



English Learning for Chinese Non-English Major Students in the Globalized World – A Study of Listening Comprehension Strategies

Dissertation zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades einer Doktorin der
Philosophie der Universität Hamburg

vorgelegt von

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Hamburg

2013

Als Dissertation angenommen
vom Fachbereich Erziehungswissenschaft der Universität Hamburg

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Datum der Disputation: 27. 01. 2014

ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide concrete research on listening comprehension strategies among Chinese non-English major students. It focuses on what kind of strategies best suit the learners' listening proficiency, on the similarities and differences in the choice of strategies between the good and poor English listeners, on the correlation between frequency, consciousness of using strategies and listening proficiency, and on the reasons for choosing the different strategies in view of social and cultural background.

The study is based on the theories of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies proposed by Rebecca L. Oxford (1990). The research method involved in this study is quantitative; I work with a field questionnaire including 36 listening comprehension strategies. The participants are 1,162 non-English major students from the same university in Northern China – Anyang Institute of Technology. Among them, the students have 21 different majors and are from 21 different provinces and cities.

The research findings include the following: Students use listening comprehension strategies at a relatively low level; students with higher listening proficiency use strategies more frequently than those with lower proficiency; students use affective strategies more frequently and social strategies less frequently; there are no differences between good and poor English listeners in the use of some strategies such as 'seeking practice opportunities, developing cultural understanding, asking for clarification or verification and cooperating with proficient users of the new language cooperating with peers'; these strategies can be used consciously or unconsciously by them. The Chinese cultural background to a great extent influences the choice and use of listening comprehension strategies. In addition, the frequent use of strategies has almost no interrelationship with listening proficiency, but the use of metacognitive strategies has a positive interrelationship with it. The degree of conscious use of strategies does not have much interrelationship with listening proficiency.

The findings of this research can help English teachers understand factors that influence the choice and use of listening comprehension strategies and the role that each group of strategies plays in listening proficiency among Chinese non-English major students. From the

findings of this study, it is recommended that English teachers should instruct students to employ more metacognitive strategies to plan, organize and evaluate their English learning so that their listening proficiency could be improved.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Zielsetzung der Studie ist die konkrete Erforschung der Hörverständnisstrategien von chinesischen Studenten, die nicht das Fach Englisch studieren, in ihrem Studiengang aber Englischkurse belegen müssen. Die Studie konzentriert sich auf die Frage, was für Strategien sich am besten dafür eignen, Hörkompetenz der Lerner zu fördern. Sie konzentriert sich zugleich auf Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiedlichkeiten bezüglich der Auswahl der Strategien, wie sie sich zwischen den in ihrer Leistung starken und in ihrer Leistung schwachen Zuhörern ergeben. Sie stellt die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Häufigkeit und Bewusstheit der Anwendung der Strategien dar und prüft das Hörleistungsniveau. Sie geht auf die Begründungen für die Auswahl der verschiedenen Strategien in Hinsicht auf den sozialen und kulturellen Hintergrund ein.

Die Studie basiert auf den Hypothesen und Theorien, die von Rebecca L. Oxford (1990) als Strategien des Sprachenlernens und im Besonderen als Hörverständnisstrategien vorgeschlagen worden sind. Die in dieser Studie verwendete Forschungsmethode ist die quantitative. Ich arbeite mit einem Fragebogen, der sich auf 36 Hörstrategien bezieht. Die Teilnehmer sind 1,162 Studenten, die als ihr Studienfach nicht das Englische haben. Die Studenten kommen von der gleichen Universität im Norden Chinas, dem Anyang Institute of Technology. Sie studieren 21 verschiedene Fächern und stammen aus 21 verschiedenen Provinzen und Städten Chinas.

Forschungsergebnisse sind unter anderen die folgenden: Die Studenten nutzen Hörverständnisstrategien auf einem relativ niedrigen Niveau; Studenten mit einem höheren Hörleistungsniveau nutzen Strategien häufiger als Studenten mit einem niedrigen Niveau; Studenten nutzen affektive Strategien häufiger und soziale Strategien seltener. Es gibt keine Unterschiede zwischen starken und schwachen Zuhörern bezüglich der Verwendung bestimmter Strategien wie den folgenden: ‚Suchen nach Übungsmöglichkeiten‘, ‚Entwicklung des kulturellen Verständnisses‘, ‚Bitte um Klärung oder Überprüfung und ‚Zusammenarbeit mit kompetenten Nutzern der neuen Sprache und mit Gleichaltrigen‘. Die Strategien können

von den Studenten bewusst oder unbewusst verwendet werden. Die im Hintergrund stehende chinesische Kultur beeinflusst zu einem großen Teil die Auswahl und Anwendung von Hörverständnisstrategien. Die Häufigkeit ihres Gebrauchs steht allerdings in einem nur geringen Zusammenhang mit der Hörleistung. Die Verwendung von metakognitiven Strategien steht hingegen in einer positiven Wechselbeziehung zur Leistung, während der Grad des bewussten Einsatzes von Hörverständnisstrategien fast keine Wechselbeziehung zur der Hörkompetenz aufweist.

Die Forschungsergebnisse können Englischlehrern dabei helfen, die Faktoren besser zu verstehen, die die Auswahl und Verwendung von Hörverständnisstrategien beeinflussen. Sie können besser die Rolle verstehen, die jeder Strategiangruppe bezüglich der Hörkompetenz bei denjenigen chinesischen Studenten zukommt, die nicht das Fach Englisch studieren. Auf der Basis der Ergebnisse dieser Studie empfiehlt es sich, dass Englischlehrer die Schüler dazu bringen, mehr metakognitive Strategien einzusetzen und so ihr Englischlernen zu planen, zu organisieren und zu evaluieren, und ihre Hörkompetenz zu verbessern.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although I do not know how to express my exciting feeling at the moment after several years of study and research in Germany and in China, I still would like to take this opportunity to share my experience of undertaking this PhD program.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Helene Decke-Cornill who accepted me as her PhD student. When I first turned to her to find a doctoral program, it was her gentle words and polite attitude to a foreign student with little experience in a foreign country that assured me that coming to Germany to study was the best choice for me. During the process of my research, she always instructed and provided me with her valuable time, professional guidance and suggestions as an academic advisor for my dissertation. In addition, she has always offered me the most loving support and care. Any time I had a problem in study or life, I could turn to her and she would help me solve my problems warm-heartedly and with patience. This allowed me to build up my confidence and become more and more used to studying in Germany. I was really lucky to have a supervisor like her. Without her, this thesis would not have been possible.

I would like to thank my second supervisor, Prof. Dr. Meinert A. Meyer. Although I found him as my second supervisor during the last writing process of my dissertation, his research and attitude to his students and life impressed me a lot. He not only gave me valuable suggestion on my thesis, he also helped me to establish my confidence in finishing my whole dissertation. I also want to express my great gratitude to Prof. Dr. Knut Schwippert. During the data analysis process, Dr. Schwippert gave me a lot of help. When I went to him to discuss the quantitative data analysis, he explained things to me with full patience. He helped me solve a lot of difficulties in the quantitative data analysis. It was his explanation that made me more confident and skillful in quantitative research.

My gratitude goes to Prof. Dr. William L. Adams and his wife Roselyn for their rigorous final proof reading of my dissertation. I also want to thank Prof. Dr. Yihong Wang for her valuable suggestions and ideas on presenting Chinese culture and statistical analysis.

Finally, my appreciation goes also to my previous colleagues at the Anyang Institute of Technology for their support in allowing and assisting me to find and contact the research samplings, organize the places and conduct the field research of my questionnaire. Because of their friendly help, I could adequately plan my research schedule and successfully carry out my quantitative research without any unexpected problems.

Of course, none of this would have been possible, had it not been for the love and support of my family including my parents, husband and parents-in-law as well as Mr. Behzad Granfar and his wife Ailun Sung-Granfar (meine Gastfamilie). Therefore, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to them. It was their support and love that made me concentrate on my research and kept me going with my dissertation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

1.1 China and globalization

English language is increasingly associated with globalization in our international world. Due to the important role that English learning plays in political, economic, commercial and technological development, English learning has received more and more attention by the Chinese government¹ and people. Guangwei Hu sees this as a world-wide development.

On the national level, English is perceived by the government as a necessary means for helping the nation further open up, a valuable resource for realizing its modernization program, and an important cornerstone of international competition. On a personal level, proficiency in English is seen as a key to a host of opportunities: to enter and graduate from university, to go abroad for further education, to secure desirable jobs in public and private sectors, foreign-invested companies or joint ventures, and to be eligible for promotion to higher professional ranks. (2002: 3)

With China succeeding in gaining entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and holding the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, English grew more and more important for China's participation in the international arena. Therefore, English communicative ability has become very significant for Chinese students who want to adapt themselves to the globalized world. Based on such a starting point, Chinese university students will be my research focus, in particular, their choices and use of language learning strategies.

This study describes how listening comprehension strategies are used by non-English major students² in China. Some research perspectives need to be considered. They include: What is the authentic condition of English study of the research samplings? What kinds of strategies do they use? What are the differences and similarities in their strategy use? What factors can influence the students' English learning and their use of language learning strategies? These aspects are the main concerns of my research.

¹ The former Vice Premier of the State Council, Lanqing Li, states, English is "not merely an educational issue per se but an issue associated with the modernization of the country." (Ross, 1993: 56)

² Non-English major students comprise a large proportion of university students in China. Therefore, enhancing listening comprehension of non-English major students can to a great extent increase the listening ability of Chinese university students. Non-English major students will be introduced more in detail in Chapter 2.

Furthermore, culture is also regarded as a key element in the research of language learning strategies. It is not only an important carrier of language but is also to a great extent constrained by language. Therefore, the influence of the Chinese cultural background on language learning and strategy use will be also considered in my study. In order to better achieve my research purposes, I shall quantitatively analyze the data generated through a questionnaire of listening comprehension strategies.

In her book³ on language learning strategies, Rebecca L. Oxford (1990)⁴ systematically and logically identified language learning strategies, set up a new classification system of strategies, suggested approaches and instruments for assessing students' use of language learning strategies with a series of well-designed questionnaires, and designed a model for strategy training accompanied by numerous strategy training exercises (cf. Cohen, 1990). In addition, she brought some variables⁵ into the research of language learning strategies, trying to put forward and bring some possible factors which could underlie and influence strategy choice. Indeed, she has made numerous contributions to foreign language learning and teaching. Not only has her book been translated into many different languages but her theories about language learning strategies have often been considered and used in language learning research and practice. With the development of research conducted in the field of learning strategies, there are many studies examining language learning strategies in all language skills.

The research results concluded from previous studies have always inspired me to raise other questions such as what kind of listening comprehension strategies are employed by certain groups of Chinese non-English major students. Is there a decisive interrelationship between listening achievement and the use of listening comprehension strategies, in

³ My study is based on Oxford's book – *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*.

⁴ Professor Rebecca L. Oxford, Ph.D. of pedagogy and linguistics is a world-famous expert of English teaching and language learning strategies. She was the head of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and Foreign Language Education at the University of Maryland. She also led language programs at Teachers College, Columbia University and at the Universities of Alabama and Pennsylvania.

⁵ The variables here refer to the possible factors which can affect the choice of language learning strategies such as "degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language." (Oxford, 1990: 13)

accordance with some researchers' view that learning strategies can significantly help to learn a new language effectively and successfully? If the language learning outcomes are related to learners' appropriate use of learning strategies, then how do these strategies support each other to help students improve their listening proficiency? Do socio-cultural factors influence the choice and use of listening comprehension strategies? Although there has been some research concerning Chinese students, there is still very little research that systematically introduces and analyzes listening comprehension strategies in connection with cultural variables. Therefore, in this study I have managed to use social and cultural background to account for some phenomena obtained from the statistical analysis of the quantitative research.

1.2 Research background

Among various aspects being researched in second/foreign language acquisition, language learning strategies is one that has received much attention. Research in the last four decades on language learning strategies has witnessed prolific and vigorous growth. Numerous studies around the world, including research concerning Chinese students or being conducted in China have contributed to both theory and practical teaching by providing fruitful academic and scientific results. These results prove and support the significant role of language learning strategies for effective and successful language learning. However, more and more language researchers have realized that the use of language learning strategies cannot fully and specifically serve the function of training and improving any single English ability like oral communication, reading comprehension, writing proficiency, vocabulary and grammar acquisition, as well as listening comprehension. A large amount of empirical research has assured us that listening comprehension is an important way to target language and language proficiency. Therefore, with the development of this trend and more attention to listening comprehension, researchers began to investigate the approaches that successful listeners use and tried to discover if there was an interrelationship between listening comprehension strategies and listening proficiency. Ultimately, they took the view that English teachers should train unsuccessful listeners to more frequently use these strategies. Compared to the

research of language learning strategies, listening comprehension strategies is considered one of the smaller branches of the larger line of research in language learning strategies.

Due to the different awareness of the significant position of listening comprehension strategies in English learning and teaching, the research of listening strategies started in China in the 1990s, about ten years later than the research in Western countries. O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper's (1989) study is one of the earliest to focus on listening comprehension strategies in detail and C. Goh's (1998) study is considered to be the earliest one that examines listening comprehension strategies of some Chinese students who studied ESL in Singapore (see more detail in Chapter 3).

The early studies about listening comprehension strategies in China were undertaken to find out what kinds of strategies were most often used to improve listening proficiency and to discover the differences in the use of strategies between successful and unsuccessful English listeners. After looking through the literature, it is not difficult to see that there are few studies concerning the factors of cultural variables influencing the choice and application of listening comprehension strategies.

In addition, as a teacher and learner of English as a foreign language, I have personally experienced great difficulties in learning and training listening comprehension. Thus, trying to investigate the differences in the use of listening comprehension strategies among the more and less successful English listeners, and finding the interrelationship between the use of these strategies and listening proficiency as well as using them to train listening ability have also been themes with which I am most concerned.

Furthermore, the application and training of learning strategies in language learning and teaching always lead me to another question: Can language learning strategies really be trained and practised from a conscious level to an unconscious level? Some researchers have taken the view that language learning strategies occur only in the early cognitive stage when they are still conscious, after which they are not strategic any more. That is also to say, language learning strategies only stay at the conscious level. Therefore, in order to find out if language learning strategies are used and what kinds of strategies are used by Chinese non-English major students at conscious or unconscious level, I have conducted this research

by means of a quantitative method with a self-designed questionnaire.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

As mentioned above, many researchers have already carried out studies into language learning strategies with different research purposes, but little research has been systematically and specifically conducted in the domain of listening comprehension strategies. Therefore, there is a need to undertake research in this field. Research into listening comprehension strategies may involve comparing the use of different kinds of strategies for training listening comprehension, identifying strategies employed by both successful and poor English listeners and finding out about factors that possibly influence the choice and use of them.

The main objective of my study is to discern how listening comprehension strategies are used by Chinese non-English major students. What are the differences and similarities in the use of these strategies between effective and ineffective English listeners? Does an interrelationship between listening strategy use and listening proficiency really exist? What are the potential reasons for choosing them? Do these Chinese students use them consciously or not?

Based on my primary concerns and research purposes, the following areas are explored by means of a quantitative research method:

1. To what extent are listening comprehension strategies used by non-English major university students in China to improve their listening proficiency?
 - 1.1) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are often used by them to improve their listening proficiency?
 - 1.2) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are less frequently used by them?
2. What are the differences and similarities in the use of listening comprehension strategies between high and low scoring students?
 - 2.1) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies do the students with relatively high and low listening proficiency utilize more frequently to train their listening proficiency?

- 2.2) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies do the students with relatively high and low listening proficiency use less frequently?
3. At which level of consciousness do students use listening comprehension strategies?
- 3.1) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are used with a higher level of consciousness by students?
- 3.2) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are used with a lower level of consciousness by students?

In the next section, hypotheses related to the three research questions are presented.

1.4 Statement of hypotheses

Research question 1: To what extent are listening comprehension strategies used by non-English major university students in China to improve their listening proficiency?

According to the previous literature, listening comprehension strategies are approaches that learners use to enhance their listening ability. Due to the different classification of strategies, listening comprehension strategies have been researched based on the unequal model. Even though a lot of research into learning strategies has been conducted among Chinese students, the investigation of listening comprehension strategies among non-English major students is still limited. The current study adopts Oxford's classification of strategies and designs a 36-item questionnaire. That the participants chosen for quantitative research can stand for the targeted research groups provides a prerequisite for finding a solution to this question. The questionnaire used for data collection can yield rich and descriptive information about the participants' use of listening comprehension strategies in the Chinese cultural and social context.

Cultural variability is a focus of this study; therefore, I expect that the awareness and use of listening comprehension strategies will be affected by the Chinese education system and the students' cultural background. There is an expectation also that strategies, in particular strategies that are more concerned with social communication, will be less frequently used by

them.

Research question 2: What are the differences and similarities in the use of listening comprehension strategies between high and low scoring students?

The participants involved in this study are all Chinese non-English major university students who have already learned English for several years and most of them have taken part in the College English Test Band 4 (CET-Band 4). This test is a criterion to distinguish the high and low scoring students. Due to the important role that strategies play in language proficiency, there is an expectation that strategies will be used with similarities and differences between the high and low scoring students. As explained above, due to the influence of cultural background, some social strategies must influence students from both groups.

Research question 3: At which level of consciousness do students use listening comprehension strategies?

This question is fully based on my assumption that the participants are able to articulate their beliefs about their listening comprehension training and listening strategy use and they can also self-evaluate and determine if they use these listening comprehension strategies consciously or not. The understanding of implicit and explicit knowledge and their conversion lead me to hypothesize that language learning strategies, as implicit and explicit knowledge, exist at both a conscious and an unconscious level. Therefore, the conscious and unconscious application of listening comprehension strategies will be tested and confirmed in this dissertation (see more detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6).

To summarize, the following hypotheses are given to the three research questions in this study.

1. Listening comprehension strategies are not used frequently by Chinese non-English major students due to the Chinese education system and their cultural background; and some social strategies are rarely used by them.
2. There exist some similarities and differences between the high-scoring and low-scoring students; students with higher listening ability can more frequently use strategies than

poor ones; and there is an expectation that the social strategies will be used rarely by both groups.

3. I expect that listening comprehension strategies will be used at both the conscious and unconscious levels and the consciousness level will be in accordance with the frequency of strategy use.

1.5 Rationale and significance of the study

The rationale of my study finds a personal foundation in my curiosity and interest in this research field. In addition to that, more than twenty years' experience of English language learning and my work experience as an EFL teacher have provided me with a strong impetus and source of motivation.

The research conducted in this study has the following rationale of theoretical, pedagogical and practical significances:

1. Although some related research has been carried out before on students' second language learning strategies in the field, such as the relationship between language proficiency and strategy use, hardly any research has been systematically undertaken to analyze the link between L2 learners' listening ability and their use of listening comprehension strategies. The results can help us to confirm if there really is an interrelationship between the use of listening comprehension strategies and listening proficiency.
2. As E. K. Horwitz says: "The ultimate purpose of studying learning strategies is, of course, an applied one; researchers and teachers hope to determine which strategies are most effective and help students adopt more productive learning procedures." (1987: 126) Finding out and verifying the relationship between specific learning strategies (listening comprehension strategies) and the specific English proficiency (listening proficiency) can help us to guide the students' English learning, and their formation and use of learning strategies as well.
3. Previous research provides us with a basic theoretical knowledge and a research foundation which can help us to produce our own systematic understanding of this

research field. My current research will become the extension of research already done. On the one hand, research theories and methods used in previous research can be helpful to my present research; on the other hand, the research methods and instruments, in particular the questionnaire of listening comprehension strategies I will use in this study, can contribute to the future research of language learning strategies.

4. My research subjects are students from a University in Henan Province, the Anyang Institute of Technology, where I used to work. This institute has thus served as the basis for my field research. It has provided me with enough interesting and valuable subjects and has helped me with excellent research conditions. I hope that the results of my investigation will not only help to improve educational standards of English teachers, but also enhance the awareness of using more effective listening comprehension strategies to train listening proficiency of Chinese students from similar categories of universities all over China.
5. The results of my study will contribute to this field by providing valuable information on listening comprehension strategies used by language learners in a Chinese environment.

1.6 Theories involved in this study

Language acquisition theories (i.e., Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism and Interlanguage theory) are the main theories used in this study that not only are closely connected with language learning strategies but also affect strategy choice and use among Chinese non-English major students.

My study is primarily based on Oxford's theory of language learning strategies (1990) and her classification of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies. In her theories, language learning strategies used for training listening comprehension and improving listening skills are called listening comprehension strategies. According to Oxford's point of view, like language learning strategies, listening comprehension strategies can also be grouped into six categories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies (which are direct strategies); and metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies (which are considered to be indirect strategies).

A brief introduction of these fundamental concepts follows to which I will return later (see more detail in Chapter 4).

- Memory strategies are also called mnemonics and refer to the strategies related to the memory function of human beings.
- Cognitive strategies refer to the mental strategies that learners use to make sense.
- Compensation strategies are the strategies which help learners to overcome knowledge gaps in order to continue communication or to enable learners to use new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge.
- Metacognitive strategies go beyond purely cognitive devices and provide ways for learners to coordinate their own learning process.
- Affective strategies are concerned with emotional requirements such as confidence and relaxation; they help learners to control their feelings with respect to negative influences in the communicative process.
- Social strategies are strategies language learners use to help them solve problems deriving from social differences and misunderstandings related to these differences; they are meant to lead to increased interaction with the help of the target language.

1.7 Terminology

The key terms in this dissertation are listed below in the order they appeared in the chapters.

- *National College Entrance Exam* (NCEE): the name of the Chinese examination organized by the Chinese Education Department to recruit university students.
- *Facework*: a term used to refer to the actions taken by a person to make whatever he or she is doing consistent with face.
- *College English Test Band 4* (CET-Band 4): the name of a College English test organized twice per year by the Chinese Ministry of Education and universities to assess Chinese non-English major students' English proficiency.

- *Foreign language acquisition (FLA) / Second language acquisition (SLA)*: commonly used terms that refer to the process of learning other languages in addition to the native language.
- *English as second language (ESL)*: a term referring to English acquired by language learners whose first language is not English, but who live in an environment in which English is employed as the main means of communication.
- *English as foreign language (EFL)*: a term that refers to English learned and taught in English classes, but not formally used and spoken by the learners in the society they live.
- *Target language (TL)*: a term employed to refer to a language that a non-native speaker is striving to learn.
- *Learning strategies (LS)*: a term that has been defined differently by numerous researchers (see Chapter 4); in this study it refers to a series of techniques, methods and activities that are consciously or unconsciously employed by language learners to assist their own learning process.
- *Language learning strategies (LLS)*: a term that refers to strategies applied in language learning and teaching.
- *Direct strategies*: a term used to refer to strategies that are directly involved in language learning, which include memory, cognitive and compensation strategies.
- *Indirect strategies*: a term used to refer to strategies that are indirectly involved in language learning, which include metacognitive, affective and social strategies.
- *Listening comprehension strategies*: a term employed to refer to the ways and methods that English language learners use to improve their listening proficiency.
- *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)*: the name of a research survey instrument designed by Rebecca L. Oxford to evaluate the application of language learning strategies by language learners.

1.8 Structure of the dissertation

The above-mentioned perspectives on language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies among Chinese non-English major students are analyzed and presented in the following sequence:

Chapter 1 comprises this introduction to my study. It starts with a brief introduction of the primary questions relating to language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies considered in the following main parts and is followed by a presentation of the research background, the purpose and research questions, the statement of my hypotheses, its rationale and significance, the theories involved in this dissertation taken into consideration as well as definitions of key terms.

Chapter 2 introduces English language teaching and learning in a Chinese cultural context. This chapter consists of three parts. The first part presents a description of the Chinese higher education system with an emphasis on Chinese universities and university students. The second part begins with the introduction of Hofstede's "Five Dimensions of Cultural Variability" with regard to the concepts of a Chinese collectivist society that includes the concepts of Chinese facework and their indirect interaction style as well as theories of Confucianism. The third part gives an account of English teaching and learning in China, paying more attention to distinguishing the differences between English-major and non-English major students from several different perspectives.

Chapter 3 addresses different theories of second / foreign language acquisition and their implications on language learning strategies. This chapter comprises two parts. The first part introduces the different implications between 'English as foreign language' and 'English as second language', defines the meaning of foreign language acquisition and presents its different developmental stages as well. In addition, this chapter explores the implications of foreign language acquisition theories on language learning strategies and then uses the figures to illustrate the mutual relationship among theories of foreign language acquisition, language learning strategies, language learners, and language learning processes as well as learning

outcomes. The second part introduces three different positions with respect to language learning strategies and highlights my views on them.

Chapter 4 introduces the general research of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies abroad and in China. This chapter includes four sections. The first part gives a definition and classification of language learning strategies. The second part presents research into language learning strategies and emphasizes the research done in China from different aspects. The third part pays more attention to listening comprehension strategies in terms of the role of listening comprehension in foreign language acquisition, the definition of listening comprehension strategies, the relationship between language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies, the special problems of listening to English among Chinese students as well as the research of listening comprehension strategies abroad and in China. The fourth part introduces the potential factors which might influence the choices and uses of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies among Chinese non-English major students.

Chapter 5 is the core part of this research and it connects the theoretical and practical parts. This chapter studies the quantitative method of the research with a detailed introduction of the samplings in terms of their majors and origins and also describes the design, revision and field survey of the questionnaire and data entry. It also introduces other research instruments involved in this study, such as SPSS and the CET-Band 4.

Chapter 6 is the most important part of this whole dissertation with a review of research questions and a detailed explanation and analysis of quantitative data. This chapter starts with item analysis and proves that all strategy items in the questionnaire have good distinguishing ability. In the following part, validity and reliability of the scale are tested, through which the scale proves to be a stable and reliable one. The successful and unsuccessful English listeners are also compared to see how similarly and differently they use thirty-six individual and six groups of listening comprehension strategies in terms of level of frequency and consciousness. In addition to this, the good and poor English listeners are also compared to find out their uses of strategies in each group. Finally, a correlation analysis is conducted to find out the interrelation among some variables, i.e., listening proficiency, frequency and consciousness of

using listening comprehension strategies and to see how closely these variables are correlated.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion of the whole quantitative research. This chapter includes three parts: the first part summarizes the results discovered and discussed in this dissertation; the second part points out the limitations of this study in terms of research samples, instruments and methods; the third and last part lists the recommendations for further study.

After my introduction to the study, I can now turn to Chapter 2 which deals with English learning in the Chinese cultural context.

Chapter 2: Learning English in the Chinese cultural context

“The aim of college teaching is to cultivate students’ comprehensive capability, especially their communicative competence, both verbally and non-verbally.”

Chinese Education Ministry 2004⁶

English, like any other language, depends upon its social environment, and plays a very important role in social interaction and communication. It connects people with different social statuses and cultural backgrounds and brings them together in a society⁷ or community. In other words, language and society are closely interdependent.

Listening plays a central part in social intercourse. Listening comprehension strategies, on the one hand describe the approaches that language learners choose to develop their listening comprehension; on the other hand, the choices and use of listening comprehension strategies must reflect and convey the social and cultural traits of their users. In order to better understand the real English learning situation of Chinese students, we need an insight into Chinese society with its educational and cultural framework and to take a look at the target population in general.

In this chapter, I will deliver a more detailed introduction to Chinese universities including the higher educational systems and distribution of universities. I shall discuss the Chinese cultural context with the help of Hofstede’s dimensions of cultural variability, theories of Confucianism and the history of language learning and teaching in China, and clarify the differences between English-major and non-English major students.

⁶ This citation is part of Curriculum Requirements of College English that was stipulated by the Chinese Education Ministry in 2004. The Curriculum Requirements of College English functions as the main foundation upon which universities organize English teaching of non-English major students. See more details in <http://www.edu.cn/20040120/3097997.shtml>, April 27, 2013.

⁷ One reason behind us studying a foreign language is to be acknowledged and accepted by a society in which this language plays a significant role.

2.1 An introduction to Chinese universities

2.1.1 An introduction to the higher education system in China

In this section, the Chinese education system will be discussed with a focus on the higher education system. In China, the education system consists of three categories: basic, higher and adult education.⁸

In China, basic education includes compulsory and senior secondary education. Compulsory education starts at the age of seven and lasts for nine years including six years in elementary school (小学 or *in Pinyin*, xiǎo xué) and three years in junior high school (初中 or chū zhōng). Senior secondary education is accessible through high school entrance examinations taken generally at the age of 16 and includes three years in senior high school (高中 or gāo zhōng). This stage consists of two different tracks: the students who want to enter colleges or universities are educated in the general senior secondary school for three years to prepare for the National College Entrance Examination while those students who have relatively lower marks or who want to enter the labor market at an earlier stage are educated in specialized schools (技校 or jì xiào) with three-to four-year programs as well as vocational schools (职校 or zhí xiào) with three-year programs (cf. Zhu, 2007: 6f). Today, students who graduate from such kinds of specialized or vocational schools are also allowed to take part in the National College Entrance Examination for further studies.

According to a description from the Ministry of Education (2005), the Chinese higher education system owes its characteristics to both the US and the UK systems. It does, however, have a stronger similarity to the US system. In this system, there are two different types of colleges. The first of these are the two-and three-year colleges – the short-cycle colleges (in Chinese known as 专科院校 or zhuān kē yuàn xiào), and the degree that can be obtained there is called a college diploma (in Chinese known as 大专文凭 or dà zhuān wén píng). The other type of college is the typical four-year college or university which not only

⁸ Adult education includes adult primary education, adult secondary education and adult higher education, going through all of the educational stages. Due to their close connection, basic and higher education will be discussed more in detail in the following contents.

offers academic but also vocational courses leading to Bachelor degrees (in Chinese known as 本科文凭 or běn kē wén píng). They also offer higher degrees such as Master (硕士文凭, or suò shì wén píng) and Doctorates (博士文凭, or bó shì wén píng) which are accredited by the State Council⁹ (cf. Zhu, 2007: 18f).

Whether the students can go to the four-year-program universities or three-year-program colleges is decided by the marks they have received in the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. The National Higher Education Entrance Examination is administered uniformly within each province, autonomous region or municipality of China. The National Higher Education Entrance Examination is graded on a scale of 100 to 900 points and it is arranged at the end of the spring semester. The graduates from Senior High Schools across the country take the examination simultaneously over a three-day period from the 7th to 9th of June. Prior to 2003, the examination was held in July; but later was moved to the month of June in order to avoid the hot weather. Only students with the highest marks can study at the four-year program universities. Other students have to choose the three-year programs.

Likewise, whether students can further study in the postgraduate program is determined by their achievements in the postgraduate examinations. Postgraduate examinations are held once a year, normally at the end of January. The exams include five subjects, among which three specialized courses are offered by the desired universities themselves. The other two courses, politics and public English are edited by the Chinese Ministry of Education; but the English major students need to take part in an exam in a foreign language other than English. As a result, only students from four-year colleges or universities with satisfactory marks can go on to study in postgraduate programs; students who graduate from a three-year college are required to work for two years, before they can be admitted to postgraduate entrance exams.

⁹ The State Council of the People's Republic of China, namely the Central People's Government, is the highest executive organ of State power, as well as the highest organ of State administration. The source is <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/data/organs/statecouncil.shtml>, March 20, 2013.

2.1.2 The development of student numbers

In China, higher education used to be an ‘elite education’, which means that only very few students were lucky enough to participate. The distribution of universities and teaching resources was also very unbalanced: given the large population, the number of universities in China and the available resources such as financial assistance, capital investment and facilities was comparatively low. For a long period of time, universities and colleges opened their doors only for students who gained very high marks in the National College Entrance Exam (NCEE) or ‘gāokǎo’, organized by the Chinese Education Department – Chinese people often describe the exam as “‘thousands of troops on a single-log bridge’ due to its low enrollment rate” (Zhu, 2007: 21).

