own learning. For instance, the engagement in self-talk to simulate the real exam situation could help to lower their anxiety when they take the exam in actual. Moreover, it might be impossible for teachers to use all kinds of strategies in class due to time limitation, so they could pay more attention to apply these four in class to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

5. Conclusion

To begin with, this chapter summarizes the major findings and discussions of this study. It then discusses the limitations of this research and provides recommendations and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings and Discussions This empirical study examined speaking strategies employed by some Chinese college students and explored the relationship between participants' use of speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance, which is the aim of this research. With the help of scientific statistical techniques, the following findings that could answer the research questions could be found from the collected data:

a) The means of participants' use of all the six speaking strategies have surpassed the average coefficient 3, which shows that students' use of speaking strategies belong to the range of medium frequency. However, it is reported from the data that the mean of compensation strategies is 3.59, showing the use of it falls in the higher frequency level. In general, the use of speaking strategies ordered in terms of frequency from the highest to the lowest is ranked as follows:

Compensation speaking strategies > Memory speaking strategies >= Social speaking strategies > Affective speaking strategies > Metacognitive speaking strategies > Cognitive speaking strategies

In terms of each subcategories, the means of Q9^{5.2} (cognitive speaking strategies), Q11^{5.3} (memory speaking strategies), Q13^{5.4} (memory speaking strategies), Q17^{5.5} (compensation speaking strategies),

^{5.2} Q9 When I don't know how to express something in English, I will try translating from Chinese which has the similar meaning to English.

^{5.3} Q11 I first memorise the pronunciation of a new word when learning it.

Q18^{5.6} (compensation speaking strategies), Q21^{5.7} (affective speaking strategies), Q29^{5.8} (social speaking strategies), and Q30^{5.9} (social speaking strategies) are all above 3.5, showing that Chinese college students tend to use these strategies more frequently compared with others.

b) Firstly, with an index of 0.650 and the significance at the 0.000 level, the correlation between speaking strategies and performance on IELTS speaking test is relatively high. Secondly, as for subcategories of strategies, the correlational coefficients between memory speaking strategies, compensation speaking strategies, affective speaking strategies and social speaking strategies and IELTS speaking test performance are all higher than 0.4 statistically significant, indicating a cogent correlation (Qin, 2004).

The pedagogical implications of this research study are that students could consciously employ memory, compensation social and affective speaking strategies while preparing for IELTS speaking test, which would be possible for them to get a more satisfactory score. On the other hand, language teachers could not involve all of the learning strategies in class as a result of time limitation and individual learner differences, thus making teachers should select more effective strategies to introduce. Therefore, the instruction of the above 4 speaking strategies seem to be important in strategy training in class for oral English teachers.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Although much effort has been to conduct this research, there still exist a number of limitations that may have a negative effect on the research results and findings. To begin with, the sample of participants is confined to a limited size, which might result in that the findings may not represent the whole undergraduate IELTS takers in China. Secondly, the items in the questionnaire might not fully reflect the participants' use of a particular type of speaking strategy, for only 5 items were involved in each subcategory. Thirdly, as the only measuring tool to judge oral proficiency level, the performance on IELTS speaking test could only approximate the participant's real level of spoken English, which may make the results not so reliable to some extent. At last, the data collected from the participants was only analysed in a quantitative way, which means that the scientific statistics could only present the result instead of giving further analysis such as explaining the reasons. Thus further research could be conducted in a qualitative or mixed-method paradigm, making it more possible to provide explanations for the results. Despite this research, there still exists a gap on the investigation on the speaking strategies employed by Chinese language learners and numerous topics could be dug out and researched on.

In conclusion, this research study found a positive relationship between participants' application of speaking strategies and their performance on IELTS speaking test. To be more specific, memory and compensation speaking strategies are the most influential on IELTS speaking test scores, and students who got scored above 7 showed a preference for using memory, compensation and affective speaking strategies, which may provide students and teachers with learning and teaching suggestions. However, there's still a lack of research in this topic regarding further explanations, which could be focus of future research.

6. References

- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chamot, A. U. (1987). The learning strategies of ESL Students. . In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

^{5.4} Q13 I will place a new word in a meaningful context like a sentence or conversation for easier memorisation.

^{5.5} Q17 I will infer or guess the meaning of a new word or phrase I don't understand.

^{5.6} Q18 I try to explain a word that I cannot clearly express in English with easier vocabulary, or replace it with a synonym.

^{5.7} Q21 I believe in myself that I can do well in oral English.

^{5.8} Q29 I use eye contact, facial expression and motions to help express thought or emphasise speech.

^{5.9} Q30 While talking in English, I may pause appropriately to generate further expressions or ideas.