In order to recruit more students for higher education, the Chinese government had to improve these conditions and the education system itself. So in 1999, China began to dramatically expand its higher education system¹⁰ – a trend which has continued to this date. The decision to expand further was most likely a response to pressure from the people due to the increased number of students graduating from secondary schools. To cater for this increased demand, the Education Department of China has allocated more teaching resources and education funds into the education systems and expanded its higher education system.

These days, Chinese students have less difficulty accessing higher education. The gross enrollment rate has increased dramatically from 9.8 percent in 1998 to 21 percent in 2005. This doubling in enrollment over the period of seven years makes the Chinese higher education system the largest national system in the world. In 2007, the Ministry of Education stated that there were 10.1 million people who had applied for university entrance exams and about 5.67 million who would be able to enter college (approx. 56%). Despite the increase in the application-participation ratio from 20:1 in 1977 to 2:1 in 2007, it is still a competitive

¹⁰ Because of the boom in student numbers, a lot of universities or colleges with three-year programs have joined forces with other colleges or lower institutes like the technical schools or professional schools. This regrouping turns them into general universities with four-year programs and enables them to receive more students. Henan Province for example, has had seven universities regroup during the years 2001 to 2008. Among these, Anyang Institute of Technology is one that regrouped with two other professional schools: Anyang

situation for Chinese students to enter the higher education system (cf. Zhu, 2007: 21f).

Current data show that the number of university students continues to rise. In 2012, there were approximately 6.80 million students who graduated from college or university. As a result of this education reform, more and more students could have the chance to enter universities or colleges and receive higher education in China. The following linear chart is a cross-diagram depicting the years from 2001 to 2013 and the ever increasing number of students graduating from universities and colleges.

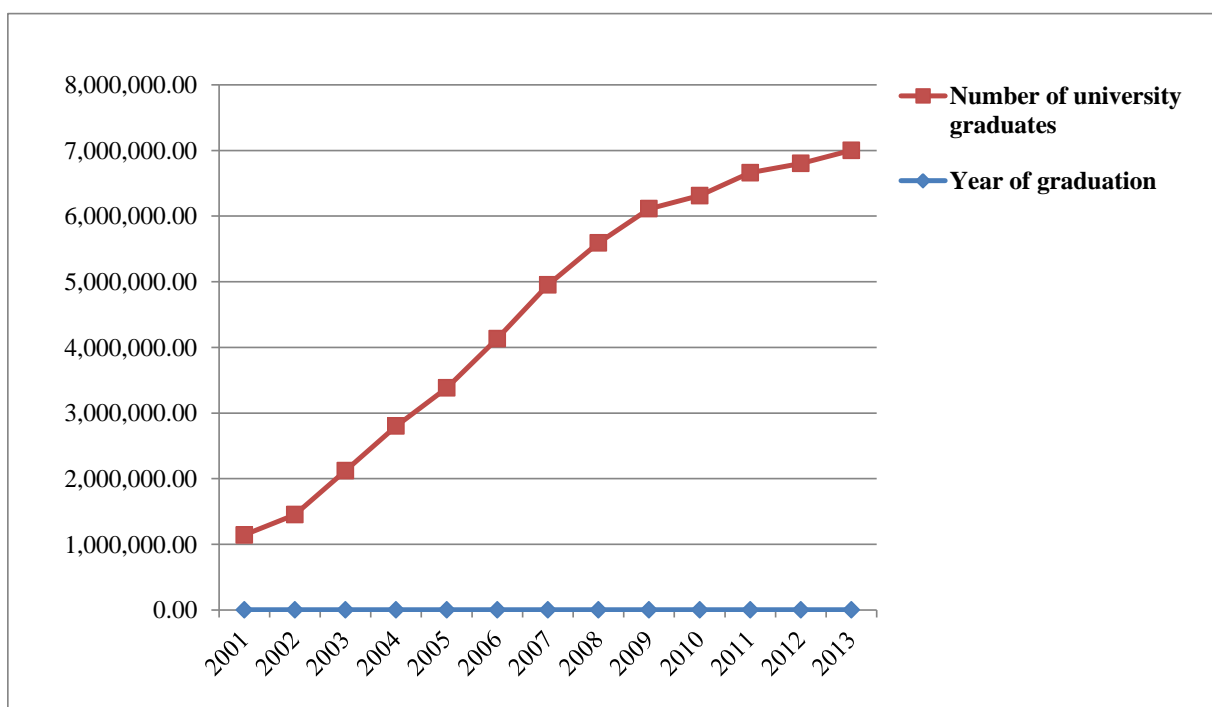


Figure 2.1 Chinese university graduates (2001-2013). (Source: Online employment channel of China education)¹¹

In the above figure, the horizontal axis refers to the year (from 2001 to 2013) in which Chinese students graduate from the universities and the vertical axis (from 0 to 8,000,000. 00) presents the number of university students that graduate in each year. These two axes show us that the number of graduates increases progressively each year.

Accounting School and Anyang Agricultural School. It should also be noted that the overall standard of these categories of universities stands between the previous four-year program and three-year program universities.

¹¹ The source is http://career.eol.cn/kuai_xun_4343/20130129/t20130129_898345.shtml, April 27, 2013.

2.1.3 The unbalanced distribution of the universities in China

Compared with Western countries such as the USA and Germany, the distribution of the universities and colleges in China is very unbalanced. This is one of the most striking features of the Chinese higher education system.

In China, the distribution of universities, colleges, and academic institutions and teaching resources depends to a large extent on the degree of economic development and political position of the city in which the institution is located. In other words, the unbalanced development of economy and politics underlies the unbalanced distribution and development of educational resources, especially the higher education system. A host of statistical facts has shown that the top universities and institutes lie in the bigger and more important Chinese cities. For example, almost 25% of the first-class universities are located in the capital city – Beijing. There are some other good universities and colleges situated in other big cities, like Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan and Guangzhou etc. However, there are very few good universities in remote provinces like Xinjiang, Tibet, Gansu, and in inner provinces with larger populations like Henan, Jiangxi etc.

First-class universities here refer to the universities that belong to Project 211 and Project 985. “In 1995, the Chinese government launched Project 211, which refers to the aim of building up 100 top level higher education institutes (HEIs) and key disciplines in the 21st century.” (Zhu, 2007: 37) In fact, the number of 211 universities rose to 116 in May of 2012. The name of Project 985 derives from the date on which it was announced, May 1998. The primary purpose of launching this project was to develop 10 to 12 so-called world-class universities which would be able to compete with the premier leagues of HEIs world-wide, including a number of world-famous and high-level research institutions. However, Project 985 was conducted in two stages: the first stage included 34 universities and the second one consisted of 5 universities. Thus, the total number of the universities in Project 985 is 39. The table below illustrates the distribution of the universities from 211 and 985 universities in China.

Table 2.1 The distribution of 211 and 985 universities in China

Municipalities and Provinces	Number of 211 Universities	Number of 985 Universities
Beijing	26	8
Shanghai	10	4
Tianjin	4	2
Chongqing	2	1
Jiangsu Province	11	2
Hubei Province	7	2
Shaanxi Province	8	2
Guangdong Province	4	2
Sichuan Province	5	2
Heilongjiang Province	4	1
Liaoning Province	4	2
Hunan Province	4	3
Jilin Province	3	1
Anhui Province	3	1
Shandong Province	3	2
Fujian Province	2	1
Hebei Province	1	0
Zhejiang Province	1	1
Gansu Province	1	1
Henan Province	1	0
Shanxi Province	1	0
Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region	1	0
Jiangxi Province	1	0
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	1	0
Yunnan Province	1	0
Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regions	2	0
Guizhou Province	1	0
Hainan Province	1	0
Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	1	0
Qinghai Province	1	0
Tibet Autonomous Region	1	0

Source: China Youth Network.¹²

¹² The source is http://edu.youth.cn/gk/syxx/200906/t20090602_919551.html, April 27, 2013.

From the above table of the distribution of universities involved in Project 211 and Project 985, we can clearly see that the distribution of higher educational resources (here it refers to the higher education institutions) in China is completely out of balance. Therefore, the education standard of some places such as Beijing or other big cities is considered to be representative of the Chinese top educational condition, but it cannot stand for the overall educational standard of the Chinese higher education system. Most of the provinces have only one top university; some provinces have none at all. Take Henan Province for example: By the end of 2008, there were 99.18 million people and the population is estimated to have increased to over 105 million in 2012.¹³ This figure will be equivalent to 1.5% of the whole world, yet the province has only one university belonging to Project 211.

As of 2012, there were a total of 2,138 universities and colleges, among which only 116 universities belong to Project 211, and 39 to Project 985. Therefore, the number of universities in Project 211 covers only 5% of the total number of universities and the number of the universities in Project 985 covers only 2% of all universities.

In China, regional differences are characteristic of the Chinese education system. They bring about different regulations in students' recruitment – in particular, the so-called regional preferential policy. Generally speaking, universities prefer to recruit students from their own province or region, even though there is a quota for students from other provinces or regions. For example, if two students with the same marks apply to a university in Beijing, one being from Beijing, the other from Henan Province or another of the inner provinces, the student from Beijing will have the opportunity to attend a much better university than the student from outside. In addition, students belonging to a national minority¹⁴ are also treated preferentially and can go to a university with comparatively weaker marks than students from the inner provinces. These are some of the typical characteristics of the Chinese higher

¹³ The source is http://zhengzhou.liaoning.com/xinwen/henanshengzongrenkou_196365.html, April 27, 2013.

¹⁴ In China, there are five Autonomous Regions occupied by different ethnicities. They are: Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Tibetan Autonomous Region of Tibet. There are 56 different groups of Chinese people. Besides majority – Han people, there are 55 minority people groups that make up 6.6% of the whole Chinese population.

education system.

Obviously, the above presentation of the Chinese higher educational system, the development of student numbers and the unbalanced distribution of Chinese universities proves that the universities in Henan Province are of great representative significance in my research. Therefore, in order to attempt to reflect the English study status of higher university students more generally, my research subjects will be students from universities in Henan province¹⁵ – more specifically, students from the Anyang Institute of Technology. Among the total number of Chinese universities, more than half belong to the same level as the one with which I conduct my research.

So far, the Chinese higher education system and universities have been presented. In the following sections, the Chinese cultural context will be introduced to help us comprehend the social and cultural factors that influence the way that Chinese students think, speak and behave as well as their choice and application of listening comprehension strategies.

2.2 Introduction to the Chinese cultural context

As outlined before, language is not merely a system of sounds, grammar, and meaning. It is social behavior and it is influenced and conditioned by social and cultural norms and rules, and cultural values (cf. Jia et al., 2007: 134). Research on language learning has also recognized the close relationship between language and culture. “More specifically, language carries knowledge and cultural information and it reflects the substantial and particular ways of thinking of that people. Thus culture is embedded in even the simplest act of language.” (Bakhtiarvand, 2011: 112) In other words, language and socio-cultural traits are closely connected with each other and do not exist independently.

Considering the Chinese research samplings and the socio-cultural context, we have to think over and discuss in what kind of a society the samplings in my study live, how this society is set up and structured and has developed, how the culture of the society is the foundation of its people as well as what kinds of norms and rules apply to the people in this

¹⁵ According to statistics from 2007, the number of universities in China is about 1,926, including 755 four-year universities and 1,171 three-year-program universities. Among these universities, there are 84 universities in Henan province altogether, comprising 33 four-year-program universities and 51 three-year-program universities.

society. This has an influence on their words, thoughts and behaviors and serves to regulate their relationships among each other.

Therefore, I will now incorporate the concept of culture into my investigation as one of the theoretical explanatory variables for a better understanding of Chinese society and Chinese traditional cultures. I will also consider the differences between my sampling and those in Oxford's or other linguists' research from the cultural perspective.¹⁶ Harry C. Triandis argues that "culture is to society what memory is to individuals; it includes the things that have worked in the past." (1995: 4) I also recognize that the concept of 'culture' is very likely to lead us to think about Hofstede's models. According to Hofstede, "culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others." (1991: 26)

Geert Hofstede (*1928-) is an anthropologist and psychologist and developed the concept of the five dimensions of cultural value. The findings of his research model show that there are more differences than similarities between the Eastern and the Western countries and cultures. His five dimensions include: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. The first four dimensions belong to his early model and were derived from a study of 53 countries and regions, and the fifth focuses on the investigation of Confucianism in the Eastern world, covering 23 countries during 1978 to 1983. His investigation of China showed that the Chinese people and culture are still to great extent imbued by Confucianism (cf. Wang, 2005: 100).

1. Power Distance¹⁷ explains the degree of unequal distribution of power, prestige and wealth in a society. Members of a high power distance culture accept the inequalities of power and wealth allowed to grow within the society. Members of a low power

¹⁶ Only when we know about the different cultural and social influences among different research groups, might we understand why they encounter different difficulties and choose different listening strategies to practice their listening comprehension.

¹⁷ Actually, low and high power distance exists in all cultures. In contrast to some Western countries like Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States, Chinese culture tends to be high in power distance.

distance culture, in contrast, believe that the society lays stress on the equalities, but not on the differences between the citizens' power and wealth.

2. Individualism-Collectivism explains the degree to which a society determines how people live together. High individualistic societies emphasize the importance of individuality, individual rights, responsibilities, privacy, and freedom and so on, but ignore the relationships between the individuals, while the low individualistic or collectivistic cultures pay more attention to community, collaboration, harmony. This society accepts the collectivist character with close and strong ties between individuals and social networks, family members or groups.
3. Masculinity-Femininity explains the degree to which society accepts and reinforces the different distribution of gender roles in a culture. A highly masculine-oriented cultural society accepts the dominating role that males play in a society and its power structure. In contrast, low masculinity or feminine-oriented cultures and societies indicate that more equality exists in the society between genders. Members of cultures high in femininity tend to value a good working relationship with their supervisors and focus on relationship enhancement, regardless of group ties.
4. Uncertainty Avoidance explains the degree to which members of a culture try to avoid uncertainty.¹⁸ High uncertainty avoidance goes together clear norms and rules to create a rule-oriented society. Members of high uncertainty avoidance cultures have a lower tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures have less concern about ambiguity and uncertainty and have more tolerance for a variety of opinions. Members of low uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to be more open to unknown situations, innovations and risks and have lower stress levels and weaker superegos.
5. Long-Term Orientation deals with “the degree to which a society embraces long-term devotion to traditional and forward thinking values.” (Wang, 2005: 101)

¹⁸ Like the dimension of power distance, uncertainty avoidance also exists in all cultures. Therefore, in contrast to some countries like Canada, Denmark, Sweden and the United States, Chinese culture tends to be high in uncertainty avoidance.

The above is a short introduction of Hofstede's five dimensions of cultural variability. These five dimensions contribute to shaping a society and regulating people's behavior in their interpersonal relationships. Among these five dimensions, 'Individualism-Collectivism' and 'Long-Term Orientation'¹⁹ are particularly relevant and specialized in the Chinese cultural context, and play a significant role in English learning and teaching among Chinese university students. Therefore, in the following parts, I will discuss these two dimensions, with regard to the Chinese cultural context.

2.2.1 Dimension of Individualism-Collectivism

When we talk about Chinese culture, we have to first know what culture means, which is also to say, we have to have a better understanding of the implication and meaning of culture. Gudykunst summarizes the conceptualization and definition of culture in many ways: culture is viewed as "everything that is human made" and "a system of meaning"; Culture is equated with communication: "culture is communication and communication is culture" (2003: 8).

In view of the cultural aspect, individualism-collectivism is the major dimension of cultural variability used to account for the differences and similarities in communication across cultures, thus influencing the ways individuals are socialized in their cultures.

Cultures that tend to be mainly individualistic include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and northern Europe. Cultures that tend to be mainly collectivistic include African, Arab, Asian, Latin, and southern European cultures. (Gudykunst, 2003:12)

Compared with some research subjects from Western countries²⁰ on whom Oxford has carried out her research, the students in my study are from China which is normally regarded as a collectivistic cultural society. Considering Chinese collectivistic society, Geert Hofstede

¹⁹ The fifth and last dimension, 'Long-Term Orientation', is mainly concerned with the standard of Chinese social values – Confucianism. In the next part, I will therefore discuss this philosophy.

²⁰ In Oxford's research, she carried out a lot of empirical studies with samples from Western countries, such as European countries or North-America, which belong to individualistic societies. "Western individualism-oriented culture requires construing oneself as an individual whose behaviour is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than by reference to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others." (Jia et al., 2007: 151f)

comments that: “For Mao Zedong, individualism and liberalism were manifest in the selfishness and aversion to discipline characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie.” (2001: 211) In collectivistic cultures, group goals are supposed to take precedence over individual goals. The individuals’ thoughts, ideas or behaviors should always be in accordance with those of the groups or the communities they belong to. When they undertake some activities or make a decision, they will first think of the value orientation of their collective communities instead of their own. In collectivistic cultures, the value of the collective is always higher and more important than that of the individual. The characteristics of collectivistic cultures are presented below:

- In collectivistic cultures, people consider equality to be of high value and freedom to be of little value (cf. Gudykunst, 2003: 11).
- Compared with members of individualistic cultures, members of collectivistic cultures pay more attention to avoiding hurting others’ feelings and not imposing their own thoughts on others (cf. Gudykunst, 2003:12).
- Compared with members of individualistic cultures, members of collectivistic cultures are more concerned with face-supporting behavior such as avoiding hurting others’ feelings and provoking others’ negative evaluation (cf. Gudykunst, 2003: 23).
- Compared with members of individualistic cultures, members of collectivistic cultures are more concerned with verbal indirectness, politeness and nonimmediacy. In addition, “members of collectivistic cultures use interdependent self construals to guide their behavior, allow social identities to influence their behavior, and are concerned with social appropriateness when interacting with strangers more than are members of individualistic cultures.” (Gudykunst, 2003: 25)

The research samplings have to be considered and interpreted in the light of the above cultural characteristics and norms of Chinese society. The research subjects involved in my study are from a collectivist society, therefore, they must be expected to own collectivist social traits. In the following section, I will talk about two important traits that play an important role in Chinese collectivist society – the concept of ‘face’ and ‘facework’ and the Chinese indirect interactive style in order to find out how these two social traits may affect Chinese students.

2.2.1.1 The concept of face and facework

Considering the dimension of Individualism-Collectivism as an important cultural variable to

account for and interpret the ideas, thoughts, words and behaviors of the social agents, the concepts of ‘face’ and ‘facework’ need detailed consideration. ‘Face’ is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself or herself [...] in terms of approved social attributes” and ‘facework’ is “the actions taken by a person to make whatever he or she is doing consistent with face” (Goffman, 1972: 5). Yuxin Jia and his colleagues state that ‘face’ always plays a very important role in human interaction and social communication. In addition, ‘face’ and ‘facework’ concepts serve as essential sociopragmatic conventions or norms operating in the management of human interaction and interpersonal relationship (cf. Jia et al., 2007: 147f). Cross-culturally speaking, ‘face’ functions as a cultural product and varies from one culture to another.

‘Face’ is a very important concept in the Chinese cultural context. Individuals in a Chinese culture are most influenced by it. In the collectivism-oriented Chinese cultural context and in the Chinese way of thinking, the concept of face carries two aspects. One is *lian* (脸) and the other is *mianzi* (面子). The former is interpreted with the meaning of “an individual's inner qualities or the inner sense of character” while the latter is concerned with “an individual's outer sense of self in terms of the reputation one has achieved.” (Jia et al., 2007: 150)

Zhi Tan states that Chinese people have been taught since their childhood to earn, to save, and to enhance their own and others’ face as well as setting up and maintaining harmonious social relations (cf. 2007: 95). It is easy to see that compared with Westerners, the Chinese people place more emphasis on their ‘face’ during social interplay and are very much concerned with social appropriateness. Therefore, Chinese people are very careful of their words and behaviors during social communication. For them, *lian* or *mianzi* is regarded as the ideal goal to reach their social respect and identity. Conversely, they are afraid of making mistakes in public and they believe that their mistakes in word or behavior are so shameful and humiliating that they could cause public criticism and contempt, which will lead them into an embarrassing situation, show their ignorance and make them lose their face, i.e., social respect and status. In addition, “[...] *lian* or *mianzi* helps people to build up good character and to establish good interpersonal relationships, which in turn lead to social

harmony.” (Jia et al., 2007: 153) Consequently, trying to keep face, not losing face (丢脸) and doing their best to keep silent in public occasions have always been the critical criteria with which the Chinese people must comply in social interactions.

As a principal guideline for Chinese people, ‘keeping face’ does indeed help them solve some conflicts or problems they might meet and helps them build up and safeguard their public self-image. But on the other hand, this guideline also prevents them from behaving as active communicators and expressing thoughts and opinions openly. It causes them to become listeners rather than speakers in the course of social communication. In this way, Chinese society has gradually become a listener-oriented rather than a speaker-oriented society.

This phenomenon of ‘keeping face’ can often be seen in English classes in China. In the process of learning a foreign language, the language behaviors and proficiency of the language learners are also more or less restricted by the ‘face’ concept. A lot of students, including my research subjects, are not very active in answering questions posed by their English teachers, or in speaking English in public and conducting activities concerning a foreign language because they are afraid of ‘losing face’. Instead, they would like to listen to what others say and keep silent. The reasons that lead to Chinese students’ passiveness in English classes can be discussed from two different perspectives. On the one hand, they are afraid of losing face when they say or answer something in wrong way; on the other hand, due to the influences of ‘the Doctrines of the Mean’²¹ (中庸之道, or *in pinyin*, zhōng yōng zhī dào), they do not want to ‘show off’ too much in front of their friends or classmates, since they always bear the old Chinese proverbs ‘树大招风 (shù dà zhāo fēng) – a tall tree catches much wind’ and ‘枪打出头鸟 (qiāng dǎ chū tóu niǎo) – the shot hits the bird that pokes its head out’ in mind. They believe that their ‘showing off’ will make them the focus of others’ discussion, complaint and even isolation. Thus, in order to avoid such situations,

²¹ ‘The Doctrine of the Mean’ is one of the core teachings and moral norms of Confucianism. The introduction of ‘the Mean’ is attributed to Confucius and then inherited and developed by His students who formed the systematic theoretical work “The Doctrine of the Mean”. Confucians in the Song Dynasty enriched and developed ‘the Mean’ in the concepts of philosophical culture further. Therefore, this doctrine has been an important life philosophy for Chinese to follow for thousands of years. It requires us to behave ourselves neither too much nor too little, that is, just right.

they would rather follow another motto ‘沉默是金(chén mò shì jīn)’ – silence is golden’ than actively display themselves in front of other people.

Meanwhile, the concepts of ‘face’ and ‘facework’ also affect some Chinese teachers and they cannot accept students’ different opinions since they are always concerned with protecting their own ‘face’ and preserving their authority in the classroom. Because of this, teachers always talk more in class and students only listen to them quietly.

Obviously, the concepts of ‘face’ and ‘facework’ affect both Chinese students who learn English and teachers to a certain extent. In the following section, I will talk about another cultural trait – the Chinese indirect interactive style to see how it influences Chinese people, in particular, English language learners.

2.2.1.2 Chinese indirect²² interaction style

Besides the ‘face’ concept, as an important communicative resource in the Chinese context, the indirect interaction style is another important communicative character trait of Chinese people. “Chinese indirect interaction style serves as an important sociopragmatic convention for people to manage communication and interpersonal relationships or to manipulate people.” (Jia et al., 2007: 144). Chinese culture is primarily targeted at an indirect interaction style. This is in contrast with Western countries.²³ The Chinese indirect style mainly demonstrates its function in situations when speakers are eager to express their intentions or to make a request. On the whole, indirect requests or intentions are very often used in the Chinese cultural context. When Chinese people communicate with each other, they are likely to hide their real thoughts from the listeners and try to avoid verbalizing their intentions in a straightforward manner. This kind of indirect interpretation requires that the listeners discern the clues and guess the speakers’ real meaning.

As Yuxin Jia and his colleague state, in the Chinese and Western world, listeners and speakers play different roles in communication. For example, in the social intercourse among Chinese people, communication is often listener-oriented and it is the listener who is

²² Chinese indirect style also refers to Chinese inductive style. Hence, we could tentatively call it indirect/inductive interactive style too.

²³ In contrast to the Chinese indirect interactive style the Western is more direct.

responsible for discerning and deliberating the real meaning through tacit understanding or intuition or for reading the speaker's mind from the contextual cues. This is different from the Western direct interactive style, in which it is the speaker who is in charge of expressing his or her intention clearly and logically to enable the listener to deduce the meaning (cf. 2007: 140).

In a word, indirect interactive style has greatly influenced Chinese people. On the one hand, they are likely to hide their real intentions when they speak to other people; on the other hand, they tend to think too much about what other people say and think. This phenomenon can be found among Chinese students during their learning process. I take Chinese students who learn English as an example: they do not like to directly convey their thoughts to their English teachers even though they may not be very satisfied with some issues such as teaching methods or teaching materials; when English teachers ask them to talk about their English learning or evaluate their English classes, they first think about their teachers' intention in posing such questions instead of answering them directly. Due to the influences of indirect interactive style, a lot of Chinese students are reluctant to directly talk about or share their feelings about English learning with their English teachers.

So far, the dimension of individualism – collectivism concerning the concepts of 'face' and 'facework' as well as indirect interactive style has been introduced. In the following section, another important cultural concept will be discussed more in detail – theories of Confucianism.

2.2.2 Theories of Confucianism

Besides the above-mentioned concept of individualism-collectivism, another cultural variability that has influenced Chinese society for a thousand years needs to be discussed here: Confucianism. Due to the influence of Confucianism, comparing to other collectivist society, China owns its special characteristics, e.g., keeping face and indirect communication. Harry C. Triandis & Michele J. Gelfand point out that,

[c]onfucian philosophy emphasized the importance of group identity, conformity, and long-term relationships. Confucius also stressed the importance of obligations that

individuals have within their family, within the nation, and within the world at large.
(2012: 500)

Confucianism, as part of Chinese tradition, is a vital element that influences individuals and functions not only as an underlying ideology but also a guiding principle permeating the way of life in China and influencing or informing the cultures of many other East Asian countries (cf. Yao, 2000: 31). Geert Hofstede asserts that “Kong Ze (Confucius), [...] was an intellectual of humble origins in China around 500 B. C.” (2001: 354). On the other hand, it also helps China to build, shape, consolidate and develop its collectivism-oriented society. Y. H. Wang states that “Confucianism is not a religion, but it is practiced as a kind of social code in China.” (2005: 89)

2.2.2.1 A brief introduction to Confucianism

In the previous sections and chapters I have more than once mentioned Confucianism and its philosophical teachings that are regarded as the roots of Chinese cultural traditions: Chinese traditional civilization and social orders or rules were founded and consolidated mainly by means of the great philosophical influence of Confucius (551-479 B. C.), which has in some ways shaped Eastern Asian culture:

Confucius philosophy, founded on his *Analects* («论语» *Lun Yu*), is the *Teaching* to establish the social order, and to place the society under the sage’s control. It is believed that anyone in a society can follow the sage’s saying and doing. (Wang, 2005: 86)

Approximately from the time of the Han Dynasty,²⁴ around 140 B. C., Confucianism, was under imperial sponsorship and dominated the Chinese educational system. In the last 2000 years of Chinese history, there have been a large number of intellectuals²⁵ who have followed Confucianism and received Confucius’ doctrine and education (cf. Wang, 2005: 89).

²⁴ The Han Dynasty was a feudal dynasty after the Qin Dynasty. It consisted of two major periods and lasted from 206 B. C. to 220 A. D. The Western Han lasted from 206 B. C. to 24 A. D. and the Eastern Han lasted from 25 to 220 A. D.

²⁵ Among those who followed Confucius doctrine, Mencius (372-around 289 B. C.), or Meng Zi (孟子), is the most famous and influential follower. He has illuminated Confucian doctrine by stressing that a ruler should provide the environment to allow subjects to be morally self-cultivated. Combined with Confucius, they are called Kong Meng, and their doctrines are together called ‘The Doctrine of Confucius and Mencius’. Like Confucian, Mencius is also very much respected by the followers of Confucianism.

Confucianism was a necessary and important norm to help the Chinese feudal government to formulate its guidelines of curriculum or governmental examinations and to recruit its officers throughout many feudal dynasties. It lasted for more than 2000 years until 1911.²⁶ During the period from 1949 to 1977, the Chinese traditional educational system with Confucianism still as a part of it was totally changed by Mao's Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).²⁷ Xinzhong Yao remarks that

[f]rom the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1980s, Confucianism lost its grasp over the state and over people's life and thinking. It was criticized and attacked as a reactionary and conservative force by many liberals and communist intellectuals alike. (2000: 37)

Despite this criticism, Confucianism persisted. It is Confucianism that dominated the development of Chinese history. It has gradually formed social codes and values, which have been adapted over time (cf. Wang, 2005: 90). Confucius' philosophical ideas and teachings are deeply rooted in the hearts of Chinese people, and influence their thinking, ideas and behaviors from past to present both in a positive way and sometimes also in a negative way.²⁸

2.2.2.2 Confucius' influences on the communication of Chinese people

As mentioned above, Confucius philosophical thoughts and teachings have played a very important role in Chinese culture for thousands of years. They have had both positive and negative²⁹ influences on Chinese people, forming their ways of thinking, speaking and

²⁶ The fourth of May in 1911 was a particularly critical time in China when a movement against imperialism and feudalism was launched. The cultural reform movement is not only a part but also a manifestation of this revolution. The so-called 'May Fourth Movement' criticized too much traditional Confucian thought and teaching systems as well as "in some parts and in some degrees changed Chinese culture and its educational system" (Wang, 2005: 86). However, deep, complete and significant change did not take place until 1949 after Chinese liberation.

²⁷ During Mao's Great Cultural Revolution, education was to serve nothing but the needs of the working class.

²⁸ The Confucian dynamism dimension involves eight values among which four values are associated positively with dimensions such as "ordering relationships, thrift, persistence, and having a sense of shame"; in contrast, the other four values are related negatively to dimensions like "protecting one's face, personal steadiness, respect for tradition, and reciprocation." (Gudykunst, 2003: 21f)

²⁹ On the one hand, some of Confucius' philosophical thoughts have had positive influences on Chinese people, e.g., 'teaching students in accordance with their aptitude' and 'never be contented with your study and never be impatient with you teaching' are Confucius teaching methods that influence Chinese people in a positive way; but on the other hand, these teaching principles display feudal characteristics and they have to some degree hindered the development of independent thinking in the Chinese people.

behavior.

The core teachings of Confucianism consist of ‘Three Guidelines’ and ‘Five Constant Laws’, both of which have to be understood on the basis of two moral concepts: De (德) and Li (礼). 德 [De] refers to the highest moral and virtual level that people could reach through their self-cultivation, and 礼 [Li] refers to ritual and goodness that teach people how to follow correct behavior.

As mentioned above, ‘Guidelines’ and ‘Constants’ are two important teachings in Confucian doctrine. ‘The Three Guidelines’ (Sān Gāng [三纲]) interpret the loyal and pious relationship between the emperor and his officers, the father and his son, the husband and his wife. The latter should not refuse what the former has ordered and has to unconditionally obey even if it costs their lives.

‘The Five Constant Relationships’ (Wǔ Cháng [五常]) refers to ‘仁 [rén]’³⁰, ‘义 [yì]’³¹, ‘礼 [lǐ]’³², ‘智 [zhì]’³³ and ‘信 [xìn]’³⁴ and cover five kinds of human relationships including the child showing full respect and absolute obedience to the parent, the wife to the husband, the younger brother to the elder brother, the younger to the elder, and the subject to the ruler (cf. Wang, 2005: 88).

According to “The Three Guidelines” and “The Five Constant Relationships”, every mechanism, no matter whether it is a feudal government or a family, has to be structured strictly by means of Confucius’ doctrine. The concept of ‘Li’ requires people to passively follow the established systems or social order sent from heaven and represented by the emperor.³⁵ According to the concept, any ideas, thoughts or behaviors that oppose the emperor, father or husband are considered to be unfaithful and outrageous. People are asked to follow or to adapt to this fixed model and established rules, but not to change them. Some famous sayings from Confucius’ Teachings well describe the children’s absolute obedience to their fathers. For example,

³⁰ ‘Rén’ means Humanity.