- Chamot, A. U. (2004). Issues in Language Learning Strategy Research and Teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 1(1), 14-26.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Scott, M. L. (1995). Communication Strategies: An empirical analysis with retrospection. In J. S. Turley & K. Lusby (Eds.), *Selected papers from the proceedings of the 21st Annual Symposium of the Deseret Language and Linguistics Society* (pp. 155-168). Provo: Brigham Young University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Scott, M. L. (1997). Review Article: Communication Strategies in a Second Language: Definitions and Taxonomies. *Language Learning*, 47(1), 173-210.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Fewell, N. (2010). Language learning strategies and English language proficiency: An investigation of Japanese EFL university students. *TESOL Journal*, 2, 159-174.
- Gan, Z., Humphreys, G., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2004). Understanding successful and unsuccessful EFL students in Chinese universities. *Modern Language Journal*, 88, 229-244.
- Huang, L. (2013). Cognitive Processes involved in performing the IELTS Speaking test: Respondents' strategic behaviours in simulated testing and non-testing contexts. *IELTS Research Reports Online Series*, No.1, Retrieved June 15, 2015, from https://www.ielts.org/pdf/Huang_RR_Online_2013.pdf
- Information for Candidates Booklet (n.d). IELTS Official Website. Retrieved June 16, 2015, from <http://www.ielts.org/pdf/IELTS%20Information-for-Candidates-March%202015.pdf>
- IELTS Speaking: Band Descriptors (public version) (n.d). IELTS Official Website. Retrieved June 16, 2015, from http://www.ielts.org/pdf/Speaking%20Band%20descriptors_2014.pdf
- IELTS Band Scores (n.d). IELTS Official Website. Retrieved June 16, 2015, from http://www.ielts.org/institutions/test_format_and_results/ielts_band_scores.aspx
- Krantz, G. (1991). *Learning Vocabulary in a Foreign Language: A Study of Reading Strategies*. Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothenburgensis.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Long, M. H. (1991). *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- O'Malley, J., & Chamot, A. (1990). *Learner Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oxford, R. L. (1989). Use of language learning strategies: a synthesis of studies with implications for teacher training. *System*, 17, 235-47.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. Boston: Heinle.
- Oxford, R. L., & Burry-stock, J. A. (1995). Assessing the use of language learning strategies worldwide with the ESL/EFL version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), *System*, 23(1), 1-23.
- Oxford, R. L., & Ehrman, M. E. (1995). Adults' language learning strategies in an intensive foreign language program in the United States. *System*, 23(3), 359-386.
- Purpura, J. E. (1999). *Language Strategy Use and Performance on Language Tests: A structural equation modelling approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Qin, X. (2004). *Quantitative Data Analysis in Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. Wuhan: Huazhong University of Science and Technology Press.
- River, W. M. (1979). Learning a Sixth Language: An Adult Learner's Diary. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 36(1), 67-82.
- Rubin, J. (1987). Learner strategies: Theoretical assumptions, research history and typology. In A. L. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp.15-30). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

- Seong, Y. (2014). Strategic Competence and L2 Speaking Assessment. *Teachers College, Columbia University Working Papers in TESOL & Applied Linguistics*, 14(1), 13-24.
- Song, X., & Cheng, L. (2006). Language Learner Strategy Use and Test Performance of Chinese Learners of English. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 3(3), 243-266.
- Treiman, D. J. (2009). *Quantitative Data Analysis: Doing Social Research to Test Ideas*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Weinstein, C. E., & Mayer, R. E. (1986). The teaching of learning strategies. In Wittrock, M. C. (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (pp. 315-327). New York: Macmillan.
- Wharton, G. (2000). Language learning strategy use of bilingual foreign language learners in Singapore. *Language Learning*, 50(2), 203-243.
- Why do Chinese students perform unsatisfactorily in oral English: A brief analysis. (n.d, 2013). The official website of People's Education Press. Retrieved June 27, 2015, from http://www.pep.com.cn/ge/xszz/fxjc/chyfi/201303/t20130319_1151359.htm
- Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yuan, W. (2011). Academic and Cultural Experiences of Chinese Students at an American University: A Qualitative Study. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 20(1), 141-157.

Received: 27/02/2016

Accepted: 24/06/2016

Appendices

Appendix 1

The English Version of the Questionnaire

A Questionnaire on speaking strategies of English learning

Basic information

Which university did you study in China? _____

IELTS Speaking Test Score 4 4.5 5 5.5 6 6.5 7 7.5 8 8.5 9

This questionnaire is designed for my research on the relationship between the use of speaking strategies for English learning for IELTS speaking test preparation and the performance on IELTS speaking test only. The questions below have no standard answers and they will not influence your future studying, so please feel free to fill in the questionnaire according to your actual learning experience instead of your opinions. Please choose one option among 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 according to how the statement suits your actual condition when you **prepare for IELTS speaking test**.

- ① = this statement never or hardly suits me.
- ② = this statement does not usually suit me.
- ③ = this statement sometimes suits me.
- ④ = this statement usually suits me.
- ⑤ = this statement always suits me.