³¹ ‘Yì’ means Justice.

³² ‘Lǐ’ means Ritual.

³³ ‘Zhì’ means Wisdom.

³⁴ ‘Xìn’ means Faith.

³⁵ In this social system, the emperors are regarded as sons of heaven to be representative of the established rituals and laws constituted by Confucius’ doctrine.

子曰：“父在，观其志；父没，观其行；三年无改于父之道，可谓孝矣”（论语 Analects, 1.10）（or in *Pin Yin - zǐ yuē*: “fù zài, guān qí zhì; fù méi, guān qí xíng; sān nián wú gǎi yǔ fù zhī dào, kě wèi xiào yǐ”），which was translated by James Legge as follows: “The Master said: ‘while a man's father is alive, look at the bent of his will; when his father is dead, look at his conduct. If for three years he does not alter from the way of his father, he may be called filial’” (Legge, 1893: 142).

Another famous Confucius’ saying that better describes the relationship between parents and son is presented as follows:

子曰：“事父母几谏，见志不从，又敬不违，劳而不怨”（论语 Analects, 4.18）（or in *Pin Yin - zǐ yuē*: “shì fù jǐ jiàn, jiàn zhì bù cóng, yòu jìng bù wéi, láo ér bù yuàn”）。This saying means that “the Master said: ‘In serving his parents, a son may remonstrate with them, but gently; when he sees that they do not incline to follow his advice, he shows an increased degree of reverence, but does not abandon his purpose; and should they punish him, he does not allow himself to murmur’” (Legge, 1893: 170).

Even today, a lot of Chinese children are educated unconditionally to obey their parents no matter whether their parents are right or not, and thus they are unwilling to express their own opinions in front of their parents and teachers.³⁶

Confucius also advocated cautious speaking and acting to be a way of survival and promotion in society,

子曰：多闻阙疑，慎言其余，则寡尤；多见阙殆，慎行其余，则寡悔。言寡尤，行寡悔，禄在其中矣（or in *Pin Yin - zǐ yuē*: duō wén què yí, shèn yán qí yú, zé guǎ yóu; duō jiàn què dài, shèn xíng qí yú, zé guǎ huǐ. yán guǎ yóu, xíng guǎ huǐ, lù zài qí zhōng yǐ）（论语 Analects, 2.18）.

This saying was translated by James Legge as follows:

The Master said, ‘Hear much and put aside the points of which you stand in doubt, while you speak cautiously at the same time of the others: - then you will afford few occasions for blame. See much and put aside the things which seem perilous, while you are cautious at the same time in carrying the others into practice: - then you will have few occasions for repentance. When one gives few occasions for blame in his words, and

³⁶ According to Chinese cultural tradition, students should respect their teachers and their attitudes to teachers should always follow the old saying of ‘一日为师，终身为父（yī rì wéi shī, zhōng shēn wéi fù）– He who teaches me for one day is my father for life’. Therefore, in the eyes of Chinese students, teachers should be held in a similar degree of respect as their fathers.

few occasions for repentance in his conduct, he is in the way to get emolument'. (1893:151)

There is no doubt that this saying of Confucius, to a certain degree, helped people in his time to adapt and find their places in the feudal society, but it still severely influences the words and actions of Chinese people today. In order to keep their face and set their places in social community, they are always cautious of their saying and acting. Therefore, 'think twice' (三思而后行, or in *Pinyin*, sān sī ér hòu xíng) has been a famous life motto for many Chinese people to follow.

Confucius' guidelines have set up social norms for people to follow, standardized people's thoughts and behaviors and consolidated the social order. At the same time, they have, to some degree, seriously hindered the development of people's thinking, which in particular manifests itself in the style of the state examinations: the eight-legged essay format [Bā Gǔ Wén (八股文)] that is a product of a certain stage of Confucianism is named so because it was divided into eight sections (opening, amplification, preliminary exposition, initial argument, central argument, latter argument, final argument and conclusion). In addition, the structure of much of an essay includes heavy parallelisms and redundancy, rhetorical features that survive in modern Chinese expository writing.

The eight-legged essay format was invented by the Song Dynasty (960-1279) reformer Anshi Wang (1021-1086). However, it is not certain exactly when the form became the standard for the civil service examinations. According to Yenwu Ku, the form of the essay became more standardized during the 15th century Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). "The term 'eight-legged essay', first appeared during the period from 1465 to 1487, and the essay form was first required in the examinations of 1487 and 1496".³⁷ After that, the eight-legged essay format was used as a written style for the state examination of the feudal government and maintained until 1905 when the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) announced the abolition of the imperial examination system.³⁸

³⁷ The sources are <http://history.cultural-china.com/en/61H8753H13236.html> and <http://history.cultural-china.com/en/61H8753H13235.html>, Feb 21, 2012.

³⁸ Although this eight-legged essay was abolished with the end of the imperial examination system in 1905, it has a far-reaching impact on the people, in particular on their way of thinking. This influence has lasted throughout the Chinese feudal history, even to the present day.

The eventual essay form proved to be too rigid and specified the topics to be tested in examinations and the minimum length of the candidates' essays. Intellectuals who wanted to take part in the state examination to be officials holding a high position in feudal government had to be trained in the structure of this rigid, fixed essay form. Intellectuals have been hindered from developing open, free ways of thinking through this pedantic formality for more than 500 years. This rigid dogma severely manacles the creativity of Chinese people and trains them to be obedient rather than nagging.

So far, I have talked about the dimension of individualism-collectivism and theories of Confucianism. From the above introduction, we can see that many of these influences are reflected in the process of learning a foreign language and taking part in language classes. Many students attribute their silences in class to their socialization and education since childhood. Keeping silent in front of a superior is regarded a virtue in traditional Chinese culture and has become a habit from long-term practice. The research subjects involved in my study grew up in Chinese culture, so the Chinese way of thinking influenced them very much. They do not answer questions in front of their teachers and friends during English classes, unless they are called by their teachers. Zhi Tan comments that

[u]nder the operation of 'a centralized educational system', Chinese students have been trained to respect and obey the teacher, conform to the collective benefits at the cost of individual interest. After some years they have got used to listening quietly in class and accepting what is said by teachers and in the books. (2007: 97)

The above explanation of Hofstede's dimension of cultural variability and theories of Confucianism can help us better understand the way that Chinese students communicate in society and their attitudes to speaking English as well as their choice and use of listening comprehension strategies. Besides the cultural codes, the discussion of English teaching and learning in China and the research samples, i.e., non-English major students are also important for comprehending this study. On the one hand, knowledge about the influence of government policy on English learning and teaching at different historical stages helps us better understand the status of English learning by Chinese students in the past and the

special significance of English for Chinese university students today; on the other hand, the discussion of differences between English major and non-English major students contributes to comprehending the necessity of taking non-English major students as my research sample. Therefore, in the following, I shall first interpret the history of English teaching and learning in China and then introduce the research samples, elaborating on the differences between English major and non-English major students with regard to several different respects.

2.3 English teaching and learning in China

2.3.1 The history of English teaching and learning

“Since the product of the history produces the habitus”³⁹ (Wang, 2005: 84), the product of the history of developing English teaching and learning must produce a habitus and display special traits of Chinese learners of English. In order to better understand this ‘product’, it is necessary to review the history of English language learning and teaching in the Chinese context.

As we all know, “foreign language teaching, and English language teaching in particular, occupies a prominent role in Chinese education.” (Cowan, et al., 1979: 466) On the other hand, the development of English language teaching and learning in China has not been very smooth. Like Chinese history itself, the history of English teaching and learning in China also covers a time period of twists and turns. Unlike other teaching subjects, the Chinese educational policy for English education (in terms of teaching goals, contents, syllabus, methods and materials) has been very specific and has often been changed with the alteration of Chinese political policy and the varying demands of China’s economic development. Therefore, the attitude and motivation for English learning of Chinese university students has always been influenced by the government’s attitude to foreign language learning. Keqiang Wang remarks that “TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) has existed in China for approximately one hundred years and has been subject to the policies and politics

³⁹ Bourdieu writes the following about habitus: “as a durably installed set of disposition, the habitus tends to generate practices and perceptions, works and appreciations, which occur with the condition of existence of which the habitus is itself the product” (Thomas, 1991:14, quoted in Wang, 2005: 11).

of the times.” (1986: 153) The history of English teaching and learning during that period of more than one hundred years has gone through the following six stages to date.

2.3.1.1 Stage one: Qing Dynasty

The latter half of the 19th century, the time of the Qing Dynasty,⁴⁰ is the first stage in which ‘teaching English as a foreign language’ (TEFL) was mentioned in China as part of the ‘Westernization Movement’⁴¹ started by some Chinese officials. During this period, formal education in EFL was initiated and supported by two groups of people: Western missionaries⁴² and Chinese reformers. These two groups worked separately with different aims in minds. The English-speaking missionaries regarded English as the essential path through which they could convey their religious beliefs and bring the souls of the Chinese to God. Keqiang Wang states that “in some middle schools, English was used to teach other subjects such as mathematics, physics and chemistry.” (1986: 154) In addition, the Chinese reformers realized the importance of learning foreign languages and considered English as a vital communicative channel, through which they could bring advanced science and technologies from the Western countries to China (cf. Yang, 2000). The representatives of such kinds of Chinese reformers during this time were Yutang Lin and Handa Li.⁴³ In 1862, the institution ‘同文馆 (Tong wen guan)’ was set up for teaching English and it became part of Beijing Normal University in 1901 (cf. Wang, 1986: 153). “This institution was a comprehensive higher education facility which included TEFL in the curriculum.” (*ibid*)

2.3.1.2 Stage two: prior to Chinese liberation (1902-1949)

From the last several years of the Qing Dynasty to the founding of the People's Republic of

⁴⁰ The Qing Dynasty, also written as Ching Dynasty was the last ruling feudal Dynasty of China from 1644 to 1912 and it was governed by a Chinese minority group, the Manchus.

⁴¹ “‘Westernization Movement’ is a set of policies aimed at imitating the technology of the capitalist countries.” (Wang, 1986: 159)

⁴² The missionaries, including Roman Catholic missionaries and Protestant missionaries, came from Western countries, especially the United States (cf. Porter, 1990; Yang, 2000).

⁴³ Yutang Lin was a famous English professor at Peking University in the 1920s and he wrote *Kaiming English Grammar*. Handa Li was also an English professor at Peking University (cf. Wang, 1986: 159f). In addition, Yutang Lin is also a famous writer, scholar and linguist.

China in 1949,⁴⁴ there were two stages to be considered. The first stage covers the years from 1902 to 1922, during which the primary model and system for education in China was imitated and adopted from Japan. The method of English language teaching was a traditional one, which emphasized reading and translation, while ignoring the significant roles that listening and speaking play in the process of English learning. Due to this traditional teaching approach, there was a strong focus on grammar and vocabulary learning. Pronunciation was simply learned by means of mechanical imitation and repetition. This was the criterion of English learning and teaching that prevailed in China for the first twenty years of the 20th century.

1922 is regarded as a critical point in the second stage of English language learning and teaching in China with a change of direction towards different educational models and systems and a strong swing away from the Japanese system of education to the Western models. During this time, some universities had adopted the Western educational systems,⁴⁵ and were aided by Western countries – in particular, by some Western churches.⁴⁶ This alteration of the educational system and model caused a shift in the focus of English language teaching and learning and put more emphasis on listening and speaking skills. There was more use of and contact with the target language and the new teaching resources offered by the mass media. During this time, a lot of schools were also built up by missionaries. The best of these schools enjoyed the benefits of a relatively advanced English language syllabus and teaching methods. They also devoted more teaching hours to English than other schools.

2.3.1.3 Stage three: the early years after Chinese liberation (1949-1956)

The next stage comprises the early years after 1949 – the year of Chinese liberation. These years were full of political shadows and quite hard for English learning and teaching. During

⁴⁴ 1949 is generally regarded as a very crucial date in Chinese history – the founding of the People's Republic of China.

⁴⁵ For example, Tong Ji University (同济大学) in Shanghai was built by the German Dr. Erich Paulun in 1907. Today, this university is among the top comprehensive universities for science and engineering courses in China.

⁴⁶ Christian universities have played a very important role in the history of Chinese education. Before Chinese liberation, there were some famous Christian universities, among which 燕京大学 (Yenching University or

this period of political struggle, the Chinese educational system had to adhere strictly to political policy, serve the proletarian purpose and became an instrument of the Chinese government. Therefore, the concepts of education and English teaching were strongly influenced by Chinese politics; all textbooks and teaching materials became vehicles for government propaganda, loaded with official messages. In other words, the ultimate goal of English language learning and teaching during this period of time was clearly to serve this new government. In addition, it was stated that all capitalist thinking, especially the educational ideas and concepts from the United States, Britain or other Western countries, should be condemned as unpatriotic and that the Chinese people should abandon these kinds of ideas. Soon, English as a subject was replaced by Russian in the Junior School syllabus and Russian became the dominant⁴⁷ foreign language taught in Chinese schools during 1953 to 1956.⁴⁸ “Many English teachers had to learn and subsequently teach Russian.” (Wang, 1986: 154)

2.3.1.4 Stage four: English language renaissance (1957-1965)

The fourth stage refers to the time from 1957 to 1965. During this time, China began trying to expand its markets and opening its doors to the world. Thanks to this trend, the important status of English was again acknowledged and accepted by the Chinese government. The Ministry of Education announced in 1955 that English teaching and learning should be restarted in secondary schools. As a result, English was reintroduced and taught at school. “Students could study either Russian or English at schools, colleges and universities.” (Wang, 1986: 154) During this period of time, the contents and structure of textbooks as well as the teaching syllabus were based on the former Russian models and thus were very traditional.

Yan Jing University) was the most famous one. It was founded by four American and British Christian churches in 1916 and was abolished in 1952.

⁴⁷ Even though English was still taught in a few senior secondary schools and institutions of higher education, it was regarded as unpatriotic to learn English.

⁴⁸ As I have mentioned, during this period the Chinese educational concepts and ideas were to a large extent influenced by political elements. The Chinese government did not set up any diplomatic relationships with English-speaking countries, such as USA and Britain; instead it had a strong relationship with some communist countries, especially with the Soviet Union which was called ‘Big Brother’ by Chinese people. Therefore, due to this intensive political relationship between China and the Soviet Union, there was a great set-back for English teaching and learning; instead, China borrowed its educational systems from the Soviet Union, including educational structures, curriculum, pedagogy and teaching materials.

Furthermore, the teaching methodology was somewhat backward: the teacher was considered to be the provider of knowledge while the students were expected to passively follow the teachers' words and to ignore the cultivation of their communicative skills. For them, learning English once more involved merely working on grammar and reading and no attention was paid to listening or speaking. During this time, the majority of texts and learning materials were about politics in China. The few original English texts were taken from communist newspapers from English-speaking countries and from English translations of Russian books. The contents of texts to a large degree consisted of political materials through which two primary aims were served: to promote a strong sense of national identity among Chinese people and to depict the hardships and negative perspectives in Western countries.

This growing awareness of learning and teaching English was further enhanced when the relationship between China and the Soviet Union deteriorated in 1960. Another significant step was taken in 1962 when English became a part of the entrance examination for colleges and universities. In order to cater for this trend, new teaching materials and textbooks were compiled, with prominence again given to the training of listening comprehension and speaking ability. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education issued guidelines to design the teaching curriculum for textbook writers and recommended that English textbooks should include more material on the culture and traditions of English-speaking countries. These changes and reforms of English teaching and learning were a sign that things were looking up for ELT in China (cf. Price, 1971: 71f).

2.3.1.5 Stage five: Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)

Disappointingly, this new trend of developing English teaching and learning did not go very far. Chinese educational concepts and ideas about English teaching and learning were again covered by a political shadow. The progress made in attaching importance to English language teaching was swept aside by the Cultural Revolution, which began in 1966 and lasted for ten years until 1976. As the term Cultural Revolution implies, this was a period of destroying cultures, including foreign language learning and teaching. During these ten

dreadful years, English again lost its position and was completely banned from Chinese schools. This period also severely undermined the normal education of Chinese students. Instead of sitting in the classrooms to continue their study, students had to go to the countryside and work as farmhands for re-education. Especially, “During 1966-1969 all universities and colleges were closed. After graduating from middle school, students were sent to work in the countryside or factories.” (Wang, 1986: 154)

Even though there was a new start for TEFL during American President Nixon’s visit to China in 1972, English teaching methods did not improve too much: The prevailing teaching approach was still a teacher-centered and grammar-translation one. In addition, textbooks were filled with political messages such as: ‘Serve the people wholeheartedly!’ ‘Never forget the class struggle!’ and ‘Young educated people must go to the countryside for re-education!’ (cf. Wang, 1986: 154) English textbooks were also considered as banned books and burned by the Red Guards who were mobilized by Mao Zedong and formed by millions of young people. Red Guards were brainwashed with communist dogma and abolition of the so-called “Four Olds” – old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas. M. R. Dow describes the situation as follows:

During the Cultural Revolution, when workers’ propaganda teams for the spreading of Mao Tse-Tung’s thoughts came to China’s colleges, classes were stopped altogether, and the students travelled instead all over the country in order to take part in criticism and debate and to exchange revolutionary experiences. (1975: 254)

Although the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, “the negative impact of this turbulent period on the development of ELT was strongly felt in the subsequent years.” (Silver, 2002: 19)

2.3.1.6 Stage six: after Chinese Cultural Revolution (1977 to the present)

By 1977 the whole country was completely exhausted by the Cultural Revolution with its fatal destructive impact. ELT in China had suffered for a decade. Fortunately, the termination of the Cultural Revolution and the government’s policy of ‘Four Modernizations Program’⁴⁹

⁴⁹ ‘Four Modernizations Program’ refers to modernization of agriculture, industry, science and technology and military.

and ‘Reform and Open-door Policy’⁵⁰ led China into a new era, a period of economic development (cf. Yang, 2000). These new principles and policies also made the Chinese people of all ages and occupations re-recognize the importance of learning English (cf. Wang, 1986: 185). In 1978, an important conference on foreign language teaching and learning was held by the Ministry of Education. During this period of time, foreign language teaching, and English language teaching in particular, occupied a prominent role in Chinese education. By the early 1980s English teaching had been restored as a compulsory subject in the university or college entrance exams.⁵¹ Considering the important position of English teaching and learning, Keqing Wang remarks that

[s]ince it is believed that a foreign language should be learned as early as possible so as to establish a solid foundation in that language, English is now considered one of the three major subjects in middle schools and in some primary schools. The Ministry of Education has clearly defined the aims, objectives, and linguistic criteria for each grade level.⁵² (1986: 155)

The objective of the College English Syllabus written in 1985 was to cultivate students’ communicative skills in oral and written forms. It aimed at proficient reading ability, certain listening and translation abilities, and elementary writing and speaking skills. The aim was for students to be able to use English as a tool to acquire knowledge in their specialized fields. As for the pedagogy, the English syllabus in the 1980s started to call for the study of foreign theories of language teaching and for a synthesis of Western and Chinese ideas. More teachers began to regard linguistics and applied linguistics with respect. With the introduction of Western teaching methodologies, the communicative approach has gradually gained favor in China’s English teaching circles.

With the political and economic development of China in the globalized world nowadays, English teaching and learning receive unprecedented attention not only from the Chinese government but also from the Chinese people. On the one hand, the Chinese

⁵⁰ ‘Reform and Open-door Policy’ refers to the policy taken by People’s Republic of China in 1979 to reform the economic and political system and to help increase commercial and trade relations with the global community, in particular, Western countries, and also to reinvigorate an economy left stagnant by the Cultural Revolution.

⁵¹ The source is http://xkwq.e21.cn/content_1.php?id=58235, July 25, 2011.

⁵² The other two subjects were Chinese and Mathematics.

government has greatly enhanced the status of English in the education system to open China up to the rest of the world; on the other hand, more and more Chinese people are interested in learning a foreign language, especially English to adapt to the international world and find a better job in the future. A wide range of English language schools can be seen everywhere in China. English learning and teaching is experiencing a boom in China.

Meanwhile, this trend of economic globalization and China's improved economic conditions also attract more Chinese students to go studying abroad⁵³ for mastering the advanced sciences and technologies, widening their international perspectives and promoting their social identities. Based on this trend, some English-speaking countries such as the USA and Britain are their preferred studying countries. Therefore, English learning becomes extremely important for them, in particular, for non-English major students. And the facts also show that non-English major students with strong professional knowledge and good English language and communicative abilities can compete well in the challenges of adjusting themselves to this globalized world.

So far, the history of English teaching and learning in China has been discussed chronologically in view of six different stages. Due to the importance of English learning to non-English major students, non-English major students and the differences between them and English-major students will now be presented from various perspectives.

2.3.2 Differences between English majors and non-English majors

As mentioned in the previous sections, in the Chinese educational systems, English is a mandatory subject and is taught at all levels of educational institutions, including both tertiary institutions and some secondary and primary institutions such as middle schools, primary schools,⁵⁴ and kindergartens. In universities and colleges, English has not only become a popular major but has also become an obligatory course for all non-English major

⁵³ According to the official statistic, more than 2.6 million Chinese students studied outside the country from 1978 to the end of 2012. This makes China the world's top source of overseas students. See http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-08/03/content_16868063.htm, August 03, 2013.

⁵⁴ Prior to 2001, early systematic English education took place only in middle schools. Early English education in primary schools emerged in Beijing in 1993, but only in some schools. In 2001, the Department of Education made the decision to launch English programs in all primary schools across the whole country.

students. They have to study English for the first two years of their campus life. In addition, English is one of the required courses⁵⁵ for the postgraduate degree entrance examination. Therefore, using university students as research subjects has not only social, but also a great deal of practical significance.

As introduced above, the research subjects in my study are non-English major students. For the purpose of better understanding this group of students, I need to firstly present the differences between English major and non-English major students in terms of student numbers, teaching contents, methods, materials and tests.

2.3.2.1 Differences in student numbers

English majors in China are students studying English intensively as a main subject. Non-English major students study subjects other than English. English is only regarded as one of their compulsory courses. They need to take part in the English courses for the first two years with four hours each week. To better compare the differences in student numbers of English major and non-English major students, we have to discuss the institutional structures of the university. According to different scales and institutional levels of the universities, English language teaching consists of three different forms:

- a. In some big and comprehensive universities, there is not only a Foreign Language Department⁵⁶ or an Institute of Foreign Languages but also a Department of public English. The former is set up for the English majors and the latter is for the non-English majors.
- b. In some universities there are only English Departments or Foreign Language Departments, which are in charge of teaching both the English majors and the non-English majors. The university (Anyang Institute of Technology) where my

⁵⁵ As for the post-graduate entrance examination, there are two compulsory subjects. One is Politics, the other one is English. Besides these two compulsory subjects stipulated by the Chinese government, students have either another two or three exams depending on their majors and the universities they wish to attend.

⁵⁶ In some big comprehensive universities, the Foreign Language Department or the Institute of Foreign Languages includes some other foreign languages besides English. Take Anyang Institute of Technology for example. Besides English language, its Foreign Language Department provides the students with another two languages such as Japanese and Russian.

research subjects are from is one of the universities owning a Foreign Language Department that is in charge of English language teaching for both non-English major and English major students.

- c. In a lot of colleges or universities with no English majors, there is only a Department of Public English for teaching the non-English major students.

From the above explanation and presentation, we can see that the scale of major students⁵⁷ is far lower than the non-English majors and the total number of non-English major students is much bigger. Therefore, the key to improving College English⁵⁸ teaching and learning is to make progress in teaching the non-English major students. For this reason, it was important for me to choose the non-English majors as the research subjects in this study.

2.3.2.2 Differences in teaching contents

Teaching English major courses is very different from teaching English to non-English major students. The primary differences are firstly reflected in the teaching contents. For the former group of students, intensive reading,⁵⁹ extensive reading,⁶⁰ grammar, linguistics, listening comprehension, oral communication, British and American literature, translation, writing,

⁵⁷ The introduction of the university institution implies that not all of the universities include English major students.

⁵⁸ In the former chapters I have more than once mentioned some of the concepts which I want to distinguish here: College, University, and College English. The difference between 'College' and 'University' depends very much upon where you live. For example, in the US, a College refers to a four-year advanced education only, and an institution which does not have the accreditation to offer more than a bachelor degree. College may also be restricted by its modifiers; University is normally regarded as the institution which is much bigger and also offers advanced degrees like PhDs and Master's degrees. And a University can consist of several Colleges. But in China, College is normally regarded as an institution with a 3-year program while universities offer a 4-year program. College English is a special term in the Chinese educational system and refers to the English courses taught either in College or in University. According to the College English Curriculum Requirement (2004), College English, an integral part of higher learning, is a required basic course for undergraduate students. As a systematic whole, College English has as its main components knowledge and practical skills of the English language, learning strategies and intercultural communication; it takes theories of foreign language teaching as its guide and incorporates different teaching models and approaches.

⁵⁹ Intensive reading is a comprehensive and systematic English course with the teaching material structured unit by unit. It normally includes several sections such as vocabulary learning, reading texts, cultural background, grammar explanation, writing instruction, as well as the exercises or training on pronunciation, listening comprehension and vocabulary. The main emphasis is, however, on teaching grammar.

⁶⁰ Compared with intensive reading, extensive reading is a course applied just for improving the global reading comprehension of language learners. The resources used to teach extensive reading usually consist of reading texts and passages introducing culture, history, and politics and so on. The questions related to the reading texts are usually in the form of multiple choice, fill in the blank, or true-false questions.

cross-cultural communication, as well as a brief introduction to Britain and the USA are required. Among these courses, listening comprehension and oral communication are generally taught by foreign teachers who are often English native speakers.⁶¹ For the latter group, only intensive reading is offered and provided twice a week and there is no extra training for listening comprehension and oral communication. An exception to this are the few listening exercises in textbooks used for intensive reading or the interactive activities and oral communicative training used in English classes. It is important for students to master and use some listening strategies to train their listening comprehension during and after their English classes.

Therefore, the investigation into the learning and listening comprehension strategies of non-English major students and the application of these research findings are of great significance.

2.3.2.3 Differences in teaching methods

Of all the mainstream English teaching methods, the Grammar-Translation-Method still plays a very important role in college English classes in China. But this method has the distinct disadvantage that it does not develop the students' overall English competence, especially with regard to their listening comprehension proficiency and oral communicative ability. In order to improve the communicative skills of students and enhance their ability to use the target language correctly in authentic communicative conversation, college English teachers and researchers have to pay more attention to communicative language teaching methods. These methods aim at encouraging students to do more class interaction such as face-to-face communication, interactive activities and a lot of listening comprehension training; they are also encouraged to use some textbooks and other teaching materials focused on training communicative skills. This is a way to expose students to the speech characteristics of native speakers and the cultural background and traditions of the target language.

⁶¹ Chinese universities and colleges usually employ some foreign teachers who are directly from or with teaching experiences in the target language countries to teach listening comprehension and oral communication.

Even though some advanced teaching methods are chosen and used in modern English classes, the grammar-translation-method is still used as the primary teaching method for teaching non-English major students. The prevailing application of that method in English classes is the fault of both students and teachers. On the one hand, most students have a relatively low level of English; especially their listening and oral communicative abilities are very poor. Thus, they are reluctant to involve themselves in communicative interaction with their English teachers or classmates, and they would rather just listen to their teachers speaking and take down some notes. Therefore, teaching methods which focus on listening proficiency and communicative skills are not very suitable for all students. On the other hand, some teachers have not yet realized the importance of using the communicative method in their classes. Others may find it difficult to lead the students into an active atmosphere where they feel comfortable talking and communicating with each other. In real English classes, the teaching model does not focus on the application of the target language in the authentic communicative situation but on grammar learning, sentence and text translation as well as the mechanical memorization of vocabulary. In this teaching model,

[t]he long-established status and positions of teacher-students means the interactional style in many Chinese classrooms tends to be one of asymmetry, where the teacher tends to dominate the lesson while the students are habitually just listening and responding passively. (Tan, 2007: 89)

As an English teacher with several years of teaching experiences in China, I always struggled to use some modern, communicative and interactive teaching methods to instruct non-English major students' English lessons, but unfortunately, these methods did not function well among them. The excessive use of modern teaching methods in English classes for non-English major students leads to some problems: English classes cannot proceed smoothly due to students' silences and inactive participation in some communicative activities; non-English major students get less language input as they are trained with traditional methods that are mainly concerned with mechanically memorizing English

vocabulary words and grammar rules.⁶²

While teaching English-major students, English teachers always try to use the forms of small groups, role plays and other language games or activities to stimulate the interests and motivation of the language learners as well as to activate their English classes and the learning atmosphere. This kind of method works well because of the English major students' relatively high level of English knowledge and oral communication and listening skills. Meanwhile, this kind of method also contributes to a high level of communicative proficiency. In contrast to non-English major students, English major students are more willing to accept advanced teaching methods, to take part in interactive activities with their English teachers and classmate and to speak and answer questions in class. Therefore, the communicative method is much more suitable and acceptable for English major students and is thus utilized more often in their English classes.

Access to resources for training listening abilities and oral communication is another factor to be considered. Not all university students are lucky enough to get additional training in listening comprehension in the audio lab.⁶³ This is largely due to the limited teaching resources and facilities provided by their universities. At a lot of universities,⁶⁴ the audio labs are open to English-major students only, while non-English majors' listening training is limited to their intensive reading classes with a CD player.

2.3.2.4 Differences in teaching materials

From the previous sections, we can see that the main differences in teaching materials lie in their distinct contents. There are also differences in the teaching materials and textbooks applied in intensive reading classes⁶⁵ in colleges and universities. Among all the intensive

⁶² For most of the non-English major students, learning vocabulary words and grammar rules is the best way to learn English and to pass the CET-Band 4 test.

⁶³ There are also university teachers who are responsible for training listening comprehension with English major students. They normally use audio labs and English films as a means of training students' listening ability. During their lessons, they begin by showing part of a film and then let the students listen to it. After several minutes, they will stop the film, and raise some questions about what is going on in the film. For example: what will happen in the film, what is the relationship between the characters in the films, how the films will go on according to their imagination and so on. In this way, the students might have a discussion around the topic they have seen in the film and the whole class will be led to face-to-face communication.

⁶⁴ The university I have chosen is an example of such a case.

⁶⁵ According to their proficiency in English, English major and non-English major students use intensive reading books of different degrees.

reading materials, New Horizon College English (published by the Press of Foreign Language Teaching and Research), 21 Century College English (published by Fudan University Press) and New College English (published by the Press of Foreign Language Teaching and Research) are the most popular ones.

New Horizon College English (《新视野大学英语读写教程》 or xīn shī yě dà xué yīng yǔ dú xiě jiào chéng) is an EFL course book series especially designed and developed for the non-English-major, post-secondary student and it is the first teaching material to be combined with modern information technology. Moreover, it consists of several units and contains texts from preparatory level 1 and 2 right up to College English Test Band 6⁶⁶ which is an English test for non-English major students. It also includes DVDs, network courses, previous examinations and corpus data. Each level consists of reading and writing courses, listening and speaking courses, audio-visual courses, reading comprehension training courses and a teacher's book as well. All parts of these books are complementary and mutually reinforcing, providing the students with a full range of teaching resources for College English. Each level of this teaching material is compiled unit by unit. Each unit discusses a topic and consists of three different sections. The contents of each unit not only focuses on the cultural background of the English-speaking countries but also on Chinese culture in order to provide the students with cultural knowledge of the target language and, at the same time, cultivate their abilities to spread their own cultures.

21 Century College English (《21 世纪大学英语教程》 or 21 shì jì dà xué yīng yǔ jiào chéng) was compiled by Fudan University and Shanghai Jiaotong University⁶⁷ in 2007. The teaching material includes four volumes and three books in each volume. Intensive reading and extensive reading are in book 1, listening and speaking in book 2, a vocabulary training booklet in book 3. After studying the first three volumes of these teaching materials successfully, the students reach the level of College English Test Band 4. After finishing the last volume, their language level will be up to College English Test Band 6. This teaching material has not only overcome the limitations of former material resources and content

⁶⁶ College English Test Band 6 is explained in more detail in Section 2.3.2.5.

⁶⁷ These two universities lie in Shanghai; both of them are top universities and belong to Project 211.

choices but also uses the cultural background and social knowledge of the target language as the primary theme of each chapter. This helps to broaden the students' cultural knowledge, widen their world horizons and provide them with ideas of enlightening significance.

New College English (《新编大学英语》 or xīn biān dà xué yīng yǔ) includes two different editions: the first edition was compiled by Zhejiang University in 1999 and the second edition was compiled by Zhejiang University in 2008. The first edition includes essentials from one to six degrees. Each degree comprises a student book, worksheets, a teacher book, independent listening comprehension material, a booklet with answers for independent listening as well as network software and so on. According to the characteristics and study environment of Chinese foreign language students, these teaching materials employ a 'student-centered teaching model'. 'Student-centered' teaching achieves its effectiveness primarily through individual or collective language trainings and practices. 'The principal education' aims at cultivating and improving the students' overall language competences, so that their listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, communication and other language skills are trained. All of the books presented above are applied for teaching English major students. Non-English majors only use the lower-level books.

The second edition is compiled based on the first one. And the second edition includes three parts: student book and teacher book, student and teacher book of audio-visual and oral courses, and NCE (New College English) Online. The second edition re-arranges all the units from levels one to six, removes and replaces parts of the materials, merges some topics and updates parts of the exercises to make contents more practical and interesting. It focuses more on cultivating and improving language ability, in particular, on strengthening the listening and speaking skills. NCE Online includes English for fun, online communication, a grammar book and dictionary. Word games cover all the words and phrases of the textbooks and provide six different games to help students expand and consolidate their vocabulary. Students can choose from different vocabulary ranges and games according to their different learning styles and preferences. Like the above-mentioned two teaching materials, *New Horizon College English* and *21 Century College English*, the contents of this edition also focus on cultural knowledge of the target language and Chinese culture.

As advanced teaching materials designed to cater for the new requirements, the three above-mentioned textbooks include a lot of cultural knowledge of the target language. For example, the first unit of the reading and writing course 2 of *New Horizon College English* includes three sections: time-conscious Americans, culture shock and adjustment to a new culture. The first section 'time-conscious Americans' describes the habits of Americans and tells us how they cherish time and plan their work meticulously. This unit helps students to understand a new culture trait, overcome culture shock, know more about Americans and adjust to these cultural differences. The fourth unit includes three sections: studying abroad, experiences in exile, and my first day abroad. Section A tells a story of the different challenges that a Brazilian senior middle school girl faces when she studies in America: first time of going abroad, independent study, expenses, and organization of time and so on. This reflects American culture through the awareness of this Brazilian girl in America. Some sentences on American schools, religion, and society in this unit go like this:

Every year the United States is host to an average of 78,000 foreign high school level students, of which 3,000 are Brazilian. (p.88)

Americans are quite religious (the majority being Christian) and have a special place in their heart for pets. (p.89)

Health insurance does not cover AIDS, abortion and suicide, nor dental and eyesight bills. (*ibid*)

2.3.2.5 Differences in English tests

In this section, I shall talk about the different tests used for evaluating English proficiency of both English-major and non-English major students. English tests for Chinese university students consist of the non-English-specialized Band 4 and Band 6, as well as the English-specialized Band 4 and Band 8.

CET is the College English Test organized by the Chinese Education Department. CET started in 1986 and was implemented formally in 1987. The purposes of CET are to promote the implementation of the College English Syllabus, accurately and objectively measure the overall English proficiency and improve the teaching quality of College English Courses.

CET-Band 4 (College English Test Band 4) and CET-Band 6 (College English Band 6) are two different test forms. In China, they are generally applied as the primary examination instruments of non-English major students and their listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing skills, vocabulary capacity, and grammar knowledge. According to the stipulation of the Chinese Education Ministry, CET-Band 4 has been the mandatory test for Chinese university students for a long time: students cannot get their bachelor degree without a successful CET-Band 4 exam before their graduation. Postgraduate students should reach CET-Band 6 when they finish their three years of postgraduate study.⁶⁸ Students are expected to master at least 4,000 words to pass CET-Band 4 and 6,000 words to pass CET-Band 6.

Before the 2005 reform, the full credits were 100 points. The test included listening, reading and writing sections. The oral test was optional and it required certain points from the marks of the written test. Since the reform in 2005, more listening and oral sections have been included. The highest possible score is 710; the passing line is 425, the lowest scores are 290. Both CET-Band 4 and CET-Band 6 include four different parts: Listening comprehension, reading comprehension, a comprehensive test and a writing test, of which listening comprehension takes up 35% (248.5 points) including 15% dialogue listening and 20% text listening. Reading comprehension takes up 35% (248.5 points) and consists of 25% careful reading and 10% fast reading. The comprehensive test takes up 15% (71 points) including a 10% cloze test or error correction and 5% on short answer questions or translation and the writing test takes up 15% (142 points) as well.

This test is held twice a year nationally, once in June and once in December. Most of the four-year-program universities are qualified to organize such kinds of tests that are carried out at the same time nationwide. When tests finish, test sheets are gathered and sealed by the invigilator teachers and delivered to the Examination Centre, and the Examination Committee arranges qualified English teachers to evaluate the test papers. The selected

⁶⁸ Due to the over-emphasis of grammar and vocabulary on English learning, CET-Band 4 to some degree impedes students' communicative abilities. Currently, CET-Band 4 is not the mandatory test for university

teachers are normally from the city where the Examination Centre is located. Once the test paper is evaluated, results will be reported to the Examination Centre. Students who get more than 550 marks in CET-Band 4 and more than 520 marks in CET-Band 6 are allowed to take part in CET-SET (CET Spoken English Test), which is held twice a year, one in May and the other one in November.

TEM-4 (Test for English Majors-4) and TEM-8, the two tests for English majors, are not open to non-English majors or to the general public. TEM-4 is a graduation requirement for English majors and TEM-8 for post-graduate English majors. This is similar to the CET-Band 4 and CET-Band 6 for the non-English major students. The students are expected to master at least 6,000 words to pass TEM-4 and 13,000 words to pass TEM-8. Such a kind of test consists of two papers. Paper 1 includes two parts: writing, which must be finished within 45 minutes – 35 minutes of composition and 10 minutes of note-writing – and dictation to be finished within 15 minutes. Paper 2 comprises four parts: listening comprehension (20 minutes), a cloze test (15 minutes), grammar and vocabulary (15 minutes) and reading comprehension (25 minutes).

CET-Band 4 is a test instrument used for evaluating the non-English-major students' language proficiency. In order to carry out my study and conduct my research, I will also use the CET-Band 4 test to examine the students' listening proficiency.

As we have seen above, there are a lot of differences between English major and non-English major students. We must bear these differences in mind when we are analysing the students later.

From the above interpretation we can also see that Chinese culture plays a very important role in regulating and influencing the Chinese students when they try to learn a foreign language; thus, the theoretical framework of this study will be based on a combination of literature review and background knowledge about the Chinese cultural context.

students any more. Even though, CET-Band 4 is still officially an important English test for Chinese university students.

2.4 Chapter summary

Chapter two focused on English teaching and learning as a foreign language under the Chinese cultural context and discussed the Chinese university system, theories of Confucianism, and English teaching and learning in China. It explained English learning and teaching from a cross-cultural perspective, in order to convey an impression of the real learning condition of English as a foreign language among Chinese students so as to help the reader understand their choices and their ways of applying learning strategies. In the next chapter, I shall provide a review of foreign language acquisition theories and look at their implications for learning strategies, in particular, the influences on the English classes in China.

Chapter 3: Theories construction⁶⁹ – foreign language acquisition and language learning strategies

“He who is ignorant of foreign languages, knows
not his own.”⁷⁰

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Functioning both as a communicative tool and a special symbol⁷¹ system, language⁷² not only plays a key role in establishing, maintaining, facilitating, strengthening and developing social networks but also lays a kind of foundation for the daily communication of human beings. As stated in the previous chapter, it serves as a bridge or communicative link that connects all social beings; without languages, human beings could not communicate with each other so easily.

Moreover, in our international society where the whole world is continually shrinking into an ever smaller global village,⁷³ people with different socio-cultural traits and backgrounds are increasingly exposed to each other. As well as intercultural communication

⁶⁹ In this chapter, the theoretical relationship between foreign language acquisition and language learning strategies will be constructed.

⁷⁰ This quotation is taken from the magazine *Kunst und Alterthum* (1824), published by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (August 28, 1749-March 22, 1832), one of the most famous German writers, and a pictorial artist, biologist, theoretical physicist and polymath. The original text is entitled “Wer fremde Sprachen nicht kennt, weiß nichts von seiner eigenen.” Goethe’s citation shows us the importance of learning and mastering a foreign language. The quotation is from the website:

<http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/Johann+Wolfgang+von+Goethe/6/index.html>, November 06, 2010

⁷¹ Symbols do not exist in isolation and they perform their functions only by means of their relation to their social and cultural environment, including the people who use them. Language, as a symbol system, includes two forms: one form is the oral language system, and the other one is a system of written words. In this research, the symbol system refers to the oral language system.

⁷² Apart from its function as a communicative instrument and a symbol system, language can also be regarded as a social product. Therefore, its existence and development depend on the society in which the language comes into being and is used. Language displays a lot of cultural and social characters, which also shows that language is closely connected with society. This point will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

⁷³ Global village is a term that was first put forward and used by Canadian educator and philosopher Marshall McLuhan in his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The making of Typographic Man* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964).

having already become a social reality, foreign languages, as the famous saying⁷⁴ with which I have begun this chapter demonstrates, are becoming a more and more important instrument for social individuals. Foreign languages are an indispensable part of social development and above all English plays a large role in connecting people from all over the world. So much so that English is undoubtedly regarded as one of the most important languages and internationally occupies first place.⁷⁵

Considering its primary function and its increasingly important position in today's international communication, Helene Decke-Cornill (2002: 251) has pointed to the fact that "the focus of English language teaching is changing from a concern with English-speaking countries, especially Britain and the United States, to an international concern that has turned English into a lingua franca."⁷⁶ Consequently, to cater to this great demand, English teaching and learning has become a trend in China. Today, the number of people learning English in China is growing rapidly.⁷⁷ In fact, "there are now more teachers and learners of English as a foreign language in China than in any other country." (Corazzi & Jin, 1996: 61)

However, as English and Chinese are two entirely different language systems, it is not easy for Chinese speakers to learn English. It is especially difficult for them to master English sounds and the English pronunciation rules due to the great difference of the phonological systems of the Chinese and English languages. Fachung Zhang & Pengpeng Yin (cf. 2009: 141f) have presented the phonological differences between these two

⁷⁴ From this saying, it can be seen that even in Goethe's time there was already a lot of importance given to learning foreign languages.

⁷⁵ English is generally regarded as the world's international language, since English is not only one of the five working languages in the United Nations but also the most widely used second language in the world. What is more, according to statistics, there are altogether 175 countries or regions whose people speak English either as their mother tongue, second language or official language. In addition, English as a foreign language covers approximately 32.6% out of all the foreign languages people are learning in Europe, China and Japan. Nowadays, more than 60% of all letters are written in English and more than 50% of all newspapers or magazines are printed in English. Therefore, all the statistics show that the English language plays an irreplaceable role in international communication.

⁷⁶ In terms of the definition of "lingua franca", Decke-Cornill (2002) has mentioned that there are usually two different statements, one holds the view that it is a means of communication between speakers of different mother tongues, including native speakers of the language, used as lingua franca while the second one describes it as "a medium of communication between people of different mother tongues for whom it is a second language" (Samarin 1987; Gnutzmann 2000, quoted in Decke-Cornill, 2002: 259).

⁷⁷ According to the statistics from the year 2010, there are more than 400 million Chinese people who are studying and speaking English as a foreign language, approximately 1/3 of the total Chinese population. In light of this trend, experts predict that the number of Chinese people learning English will soon be more than the total number of the people from English-speaking countries. The source is <http://www.bj.chinanews.com/news/2010/0312/6753.html>, August 25, 2011.

languages. These phonological differences are primarily manifested in the categories of phonemes, tone/intonation and juncture.

- The so-called Common Speech or Putonghua forms the basis of standard Chinese, and it is a kind of modern Chinese spoken in Northern China.⁷⁸ The phonetic system of modern Chinese is called ‘Hanyu Pinyin’.⁷⁹ This phonological system of Mandarin Chinese consists of 23 consonant sounds and 36 vowel sounds. In comparison, English possesses 24 consonant sounds and 20 vowel sounds.⁸⁰ Firstly, these two language systems have their own special phonemes. Although many English phonemes have equivalents in Chinese, some do not. Secondly, place and manner of articulation are different in Chinese and English. A distinctive feature in English may not distinguish one phoneme from another in Chinese, and vice versa. Thirdly, the position of phonemes and the way of combining them are different between these two languages (cf. Zhang & Yin, 2009: 144). In addition,

[e]ach Chinese character is usually made up of an initial consonant (called a ‘Shengmu’) and a simple or compound vowel (called a ‘Yunmu’). In IPA (International Phonetic Association), Chinese students can easily pronounce /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/ and some vowels such as /i/, /u/ because of the similar pronunciation between English and Chinese. (Tang, 2005: 105)

However, in comparison with English vowels and consonants, the phonemes /Ü/, /Üe/, /Üan/, and /Ün/; /Zh/, /Ch/, /Sh/; and /Z/, /C/, never appear in English, and the /v/ sound never appears in Chinese. Zhang states that “the difference between /s/ and [θ]; /z/ and [ð] is quite a challenge for Chinese learners of English” (2005: 121). Additionally,

⁷⁸ China has eight major dialect groups: Putonghua (Mandarin), Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghainese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Taiwanese), Ciang, Gan and Hakka and many sub-dialects. Mandarin Chinese is the mother tongue of about 70% of Chinese speakers and is the accepted written language for all of China. Sources are http://www.travelcentre.com.au/travel/asia/China/chinese_languages.htm, June 26, 2012 and <http://esl.fis.edu/grammar/langdiff/chinese.htm>, July 13, 2012.

⁷⁹ Hanyu Pinyin uses modified equivalent English letters to help learners to read Chinese characters. Even though Pinyin uses Latin letters to indicate the pronunciation, its production method differs from English phonology (cf. Lin, 2007: abstract). In addition, the writing systems of the two languages are strikingly different: English writing is alphabetic whereas Chinese uses symbols that are most often defined as logograms, logographs, or just ‘Chinese characters’.

⁸⁰ Traditional linguistics believes that there are 48 sounds including 20 vowels and 28 consonants, while the modern linguistics states that there are 44 sounds including 20 vowels and 24 consonants. They consider /tr/, /dr/, /ts/ and /dz/ not to be the independent morphemes but consonant clusters. See <http://www.ubd.edu.bn/academic/faculty/FASS/staff/docs/DD/STETS-consonants.pdf>, September 20, 2012.

because of the influence of dialect in different regions in China, the learner will be distracted by his or her local dialect in the learning process of the target language (cf. Tang, 2005: 105). For example, confusion occurs when some Chinese speakers try to pronounce ‘bad’ and ‘bed’, ‘thing’ and ‘thin’, ‘right’ and ‘light’, ‘life’ and ‘knife’, ‘sheep’ and ‘ship’ and so on.

- Another phonological distinction between Mandarin and English lies in the different tone or intonation of these two languages. Chinese is considered a tone language by modern phoneticians while English is regarded as an intonation language. Mandarin Chinese has four pitched tones (‘ˊ’, ‘ˊˊ’, ‘ˋ’ and ‘ˋˋ’) and a ‘toneless’ tone and the meaning of a word in Chinese depends on the pitch level of its syllables.⁸¹ “Every syllable in Chinese has an essential component tone, which is the pitch pattern of the voiced part of the syllable. The pitch and change in pitch of a syllable makes for a difference in meaning.” In contrast, “tones cannot change the meanings of English phonemes. English utterances must have particular intonation patterns to express different meanings” (Zhang & Yin, 2009: 145). For example, in Chinese, ‘wen’ (be warm) is the first tone, ‘wen’ (to smell) is the second tone, ‘wen’ (to kiss) is the third tone, and ‘wen’ (to ask) is the fourth tone. Both syllables have the same initial and vowel sounds, but their meanings are completely different due to their different tones. The meaning of English phrases is decided by intonation. However, Chinese students do not pay attention to this aspect of intonation and thus produce utterances that do not sound English. This is another problem of Chinese students’ speaking and listening to English.
- The last distinctive aspect between Chinese and English comes from differences in juncture. In Chinese, there are breaks in the continuous flow of speech; while in English, the flow of speech goes smoothly without breaks. In other words, the boundaries between syllables are quite obvious in Chinese and are hard to notice in English (cf. Zhang & Yin, 2009: 145). This phonological difference between the two languages makes it even harder for Chinese students to understand spoken English

⁸¹ As a tone language, Chinese uses the pitch (highness or lowness) of a phoneme sound to distinguish word meaning. In English, changes in pitch are used to emphasize or express emotion, not to give a different word meaning to the sound.

sentences. When listening to English, they always complain that English is too fast for them to catch and they cannot grasp or follow the meaning because they are used to listening to their mother tongue: a language with breaks in-between syllables.

Tan et al. state that “phonological information may be less informative for Mandarin speakers than for English speakers due to differences in spoken language structure” (Tan et al., 2005, quoted in Hamilton, 2007: 18) and the vast distinctions in the phonology of Chinese and English naturally give rise to difficulties for Chinese students in pronouncing and listening to English words.

Can this problem for Chinese learners be overcome? Are there ways in which teaching and learning can actively help them tackle this difficulty successfully? In this study I concentrate on the role that learning strategies may play in Chinese students’ success or failure in English listening comprehension and find out whether they play or can play an important part in the realm of listening comprehension. But before I concentrate on that question, I shall first provide a review of language acquisition theories and look at their implications for language learning strategies.

3.1 Language acquisition theories

I now turn to a relatively detailed account of language acquisition theories which comprises a series of theoretical concepts that have been put forward, hypothesized, verified and developed in the research into foreign language learning and teaching. The generation and development of these concepts have to a large extent influenced English learning and teaching.

As to the knowledge of language acquisition theories, some concepts should be first explained. In the following paragraphs, I shall distinguish between *English as a Second Language (ESL)* and *English as a Foreign Language (EFL)* and discuss the distinction between acquiring and learning put forward by nativist scholars. Then I will provide a short chronological review of some important language learning concepts: theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism and interlanguage, all of which play a vital role in the study of

language acquisition.

3.1.1 Differences between *English as Second Language* and *English as Foreign Language*

The abbreviation L2 which refers to any language other than a person's first language is an umbrella term that professionals subdivide into two categories:⁸² ESL (English as Second Language) and EFL (English as Foreign Language).⁸³ Both are frequently mixed up and misused by English language learners, sometimes even by English teachers; therefore, it is very necessary to give a clear explanation of these two items.

Although they share many similarities,⁸⁴ they also have some notable distinctions. Firstly, the difference lies in the locations or contexts where English is learned and taught as well as in the English learners themselves. ESL is a linguistic term with particular significances in about ten English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada,⁸⁵ Britain and the United States to refer to people who come to the country with their native languages and try to learn to speak English secondarily. It is also used to speak of the people who live in a country where English is the official language, such as India and Singapore,⁸⁶ while the majority of the population speaks another native tongue.

Secondly, from the aspect of function, the primary purpose of teaching English in the above-mentioned English-speaking countries is to teach individuals originally from non-English speaking countries to speak enough English to function well within the target language society and to take part in the matters of the environment or community in which they now live. Therefore, the students under ESL environment "thus live and interact with the native speakers, and have immense exposure to the target language." (Khaled, 2004: 16)

In contrast to ESL, EFL occurs outside the English-speaking environment or society. It

⁸² Besides these two terms, I also use 'target language' which refers to the language being learned and covers both the implication and function of second language learning and foreign language learning.

⁸³ In this paper, I use L2 to refer to both ESL and EFL.

⁸⁴ The primary similarity between EFL and ESL is that both concepts refer to the English of non-native speakers.

⁸⁵ According to other categorizations, Canada is also a country where English is spoken and used as the primary language.

⁸⁶ Including India and Singapore, there are more than twenty countries which view and use English as their local official language.

refers to learning English in a country or community where English is not the spoken or written language or mother tongue of the majority in that society. In many countries, such as in China, English is not the primary communicative instrument among the population. Under this condition and in this language context, EFL forms a part of the school curriculum and is taught at schools. The learners cannot pick up the language in the environment like the students under ESL conditions. As Khaled states, “students in these situations have exposure to the target language only during their class time. Often students learn English with the sole purpose of passing university entrance exams.” (2004: 17)

However, in China the status of EFL has gradually changed with English having quickly become an internationally important language and a necessity to be mastered by Chinese students.⁸⁷ Nowadays, the intention and motivation of the Chinese to learn English is not reduced to the purpose of finishing their school program or passing some kind of examination but is informed by social purposes or the hope to get better jobs in the future. In this research, English as a foreign language in China (where Chinese is regarded as the first or second language⁸⁸ of the Chinese people) will be discussed. In order to better distinguish second language and foreign language, Rebecca Oxford states that

[t]he target language, or language being learned, can be either a second language or a foreign language [...] The difference between learning a second language and learning a foreign language is usually viewed in terms of where the language is learned and what social and communicative functions the language serves there. A second language has social and communicative functions within the community where it is learned.

In contrast, a foreign language does not have immediate social and communicative functions within the community where it is learned; it is employed mostly to communicate elsewhere. (1990: 6)

As a result of the above conceptual interpretation, and considering China and Chinese

⁸⁷ Learning English is one of the most critical skills at the university where I conducted my research. In addition to English, computer skills and a driving license are also considered necessary.

⁸⁸ China is an immense country with 56 different nations of people, including Han people and 55 other groups of minority people. The majority of Chinese are Han People, covering about 90 percent of the whole Chinese population, who speak Chinese as their first language, and do not have a second language. In contrast to Han People, nowadays there are 40 nations out of the 55 minority groups who still use their own national languages that are also their first languages. Therefore, Chinese can only be their second language. For example, a group of minority people are called ‘朝鲜族 Cháo xiǎn zú’ or ‘Chinese Korean Nationality’, who mainly cluster in the Northeast of China. There are approximately 2 million such people in China now. Their first language is Korean, and Chinese is only regarded as their second language.

students as the focus of my research, my study limits itself to EFL. For this reason, I will use foreign language acquisition theories rather than second language acquisition theories in the following chapters.

3.1.2 Acquiring or learning?

In order to better understand theories of foreign language acquisition and the implicit and explicit knowledge involved, a basic definition needs to be presented first. The word *acquisition*, spelt *acquisicioun* in Middle English, derives originally from Middle French or Latin. Webster's Online Dictionary⁸⁹ defines the term as follows:

- the act of contracting or assuming or acquiring possession of something
- something acquired
- the cognitive process of acquiring skill or knowledge
- an ability that has been acquired by training

In language learning theory, the term *acquisition* has come to denote a specific way of approaching another language, distinct from *learning*. Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell, two nativist language theoreticians, pointed out that distinction. According to their *Natural Approach* theory, there are two different types of language processing: acquisition and learning. *Acquisition* is described as occurring in spontaneous language contexts, is subconscious, and finally leads to conversational fluency; *learning*, on the other hand, is equated with conscious knowledge of the rules of language derived from formal and traditional instruction in grammar (cf. O'Malley & Chamot, 1990: 10).

Due to the above distinction between *acquisition* and *learning*, we can regard English acquisition as a subconscious process of skillfully mastering the English language by means of cultivating and developing the learners' feel for the language, their sense of the language and their unawareness of its grammatical rules. In contrast, English learning is a conscious process of studying the language with attention to the rules and regulations of its grammar and vocabulary.

First language acquisition research studies infants' acquisition of their native languages

and accounts for the process of how a child acquires its mother tongue. In a similar way, the term second language acquisition is used to describe the processes of acquisition of any language learned after the acquisition of a mother tongue in a context where that other language is used by the environment and thus necessary for participation. The umbrella term L2 will be used here to refer to both second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language acquisition (FLA).

In line with the distinction between conscious learning and intuitive acquisition, we can distinguish between conscious and intuitive or unconscious use of learning strategies in developing one's command of a language even though sometimes we cannot find a clear line between consciousness and unconsciousness. The cognitive process of language learning can also be divided into two categories according to whether the students employ strategies consciously or not. In summary, learning strategies can be applied through conscious attention or used automatically without any conscious attention. For example, language learners generally make conscious use of certain methods, such as repetition, reasoning, analyzing, and taking notes, and so on, which then evolve into unconscious strategies through skillful use.

3.1.3 The development of foreign language acquisition / learning theories and their implications for language learning strategies

This section concerns itself with the theoretical background both of linguistic and cognitive theories of foreign language acquisition.

Foreign language acquisition theory is not a new concept at all. Research into foreign language acquisition has already seen its development over more than the last half century. During the past decades, some language researchers and theoreticians have made strenuous efforts to explore, examine, verify and analyze the processes of learning foreign languages. Additionally, a host of research and findings in this field reveals more and more that the study of foreign language acquisition is related to the successful outcome of foreign

⁸⁹ The explanation of this etymology is from Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary. The source is <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/acquisition>, November 28, 2010.

language teaching and learning. Instead of just focusing on learning, researchers have to connect educational concepts related to learning as well as teaching. The development of foreign language teaching and learning has gone through different stages. The learning theories developed in these stages complement or partially contradict each other and play a role in the understanding of learning strategies. In the following sections, I will provide a theoretical foundation by conducting a brief review of the mainstream theories of foreign language acquisition and expound their implications concerning language learning strategies.

3.1.3.1 Behaviorism and its implications for language learning strategies

The first learning theory to be discussed in this study is the behaviorist theory. It is the first empirically founded theory in this field. “Behaviorism is an approach to learning psychology that has its roots within positivism, and which has had a profound influence on language teaching throughout the world.” (Williams & Burden, 1997: 8) It also influenced the development of a foreign language acquisition theory. Behaviorism is primarily concerned with observable behavior, including language behavior, and views behavior as the product of conditioning.

The behaviorist theory of language learning put forward by B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), generally considered to be the founder of the modern behaviorism movement in the realm of language learning, initially elaborated on children’s mental processes in the acquisition of their first language. It became a very important theory in foreign language learning and teaching, but was later rejected⁹⁰ by Chomsky whose thoughts influenced Krashen’s & Terrell’s (1983) nativist ‘natural approach’. Behaviorist theory is an attempt to explain human ways of learning. According to behaviorist theory, learning can be defined as the processes that lead to relatively permanent behavioral change. In other words, as we learn, we alter the way we perceive our environment, the way we interpret incoming stimuli, and therefore the way we interact, or behave.

⁹⁰ As stated above, learning theories complement each other in supporting learning strategies. Chomsky’s theory helps to offset limitations of behaviorist theory implied in learning strategies and helps us understand conscious and unconscious use of learning strategies.

The behaviorist theory of stimulus-response learning, particularly as developed in the operant conditioning model of Skinner, considers all learning to be the establishment of habits as a result of reinforcement and reward. (Rivers, 1968: 73)

In 1957, Skinner published his book *Verbal Behavior*, in which he attempted to account for the phenomenon of language development in humans by means of the behaviorist theory. After that, behaviorists' points of view about foreign language learning and teaching were taken up widely by foreign language teachers worldwide, and "were powerful influences on the development of the audio-lingual approach to language teaching" (Williams & Burden, 1997: 10). Richards & Rodgers comment that "according to the audio-lingual approach, foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation." (1986: 51) Skinner took the view that language learning is actually a process of Stimulus-Response (S-R).⁹¹ It was this association formed between stimulus and response that laid the foundation for the audio-lingual approach.

In the audio-lingual teaching process, dialogues and drills form the basis of audio-lingual classroom practices and dialogues are used for repetition and memorization (cf. Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 53). This audio-lingual approach includes practice, imitation and repetition. It is teacher-induced, with the students being manipulated into repeating, memorising and following pattern drills. This approach still plays a key role for university students in China, in particular, for the research samplings in my study.

Skinner's behaviorist theory tries to model and build up an ideal relationship between teachers who function as language models and language learners who are imitators during the process of their teaching and learning activities. This implies that

[t]he teacher models the target language, controls the direction and pace of learning, and monitors and corrects the learners' performance while learners play a reactive role by responding to stimuli, and thus have little control over the content, pace, or style of learning.

[I]nstructional materials in the Audiolingual Method assist the teacher to develop

⁹¹ The process of stimulus-response is supposed to be bilateral in direction; on the one hand, stimulus can lead to response, on the other hand, response can strengthen and evoke stimulus.

language mastery in the learner: among them textbook and printed materials provide the texts of dialogues and cues needed for drills and exercise, tape recorders and audiovisual equipment provide accurate models for dialogues and drills, and language laboratory provides the opportunity for further drill work and to receive controlled errorfree practice of basic structures. (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 56f)

Thus, teaching machines are to be regarded as teaching instruments and their application to language learning and teaching serves as a kind of learning strategy. It is obvious that the theoretical and practical function of Skinner's behaviorist theory has laid an important theoretical foundation for language learning strategies. Thanks to Skinner's teaching machines and later computer-assisted teaching methods, language learners began to use radio, recorders, TVs and computers to train their listening comprehension. The application of multimedia to language learning and teaching has also become a very useful and important learning strategy.

The language learning process constructed upon the behaviorist theory concerning the subject (foreign language teachers) and object (foreign language learners) is described in relation to learning strategies in the following figure:⁹²

⁹² In this and the following figures, the key words or phrases are written in bold letters.

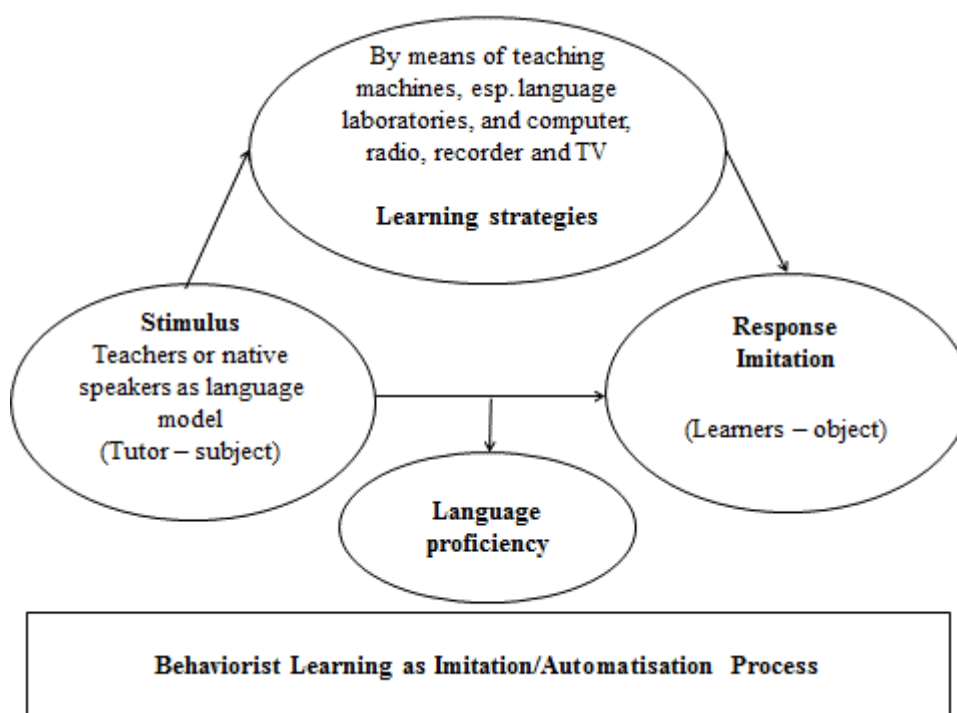


Figure 3.1 Relationship between the assumed learning process based on behaviorist theory and learning strategies

The above figure illustrates the language learning process in behaviorist theory. In this imitation / automatisisation process which is based on behaviorist learning, the horizontal arrow between ‘tutor’ and ‘learners’ represents the teaching-learning model. This model is based upon ‘stimulus-response’ and reinforcement by means of tools such as computer, radio, recorder and TV.