Metacognitive Speaking Strategy

1. I would pay attention when someone near me talks in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

2. I will use mental language preparation and organization prior to speaking in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

3. I will correct myself after I realize I've spoken incorrectly.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

4. I set up learning goals for oral English learning aimed at the three speaking tasks in IELTS.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

5. I periodically summarize the progress I've made, find out problems and try to solve them.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

(Never) (Always)

Cognitive Speaking Strategy

6. While talking about something in Chinese, I would think about how to say it in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

7. When others speak English, I would try to repeat in a low voice.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

8. I practice oral English by listening to English songs or watching English movies.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

9. When I don't know how to express something in English, I will try translating from Chinese which has the similar meaning to English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

10. I practice oral English by using structured formulas and patterns to enhance understanding and fluency.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Memory Speaking Strategy

11. I memorise the pronunciation of a new word first when learning it.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

12. I periodically review what I've previously learnt about oral English in order to enhance memorization.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

13. While learning a new word, I will place it in a meaningful context like a sentence or conversation for easier memorization.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

14. While learning new words or phrases, I could associate them with what have been learnt before.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

15. I try to group the new words and phrases according to their functions or meanings for easier memorization.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Compensation Speaking Strategy

16. I try to adjust the topic for the conversation or discussion conducted in English when I feel it difficult to express.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

17. I will infer or guess the meaning of a new word or phrase I don't understand.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

18. When practicing oral English, I try to explain a word that I cannot clearly express in English with easier vocabulary, or replace it with a synonym.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

19. When I don't understand others, I would ask them to slow down the speed or repeat what they said.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

20. I will infer what others will say next according to what they've said earlier.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Affective Speaking Strategy

21. I believe in myself that I can do well in oral English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

22. I try to control my tension like taking a deep breath before talking to others in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

23. I try to talk with others in English on my own initiative.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

24. I feel free to speak English even if I might make mistakes.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

25. I try to engage in self-talk to simulate the exam situation.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Communicative Speaking Strategy

26. I would request others to help me correct my mistakes when talking in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

27. When I get stuck or halting while speaking English, I would repeat the last word I've said or restart the sentence.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

28. I would seek the listener's confirmation after talking about something in English.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

29. I use eye contact, facial expression and motions to help express thought or emphasize speech.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

30. While talking to others in English, I may pause at appropriately to generate further expressions or ideas.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤
(Never) (Always)

Appendix 2

IELTS 9-Band Scale

(Selected from http://www.ielts.org/PDF/Guide_Edu-%20Inst_Gov_2013.pdf, retrieved on July, 24, 2015)

IELTS 9-band scale

There is no pass or fail in IELTS. Rather, all test results are reported on a clear 9-band scale (from 1, the lowest, to 9, the highest). The scale has remained consistent and acquired currency around the world over the past three decades.

The IELTS test provides an accurate picture of a candidate's language skills at a certain point in time. Language ability diminishes over time if not actively maintained.

Candidates receive an overall band score as well as individual scores for each test component (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking).

Read more about band scores, examiners, marking and assessment criteria at www.ielts.org/researchers

9	Expert user	Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
8	Very good user	Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.
7	Good user	Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

6	Competent user	Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
5	Modest user	Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.
4	Limited user	Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
3	Extremely limited user	Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
2	Intermittent user	No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
1	Non user	Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
0	Did not attempt the test	No assessable information provided.

Appendix 3

The Band Descriptors of IELTS Speaking Test (Public Version)

(Selected from http://www.ielts.org/pdf/Speaking%20Band%20descriptors_2014.pdf, retrieved on July, 24, 2015)



SPEAKING: Band Descriptors (public version)

Band	Fluency and coherence	Lexical resource	Grammatical range and accuracy	Pronunciation
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only rare repetition or self-correction; any hesitation is content-related rather than to find words or grammar speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features develops topics fully and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary with full flexibility and precision in all topics uses idiomatic language naturally and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of structures naturally and appropriately produces consistently accurate structures apart from 'slips' characteristic of native speaker speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety sustains flexible use of features throughout is effortless to understand
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks fluently with only occasional repetition or self-correction; hesitation is usually content-related and only rarely to search for language develops topics coherently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning uses less common and idiomatic vocabulary skillfully, with occasional inaccuracies uses paraphrase effectively as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures flexibly produces a majority of error-free sentences with only very occasional inappropriacies or basic/phon-systematic errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of pronunciation features sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks at length without noticeable effort or loss of coherence may demonstrate language-related hesitation at times, or some repetition and/or self-correction uses a range of connectives and discourse markers with some flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses vocabulary resource flexibly to discuss a variety of topics uses some less common and idiomatic vocabulary and shows some awareness of style and collocation, with some inappropriate choices uses paraphrase effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of complex structures with some flexibility frequently produces error-free sentences, though some grammatical mistakes persist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is willing to speak at length, though may lose coherence at times due to occasional repetition, self-correction or hesitation uses a range of connectives and discourse markers but not always appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a wide enough vocabulary to discuss topics at length and make meaning clear in spite of inappropriacies generally paraphrases successfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex structures, but with limited flexibility may make frequent mistakes with complex structures though these rarely cause comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed control shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self-correction and/or slow speech to keep going may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction links basic sentences but with repetitive use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice rarely attempts paraphrase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a limited range of pronunciation features attempts to control features but lapses are frequent mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speaks with long pauses has limited ability to link simple sentences gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pauses lengthily before most words little communication possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only produces isolated words or memorised utterances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot produce basic sentence forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speech is often unintelligible
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no communication possible no rateable language 			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not attend 			