3.1.3.2 Nativist language learning and its implications for language learning strategies

The behaviorist view of language learning was soon questioned and rejected by newer language learning theories, especially Nativism and Cognitivism / Constructivism.⁹³ Unlike Skinner, Noam Chomsky (1928-), founder of the so-called nativist theory, maintains that language learning does not take place through imitation but is based on an innate capacity of learners. His language learning theory relies on his conviction that humans have an innate language learning capacity. They do not imitate, but rather process and generate language. The human mind inherently and by nature possesses the equipment to acquire language: a

⁹³ Cognitivism / Constructivism will be introduced in 3.1.3.3.

so-called language acquisition device (LAD). Chomsky suggests that language is actually an innate faculty. In other words, we are born with a set of rules and regulations about language in our heads that he defines as 'Universal Grammar'. Universal grammar is the basis upon which all human languages are built.

In 1957, Chomsky published his concept of a transformational-generative grammar and in 1959 he published a critical review of Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*. In it he strongly criticized Skinner's ideas and maintained that language learning is not a process of stimulus-response but a cognitive process in which intuition plays a huge role. Rautalinko (2004) states that the major distinction between the behaviorist and nativist approaches led to a lasting debate between Noam Chomsky and B. F. Skinner in the 1950s:

Nativist theories, such as those proposed by Chomsky, advocate that language acquisition is a uniquely human process with origins in the structure of the brain. There is support for the nativist perspective from, for example, languages that are invented by deaf children or children with different cultural backgrounds who initially lack common language. These invented languages may be structured in a way suggesting that humans have some kind of built-in language acquisition device [...]

Behavior theory, on the contrary, claims that language is acquired through modeling and operant conditioning. Skinner and others have focused on showing how parents selectively reinforce language in their children. Caregivers provide examples of verbal behavior to children, who imitate verbal operations that are either ignored or reinforced. This perspective distinguishes itself from nativist theories by a continuity strategy, proposing that the behavior found in humans and less developed species is determined by the same rules. Support for the behaviorist perspective comes, for example, from language training of people with developmental disabilities. (Rautalinko, 2004: 11f)

The behaviorist view of language acquisition simply claims that language development is the result of a set of habits and stresses that correct structures of the pattern drills, whose function is to provide proficient repetition in functional contexts to establish correct habitual responses, could be imitated and trained, ignoring the formal grammar teaching; while nativist ideas of LA draw on the innate language learning abilities of humans that allow them to create implicit language knowledge when exposed to language input and trying to make sense of it (cf. Chomsky, 1965: 4).

3.1.3.3 Cognitivism, Constructivism and their implications for language learning strategies

Cognitive theory of learning is the next important stage and is largely based on the theory of human information processing. It deals with the mental processes involved in learning, including language learning. According to cognitive theory, learning is viewed as a process in which the learner functions as the subject and actively tries to make sense of the world. This theory treats the learners as active thinkers rather than imitators and puts the learners firmly at the center of the learning process by stressing that learning will only take place when the matter to be learned is meaningful to the learners. Therefore, the basic technique associated with the cognitive theory of language learning is the problem-solving task which is task-based and has a purpose beyond the production of correct speech. However, this teaching technique is rarely seen in the class of Chinese non-English major students.

The cognitive theory of learning is an important theoretical foundation in defining, presenting and understanding learning strategies. It recognizes learning strategies as one of the significant cognitive tools in foreign language acquisition. Cognitivism provides the theoretical background for O'Malley & Chamot's (1990) *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cognitive theories indicate that comprehension of both oral and written texts is an active, constructive process that progresses from attentional and encoding processes through the utilization of the interpreted meaning. Language reception and production is seen as involving selection and organizational processes required to construct meaning, both actively and receptively. In cognitive theory, learning strategies are viewed as complex cognitive skills.

According to some cognitive viewpoints, learners typically progress from declarative knowledge (know that) to procedural knowledge (know how). Declarative and procedural knowledge in this school of cognitive theory are also important for learning strategies. In the light of the degree of familiarity of foreign language learners with language learning strategies, learning strategies might encompass declarative learning strategies and procedural learning strategies. According to Anderson's Adaptive Control of Thought Model (ACT),

new knowledge is declarative and automatic knowledge is procedural. O'Malley & Chamot hold the view that learning strategies can be used consciously in initial stages of learning, but can become proceduralized by practicing (cf. Takač, 2008: 35). The process of learning strategies develops from a declarative level to a procedural one. This process can be achieved through constant training and practice. Therefore, based on cognitivism according to Anderson, learning strategies can be described in the cognitive learning process by the following figure:

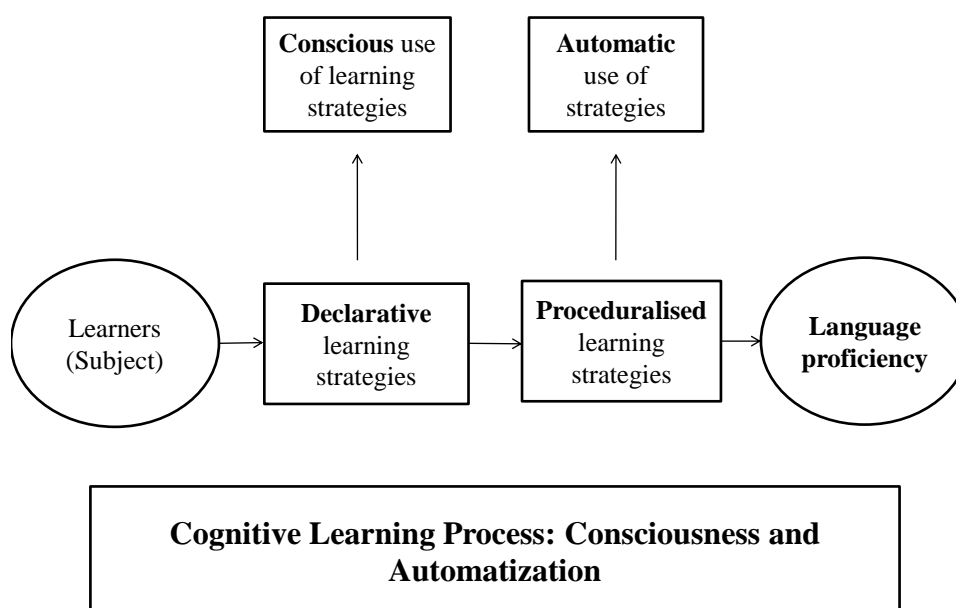


Figure 3.2 Description of learning strategies based upon the cognitive learning theory according to Anderson

The above figure illustrates the cognitive learning process according to Anderson. In this process, language learners as learning subjects may actively generate language and use strategies in two stages: declarative and then proceduralized learning strategies. That is to say, language learners can use learning strategies from a conscious to an automatic level. Thanks to these two stages of strategy use, learners can reach a certain degree of language proficiency.

The next catchword in the educational field is constructivism. Closely related to cognitivism, it is applied both to learning theory and to epistemology – both to how people

learn and to the nature of knowledge. The constructivist takes the view that people always actively construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world by creating meaning and order or by experiencing things and reflecting on what they have perceived. They manage to interpret what they hear, read, see and think based on their previous knowledge and learning experience. In this way the learner is brought into central focus in learning.

In constructivist learning theory, learners are regarded as active creators of their own knowledge or information constructors. In this sense, only when we keep on reviewing old knowledge by interacting with others and the outside world, can we ‘store’ that knowledge, form the network linking all the information or knowledge in our brains as well as better understand and construct the new knowledge that we are learning. In China, this educational idea was already raised and put into practice during Confucius’ time.⁹⁴ A famous saying from Confucius states, 子曰: “温故而知新, 可以为师矣” (zǐ yuē: wēn gù ér zhī xīn, kě yǐ wéi shī yǐ) (论语 *Analects*).⁹⁵ This saying was translated by James Legge (1815-1897)⁹⁶ as follows: The Master said, “If a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge, so as continually to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others” (1893: 149).

In short, this language learning theory supplies us with very important and useful approaches to learning a foreign language. Cognitivist and constructivist theories go back to Lev. S. Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Jean Piaget (1896-1980).

Vygotsky believes that cognitive development occurs within a social context. A child appropriates his ways of thinking and behavior through social communication. The construction and use of some cultural tools such as language are necessary conditions under which a society is produced; while Piaget makes the distinction between new knowledge being integrated in the existing mental schemata of a learner and the revision and new creation of mental schemata if this integration does not work. He calls the former

⁹⁴ Confucius (Chinese: 孔子, *Kong Zi*) (551 BCE-479 BCE) was a great Chinese thinker and social philosopher whose teaching methods and philosophical ideas have deeply influenced the thoughts and life of the Chinese people. In the later parts of interpreting the Chinese cultural context, I will provide a detailed explanation of Confucius and Confucianism.

⁹⁵ The *Analects* (论语, *Lun Yu*) were compiled many years after the death of Confucius, and were a collection of Confucius’ teachings and brief aphoristic fragments. Many of the sayings compiled in this book have significance for our life and study.

⁹⁶ The *Analects* were translated by James Legge (1815-1897), a famous Scottish sinologist and the first professor of Chinese at Oxford University.

assimilation and the latter accommodation and it is via accommodation that our real learning occurs.⁹⁷

Considering the relationship between constructivist theories and learning strategies, it is not hard to see that constructivism has had a significant influence on theories of language learning strategies and has offered the theoretical foundations, especially for memory strategies. According to Rebecca L. Oxford (1990), memory strategies emphasize the mental link and association between knowledge or information learned previously and the current input information being learned. In other words, the learning process carried out based on constructivism can be presented in the following figure:

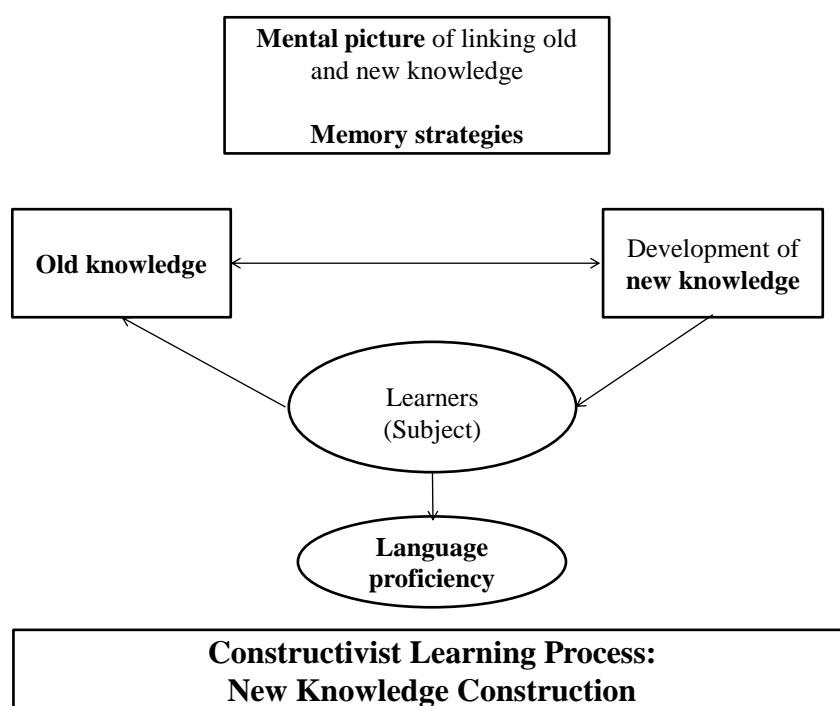


Figure 3.3 Relationship between the learning process based on constructivist theory and learning strategies

The above figure describes the learning process under constructivist theory and shows how new knowledge is constructed. In this process, learners act as learning subjects and actively develop new knowledge based on their old knowledge by means of mental linking and transformation. This involves the use of memory strategies. Once learners can creatively

⁹⁷ The source is <http://de.scribd.com/doc/13401568/Piaget-Versus-Vygotsky>, October 20, 2012.

use such kinds of strategies and connect old and new language knowledge, they can reach language proficiency.

Obviously, learner autonomy and individuality are at the heart of the constructivist model. However, Chinese teaching very much adheres to the Grammar-Translation Method as well as to behaviorist principles and this severely impedes the ideas of self-exploration, autonomy and creative processing maintained in cognitivist and constructivist theories and upheld in the communicative approach. Although the above idea of language learning is a recent Western theory that governs ELT theories in general, it does not connect easily to some cultural conditions. For example, the Confucian theory (see Chapter 2) obstructs the functional application of the communicative approach in English classes in China. Due to its influences, Chinese non-English major students are reluctant to communicate in English (see Chapter 2, 6 and 7).

3.1.3.4 Interlanguage theory and its implications for language learning strategies

The theory of Interlanguage (*inter* means between) refers to an emerging linguistic system that has been developed by a learner of a foreign language who is on the way to approaching the target language, but transfers some features of his/her first language to the new language. When using the target language the learner will also create some innovations that derive neither from his or her first language nor the target language. Therefore, interlanguage is a linguistic system which stands between the first language (L1) and the target language (L2) and displays features of both and some that are independent of both. According to Selinker's (1976) point of view, interlanguage is a foreign language learner's product and displays signs of overgeneralization of linguistic material, language transfer, and transfer of training strategies of L2 learning and strategies of L2 communication.

Interlanguage is a language system (comprising grammar, phonology, semantics, pragmatics) constructed by the language learners in the process of second language (cf. Takač, 2008: 31) or foreign language learning. Interlanguage theory describes the process of foreign language acquisition from a cognitive perspective. A foreign language learner's language shows the way s/he builds up and tests hypotheses about the regularities governing

the new language.

The idea of interlanguage is founded upon the assumption that an L2 learner, at any particular moment in his learning sequence is using a language system which is neither the L1, nor the L2. It is a third language. Likewise, some rules used by the language learner are to be found neither in his own mother tongue, nor in the target language. (Tang, 2005: 101)

Just like language interference, interlanguage is a topic which not only catches the attention of the teachers but also of students. Within the research field of SLA/FLA, foreign language learners who focus on the purpose of the target language will surely be under the influence of their first language. Moreover, the theory of interlanguage demonstrates that during the process of language study, it is impossible for learners to achieve target language proficiency directly without any L1 interferences or making any mistakes.

The theory of interlanguage views errors made by learners in language production as evidence for the development of linguistic competence. What must be accentuated is that errors are not considered to be an extremely negative side effect of learning, but a manifestation of efforts invested by the learner in organizing the language input. (Takač, 2008: 31)

Because my research is carried out in China, and the research subjects are Chinese students, the language phenomena of these students and the characters of the Chinese language must be taken into consideration. Later in this study, I will consider the study of English among Chinese students, especially among Chinese non-English majors. The Chinese-English interlanguage reveals linguistic phenomena governed by the rules of Chinese and English as well as independent features and comes into being during the process of learning English. A great deal of the findings indicates that research into interlanguage and mastery of its characteristics can also benefit foreign language teaching.

Some linguists have expounded the relationship between learning strategies and interlanguage, as well as their mutual influence. It is the application of learning strategies that builds up a definite systematicity in the interlanguage, i.e., by the use of strategies such as language transfer, overgeneralization of L2 rules or simplification (cf. Takač, 2008: 32). In this respect, the interlanguage theory has a significant implication for research into

learning strategies. The learning process concerning the interlanguage and learning strategies can be presented in the following figure:

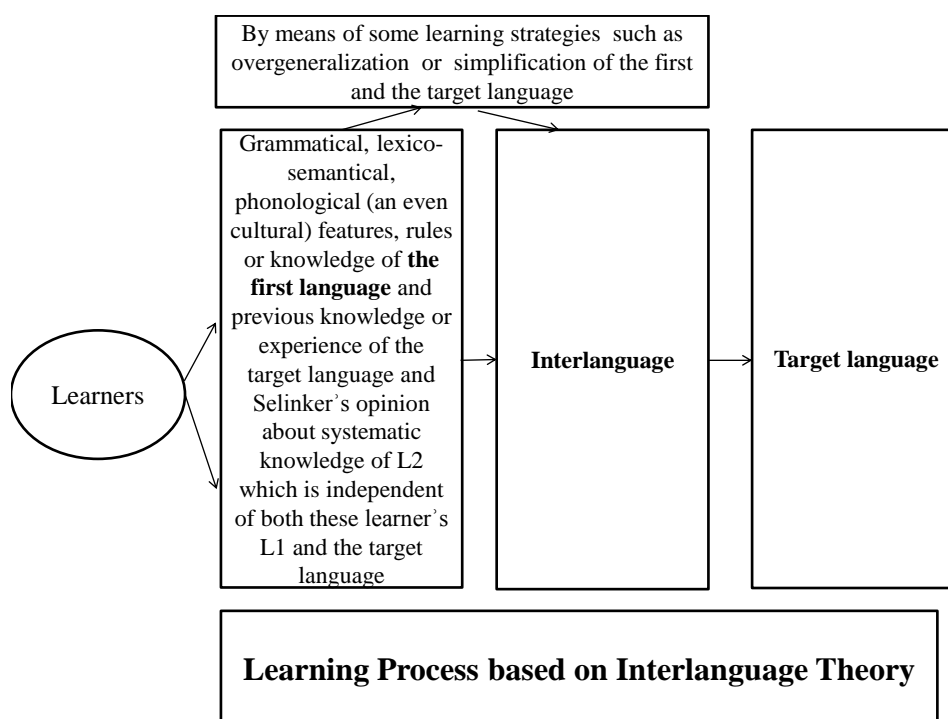


Figure 3.4 Relationship between the learning process based on interlanguage theory and learning strategies

The above figure shows us the language learning process according to interlanguage theory. In this process of achieving the target language, grammatical, lexico-semantic, phonological (and even cultural) features, rules or knowledge of the first language and previous knowledge or experience of the target language and so on influence language learners and make them produce interlanguage which is constructed by way of some learning strategies, e.g., overgeneralizing or simplification of some grammatical features, rules, the transfer of previous knowledge or experiences to the target language, etc. The learners' hypotheses about the rules underlying the new language are constantly tested and, ideally, revised and overcome in this process leading to proficiency in the target language.

R. Oxford (1990) agrees that there is a close relationship between the use of learning strategies and interlanguage. She argues that when adults deal with cognitive strategies,⁹⁸

⁹⁸ See Section 4.1.3.2

they might use analyzing and reasoning strategies to ‘reason out’ a new language. While in the process of reasoning out this new language, some mistakes might be made by overgeneralizing rules or transferring expressions from one language to another, typically from the mother tongue to the target language. “Interlanguage is a predictable, normal phase of language learning, but some language learners fail to leave that phase because they misuse or overuse some of the analyzing and reasoning strategies.” (1990: 45)

The phenomenon of interlanguage can be often seen among Chinese students learning English. Due to the distinctive differences in pronunciation, grammar, and cultures between Chinese and English, Chinese students may produce an interlanguage English with errors resulting from the transfer of Chinese sentence structures or grammar to English. For example, the Chinese language does not use different verb forms to represent different tenses; therefore, Chinese students sometimes produce incorrect sentences by ignoring verb conjugation.

So far, I have introduced four different theories of foreign language acquisition. Although they are competitive to each other, i.e., behaviorist and cognitive theories are a pair of struggling theories, they have in common that they have influenced the development of the LLS debate. With regard to the research samplings in my study, it is the behaviorist tradition that plays a crucial and sometimes quite problematic role, as will be seen in my data analysis.

3.2 The concepts of implicit and explicit knowledge and three different theories about language learning strategies

3.2.1 Implicit and explicit knowledge

When I discuss different theories about language learning strategies, I will inevitably speak of the two important concepts of explicit and implicit knowledge. Learning involves both the deliberate conscious system (explicit knowledge) and unconscious implicit systems (tacit knowledge).

In the knowledge management (KM) literature, the term *implicit knowledge* is often

treated synonymously with Michael Polanyi's term *tacit knowledge*. Both are further dealt with as a form of private knowledge that is treated as 'informal', and even, in a sense, 'unconscious' knowledge. (Day, 2005: 630)

Wakefield states, "Explicit knowledge can be formalised and represented, and thus articulated in formal languages [...] as information, explicit knowledge can be easily stored, retrieved, shared and disseminated within organisations." (2006: 105) The difference between implicit (unconscious) and explicit (conscious) learning is traditionally explained by assuming separate memory systems for implicit and explicit knowledge. There is evidence to show that these two kinds of knowledge may not only develop independently under some circumstances but also might be acquired in the absence of each other. Considering the interaction between implicit and explicit knowledge, there exist two types of learning processes: one is a top-down direction (learning first explicit knowledge and then implicit knowledge on the basis of the former); the other one is a bottom-up direction (learning first implicit knowledge and then explicit knowledge, or learning both in parallel). Dakun Wang maintains that "the tunings of the implicit learning can be guided and governed by explicit learning and explicit learning can be consolidated and reinforced by implicit learning." (2000:18)

3.2.2 Debate about language learning strategies as implicit or explicit knowledge

From the above introduction of implicit and explicit knowledge, it is not hard to see that there exist actually three different opinions about language learning strategies according to the influence of distinctive theories in foreign language acquisition. In terms of the relationship between explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge, Alan Tonkey (1996) called these three theoretical opinions *interface positions* (non-interface position, strong interface position and weak interface position).

Language learning strategies, like other kinds of knowledge, are inevitably connected with the debate about implicit and explicit knowledge. Considering language learning strategies as implicit knowledge means that language learning strategies are intuitive and can

be used at an unconscious level; while language learning strategies are explicit knowledge and can be consciously practiced to become implicit knowledge. Whether language learning strategies are implicit or explicit knowledge and how these two kinds of knowledge interact is still a source of debate. In the following parts, I will discuss the above-mentioned three different positions concerning the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge.

3.2.2.1 Krashen's non-interface position

In the previous paragraphs, I mentioned Krashen's (1981) language acquisition theory. It is based on Chomsky's nativist theory. Krashen formulates *five hypotheses*: 1. *The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis* is the most fundamental of all his hypotheses and states that acquisition and learning are two different processes of acquiring a language. From the cognitive aspect, acquisition refers to the subconscious while learning is conscious. 2. *The Monitor Hypothesis* aims at illustrating the correlation between acquisition and learning, outlining the problematic, obstructive impact of explicit teaching and declarative knowledge on intuitive acquisition (non-interface). 3. *The Natural Order Hypothesis* states that grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order: "there is a fairly stable order of acquisition of structures in language acquisition, that is, one can see clear similarities across acquirers as to which structures tend to be acquired early and which tend to be acquired late" (Krashen & Terrell, 1981: 5f). 4. *The Input Hypothesis* attempts to provide an answer to the question of the conditions enabling learners to acquire a second language. According to Krashen, we can only acquire language by receiving comprehensible input, which means that we have to receive input that is just beyond our competence but not beyond our understanding. 5. *The Affective Filter Hypothesis* captures the relationship between affective variables (motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, etc.) and the process of L2 acquisition.

In fact, Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis claims that 'learned' knowledge is completely separate and cannot be converted into 'acquired' knowledge. In this learning process, Krashen emphasizes that implicit and explicit knowledge are separate entities within the brain and do not interface. He also claims that we 'acquire' a second language in only one way, by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensible input'. Learning merely

produces conscious knowledge which we can use when we monitor, or edit, our spontaneous output. However, Krashen's most radical and controversial claim about learning and acquisition is that they produce entirely separate knowledge stores. Contrary to what most teachers have traditionally believed, he argues that there is no way that learning (and therefore overt teaching) can contribute to the knowledge store of the acquired system which learners draw on when they use language to communicate and understand messages rapidly (cf. Tonkey, 1996). Therefore, according to Krashen's theory, there is no way for a conscious strategy to turn into an unconscious one. The subject of the strategies would have to concentrate on the unconscious strategies used by learners in the process of receiving comprehensible input and leading to the language competence:

In Krashen's view, 'learning' does not lead to 'acquisition,' because the sole function of learning is to act as a monitor or editor of the learner's output. Therefore, the inescapable conclusion of this model is that conscious use of learning strategies will make little contribution to the development of language competence. (O'Malley, 1990:10)

3.2.2.2 The strong interface position

Krashen's hypotheses about acquisition and learning have been questioned by many linguists and researchers and there are important theories that suggest that conscious language learning, including the conscious use of learning strategies, can play an important part in language development.

McLaughlin (1987) criticizes that Krashen never adequately clarifies 'acquisition', 'learning', 'conscious' and 'subconscious'. Thus, it is quite difficult to independently determine whether subjects are 'learning' or 'acquiring' language.⁹⁹ He also believes that learners may move from controlled processing of language forms to automatic processing, largely by repeated practice and training.¹⁰⁰

Some critics of Krashen's view maintain a 'strong interface position': They believe that the conscious, explicit knowledge which Krashen associates with learning can be converted into the sub-conscious, implicit knowledge which he links to acquisition (cf. Tonkyn,

⁹⁹ The source is <http://www.stanford.edu/~kenro/essays/NaturalApproach.html>, April 03, 2012.

¹⁰⁰ See Anderson in 3.1.3.3.

1996).¹⁰¹ “This interface position was first formally advanced by Sharwood Smith (1981) and has subsequently been promoted by DeKeyser (1998).” (Bowles, 2010: 4)

Ellis states that “explicit knowledge can become implicit knowledge provided learners have the opportunity for plentiful communicative practice.” (2008: 3) According to the learning model constructed by Bialystok, second language learning is based on three different types of knowledge: explicit linguistic knowledge, implicit linguistic knowledge and general knowledge of the world (cf. O’Malley & Chamot, 1990: 10). L. Vandergrift (1995) observes that the pedagogical implication of Bialystok’s model is that explicit linguistic knowledge can become implicit by means of a strategy of formal practising. “This would suggest that learning strategies can become automatic and, eventually, convert to implicit knowledge. By the same token, explicit knowledge can be derived from implicit linguistic knowledge through a strategy of inferencing.” (Takač, 2008: 33f) Obviously, the theory of strong interface position provides us with two learning models about explicit and implicit knowledge. One is Bialystok’s analysis / control model explaining the relationship of the ‘implicit – to – explicit’ position and the other one is Anderson’s ACT model accounting for the ‘explicit – to – implicit’ position.

Considering the LLS in the theory of the strong interface position, M. Rabinowitz & M. T. H. Chi (1987) state that learning strategies that more actively engage a learner’s mental processes should be more effective and useful in supporting learning processes of language learners. “These strategies may become procedural after repeated use or after a skill has been fully acquired, although mental processes that are deployed without conscious awareness may no longer be considered strategic.” (O’Malley, 1990: 18)

¹⁰¹ The source is
<http://202.194.48.102/englishonline/jxyj/xslw/E-Zine/T3w7eLEARNING%20AND%20ACQUISITION.asp?>
 April 03, 2012.

3.2.2.3 The weak interface position

The third theory about explicit and implicit knowledge is the weak interface position. It is in accordance with the opinion that “explicit knowledge can become implicit; however, it is not as categorical as the strong interface position in its formulation.” (Bowles, 2011: 250) The conversion of explicit to implicit knowledge is constrained under some circumstances. Bowles comments that “the conversion of explicit to implicit knowledge can occur through practice, but only if and when the learner is developmentally ready to acquire the linguistic form in question.” (2010: 250f) Of course, “explicit knowledge does not guarantee the occurrence of these processes.” (Ellis, 1993: 98) In other words,

[t]he weak interface position suggests that there can be indirect transfer from explicit to implicit knowledge. This transfer, however, cannot be predicted or directly caused by teaching: it will depend primarily on the learner’s readiness to integrate the new feature into his other own language system. Such integration can be facilitated or accelerated by the existence of explicit knowledge. (Henkel, 2011: 512)

Taking the theory of weak interface position into the domain of learning strategies, we can also see that learning strategies are presented in implicit and explicit knowledge in the form of explicit (conscious) learning strategies and implicit (unconscious) learning strategies. According to this theory, conscious learning strategies can convert into unconscious learning strategies and this conversion will only be achieved under the condition that the language learners consciously use learning strategies and they are ready to transfer the use of learning strategies from a conscious to an autonomous level.

3.2.2.4 The present study viewed within this debate

Even though these different theories of implicit and explicit knowledge have been debated to date and there is also some empirical research supporting these different theories, I hold the view that the interface position plays a very important role in FLA. Bearing in mind the conversion between implicit and explicit knowledge, I follow the opinion that language learning strategies cannot only be utilized consciously or subconsciously but can also be transferred from a conscious to an unconscious level and vice versa.

Therefore, I have conducted this study relating to the conscious and unconscious application of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies among my Chinese university students. I have tried to find out what kinds of strategies are used consciously or unconsciously by these learners. This will be elaborated in later parts of my PhD thesis.

3.3 Chapter summary

This chapter primarily introduced foreign language acquisition including the main learning theories – Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism and Interlanguage theory – and elaborated on their implications for learning strategies. Obviously, the consideration of learning strategies is strongly influenced by these learning theories, especially by the latter three because, unlike behaviorism with its robot-like image of the language learner, these three stress the learners' mental involvement on their learning processes. In addition, implicit and explicit knowledge were introduced to discuss the cognitive process of using learning strategies. In the following chapter, I shall follow the main topic of learning strategies and introduce the empirical research with a focus on the research done in China.

Chapter 4: Empirical research on foreign language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies worldwide and in China

“Give a man a fish and he eats for a day.
Teach him how to fish and he eats for a
lifetime.”

Lao-Zi ¹⁰²

4.1 Language learning strategies

In the previous chapter, I have presented and discussed different language learning theories in the framework of foreign language acquisition, and then brought their implications into the theories of language learning strategies. The precondition for a better understanding of my research about listening comprehension strategies among Chinese students is a clear idea of what language learning strategies are in general. Therefore, in this chapter, I will consider different aspects of language learning strategies including their definition, classification and assessment. The aims of this literature review are to lay the groundwork for the study as a whole and to present an overview of the major issues related to language learning strategies in general and listening comprehension strategies in particular. Then I will also look more specifically at the use of learning and listening comprehension strategies by Chinese students and my research samplings in particular.

¹⁰² Lao-Zi is also spelled Lao-tse. Lao-Zi, who lived in the 6th century BC, was a philosopher of ancient China and is a central figure in Taoism (also spelled “Daoism”). He “addresses that everything is unified as One from Tao to a Myriad of things and the opposite forces of Yin and Yang are contained in it; however, Yin and Yang are seen as ‘unified with harmony’, not against each other.” (Wang, 2005: 93)

4.1.1 The origin of interest in language learning strategies¹⁰³

As noted in the introduction to foreign language acquisition, for a long period of time, foreign language learning and teaching were guided by the theories of Behaviorism:¹⁰⁴ Foreign language learning was considered basically as a mechanical process of habit formation; language skills are learned more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented in the spoken form before the written form; analogy provides a better foundation for foreign language learning than analysis; the meaning that a word has for a native speaker can be learned only in the matrix of allusions to the culture of the people who speak that language (cf. Rivers, 1981).

Other linguists rejected linguistic behaviourism. It could not explain why children produced words and sentences they had never heard in their environment? With this inconsistency in mind, more and more linguists and language teachers began to pay attention to mentalist theories. Noam Chomsky was the pioneer and the most famous and influential among them. According to his theory and empirical research, language is not a form of behavior, but rather an intricate rule-system and a large part of language acquisition is the intuitive learning of this system. Learning consists not just of simply forming habits but of acquiring rules, regulations and a process in which the individual's experiences are constantly tested and modified by subsequent experience. His theory relies on the conviction that there exists an innate human capability to learn a language. Children normally organize all the utterances they have heard and, in the process of attributing meaning, make some hypothesis about the rules and regulations of language and construct their internal grammar. The development of mentalist theories became one of the most important stimuli in the study of learning strategies.

Influenced by the development of language learning theories, in the mid-1970s, teachers' attitudes towards foreign language teaching and learning changed. More and more teachers became interested in observing and studying the ways in which their students could

¹⁰³ While I have mentioned learning strategies when introducing foreign language acquisition in Chapter 3, learning strategies are at the center of this chapter.

¹⁰⁴ See Section 3.1.3.1

learn foreign languages by themselves instead of simply being taught. Language learners that were particularly successful became their primary research focus. Therefore, in view of this new teaching philosophy, they ceased enforcing too much of their own teaching methods on the students; instead, they began to think about how to adapt their teaching methods and concepts to cater for the students' needs. As a result, the teaching model turned from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness. Based on these prerequisites, linguists were increasingly interested in getting to know how successful language learners manage their foreign language study, train their overall language abilities and overcome problems during their learning. They also wanted to discover what language learning strategies or methods students used most to master a foreign language. In particular, "of all the learner factors, the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and success in mastering a second or foreign language has been the focus of considerable research over the past two decades." (Yang, 2007: 36)

With the foreign language teachers' changing attitudes towards foreign language learning and teaching, the research into language learning strategies used by effective language learners has become much more important than just teaching the learners the foreign knowledge itself. Language learning strategies are a series of approaches or methods used in language learning with which learners can solve problems or overcome the barriers they meet in the process of learning foreign languages. According to Weinstein & Mayer, the goal of strategy use is to "affect the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, or interacts with new knowledge." (1986: 315) This is in accordance with the old Chinese proverb quoted at the beginning of this chapter which says, "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime." (授人以鱼不如授人以渔, or *in Pinyin*, shòu rén yǐ yú bú rú shòu rén yǐ yú)¹⁰⁵ In some respects, the concept and implication of language learning strategies is a very good example of the concrete application of this proverb in our academic research fields, especially in the domain of foreign language learning and teaching. The methods or

¹⁰⁵ In Chinese, the words normally have the same pronunciation but with different characters. And there are two "yú", the first "yú" means "fish" while the second "yú" means "fishing".

approaches of teaching and guiding students to effectively ‘fish’ for a foreign language are also much more important than just getting to know and eat some ‘fish’ (some rules or regulations of the grammar, words or phrases in the new language). This concept is also important for life-long language learning outside the school context. Now that getting to know the methods of ‘fishing for foreign languages’ is the most important path to mastering a foreign language, language learners themselves are expected to learn and perfect methods of improving their language proficiency.

4.1.2 The definition of language learning strategies

In order to achieve a better understanding of language learning strategies, we have to go back to the basic word ‘strategy’. Strategy derives from “the ancient Greek term ‘strategia’ with the meaning of generalship or the art of war. More specifically, strategy involves the optimal management of troops, ships, or aircraft in a planned campaign.” (Oxford, 1990: 7)

In modern English, the word strategy is defined as the follows:¹⁰⁶

1. A (1): the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological and military forces of a nation or a group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war (2): the science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions;
B: a variety of or instance of the use of strategy.
2. A: a careful plan or method;
B: the art of devising or employing plans or stratagems toward a goal.
3. An adaptation or complex of adaptations (as of behavior metabolism, or structure) that serves or appears to serve an important function in achieving evolutionary success.

From the above explanation, it is obvious to see that strategy is a vital element leading to success in any activity. If we want to succeed in learning something, we have to use some strategies or special methods to do so. When we transfer this concept to the field of education, we speak of ‘learning strategies’.

¹⁰⁶ See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy>, November 28, 2012.

Learning strategies (LS) refer to “the special thoughts or behaviours or mechanisms that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.” (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990: 1) Simply speaking, learning strategies are regarded as the approaches and methods which individuals use to accomplish their learning goals or tasks. From the cognitive aspect, learning strategies are special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information.

Learning strategies play an important part in teaching and learning foreign languages. Bialystok (1978: 76) defines strategies as “optimal methods for exploiting available information to increase the proficiency of L2 learning [...] they operate by bringing relevant knowledge to the language task that has the effect of improving performance” (quoted in Višnja, 2008: 33). Learning strategies play a very important role in the foreign language acquisition process and “strategies are especially important for foreign language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence.” (Oxford, 1990: 1) M. Williams & R. L. Burden describe learning strategy as follows,

[a] learning strategy is like a tactic used by a player. It is a series of skills used with a particular learning process in mind. Thus, learning strategies involve an ability to monitor the learning situation and respond accordingly. This means being able to assess the situation, to plan, to select appropriate skills, to sequence them, to co-ordinate them, to monitor or assess their effectiveness and to revise the plan when necessary. (1997: 145)

Learning strategies applied in language learning and teaching are called Language Learning Strategies (LLS). The appropriate application of LLS can lead to improved proficiency and greater self-confidence (cf. Oxford, 1990: 1). LLS can be used either in language input or language output. In order to better understand different groups of strategies when they are in practice, I have first to discuss the concepts of input and output. According to directions in which the messages are transmitted, language can be classified as *language input* that can be defined as “the potentially processable language data which are made available by chance or by design, to the language learner” (Sharwood Smith, 1993:

167) and *language output*¹⁰⁷ which refers to “learner language that is intended to convey meaning to an interlocutor while stretching the learner’s linguistic resources” (Chapelle, 1998: 24). Of the two: input (i.e., listening or reading) seems much more important for language acquisition than output (i.e., speaking and writing).¹⁰⁸ Jordens & Lalleman believe that input is a linguistic factor that influences the SLA process and plays an important part in the acquisition process (cf. 1996: 22).

Language learning strategies are subdivided into listening comprehension strategies, speaking strategies, reading comprehension strategies and writing strategies,¹⁰⁹ as well as oral communicative strategies, vocabulary learning strategies and grammar learning strategies. Due to the importance of listening input in FLA, the research into listening comprehension strategies is also of crucial significance to studying language learning strategies. Because of their central and significant position in this study, listening comprehension strategies are explained in more detail in Section 4.3.

In the course of language learning strategies research, linguists have defined language learning strategies according to their own understanding and recognition of these strategies. To put the definition of language learning strategies on a more precise level, we will define them chronologically in the following table:

Table 4.1 Definitions of language learning strategies

Source	Definition of Language Learning Strategies
Rigney (1978)	LLSs refer to often-conscious steps or behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information.
Bialystok (1978)	LLSs refer to optional means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language.

¹⁰⁷ Listening, speaking, reading and writing, the four basic language skills can be classified into two categories, in which listening and reading belong to language input while speaking and writing to the language output.

¹⁰⁸ As for the Chinese students, language output is also a headache for them: they always have difficulty in skillfully combining language input and language output, therefore, they should not only take in as much language input as possible but should also try to produce more language output.

¹⁰⁹ For a long time, the so-called four skills described the levels of language tackled in language classes: listening, reading, speaking and writing. In recent years, a fifth skill has gained importance: mediation.

Tarone (1981)	LLSs refer to what learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning.
Weinstein & Meyer (1986)	LLSs refer to behaviours and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process.
Rubin (1987)	LLSs refer to the strategies which contribute to the development of the language system that the learner constructs and affects learning directly.
Chamot (1987)	LLSs refer to techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information.
Wenden (1987)	LLSs refer to language behaviours learners engage in to learn and regulate the learning of L2, to what learners know about the strategies they use (i.e., strategic knowledge), and to what learner know about aspects of L2 learning.
O'Malley & Chamot (1990)	LLSs refer to special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information.
Oxford (1990)	LLSs refer to specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.
Richards & Platt (1992)	LLSs are intentional behaviour and thoughts used by learners during learning so as to better help them understand, learn or remember new information.
Ellis (1995)	LLSs refer to the mental or behavioural activities related to some specific stage in the process of language acquisition or language use.
O'Malley & Chamot (1996)	LLSs are special ways of information processing that can make comprehension, learning and storing of information more effective.
Ridley (1997)	LLSs refer to the denotation of the procedures – which are sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious – used by a person as a way of reaching a goal.

Cohen (1998)	LLSs refer to processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a L2, through the storage, recall and application of information about that language.
Purpura (1999)	LLSs refer to the conscious or unconscious techniques or activities that an individual invokes in language learning, use or testing.
Hall (2001)	LLSs refer to goal-directed actions that are used by learners to mediate their own learning.
Cohen & Dornyei (2002)	LLSs refer to the conscious and semiconscious thoughts and behaviours employed by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language.
Gu (2003b)	LLSs refer to a series of actions a learner employs to facilitate the completion of a learning task.
Anderson (2005)	LLSs refer to specific things that a language learner does to learn.
Leaver & Ehrman & Shekhtman (2005)	LLSs refer to both activities and techniques used to learn.

Sources: Wu (2008), Takač (2008) and Tran (2011).

The above definitions are all concerned with the functions that language learning strategies play in the learning process. According to them, language learning strategies can be described as kinds of behaviors, activities, procedures, thoughts, steps, means, techniques, approaches, processes and actions. Most of the above definitions indicate that language learning strategies are consciously used to accomplish learning tasks. In contrast to them, the definitions summarized by J. Ridley (1997), J. M. Purpura (1999), A. D. Cohen & Z. Dornyei (2002) indicate that language learning strategies may be conscious or unconscious techniques and activities. In short, language learning strategies are a series of techniques, methods and activities that are consciously or unconsciously employed by language learners to assist their own language learning process.

For a better comprehension of language learning strategies, the relationship between them and some related terms also need to be interpreted here. For example, H. H. Stern states that

[s]trategy is best reserved for general tendencies or overall characteristics of the approach employed by the language learner, leaving learning techniques as the term to refer to particular forms of observable learning behaviour, more or less consciously employed by the learner. (1983: 405)

Similarly, C. Goh distinguishes between strategies and tactics, with strategies defined as a general approach to learning, and tactics as specific actions. Tactics refer to the actions that are observable and imply the application of a certain strategy (cf. 1998: 124). In addition, the definitions of skills and strategies have also been interpreted by some researchers. P. L. Carrell (cf. 1989: 122) states that skills and strategies are distinguished by means of an active and passive component.

Strategies refer to intentional actions selected and controlled by learners in the attempt to achieve a goal, where their active participation is emphasised. Skills, on the other hand, can refer to passive abilities that do not have to be activated. (Višnja, 2008: 49)

4.1.3 The classification of language learning strategies

In the above section, I have discussed the definition of language learning strategies. A large amount of research in this field demonstrates that the strategies which are applied in learning a second or foreign language can be described and classified. Researchers have tried to classify language learning strategies according to their own study and investigation. However, from the Table 4.2, we can see that actually all these classifications share some common factors:

Table 4.2 Classifications of language learning strategies

Authors	Categories	Subcategories
O'Malley (1985)	Metacognitive Strategies	Selective attention
		Planning
		Monitoring
		Evaluation
	Cognitive Strategies	Rehearsal
		Organization
		Inferencing
		Summarizing
		Deducing
		Imagery
		Transfer
		Elaboration
	Social/affective Strategies	Cooperation
		Questioning for clarification
		Self-talk
Rubin (1987)	Cognitive Learning Strategies	Clarification / Verification
		Guessing / Inductive Inferencing
		Deductive Reasoning
		Practice
		Memorization
		Monitoring
	Metacognitive Learning Strategies	Planning
		Prioritising
		Setting goals
		Self-management
	Communication Strategies	
	Social Strategies	
	Direct Strategies	
	Memory Strategies	Creating mental linkages
		Applying images and sounds
		Reviewing well
		Employing action

Oxford (1990)	Cognitive Strategies	Practicing
		Receiving and sending messages strategies
		Analyzing and reasoning
		Creating structure for input and output
	Compensation Strategies	Guessing intelligently
		Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
	Indirect Strategies	
	Metacognitive Strategies	Centering your learning
		Arranging and planning your learning
		Evaluating your learning
	Affective Strategies	Lowering your anxiety
		Encouraging yourself
		Taking your emotional temperature
	Social Strategies	Asking questions
		Cooperating with others
		Emphathising with others
Stern (1992)	Management and Planning Strategies	Decide what commitment to make to language learning
		Set himself reasonable goals
		Decide on an appropriate methodology, select appropriate resources, and monitor progress
		Evaluate his achievement in the light of previously determined goals and expectation
	Cognitive Strategies	Clarification / Verification
		Guessing / Inductive Inferencing
		Deductive Reasoning
		Practice
		Memorization
		Monitoring
	Communicative-Experiential Strategies	Circumlocution
		Gesturing
		Paraphrase

		Asking for repetition and explanation
	Interpersonal Strategies	
	Affective Strategies	

Source: Pezhman Zare (2012: 164f).

The above table of classification provides us with a description of language learning strategies with different taxonomies and categorizations. Looking at these features and characteristics, we can see that the system of categorization developed by Oxford contains most of the features of previous classifications and is more detailed (cf. Williams & Burden, 1997: 152). “Compared with earlier research into language learning strategies, Oxford’s (1990) classification of language learning strategies is more comprehensive and detailed.” (Lee, 2010: 141) S. Jones also holds the view that Oxford has set up and “developed a system of language learning strategies which is more comprehensive and detailed than earlier classification models” (1998: 121). As a result, “Oxford’s extended classification scheme served another purpose, however, which was to provide the foundation for generating items for a questionnaire designed to assess uses of learning strategies in second language acquisition.” (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990: 103)

Oxford classified language learning strategies into two categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. According to her definition, direct strategies refer to strategies that directly involve the target language and include subcategories such as memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies, while indirect strategies refer to the strategies that underpin the business of language learning and consist of the following subcategories: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. In her opinion, language learning strategies cannot only be grouped and classified but also be learned and effectively utilized in any of the four language modalities – listening, speaking, reading and writing or some combination of these – and are teachable. In the following part, I will introduce these language learning strategies one by one in terms of their definitions and features.

4.1.3.1 Memory strategies

The word *memory* is originally derived from the Latin word *memoria* and has the following meanings (1) the power of process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned and retained, especially through associative mechanisms (2) the store of things learned and retained from an organism's activity or experience as evidenced by modification of structure or behaviour or by recall and recognition.¹¹⁰

In neurological terms, memories are groups of neurons that fire together in the same pattern each time they are activated. Carter (1998: 43f) states that the links between individual neurons that bind them into a single 'memory' are formed through a process called long-term potentiation (LTP). When we refer to memory in listening, we mean both the process of activating relevant memories to assist in comprehension and the process of forming or updating memories during comprehension. According to the time of the information retaining in the brain, memory can be grouped into two categories: long-term memory, associated with the sum of all of a person's knowledge and experience, and short-term memory, associated with knowledge that is activated at a particular moment. Rost expounds that

[t]he popular term 'short-term memory' (STM) is ambiguous because it is used to refer to either (1) the set of representations from long-term memory stores that are currently and temporarily in a state of heightened activation, or (2) the focus of attention or content of awareness that can be held for a limited period of time. (2005: 69)

Memory is crucial in any kind of learning, especially in terms of learning a foreign language; a good memory could definitely lead to the success of learning a language. Memory strategies are also called mnemonics; they refer to the strategies related to the memory function of human beings. During the process of learning a foreign language, learners usually use their memory as an important method to help them quickly take in new information. The memory strategies systematically described by Oxford comprise the following features:

¹¹⁰ The source is <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/memory>, November 28, 2010.

- Memory strategies reflect very simple principles, such as arranging things in order, making associations, and reviewing. (1990: 39)
- Memory strategies [...] enable learners to store verbal material and then retrieve it when needed for communication. (*ibid*)
- [...] the memory strategy of structured reviewing helps move information from the “fact level” to the “skill level,” where knowledge is more procedural and automatic. (*ibid*)
- Memory strategies often involve pairing different types of material. (1990: 40)
- Certain memory strategies are designed to link verbal material with sound, motion or touch. (*ibid*)

4.1.3.2 Cognitive strategies

From the previous interpretation about the taxonomy and categorisation of language learning strategies, one can see that cognitive strategies are mentioned and expounded by all language researchers. This means that cognitive strategies have caught the attention of most language researchers. Influenced by cognitive learning theories,¹¹¹ cognitive strategies are summarized by the linguists as referring to the mental strategies or mental steps and actions that language learners employ to make sense of a language. O'Malley & Chamot interpret that “cognitive strategies are often specific to distinct learning activities and would include using operations or steps in learning or problem solving that require direct analysis, transformation, or synthesis of learning materials.” (1990: 99) Besides, cognitive strategies are exemplified by inferencing, or guessing meaning from context, and elaboration, or relating new information or knowledge to other concepts already recognized, accepted and stored in memory. Višnja asserts that cognitive strategies “include processing language in the human mind and constitute mental processes directly concerned with obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of information in order to learn” (Williams & Burden 2011, quoted in Višnja, 2008: 53). Oxford describes the features of cognitive strategies as the following:

- Cognitive strategies are essential in learning a new language. [...] are a varied lot, ranging from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing. [...] cognitive strategies are unified by a common function: manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner. [...] are typically found to be the most popular

¹¹¹ See Section 3.1.3.2 for more details about cognitive learning theories.

strategies with language learners. (1990: 43)

- Strategies for practicing are among the most important cognitive strategies. (*ibid*)
- Strategies for receiving and sending messages are necessary tools. (*ibid*)
- Analyzing and reasoning strategies are commonly used by language learners. (1990: 44)

4.1.3.3 Compensation strategies

The last of the direct strategies involves compensation strategies which refer to the strategies that help learners to overcome knowledge gaps to continue communication or “enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge.” (Oxford, 1990: 47) According to Rae L. Lan (cf. 2005: 18), compensation strategies are applied to make up for missing knowledge while listening, reading, speaking, or writing a language. In other words, compensation strategies are strategies used by learners to compensate for limitations in the process of their language learning.

Therefore, in the process of learning a foreign language, especially in the course of listening to the target language, besides the basic linguistic knowledge of the foreign language, listeners should also try to find the extra supporting information from the context or use some other clues such as contextual clues, background knowledge, body language, expressions or actions of the speakers to guess and infer the meaning out of the contents they have heard or the real meaning the other people want to convey. The features of compensation strategies described by Oxford will be listed as follows:

- Compensation strategies are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and, especially, of vocabulary. (1990: 47)
- Compensation occurs not just in understanding the new language but also in producing it. (1990: 48)
- Compensation strategies allow learners to produce spoken or written expression in the new language without complete knowledge. (*ibid*)
- Many compensation strategies for production are used to compensate for a lack of appropriate vocabulary, but these strategies can also be used to make up for a lack of grammatical knowledge. (1990: 49)
- Compensation strategies for production help learners to keep on using the language, thus obtaining more practice. (*ibid*)

So far, the definition and function of these three direct strategies have been presented.

As explained, direct strategies involve direct learning and use of the subject matter and require mental processing of the language even though they do this processing differently and for different purposes (cf. Oxford, 1990: 37). In summary,

[m]emory strategies [...] help students store and retrieve new information. Cognitive strategies [...] enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means. Compensation strategies [...] allow learners to use the language despite their often large gaps in language. (*ibid*)

In the following section, the definition and major function of three indirect strategies – metacognitive, affective and social will be elaborated.

4.1.3.4 Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive is a compound word with *meta-* as a prefix to *cognitive*. *Meta* is derived from Latin or Greek, which means “situated behind or beyond”.¹¹² Metacognitive can thus be understood as cognitive beyond cognitive. Oxford writes,

[m]etacognitive means beyond, beside, or with the cognitive. Therefore, metacognitive strategies are actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices, and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process. (1990: 136)

Even though cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies share some characteristics and both deal with mental processes, it is still indispensable to distinguish between them:

[...] Cognitive strategies are seen as **mental processes** directly concerned with the processing of information in order to learn, which is for obtaining, storage, retrieval or use of information.

Metacognitive strategies involve an awareness of one’s own **mental processes** and an ability to reflect on how one learns, in other words, knowing about one knows. (Williams & Burden, 1997: 148)

As indirect strategies, metacognitive strategies go beyond cognitive strategies and provide us with more effective strategies for learning a foreign language. They comprise those strategies that emphasize the learning process regarding planning, organizing,

¹¹² The source is <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meta>, October 20, 2010.

evaluating and monitoring. They help learners manage and control their own learning and thus achieve greater learner autonomy (cf. Lan, 2005: 23). The role of metacognitive strategies in successful and autonomous language learning is of great importance, for they help learners not to lose focus of their language learning and to control their own learning process and progress (cf. Višnja, 2008: 54). The features of metacognitive strategies are described by Oxford as follows:

- Metacognitive strategies are essential for successful language learning. (1990: 136)
- [...] metacognitive strategies, like organizing, setting goals and objectives, considering the purpose, and planning for a language task, help learners to arrange and plan their language learning in an efficient, effective way. (*ibid*)
- The metacognitive strategy of seeking practice opportunities is especially important. (*ibid*)
- The problems – unrealistic monitoring of errors and inadequate evaluation of progress – can be ameliorated by using the metacognitive strategies of self-monitoring and self-evaluating. (1990: 137)
- In several studies of second and foreign language learning, students used metacognitive strategies less often than cognitive strategies and were limited in their range of metacognitive strategies, with planning strategies most frequently employed and with little self-evaluation or self-monitoring. (1990: 138)

4.1.3.5 Affective strategies

The term affective refers to “emotions, attitude, motivations, and values.” (Oxford, 1990: 140) Emotion is a very important element regulating and influencing the language learners’ attitudes while they are learning a foreign language. The idea of affective strategies is to some degree accordant with the affective filter theory, originally proposed by Dulay & Burt in 1977 and incorporated and developed by Krashen as one of his five hypotheses in 1985. Lozanov’s Suggestopedia (1979) also aims at enhancing learning by lowering the affective filter of learners. According to their points of view, affective variables are believed to be substantially related to language acquisition. Therefore, language learners should not ignore the affective factors involved in their language learning processes. Negative emotions might sometimes cause problems or barriers when they study and use English, especially when they listen or are involved in social communication. They might feel too nervous to catch the real meaning or to say something and to respond to the people they are talking to. Gardner &

MacIntyre suggest that “affective variables are probably more powerful in influencing strategy use than intelligence and aptitude.” (1992: 215) Oxford believes that

[g]ood language learners are often those who know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning. Negative feelings can stunt progress, even for the rare learner who fully understands all the technical aspects of how to learn a new language. On the other hand, positive emotions and attitudes can make language learning far more effective and enjoyable. (1990: 140)

Therefore, in order to overcome the influences from the perspective of negative emotions, language learners have to consider and use affective strategies, e.g., relaxation techniques which are concerned with their emotional requirements such as self-confidence, motivation, self-encouragement and relaxed state of mind as well as the positive attitudes towards language learning that help them control their feelings over the negative influences. The features of affective strategies suggested by Oxford are listed as follows:

- Self-esteem is one of the primary affective elements. (1990: 141)
- The sense of efficacy that underlies self-esteem is reflected in attitudes (mental dispositions, beliefs, or opinions), which influence the learner’s motivation to keep on trying to learn. (*ibid*)
- Self-encouragement strategies are powerful ways to improve attitudes and, thus, motivation. (1990: 142)
- Anxiety-reducing strategies like laughter and deep breathing are necessary. (*ibid*)
- Tolerance for ambiguity was one of the two factors that predicted success in foreign language learning. (*ibid*)

4.1.3.6 Social strategies

The last strategy I will explain here is the social one. As we know, language is learned and applied for social communication. Without this function, language would lose its significance. As a social product and medium, the process of foreign language learning always involves different social agents from diverse socio-cultural groups who study and use the language to conduct social communication, to engage in interaction as the social subjects and to set up the community to which they belong. In order to avoid the problems which might cause much trouble or obstacles in the real process of their interactive communication, such as cultural violation, lack of socio-cultural background knowledge, misunderstanding of

certain non-verbal symbols¹¹³, and so on, the consideration and appropriate application of social strategies in language learning seem very important for both foreign language teachers and foreign language learners.

Social strategies entail cooperation with other language learners: L2 teachers, learners or speakers in general. They are defined as the strategies that the language learners use to help solve problems arising from different social backgrounds and, if applied successfully, lead to increased interaction and exposure with the target language. J. Rubin accepts the roles of these strategies that put language learners in an environment where communicative practicing is possible and does not affect learning directly (cf. 1987: 20). The features of social strategies described by Oxford will be listed here as the presentation of the strategies discussed above:

- One of the most basic social interactions is asking questions, an action from which learners gain great benefit. (1990: 145)
- [...] cooperating in general – with peers and with more proficient users of the target language – is imperative for language learners. (*ibid*)
- To promote cooperative language learning strategies, either inside or outside the classroom, it might be necessary to help learners confront – and possibly modify – their culturally defined attitudes toward cooperation and competition. (1990: 146)
- Empathy is essential to successful communication in any language; it is especially necessary, although sometimes difficult to achieve, in learning another language. (*ibid*)
- Social strategies can help all learners increase their ability to empathize by developing cultural understanding and become aware of others' thoughts and feelings. (*ibid*)

In summary, indirect strategies help learners regulate the learning process without directly involving the target language and work together with the direct strategies.

Metacognitive strategies allow learners to control their own cognition [...] to coordinate the learning process by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating. Affective strategies help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes. Social strategies help students learn through interaction with others. (Oxford, 1990: 135)

¹¹³ Verbal symbols refer to words, sentences, sounds or other utterances that are said in order to convey some meaning, while non-verbal symbols refer to the signs, gestures and expressions that are not spoken but still try to convey the meaning the speakers want to express.

4.1.4 The survey instrument – *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*

Thanks to the classification of language learning strategies and the detailed explanation of each category of the strategies, the implication of language learning strategies now seems much clearer. However, researchers have never stopped their constant investigation and research into the application of language learning strategies among different groups of language learners. Language learners from university students to young school learners with different learning levels and socio-cultural backgrounds have been their research subjects. Numerous empirical studies have been undertaken in order to obtain more precise information about what kinds of learning strategies are respectively learned and used by students with higher or lower language levels, what kinds of learning strategies are acquired and consciously used by students and what is the relationship between their application of language learning strategies and their learning outcome.

To cater for the need for quantitative research and more objective data, some researchers revised different surveys in accordance with the requirement of their own research. One of the more practical ones is the *Strategy Inventory for Language Learning* (SILL)¹¹⁴ that possesses a high degree of internal reliability and was developed by Oxford (1990). Oxford's original SILL has two different versions (version 5.1 and version 7.0). The first version is devised for English speakers learning a new language. This version is made up of six parts and consists of eighty individual strategies. The second version is designed for speakers of other languages learning English. It is also made up of six parts and contains items covering fifty individual strategies. The SILL uses a 5 Likert-scale for which language learners are asked to respond to each SILL indicating how often they employ these strategies. They can select one answer from five options. It is designed to provide information about the way we tackle the task of learning a foreign language. Like other research surveys, it is a very useful test instrument to help the researchers carry out their quantitative studies.

“SILL has been translated into more than twenty languages and used in dozens of

¹¹⁴ Oxford's extended classification scheme served another purpose, however, which was to provide the foundation for generating items for a questionnaire designed to assess uses of learning strategies in second language acquisition (cf. Oxford 1986; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

published studies around the world” (Oxford, 2003: 15), has been used to assess the use of language learning strategies of more than 10,000 language learners world-wide and has been employed in many ways since its original validation was posited in the early 1990s (cf. Adam Russell, 2010). In addition, many researchers who are engaged in English language teaching and learning have not only adopted Oxford’s theories of language learning strategies and the classification of learning strategies, but have also applied Oxford’s SILL as a primary research survey. Others have revised some items from SILL to design and reconstruct their own questionnaire as well as to form new language learning scales to meet their own research purposes and specific tasks on language learning strategies.

S. J. Chang (1990), for example, used a version of the SILL with mainland (People’s Republic of China) and Taiwanese (Republic of China) students at the University of Georgia. The results of the research showed their high use of compensation strategies and low use of affective strategies. Three measures of proficiency showed different effects on strategy use; students who rated themselves above average in proficiency used more strategies overall than those who rated themselves below average; in addition, Christine C. M. Goh & Kwah Poh Foong (1997) conducted a study of language learning strategies used by 175 ESL¹¹⁵ students from China to survey the frequency of strategy use and to determine how it is influenced by the learners’ proficiency level and gender. In this study, a SILL questionnaire including six categories of language learning strategies classified by Oxford was administered. Results from this survey indicated that metacognitive strategies were most frequently used, while memory strategies were least frequently used. Statistical analysis showed that significant differences were to be found in the use of cognitive and compensation strategies among learners at three proficiency levels. The research also showed that gender played a role in influencing the kinds of strategy use: Female students were found to use compensation and affective strategies significantly more often than male students. Findings from this study could help teachers identify appropriate strategies to facilitate the learning of L2 by Chinese learners (cf. Bedall & Oxford, 1996: 47f).

¹¹⁵ Compared with some other research concerning Chinese EFL students, this is a study of Chinese students who are learning and using English as their second language.

To summarize, a great number of descriptive studies have applied this instrument and used it for reference to collect quantitative data on large numbers of mostly foreign language learners (cf. Chamot, 2004: 16). “SILL has also been used in studies that correlate strategy use with other variables such as learning styles, gender, proficiency level, and culture.”¹¹⁶ (*ibid*)

As far as my own work is concerned, a questionnaire is used as an extremely important measurement tool for my quantitative research; the design and construction of my questionnaire¹¹⁷ are not only based on the SILL for testing the utilization of listening comprehension strategies, but are also based on Oxford’s suggestion of language learning strategies applied in listening comprehension and training. In addition, Oxford’s concepts of language learning strategies and listening strategies as well as her practical experience and research of listening strategies have been the primary theoretical foundation for designing my questionnaire, reinforcing my research and fulfilling my research purpose as well.

4.2 Development of language learning strategies research and empirical research conducted in China

After having introduced language learning strategies in the light of their origins, definition, classification, Oxford's taxonomy and categorization as well as SILL as the instrument used for surveys, I now move on to the presentation of the research on language learning strategies. I then focus on China and put forward my primary concerns about LLS from various aspects including research methods and strategies used in each language practice such as speaking strategies, reading comprehension strategies and writing strategies as well as three general learning strategies such as oral communicative strategies, vocabulary learning strategies and grammar learning strategies.

As the core topic of this study, listening comprehension strategies are introduced in

¹¹⁶ The source is <http://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/v1n12004/chamot.htm>, Ana Uhl Chamot, 2004, Vol. 1, no 1, pp. 14-26, July 25, 2010.

¹¹⁷ The design and construction of the questionnaire will be explained in more detail in the chapter on methodology.

more detail from different perspectives such as the role of listening in FLA, definition, relationship between learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies and the special problems of listening to English among Chinese students as well. Finally, I will also discuss factors which could possibly influence the choice of language learning strategies and in particular listening comprehension strategies.

4.2.1 The development of language learning strategies research

“Research into language learning strategies began in the 1960s, since when a considerable amount of descriptive work has been carried out in this area.” (Williams & Burden, 1997: 149) Višnja Pavičić Takač comments that the early research of learning strategies “attempt at pinpointing reasons why some learners – under the same conditions – achieve better results than their peers.” (2008: 58) Research focused on successful and unsuccessful students has been widely improved, in particular, after the research by Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975) (cf. Naiman et al., 1978). The primary aim of those studies was to find out the differences between good language learners and the poor ones in using learning strategies. The findings of these studies showed that such differences do exist. In addition, the research includes the relationship between learning strategies and language competence and also includes the choice and use of learning strategies.

O'Malley et al.'s (1985) finding that the higher level students reported greater use of metacognitive strategies led to the conclusion that the successful students use more metacognitive strategies to manage their language learning than the less successful language learners. Through interviews, observation and reports by the language learners themselves, the researchers tried to identify the characteristics of the effective language learners and then made efforts to describe and classify these characteristics. Some researchers believe that once we get to know the learning strategies used by successful language learners, these kinds of learning strategies could be also taught to less successful students.

Until today, agreement has not been reached that language learning strategies can

definitely lead to excellent language learners.¹¹⁸ However, out of the six learning strategies (see Sections 4.1.3.1 to 4.1.3.6), good English learners are found to use metacognitive, cognitive and social-affective strategies skilfully (cf. Cohen 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Wenden 1991, 1998).

As discussed in a previous section, Rebecca L. Oxford, in her book *Language Learning Strategies: What every teacher should know* (1990), has systematically analyzed the active learning process of language learners, illustrated and summarized the learning methods from her own observation of language learners in and outside the classrooms or from her own teaching experiences, and has then given teachers some guidance as to how to teach languages to their students with a focus on communication.

She sees the aim of language learning strategies as being oriented towards the development of communicative competence, and that they must, therefore, involve interaction among learners. Learning strategies, she argues, must both help learners to participate in communication and to build up their language system. (Williams & Burden, 1997: 151)

Many researchers began their study by investigating learning strategies used for different purposes such as speaking strategies, writing strategies, reading strategies, and listening comprehension strategies, etc. In order to find out the relationship between the application of single language learning strategies and language proficiency in a more specific way and to use the academic findings to train the students in using language learning strategies more effectively, some research has been conducted both abroad and in China. In the following sections, research of language learning strategies in China will be introduced according to research methodologies and strategies used for different purposes.

¹¹⁸ Though there is no indisputable evidence of a link between the use of learning strategies and excellent language learners, the successful and unsuccessful language learners do display differences in the use of learning strategies, which cannot be characterized as inherently either good or bad, but as potentially useful (cf. Cohen, 1998). Therefore, my research focus is also to compare the differences of using listening comprehension strategies between the high-scoring and low-scoring groups of the Chinese non-English major students and to find out what kind of strategies might be potentially useful and lead to potentially successful learners.

4.2.2 Empirical research of language learning strategies conducted in China

With the rapid development of the Chinese economy and the ever increasing involvement with the outside world, English increasingly receives attention from the Chinese. Millions of people have begun to learn English: old people and small children alike take much delight in learning and speaking English. English learning has become a very popular challenge for Chinese people.

In order to cater for the requirement of Chinese learning and speaking English, research work on English learning and teaching has also been developed.¹¹⁹ In the past twenty years in particular, much research concerning English teaching and learning as well as foreign language acquisition has been conducted in China, but the field of language learning strategies has not received sufficient attention (cf. Zhang 1999: 106). The general purpose of studying language learning strategies used by Chinese learners is to compare and find out the differences between the successful learners and the unsuccessful ones. The earliest study of Chinese students' L2 learning strategies can be seen in the reports by Huang (1984) and Huang & Van-Naerssen (1987) which were followed by Ruiqing Liu & Yi'an Wu (1989), Jiang (1994), Gu & Johnson (1996), Wu et al. (1996), Wen & Johnson (1997) and Zhang (2001a) (cf. Zhang & Skuja-Steele, 2003). In order to have a clearer review of the research on learning strategies done in China or with Chinese students as the research subjects, even though I cannot list all the studies individually, I will try to categorize them from different perspectives and present some of them in the following sections.

4.2.2.1 Introduction to the research methods of studying language learning strategies used by Chinese students learning English

Like other research foci mentioned above, that has been put forward, hypothesized and proved by the researchers of foreign languages, questions about how to collect data when

¹¹⁹ Even so, due to the educational policy concerning foreign language in China, which has been explained and presented in Chapter 2, the research in this field started quite late in contrast to the research performed in the western countries.

researching language learning strategies have, for a long time, been the main concern of researchers in this field.

The early studies of Chinese students' L2 learning strategies are mostly based on the researchers' observation in class and does not explain and reflect the research method used. Despite these shortcomings, we cannot ignore them totally.

Recent studies used for identifying students' effective learning strategies have become increasingly systematic. The research methods used are grouped as quantitative, qualitative or mixed. In terms of research methodology, Huang (1984) is among the first Chinese scholars to apply western empirical research methods. In the following paragraphs, I will interpret the methods mostly used by some of the Chinese researchers based on the systematic presentation of Zhang & Skuja-Steele (2003) including the following aspects:

Questionnaires (including the application of Oxford's SILL revised questionnaires or self-made ones) are the most frequently used methods for identifying students' learning strategies. A questionnaire is a research form containing a list of questions designed for a respondent and is often used for collecting quantitative data. This becomes evident when reviewing the following studies: Huang 1984; Huang & van Naerssen 1987; Runqing Liu & Yi'an Wu 1989; Qiufang Wen 1993, 1995; Zukang Jiang 1994; Gu & Johnson 1996; Qiufang Wen & Haixiao Wang 1996; Yi'an Wu & Runqing Liu 1996; Goh & Kwah 1997; Wen & Johnson 1997; Wenyu Wang 1998; Xia Wu & Qiang Wang 1998; Zhang 2002a; Fengshi Yuan & Zhenqian Liu & Fuyong Zhang 2004; Yi Ding 2006, and so on.

Even though there are many advantages of questionnaires, there are still some difficulties in using them. The difficulties lie in the ways that questionnaires are launched. Questionnaires might have low reliability or a low response rate if they are sent to respondents who do not finish them by themselves or neglect to send them back. If questionnaires are conducted with respondents face-to-face, in particular with a large number of samples, it will be more complicated since other issues have to be considered: time, place and participants of the questionnaire need to be selected and organized.

Besides the *questionnaire*, which is mostly utilized to collect a large amount of objective

data for quantitative study, a lot of different qualitative research methods¹²⁰ are also applied by researchers. These include:

Interviews (unstructured, semi-structured or structured) are used as research instruments in studies such as Huang 1984; Huang & Van Naerssen 1987; Wen 1995; Guanghui Ma 1997; Hongying Li & Yue Wu 2007, etc. An interview is defined as “a purposeful conversation in which one person asks preferred questions (interviewer) and another answers them (respondent).” (Frey & Oishi, 1995:1) Interviews are good for excavating and collecting more concrete and objective qualitative data but they also have some limitations. Due to time pressure, interviews are normally conducted with small group of interviewees. Therefore, interviews are not suitable for the research that needs a large amount of data. Actually, compared to questionnaires, very little research work has so far been based on interviews as the primary research method. This is due to objective reasons and conditional limitations.¹²¹

Concurrent introspective & concurrent retrospective (think-aloud Protocol) is a research method that allows researchers to understand the thought process of a subject as he/she uses a product, device, or manual. In other words, “the subject is asked to talk aloud, while solving a problem and this request is repeated if necessary during the problem-solving process thus encouraging the subject to tell what he or she is thinking.” (Maarten et al., 1994: 26) The studies with the help of think-aloud protocol include Gu 1994, 1997; Yong, 1997; Yu 1999; Zhang 1999; Ma & Nie & Wang 2008. Think-aloud protocols have become more common in educational research since they provide rich data that can be derived from methodology (cf. Christopher et al., 2006).

Unlike the other techniques for gathering verbal data, there are no interruptions or suggestive prompts or questions as the subject is encouraged to give a concurrent account of his thoughts and to avoid interpretation or explanation of what he is doing, he just has to concentrate on the task. This seems harder than it is. [...] Because almost all of the subject’s conscious effort is aimed at solving the problem, there is no room left for reflecting on what he or she is doing. (Maarten et al., 1994: 26)

¹²⁰ There are two general opposing camps in the field of social sciences and applied linguistics, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is empirical research where the data are in the form of numbers, while qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers (cf. Punch, 1998: 4)

¹²¹ Due to the influence of Chinese socio-cultural traits, students are normally reluctant to be interviewed. Even if they participate in the interview it is often difficult to get valuable information from them.

Another method employed by researchers involves diaries and Journals of language learners. Oxford remarks: “Diaries or journals are forms of self-report which allow learners to record their thoughts, feelings, achievements, and native speakers.” (2005: 198) Studies in this area include Wen 1993; Wen 1995; Parry 1995. Compared with other survey instruments, diaries and journals of language learners are free-form without constraints on style and content. In order to get more concrete information from diaries and journals of language learners, researchers have to provide guidelines or constraints on how to write diaries or journals. Sometimes students are reluctant to share their diaries with researchers as they are considered to be private. Therefore, researchers have to ask for permission if they wish to read students’ diaries or journals.

Another fieldwork approach is the mixing of different research methods: a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research, both applying questionnaires and interviews. This method has attracted the attention of a number of empirical researchers.

In my study, I will use a quantitative research method, using a questionnaire as my primary research approach. This will be explained in detail in the following chapters. After the introduction of research methodologies used in investigating language learning strategies in China, I move on to discuss learning strategies from the perspective of their functions in improving English proficiency. The relation between learning strategies and other types of strategies is described in the following figure:

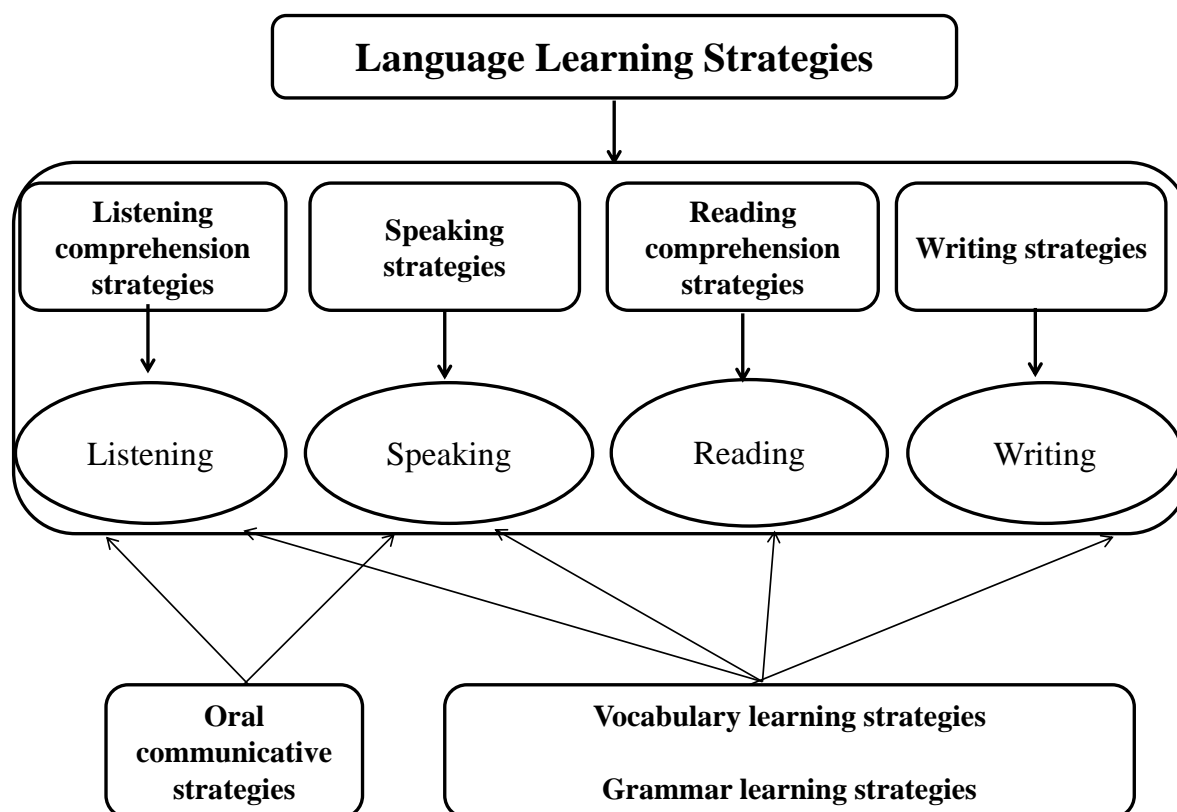


Figure 4.1 A framework presenting the relation between language learning strategies, language learning strategies applied in each language skill and general learning strategies

The above figure describes the relationship between language learning strategies, strategies used in each language skill and several general strategies that support different language practices. According to learning strategies used in each language skill, strategies are divided into listening, speaking, reading and writing strategies. In addition, general strategies supporting two or more language skills include two different types: The first type refers to oral communicative strategies that function in speaking and listening practices; and the second one includes vocabulary and grammar strategies that play a role in all of the four different language practices.

4.2.2.2 Language learning strategies applied in the four language skills¹²²

At this stage, speaking, reading comprehension and writing strategies will be introduced respectively. Listening is at the same level with the former three language practices, but listening comprehension strategies will be discussed separately in Section 4.3 since they are the major focus of this dissertation.

Speaking strategies

Learning how to speak English fluently and correctly is always a task for Chinese university students. In the process of learning English, students might use some behaviors, actions, steps or specific techniques to enhance their speaking proficiency. Speaking strategies refer to strategies used by language learners in order to improve their speaking ability. In China, English teachers always apply some techniques to teach speaking in English classes. These include: dialogues, discussion, debate and storytelling. However, Chinese is still the main language in their English classes and too much use of the mother tongue severely inhibits the improvement of students' speaking ability.

Xinguang Shao & Hong Gao (2006) studied speaking strategy use among non-English major postgraduates. The results of this study show that students do not often use learning strategies in their English speaking. Distinctive differences exist between how high-scoring and low-scoring groups use these strategies. These two groups display great differences in using compensation, social and affective strategies. There are no distinctive differences between males and females in the use of speaking strategies.

Xinning Zhang (2010) studied overall changes in speaking strategy use of non-English major students from two different departments in two successive years (covering 4 semesters). The aim was to find out if successful and unsuccessful learners change the way they use the six categories of speaking strategies and if their major background correlates with these changes. The sample involved 60 students with two different majors. The findings

¹²² As mentioned before, my work does not include a discussion of mediation which has recently been introduced as a fifth important language skill.

of this research show that students exhibit distinctive changes in using speaking strategies during their third semester after they have been trained to use these strategies. The use of cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies has a distinct correlation with the students' major.

Writing strategies

Writing strategies refer to mental or cognitive and metacognitive procedures that successful writers use to control their production and planning of their writing. In other words, they are deliberate, focused ways of thinking about writing. In China, students try to use some strategies to improve their writing proficiency, which includes: sentence-making paraphrase, text revision, and so on. However, there are very few studies concerning the writing strategies of Chinese students. That is to say, compared with other types of language learning strategies, writing strategies seem even less well-covered. As far as I have found, there are only a handful of studies focused on the English writing strategies of Chinese students.

D. Z. Yu (1999) focused on the writing strategies of Chinese students when learning how to write English compositions. Wang & Wen (2002: 225f) made a case study of 16 Chinese students writing English compositions. Through different methods, such as retrospective interviews, questionnaires, and work analyses and so on, the study revealed that the revision process of Chinese compositions (CL1) and that of English compositions (EL2) has similarities. Revisions made after writing are more than mental revisions. The researchers also found some differences: those who spent more time setting up their compositions revised less in the Chinese composition, but revised more in the English one. The interference of the mother language led to more revision (which was regarded as a beneficial element for it was expected to help the writers to express their feelings). They also found that in narrative writing tasks, the frequency of native language use is higher than in expository writing tasks. With the development of the students' EFL, the frequency of using their mother language was expected to decrease.

Reading comprehension strategies

Among the four basic language skills, reading comprehension is usually considered to be one of the most important skills to be acquired by university students learning English as a foreign language in China. Reading comprehension strategies refer to the skills that language learners use to help them overcome their problems in a reading task and accomplish their goals of understanding reading paragraphs. Strategies used by Chinese students to improve their reading proficiency include: fast reading (skimming and scanning), comprehensive reading, selective attention, taking notes, and so on. Like the study of writing strategies, the study of reading strategies in China is minimal.

In order to find out about the relation between learning strategies and the degree of reading fluency, L. J. Zhang (1999) surveyed students' strategies based on Carrell's (cf. 1989: 121f) general reading comprehension strategies chart. He found that three variables were beneficial for students' English reading improvement: self-assessment, guessing the meaning of the new words and vocabulary analysis.

In Upton & Lee-Thompson's (cf. 2001: 469f) study, there were 20 research subjects, half of them Chinese, half Japanese students. The results of this study provided us with some interesting findings: In the process of reading English as a foreign language, the mother tongue not only played the role of translation but also helped readers to identify words and sentences; to confirm understanding; to predict structures and contents of a text; and to monitor the characteristics of a text and of their own reading behavior.

4.2.2.3 Three general language learning strategies

In addition to the above strategies used in language practice interpreted by Rebecca Oxford, in this section I will discuss another three general language learning strategies: oral communication, vocabulary and grammar learning strategies. These strategies are comprehensive strategies and support the learning process of English language learners.

Oral communicative strategies

Oral communicative strategies include speaking and listening strategies. Oral communicative strategies are strategies that not only encompass approaches to conveying or passing informative and meaningful messages but also help learners to overcome social limitations or deal with problems in their daily communication. Williams et al. (2001) confirmed the important role that communicative strategies play in L2 learning because they enable learners to continue communicating, thus creating opportunities for learning through a prolonged exposure to L2 input. Some strategies more frequently used by Chinese students to improve their oral communicative ability include: role-plays, asking for clarification, repetition, body-language, and so on.

Among all the research in this field, the studies of Huang (1984) and Huang & Naerssen (1987) are probably the earliest reports concerning the oral communicative strategies of Chinese English language learners. The data from Huang & Naerssen (1987) are from Huang (1984) in which both questionnaires and interviews were applied. They learned that functional practice plays an important role in the process of foreign language learning and that the degree of fluency when reading aloud correlates with the overall oral fluency in conversation.

Siqing Chen (1990) focused on experimental research into the relationship between L2 learners' target language proficiency and their strategic competence. She devised certain concept-oriented tasks with 24 items to set up English communicative strategies of university English-major students with varying grades. The research sample consisted of 12 students. They were divided into two groups: one group of six second-year postgraduates and one group of six third-year undergraduates. She found that the frequency, type and validity of communicative strategies were related to the degree of fluency in the language. Students who are highly fluent use more communicative strategies (such as metacognitive, affective and social strategies) than those whose fluency is low. The difference between the mother tongue and the second language also influenced the subjects' choice of communicative strategy.

Defa Xiao et al. (2004) conducted a study of oral communication strategies to investigate whether age differences play a role in strategy use and whether there is a relationship between strategy use and oral achievement. Learners over 18 more frequently used communication strategies than those under 18 and high-score learners use more L2-based strategies than low-score ones. In another study, Jing Tian (2005) defined and classified communicative strategies, analyzed the students' ability to use communicative strategies when problems were encountered and looked at influencing factors in the use of communicative strategies. She also covered how to train the students to use communicative strategies more appropriately.

Vocabulary learning strategies

In the following, I will introduce another two general strategies: vocabulary learning strategies and grammar learning strategies. Vocabulary learning strategies play a very important role in English language learning and they are used in all language practices. Vocabulary learning strategies are a subset of general language learning strategies. Vocabulary learning strategies usually refer to the strategies that language learners use to help them to quickly and efficiently remember vocabulary and developing their lexical capacity. Višnja indicates that "as for the definition of vocabulary learning strategies, one may conclude that these are specific strategies utilized in the isolated tasks of learning vocabulary in the target language. However, they can be employed in all kinds of tasks." (2008: 52) Chinese students always use some methods or approaches to help them remember vocabulary and increase their vocabulary volumes. These strategies include memory cards, guessing, dictionary look-up, association, translation, classification, and so on.

As pointed out by Dai (cf. 2000: 138), research into vocabulary learning strategies conducted in China or concerned with Chinese EFL students is still weak in China. Recently, Gu (1994, 2002), Gu & Johnson (1996), Wu & Wang (1998), Wang (1998), Zhang (2001) and Zhang (2002b) have undertaken some research into vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary learning strategies of the Chinese students by combining and using the

quantitative and qualitative methods (cf. Zhang & Skuja-Steele, 2003). Among these, Yongqi Gu (cf. 1994, 1996, 2002) explored vocabulary learning strategies. On the basis of reading tasks, Gu's (1994) analyses of successful and unsuccessful language learners showed that qualitative and significant differences in terms of vocabulary learning strategies did exist, but that successful learners normally used more metacognitive and cognitive strategies than the unsuccessful learners. Gu & Johnson (1996) asked 850 sophomore non-English major students at Beijing Normal University to complete a vocabulary learning questionnaire and tried to find out the relationship between their learning outcome and their use of learning strategies. They found that these sophomore students used different language learning strategies: there were two metacognitive strategies – self-initiative and selective attention – that had a positive effect on achievement. They also found that strategies such as guessing from the discourse, skilfully using a dictionary, taking notes, paying attention to the forms of the words, and so on, had a positive effect on language achievements. In another investigation, Gu (2002) focused on vocabulary learning strategies. Here, the two key variables were gender and academic major. It was demonstrated that female students significantly outperformed their male counterparts in using vocabulary learning strategies. This was found to be related to their language outcomes in EFL learning. Academic majors, on the other hand, were found to have little differences in using vocabulary strategies. Gu (2003a) found some differences and many similarities in the use of vocabulary learning strategies of two successful EFL learners in China (cf. Tran, 2011).

In a descriptive vocabulary study of students learning English at Hong Kong University, M.Y. Fan (2003) identified important implications for strategy instruction. The earlier studies show, for example, that when students perceived that a strategy was useful, they used it more often than the strategies that they did not perceive as useful and, on the other hand, that students with higher vocabulary proficiency normally used strategies more often, even when they did not perceive them as useful. These findings suggested that students might use more language learning strategies if teachers convinced them of their usefulness.

Bei Zhang (2011) studied the strategies employed by Chinese English major students in vocabulary learning and discussed the differences between effective and less effective

learners in using them. The study was based on qualitative research and involved 35 college students. The data and the final analysis of the research indicated that there are significant differences between effective and less effective learners, and suggest some common points among effective learners in their use of vocabulary learning strategies.

Grammar learning strategies

Like vocabulary learning strategies, grammar learning strategies as supporting strategies go through all stages of language practices and help learners improve each of their language skills. Grammar strategies refer to methods that language learners use to enhance their mastery of correct grammar knowledge and language rules. The correct use of grammar is a very important part of foreign language ability, thus, research into grammar strategies is necessary. Like the strategies introduced above, Chinese students also use some strategies to improve their grammar knowledge and the strategies include: drills training, induction and deduction, summaries, learning by analogy, and so on.

Ying Huang's (2007) study took cognitive theories and language learning strategies as its theoretical foundation. This research employs a questionnaire and an interview as research instruments to investigate the use of grammar strategies by 171 non-English major vocational college students in the Broadcasting & Television College of Gansu Province. The findings show that most of the subjects agree that grammar learning is very important and they like to employ grammar strategies such as preview, review, relying on instruction, practice, translation, self-encouragement and self-comfort. However, they are not good at monitoring, error collection, drilling, and communicating strategies. As to the big categories of learning strategies, affective strategies are most frequently used and communicative strategies are least frequently used during the process of grammar learning. Another finding of this study shows that students with high language proficiency use more grammar strategies than those whose language proficiency is low. This research plays a role in helping other vocational college English teachers to realize the importance of grammar learning strategies and intentionally to weave grammar strategy training into regular classroom practice, and to raise students' consciousness of using grammar strategies.

Zaojun Chen's (2007) study adopted quantitative and qualitative methodologies to investigate the use of grammar learning strategies by English major sophomore students from Nanchang University. The findings show that the frequency of strategy use is at the medium level. Cognitive and social strategies are positive predictors of English grammar learning outcomes while metacognitive and affective strategies have no predictive power over English grammar learning outcomes. Furthermore, students with high proficiency use grammar strategies more than those with low language proficiency. These findings indicate that effective English grammar strategies will enhance English grammar learning and English teachers should provide strategy-based grammar teaching to help students become more proficient in the use of effective grammar strategies.

So far, development and research into language learning strategies, in particular, research of learning strategies conducted in China, has been introduced from the perspective of research methodologies and practical application of strategies in language skills. As the research focus of this study, listening comprehension strategies will be expounded in more detail in the following section.

4.3 Listening comprehension strategies research

4.3.1 The role of listening in foreign language acquisition

In the previous parts I have repeatedly stressed the fact that language is the most important element for social interaction, and as a major social symbol, language is primarily transmitted through speaking / listening, i.e., oral communication. Listening comprehension refers to the ability to identify and to understand what the others are saying. P. Emmert (1994) stresses that listening is not only hearing words but also an active process by which students receive and construct meaning from and respond to spoken and / or nonverbal messages. Language learning to a great extent depends on listening. Listening not only provides language learners with the aural input that enables them to interact in spoken

communication,¹²³ but also plays an extremely important role in the course of conducting successful oral communication and building up social intercourse. Listening comprehension (the process of understanding speech in a second or foreign language) assumes a very important position in foreign language acquisition. Bidabadi & Yamat state that

[L]istening is also not an easy skill to be acquired because it requires listeners to make meaning from the oral input by drawing upon their background knowledge of the world and of the second language and produce information in their long term memory and make their own interpretation of the spoken passages. (2011: 26)

As mentioned in Chapter 3, FLA refers to the acquisition of any foreign language after the acquisition of the mother tongue. In the course of acquisition – cognitive or intuitive processes of learning/acquiring L2 – language learners have to learn to listen in the foreign language. This can be compared to children learning to listen in their mother tongue as part of their natural language acquisition process. Language learners acquire their language skills through listening.¹²⁴ Empirical research has shown that only when language learners have some listening ability, can they produce language output and partake in a communicative occasion. Therefore, the prominent role of listening comprehension in language learning has caught the attention of many researchers. D. Nunan, for example, believes that “listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact over 50% of the time that students spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening.” (1998: 1)

Building on research that showed a close relationship between input adjustments and message comprehension, Rost states that “‘comprehensible input’ was a necessary condition for language learning” (2005: 93) and in this process of taking in the information and message, memory serves a very important role. Listeners have a limited memory capacity for the target language (cf. Richards, 1983). Thus, it is essential that foreign language learners should learn how to increase that capacity, i.e., acquire methods that can serve as “steps

¹²³ According to Feyten (1991), in daily communication, people allot 45% of the time to listening, 30% to speaking, 16% to reading, and only 9% to writing. Another survey conducted in the US suggested that an average person spent about 30% of their time speaking and 42% of their time listening (cf. Jou, 2010: 3f).

¹²⁴ It is assumed that there are two overlapping processes in L2 listening development: learning to listen in the L2 (that is, learning to understand spoken messages) and learning the L2 through listening (i.e., learning the syntax and lexis of the language through listening).

taken by learners to help them acquire, store, retrieve, and/or use information.” (Golchi, 2012: 116)

As learning to listen in the target languages and learning the target languages through listening is a crucial factor in L2 acquisition, a number of linguists and language researchers concentrate on strategies used for training listening comprehension. They hope that with the aid of listening comprehension strategies, language learners can form a set of good listening habits, train their listening in a more promising way, develop their listening ability and communicate successfully.

In my research, I will focus on the use of listening strategies among a specific group of Chinese students. I hope to investigate through quantitative research methods presented in the forms of a questionnaire, not only the use of listening strategies among Chinese non-English major students, but also the possible factors which influence the choice of listening strategies.

4.3.2 The definition of listening comprehension strategies

“Listening strategies are defined as conscious plans to manage incoming speech, particularly when the listener knows that he or she must compensate for incomplete input or partial understanding.” (Rost, 2005: 236) Considering the functions of language learning strategies applied to different language skills and specific language tasks, listening comprehension strategies refer to the strategies utilized for improving the students' listening comprehension or the strategies used in listening practices or activities. Listening comprehension strategies can also be regarded as the techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input. Listening comprehension strategies, according to Weinstein and Mayer (cf. 1986: 315), are behaviors and thoughts that a listener engages in during listening that are intended to influence the listener's sense-making processing. In addition, H. C. Teng (1998) defines listening comprehension strategies as mental processes that are activated by listeners to understand, learn, or to retain new information from utterances.

Like language learning strategies, listening comprehension strategies are extremely important for foreign language learners. M. Rost (1994) asserts the important role that the application of a range of strategies plays in leading to successful listening. The studies show that only when EFL learners are equipped with skilled listening comprehension strategies can they be expected to engage successfully in comprehension processes. S. Rixon's (1981) study shows that it is important for L2 learners to apply some or all of the strategies of native speakers, such as prediction or filtering for improving understanding. B. Goss (1982) proves that a competent listener should master many strategies and the knowledge of when to use them (cf. Chien & Li, 1998: 67).

Based on the theoretical structure of the classification of learning strategies constructed by Oxford (1990), as shown in Section 4.1.3, listening comprehension strategies can be divided into two subgroups: direct strategies including memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies and indirect strategies including metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies.

4.3.3 The relationship between language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies

After introducing the definition and classification of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies display distinct differences, I want to emphasize and explain their close mutual relationship from a theoretical and practical perspective.

Language is considered to be a system of communication by means of sound and writing; it operates through the organs of speech and hearing and uses vocal symbols processing arbitrary conventional meanings among members of a given community (cf. Pei, 1966: 141). Human beings, as individuals in a communicative society, have to learn language to transfer and convey their feelings, ideas and needs and to partake in the social communicative systems. Language learning is thus a process of exchanging input and output. Input information consists of listening and reading intake, while output information includes speaking and writing. Input can directly underlie the output information, since listening often

comes before speaking. Listening without speaking is also possible and we have a much higher receptive command of languages than a productive one. The same issue exists with reading and writing. Relying on Chomsky, Krashen's 'The Power of Reading' (1993) relates to his input hypothesis and stresses the effect of just reading on language acquisition. According to the language acquisition theories discussed above, Chomsky was concerned with utterances of children that they had generated themselves, without having heard them before. The research subjects in my study, however, are mature university students rather than small children. Listening comprehension strategies thus come into being when these learning strategies relate to listening practices and activities, as explained in Section 4.3.2. For this reason, listening comprehension strategies are not only part of language learning strategies but also play a leading role in learning strategies.

From a practical and pedagogic perspective, listening comprehension takes up an extremely important position in College English teaching and learning. It is not only considered to be one of the basic ways of acquiring linguistic knowledge and acquiring a language, but it is also an important means of ensuring language standardization and strengthening language practices.

The College English Curriculum Requirements¹²⁵ (2004) in China state that

[t]he objective of College English is to develop students' ability to use English in an all-round way, especially in listening and speaking, so that in their future work and social interactions they will be able to exchange information effectively through both spoken and written channels, and at the same time they will be able to enhance their ability to study independently and improve their cultural quality so as to meet the needs of China's social development and international exchanges.

From my own experience of both learning and teaching English as a foreign language, I can say that the most formidable obstacle for Chinese students on the way to grasping English lies in listening comprehension. In this regard, as the basic and core part of language learning, listening should be developed and improved. My research question concerns the

¹²⁵ The College English Curriculum Requirement was drawn up to provide colleges and universities with a guideline for teaching English to non-English major students. As for a detailed explanation of College, University and College English, please see Chapter 2.

potential contribution of listening comprehension strategies and aims to find out if the use of strategies really makes a difference. My research also tries to find out if listening comprehension strategies can function as an important complementary part of learning strategies to help language learners develop their listening ability. In the following, the difficulties in listening to English among Chinese students will be expounded in order to see what kinds of factors impede listening ability of Chinese students.

4.3.4 Difficulties in listening to English for Chinese students

Spoken language is a verbal symbol not only utilized for the speakers to express and deliver their thoughts or feelings, but it is also an important channel for listeners to receive certain information to ensure effective communication. Therefore, oral language is the most critical way for social interaction. Unfortunately, in the real process of language communication, especially in the socio-cultural context of the target language, the communicative result is not always satisfying. There may be several reasons to account for this phenomenon, but one of the most important and striking ones lies in poor listening comprehension which frequently impedes the speed of absorbing and processing language input and blocks the fluency of social intercourse.

Listening is a difficult skill to master in one's own language, let alone in a foreign language. One of the most difficult comprehension tasks even for advanced foreign language students is the comprehension of native speakers when they converse with each other. The results of Lu's (2008) study demonstrated that about 93.8% of students consider listening skills as more important than the other three skills. Consequently, having good listening comprehension skills has always been the main concern of EFL students who are studying English in a foreign language environment with little exposure to the target language. Therefore, they always want to develop their listening comprehension first when they enter university and the primary task of their foreign language teachers is to teach English in the authentic context especially for communicative purposes (cf. Bakhtiarvand & Adinevand, 2011: 112). Trying to solve the problems of poor listening comprehension challenges us to identify and consider the main problems of listening in a foreign language and how to

overcome them. Bearing these points in mind, I now proceed to present some reasons taken from my personal experience of teaching and learning English and from talking with students of English.

4.3.4.1 Problems from phonologies

The problems of listening to English have not only subjective but also objective aspects. As mentioned in the first chapter, great differences in phonology between English and Chinese are the biggest barriers that impede Chinese students who are learning English. Due to some similar phonemes between these two languages, Chinese students are likely to pronounce some English words according to Chinese pronunciation rules and tones. English has consonant clusters while Chinese does not, there is always a vowel between consonants in Chinese and thus Chinese students often add a vowel when they read English consonant clusters. For example, *sly* [slai] is pronounced as [sə'lai]. In English, words often end with consonants; while in Chinese, words always end with vowels in addition to (n) and (ng); therefore, Chinese students are likely to add a vowel after a consonant. For example, *bike* [baik] is sometimes pronounced as [baikə].

In addition to the above introduction of different pronunciation rules between Chinese and English, Chinese students always have problems differentiating some similar pronunciations. Two different phenomena can be addressed here: some Chinese students, including students involved in my study, for example, have problems distinguishing the long vowel /u:/ and short vowel /u/, thus, they might mix the minimal pairs like 'fool' and 'full', 'loose' and 'lose'; some students can also be puzzled when they hear 'He gave me a pat' and 'He gave me a pet'. In addition, they have problems with homophones and might try to produce two distinct sounds although only one is correct, such as between 'principal' and 'principle', between 'altar' and 'alter', between 'prey' and 'pray', between 'cite', 'site' and 'sight', between 'ensure' and 'insure', between 'steal' and 'steel', between 'story' and 'storey' and so on.

Obviously, incorrect English pronunciation has a negative influence on their listening ability. Therefore, mastering the correct English pronunciation is the most elementary

prerequisite to improving listening ability.

4.3.4.2 Lack of attention

In addition to the phonological aspect, another problem when listening to English lies in the level of attention. Listening to English requires a high level of attention. This is required for focusing one's consciousness¹²⁶ on an 'object' or 'train of thoughts'. Attention can be directed either externally or internally. "Attention is thus the beginning of involvement, which is the essential differentiation between simply hearing and listening." (Rost, 2002: 12) Let us suppose that during verbal communication in the target language the listener does not direct his/her attention to the speaker who is transmitting his/her thoughts and feelings. Then how can the listener receive and process the verbal symbols and give the corresponding responses? In our research of English learning and listening comprehension, it is not difficult to find out that many students, including my research subjects, have inefficient listening habits: when they listen to English, they cannot really pay attention to it, instead, their minds wander and they are frequently disturbed by other people or some background noises. Their insecurity/lack of confidence (see Section 4.3.4.5) could be another of those reasons that makes them self-conscious and less open. In view of this problem, many foreign language researchers have stressed the necessity of training language learners to direct their attention consciously when listening to English. Rebecca Oxford describes the metacognitive strategy of *Paying Attention*:

The strategy of paying attention is necessary for all of the language skills. This strategy involves two modes, directed attention and selective attention. Directed attention (almost equivalent to "concentration") means deciding generally or globally to pay attention to the task and avoid irrelevant distractors. In contrast, selective attention involves deciding in advance to notice particular details. (1990: 154)

4.3.4.3 Limited vocabulary

Another problem that language learners regularly encounter when listening to English is their limited vocabulary. New and rare words or phrases are their biggest headache and thus

¹²⁶ Consciousness is the most fundamental concept when we consider listening to be an active process (cf. Rost, 2005: 11).

become a major obstacle to understanding and interpreting the information received. We may often hear the students complaining about their poor English listening ability and limited vocabulary. This phenomenon is actually not an individual problem emerging from English learning and teaching, but a common problem for a lot of English learners. Given this, training language learners to use some effective strategies to overcome their lack of vocabulary seems very relevant. Although many foreign language researchers have tried to teach their students to use methods when listening in language classes, an important point is that students should communicate by means of some effective strategies themselves and try to train their global listening.

Certain listening comprehension strategies have been proposed to address the issues above. Rebecca Oxford's theory of memory strategies helps language learners to bridge their previous knowledge and any new language information, including new vocabulary. Among the taxonomy of her memory strategies are all four groups of strategies including centering mental linkage, applying images and sounds, reviewing well and employing action that can be used in listening. Some students wonder why they master certain words, but still have problems perceiving these words in real conversations even when native speakers are not speaking quickly. As we know, listening is primarily a cognitive activity, involving the activation and modification of concepts in the listener's mind. When language learners listen to English, their brains, according to the information processing paradigm of cognitive theory, will first perceive the information, knowledge and even individual words and then connect them with the existing schemas in order to comprehend what they have heard and respond or give feedback immediately. Therefore, language learners have to repeatedly practice vocabulary, phrases, idioms, sentences and other forms of language in meaningful contexts so that schemas can come into being and stay lastingly in their brains. In view of this, practice is not merely a cognitive activity but also plays a very important role in foreign language learning and listening comprehension training. Rebecca Oxford also emphasizes the significance of practice in learning a foreign language and provides us with some examples. She points out that among her theories of cognitive strategies, the strategy of *practicing, repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and*

using formulas and patterns as well as *practicing naturalistically* could be applied to listening skills. In addition, she further stresses that foreign language learners should not only use live speech, tapes, records, TV and other media to practice their listening comprehension but also ought to make friends with native speakers of the target language in order to further train their listening and communicative abilities (cf. 1990: 69f).

4.3.4.4 Lack of background knowledge

Fourthly, some listening difficulties arise because of the cross-cultural perspective. As was mentioned before, language as a verbal symbol used for social intercourse is not only a communicative instrument, but also reflects the cultural and social knowledge of a certain community or group. Therefore, the cultural uncertainties between different languages communities are a big barrier when people communicate who do not share a language. This obstructs normal communication among the foreign language learners, especially in their listening comprehension. Although some foreign language learners can understand what they have heard word for word, they still have problems in grasping and comprehending the deep and real meaning of the new information because they lack cultural knowledge of the target language. For example, in Chinese culture, a dog is regarded as a very humble animal. Chinese idioms with dogs always have a derogatory meaning. However, in English-speaking countries, people hold different ideas about dogs. Therefore, English idioms use dogs to describe personal behavior, e.g., ‘Every dog has his day’, ‘Love me, love my dog’, etc. Likewise, Chinese people show their love for cats and dragons while people from English speaking backgrounds do not. Therefore, trying to inform language learners of the cultural background of the foreign language and conducting research into cross-cultural pragmatics could help them more easily comprehend the target language. Weidong Dai & Zaoxiong He maintain that “language is a kind of cultural expression. It is very necessary for students to know some background about English-speaking countries, such as the history, culture, customs and habits, even lifestyles.” (2002: 12) To cater for this purpose, many researchers have put forward strategies to help learners to overcome their limitations of cultural knowledge. In Oxford’s description of compensation strategies, she also suggests that

[g]eneral background knowledge (including knowledge of the target culture, knowledge of the topic under discussion, and general world knowledge of current affairs, art, politics, and literature) helps language learners to make guesses about what they hear or read. (1990: 93)

4.3.4.5 Lack of confidence

Another big problem when listening to a foreign language lies within the language learners themselves. This is known as the intrinsic factor. Some language learners are short of confidence and full of nervousness. For example, when they listen to English, they will feel nervous or anxious, and this negative affect influences their listening outcome and “is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure” (Oxford, 1990: 140). However, some good language learners know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning and can use their own methods to regulate their feelings before listening to English, such as listening to a favorite song or deep breathing. A host of research facts has shown that positive emotions and attitudes can make language learning far more effective and enjoyable and help learners reduce their anxiety and relax. Therefore, as language teachers, we should not only convey knowledge to our students but also encourage them to overcome their nervous emotion and build up their confidence in learning English and in training listening comprehension. Seeing the importance of the affective factor, a lot of language researchers have carried out research into affective strategies, trying to guide learners’ foreign language learning by means of positive and effective strategies. For instance, Rebecca Oxford (1990) puts forward the following affective strategies: *lowering your anxiety*, *encouraging yourself* and *taking your emotional temperature*. These can also be used with any of the four language skills. *Lowering your anxiety* is often used by Chinese students to help them regulate their nervous feelings and help them calm down. ‘Encouraging yourself’ means that language learners first encourage themselves so that they are full of confidence when they listen to English. This strategy is also used more often among English teachers when they encourage their students and help them build their confidence in learning English.

4.3.4.6 Lack of English language environment

The sixth and last point is related to the English learning environment. As we know, the English environment in China is quite different from other countries. The lack of good language environment is a very important factor leading to poor English listening comprehension. In China, there are insufficient opportunities for language learners to use English in real-life situations and lack of exposure to authentic English language material. In addition, due to China's examination-oriented education, most students learn English only for passing an examination or getting a better job and not for real conversation.

Therefore, trying to create a good learning environment for English becomes very important. Language learners should be engaged in English activities and find opportunities to train their listening comprehension and oral communicative ability.

As for this perspective, Oxford proposes some strategies and urges the language learners to try to seek practice opportunities:

Language learners must seek out – or create – opportunities to practice any and all of the four language skills. If students want to reach moderate to high proficiency, classroom time cannot usually provide adequate practice opportunities. Therefore, students will need to find additional chances to practice the language and must realize it is up to them to search for these occasions. (1990: 160)

4.3.5 Research into listening comprehension strategies abroad and in China

Research into listening comprehension strategies originated from the Western countries in the 1980s. Most of the early research was concerned about finding out differences in the use of listening comprehension strategies among the learners, the relationship between their uses of listening comprehension strategies and listening proficiency as well as the possibility to teach these listening strategies to the unsuccessful and ineffective listeners. A study carried out by O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper (1989) aimed at discovering the differences between the different types of strategies used by effective listeners and those used by ineffective listeners. Ross & Rost (1991) first identified the listening comprehension strategies used by higher

proficiency students and then successfully taught these to students with lower listening proficiency. S. M. Bacon's (1992) study about how listeners adjust their strategies to the difficulty of the input was carried out by listening to authentic texts and materials in Spanish in order to investigate and judge them on the basis of speed, familiarity and the type of information. Consequently, Bacon suggested that learners should try to use more authentic texts or messages to practise their listening skills and build up their self-confidence in future linguistic interactions in the target language.

K. A. Carrier (2003) studied listening comprehension strategies and focused on academic listening tasks. This study involved a small group of high school ESL students and included both bottom-up and top-down approaches to listening.¹²⁷ The study was conducted over a period of six weeks in total. Selective attention and note-taking were the two strategies taught. The teacher first defined and modelled the strategies and then provided the students with an opportunity to practise. The result of pre-test and post-test revealed that students significantly improved both bottom-up and top-down approaches.

In the 1990s, some empirical and practical studies on listening comprehension strategies related to Chinese students learning English as a foreign language appeared in China. Like the early research conducted in the Western countries, some of the studies concerning listening comprehension strategies were also undertaken to find out what kinds of listening strategies were most frequently used to improve listening proficiency and the primary differences in listening comprehension strategies used by successful and unsuccessful listeners.

C. Goh (1998) reported on some Chinese students' listening comprehension strategies that studied ESL in Singapore. Their major was English for Academic Purposes. Her analysis showed that the students whose listening was good used more learning strategies and learning skills than those whose listening was poor. The cognitive strategies (inferring, explaining, predicting, etc.) used by the two groups were $M=11$ to $M=6.9$.¹²⁸ The

¹²⁷ Top-down and bottom-up are two major approaches to explaining the listening process. The bottom-up approach views comprehension as a process that listeners first decode the smallest elements of what they hear. In contrast, the top-down approach refers to the process that understanding starts from the listener's background knowledge of the non-linguistic context and then works down towards the individual sounds.

¹²⁸ M refers to the mean value that the students use of the above mentioned strategies.

metacognitive strategies (selective attention, understanding monitor, understanding evaluation, instant evaluation of language input, etc.) used by them were $M=8.5$ to $M=5.5$. The students who had poor listening comprehension were not good at using metacognitive strategies. Goh (1999) did another survey of the students' listening strategies and their concrete tactics when using these strategies. Thanks to the retrospective reports of the subjects, she found 44 listening tactics. After comparing two retrospective reports, she found that they used many similar strategies, but the person who was more capable could use the metacognitive and cognitive strategies more efficiently.

In the past ten years, it seems that Chinese researchers have increasingly turned their attention to studies of listening comprehension strategies among a particular group of research subjects. The research related to listening strategies and English major or non-English major students is of great importance as it shows the effect of exploiting listening comprehension strategies.

For example, C. M. Yang (2004) investigated the listening comprehension strategies employed by English major students in China. The study was aimed at finding out which listening comprehension strategies were being used by them and what the relationship between listening strategies and listening proficiency and the differences in strategy use between successful and unsuccessful listeners was like. The subjects involved in this study were 106 English juniors from three universities in Shandong Province. The theories and design of the questionnaire in this study adopted O'Malley & Chamot's classification of language learning strategies. The results of this study revealed that:

- a. English-major students use inferencing, note-taking, directed attention, selective attention, elaboration and affective strategies more frequently, but they use social, monitoring and mother-tongue strategies least frequently. Among the three major types of listening strategies, cognitive strategies are used most frequently and social/affective strategies least frequently.
- b. There is a correlation between listening strategies and listening proficiency, but the correlation is very weak.

- c. There are great differences in the use of directed attention, functional planning, self-management and affective strategies between successful and unsuccessful listeners.

The findings of this research are not only helpful for language learning and teaching, but also for the study of language learning strategies. However, there are some obvious limitations to this research, such as the objectivity of the research samples and self-designed questionnaire.

J. L. Huang (2005) published her study on listening comprehension strategies employed by 149 non-English majors at a Chinese agricultural university. In this study, the classification of listening strategies was based on O'Malley's distinction between metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, translation strategies, and social / affective strategies. This classification is different from my research which is based on Oxford's classification. The findings of this study showed that:

- a. Metacognitive, formal and social / affective strategies are most often used, but translation strategies are the least used.
- b. There is a positive correlation between listening strategies and listening performance, but the correlation is slight.
- c. There are differences in employing listening strategies between successful and unsuccessful listeners: the former apply more strategies more frequently.

L. H. Chen's (2006) study involved 90 non-English major students from a Chinese Art Institute and was also based on O'Malley's classification of language learning strategies. It inquired into the characteristics of listening comprehension strategies used by non-English majors, the relationship between listening comprehension strategies and listening outcome and the differences in using these strategies by good listeners and poor ones. After analyzing the data, she drew three major conclusions:

- a. Non-English majors use more metacognitive and cognitive strategies in the process

of listening comprehension, but less social / affective strategies.

- b. There is a significant difference between listening strategies and listening outcome.
- c. Good listeners use more listening comprehension strategies and use them more frequently than poor listeners.

Qiong Li's (2008) empirical study on *Language Self-efficacy and Listening Comprehension Strategies of Non-English Majors in EFL Context* centred on analyzing the effects on non-English major learners' language self-efficacy and listening strategies on their academic achievements. The goal of this was to enlighten teachers and educators about methods of teaching English more effectively. The results of this research revealed that:

- a. There is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and listening achievements, between the use of listening strategies, in particular, the use of social/affective strategies and listening achievements, and between self-efficacy and the use of listening comprehension strategies.
- b. There are no differences in self-efficacy and application of listening comprehension strategies between different genders.
- c. Self-efficacy has more prediction on English learning than the use of listening comprehension strategies.

Other research was also carried out in Liu, et al., 2007; Zhou, et al., 2007; Huang, et al., 2009; Zhang, et al., 2009; Xu, et al., 2010 and so on.

Of course, the above research and findings play a more or less significant role in the research of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies. However, despite the abundance of research on listening comprehension strategies, much of the research is still not very satisfying. Several issues still need to be taken into consideration. First, the subject pool involved in the studies was never big enough and the students chosen did not represent the average students. Second, we can also see that all of the studies were limited to finding the quantitative and qualitative differences in language learning strategies or listening comprehension strategies used by students. Third, there has been no fully

systematic research considering the learning conditions of English in the socio-cultural context of Chinese EFL students. Fourth, the previous research was focused either on evaluating the relationship between listening comprehension strategies and listening outcome or on listening strategies training. Fifth, the previous research has seldom covered the different categories of listening comprehension strategies and their influences on listening proficiency. Nor does it consider the potential factors which can affect students' choices of listening comprehension strategies and conscious or unconscious use of these strategies. In view of these issues, I have chosen a relatively large sample of students as my research subjects and an elaborately-designed questionnaire as my research tool. With these I will investigate the differences in using listening comprehension strategies between the successful and unsuccessful listeners, correlation between the use of listening strategies and listening proficiency, conscious or unconscious use of listening strategies and correlation between listening proficiency, use of listening strategies and conscious level of using these strategies among Chinese non-English major students.

4.4 Factors affecting the choice of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies

From the above discussion of language learning strategies and the specific case of listening comprehension strategies, we have already gained a thorough view of these two concepts and how they are used in language learning and teaching. A number of empirical studies seem to indicate that differences exist in the use of these strategies among different groups of students and language learners. Indeed, even students with similar language proficiency sometimes seem to choose their strategies differently. In view of this consideration, another question surfaces: what might the factors be that affect the choice of strategy among language learners? It goes without saying that if we know a lot about the characteristics of language learning of a certain group of people, including their usage of learning strategies, the frequency, the effectiveness and even the factors influencing their strategy choice, we can think about how this knowledge can be used in language teaching. We can also learn to use the strategies in the course of their language learning much more professionally. Only when

we know the reasons, can we try to help the language learners to overcome factors that have a negative influence on their learning processes. Therefore, the research into the factors influencing the strategy choice of language learners is also important and needs to be considered and investigated. Višnja asserts that

[i]ndividuals construct their own reality and, therefore, acquire different types of knowledge in different ways, even in what seem to be highly similar situations. This means that among learners there are individual differences in the way each and every one of them acquires the L2. Individual differences are considered a powerful factor in language acquisition.¹²⁹ (2008: 28)

Various factors may influence learners' choice of learning strategies. R. Ellis (2008) assumes that these factors include: (a) learner factors and (b) social and situational factors. Oxford suggests the following factors: “degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language.” (1990: 13) Oxford & Nyikos present 14 factors related to the choice of language learning strategies, including the language being learned, the level of language learning such as proficiency or course, the degree of metacognitive awareness, sex, affective variables such as attitudes, motivation, and language learning goals, specific personality traits, overall personality type, learning style, career orientation or field of specialization, national origin, aptitude, language teaching methods, task requirements and types of strategy training (cf. 1989: 291f).

Oxford's point of view about the factors influencing the choice of strategies is a very general one, which covers all language learners from different countries with different cultural backgrounds, ages, and stages of learning, with different task requirements, different learning styles, different motivation levels, different learning purposes and so on. J. Reid (1995) compares the uses of language learning strategies between Hispanic and Japanese ESL/EFL students and confirms the view that cultural backgrounds affect strategy (cf. Oxford, 1996).

With the help of Oxford's concepts and suggestions of the possible factors, some

¹²⁹ Individual differences including language aptitude, motivation, cognitive style, learning level, learning style, gender, beliefs and cultural traits could be the factors that influence the choice of the learning strategies.

research concerning cultural and ethnic factors contributing to differences in the choices of language learning strategies has been done, e.g., D. Bedell's (1993) research which was focused on 353 students taking English classes at six secondary and tertiary level institutes in China. The final results of this research showed that compensation strategies were most frequently used both by Chinese students domestically and by Chinese students studying in the US (cf. Chang, 1990) and in Taiwan (cf. Yang, 1993a, and 1993b). In contrast, N. D. Yang's (1993a) and J. Oh's (1992) study indicated that memory strategies were less frequently used among Chinese and Korean students. All of the research and findings suggested that cultural factors (such as the way schooling is done in the different countries) played an important role in the selection of language learning strategies (cf. Yang, 2007: 36).

However, culture is merely one of the variables that affect the use of language learning strategies. A lot of investigations are done on subjects with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Then what are the concrete influencing factors in researching subjects of the same culture? What is more, apart from Oxford's general opinions, almost no research has been done into the factors influencing the choice of the students' learning strategies use in listening, speaking, reading and writing. This also gives me much more motivation and encouragement to conduct my investigation. In my research, I will focus on Chinese students of a certain range of age, similar learning level (the learning level here refers to the students chosen from the same university year) and with certain task requirements – listening comprehension in their CET-Band 4. I will try to explore their use of listening comprehension strategies and, in addition, try to excavate Chinese socio-cultural traits in order to account for the phenomenon of how the subjects in my research choose listening comprehension strategies and how the socio-cultural variable affects their choices and uses of these strategies.

4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter firstly discusses the definition and classification of language learning strategies and then introduces the research of language learning strategies in the light of their practices in each language skill. As the core research topic, listening comprehension strategies has also

been elaborated with the focus on discussing the role of listening in FLA, the relationship between them and language learning strategies, the special problem of listening to English among Chinese students and the empirical research done in China. With these theoretical backgrounds in mind, I shall now embark upon introducing my research methods and quantitative data analysis.

Chapter 5: Research methodology

“Quantitative research is typically defined along the notion that data are presented in a numerical form that is suitable for mathematical analyses.”

Aliaga & Gunderson (2002:1)¹³⁰

After the literature review and the introduction to the Chinese cultural context, I now move on to the question of research method. It plays a very important role in connecting the theoretical and practical sections of my research. This chapter about methodology needs to be considered as the core part of this dissertation.

Monique Hennink and her collaborators have stated that “a critical part of any research report is the methodology. The research methodology tells the reader what was actually done, how it was done and why it was done this way.” (2011: 274)

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the quantitative method applied – a self-designed questionnaire – and reveals the framework upon which this study is based.

5.1 Research method: a quantitative design

In this research, a quantitative method, in the form of a field questionnaire, will be applied. The purpose of this is to propose, develop, formulate, analyse, verify and present the hypotheses, research purposes and research questions as well as the final results of my investigation. The standards of choosing the research samplings for quantitative data collection will not only be based on the research questions and aims but also on the classification of the Chinese universities.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Martha Aliaga (November 25, 1937- October 15, 2011) is a world-renowned educator, statistician, and director of education at the American Statistical Association. Brenda Gunderson is a senior lecturer at the University of Michigan Department of Statistics in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

¹³¹ A detailed explanation of Chinese universities is to be found in Chapter 2.

More specifically, my research was conducted by means of a quantitative approach, involving quantitative research and analysis. Initially this research started with a pilot interview based on a questionnaire that was designed and constructed in the light of findings of previous scientific studies and other origins or resources.¹³² The questionnaire was revised according to the contents and results of the pilot interview I launched in China. Only then was the final questionnaire generated. Secondly, the reconstructed questionnaire was carried out among the selected samplings, and after launching the questionnaire, the quantitative data were collected and then processed in a SPSS program. Thirdly, the collected data were regrouped and analysed within an SPSS program. This covered the students' grades in listening comprehension as well as the supporting information obtained through my talk with the students.

In this method matrix, quantitative research helped me to check my hypothesis based on Oxford's theory – to confirm the variables of the categories using confirmatory factor analysis and to interpret the results which account for the first, second and third research questions (see Figure 5.1 below). An in-depth analysis of these concrete research steps will be provided in the following chart:

In order to better understand the following chart, I have to firstly explain two terms here. *Primary* data refers to my experiences of learning English and using language learning strategies, my own research in the fields of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies and my discussions with professors and other PhD students as well. *Secondary* data refers to the knowledge or research from previous researchers or linguists.

¹³² The resources and origins from which the questionnaire was designed will be listed in the following chapter.

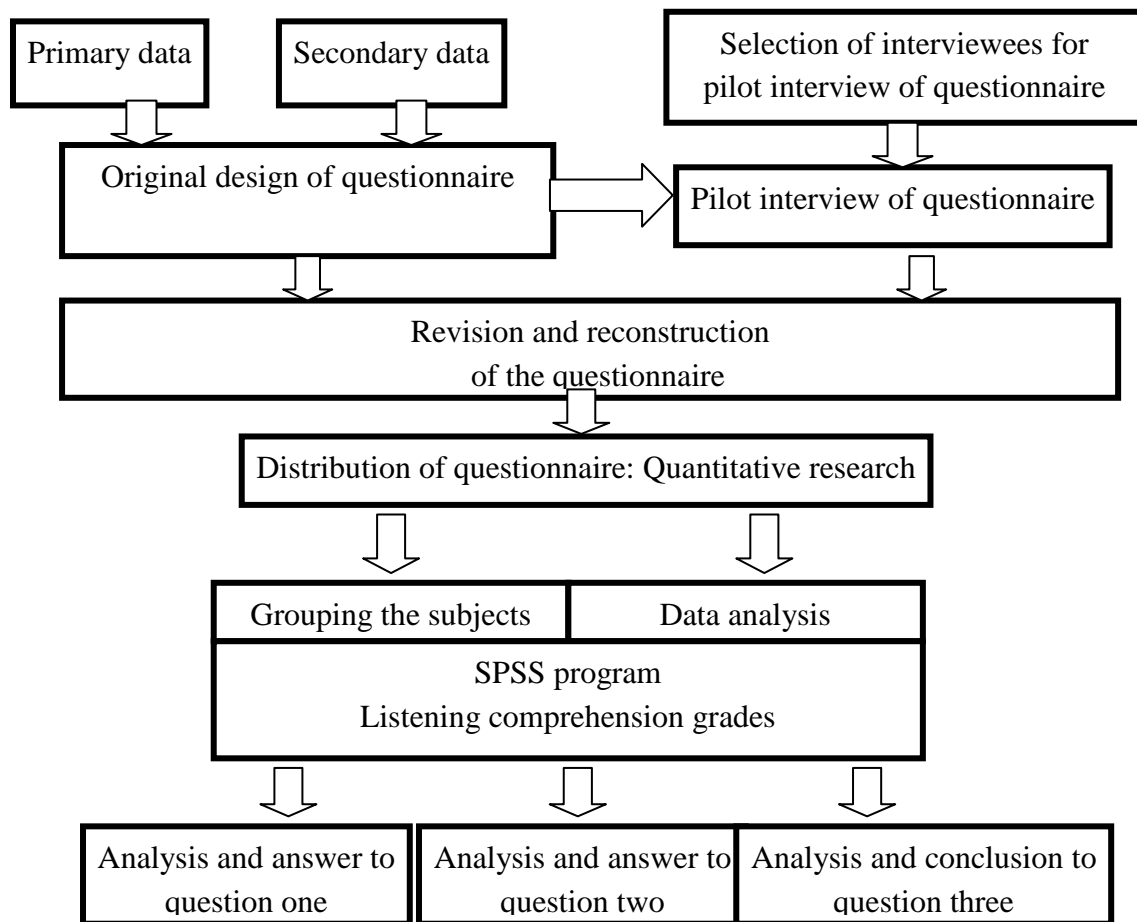


Figure 5.1 The quantitative design of this study

5.2 Quantitative data collection

A quantitative design was applied to the above-mentioned questionnaire and to the collection of the data generated from the survey. In order to interpret this step more clearly and understandably, I will now turn to the introduction and presentation of the selected research sample, the construction and the improvement of the questionnaire, the concrete procedure of launching the final questionnaire in the field as well as the explanation of data entry.

5.2.1 Research sample

In the process of explaining and presenting quantitative research, sample choice is a very important procedure. Quantitative research sampling is used to measure the selected

members of a certain group from a population. In order to represent this population as accurately as possible, the sampling chosen here must be representative of the whole population¹³³ to be studied. Therefore, in the following contents, the samplings will be introduced and described in detail.

5.2.1.1 Selection of research samplings

In this research, the selected samplings are the sophomore students from Anyang Institute of Technology in China. The students were chosen with the help of their English teachers. Sophomore students refer to the second-grade students who registered for their study in the year of 2008. Compared with freshmen, junior or senior students, the sophomore students are more suitable as the research sampling. The reasons for choosing the sophomore students from AIT in this research are the following:

To begin with, after one year of studying at university, sophomore students have gradually become used to university life and most of them have already taken part in the CET-Band 4 that is used as a very important criterion in this study to evaluate their listening ability. This makes them suitable to be chosen for conducting the questionnaire; in addition, one year later, it is still easy to recruit these samplings to conduct an interview with me in order to find more information to test my hypothesis, to respond to the research questions and to explain and interpret the research results.

In addition to that, Anyang Institute of Technology (AIT) is a general university in Henan Province providing four-year programmes with a focus on science and engineering. The Province is the largest in China. According to the statistics of the People's Government of Henan Province, the population of Henan Province was about 99.18 million in 2008, and grew to 104.89 million by the end of 2011. This figure is equivalent to about 1.5% of the global population.

One more thing, almost 60 per cent of the universities in Henan Province stay at a level with AIT, even in the whole country; there are a large number of universities belonging to

¹³³ The whole population to be studied are students from universities that do not belong to Project 211 or Project 985 introduced in Chapter 2.

this level.¹³⁴ What is more, most of the students (non-English majors) studying at this kind of university have only studied English under an input-poor environment in order to satisfy the Foreign Language Requirements for graduation. English is a compulsory subject during the first two years of their four-year university programme with an average of four hours of classroom (each class hour lasts fifty minutes) exposure per week. They have no extra audio training in their English study programme or they have very few chances to get any listening strategies from their teachers in class. Therefore, they have relatively poor listening abilities and little awareness of how to use listening strategies in their foreign language study.

5.2.1.2 Description of research samplings

Most of the subjects¹³⁵ have been studying English as a required subject for about eight or nine years including three years of junior middle school, three years of senior high school and two years of university, and their ages range from 20 to 22. The total number of students involved in this research was up to more than 1,300 students.¹³⁶ The following is a brief description of the research subjects¹³⁷ according to their majors and the provinces they are from. These could be regarded as the two main factors¹³⁸ verifying the objectivity and representativeness of the research sampling.

¹³⁴ This level means that AIT does not belong to the level of 211 or 985 universities but is higher than those three-year program colleges. As explained in the previous chapter, only a few universities are from 211 or 985 level. Therefore, students from AIT can better represent the average Chinese university students.

¹³⁵ Eight or nine years of learning English is an average time. Through my talk with the students, I found that most of the students began to study English during their junior middle school, others studied one year more in the junior middle school or in the senior middle school due to resitting the junior high school or university entrance examination. Some students started to learn English from primary school. This group, however, is quite small.

¹³⁶ After evaluating the questionnaire, I found out that the research sample consisted of 1,324 students. The real sample coded into the SPSS program was less than the number because some questionnaires were deemed invalid because of the way in which the students answered. More than one third of the sophomore students took part in my research.

¹³⁷ The number mentioned above is different from the original one, because I removed some invalid survey papers during data entry. Therefore, the samplings involved here are all the valid ones.

¹³⁸ In the previous chapter, I introduced the unbalanced distribution of Chinese universities and colleges as well as the number of the non-English major students. This constitutes the primary rational evidence for verifying the objectivity and representativeness of my research sample.

Introduction to the majors of the samplings¹³⁹

As explained before, the research subjects chosen for this study are non-English major students from Anyang Institute of Technology. The sample covers 21 different majors from several departments such as: Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Architecture Engineering, Economy and Management, Social Science, Art and Design, and the Farming & Veterinary Department. The concrete names of these 21 majors are listed in the figure below and are displayed according to the time in which they were surveyed:¹⁴⁰

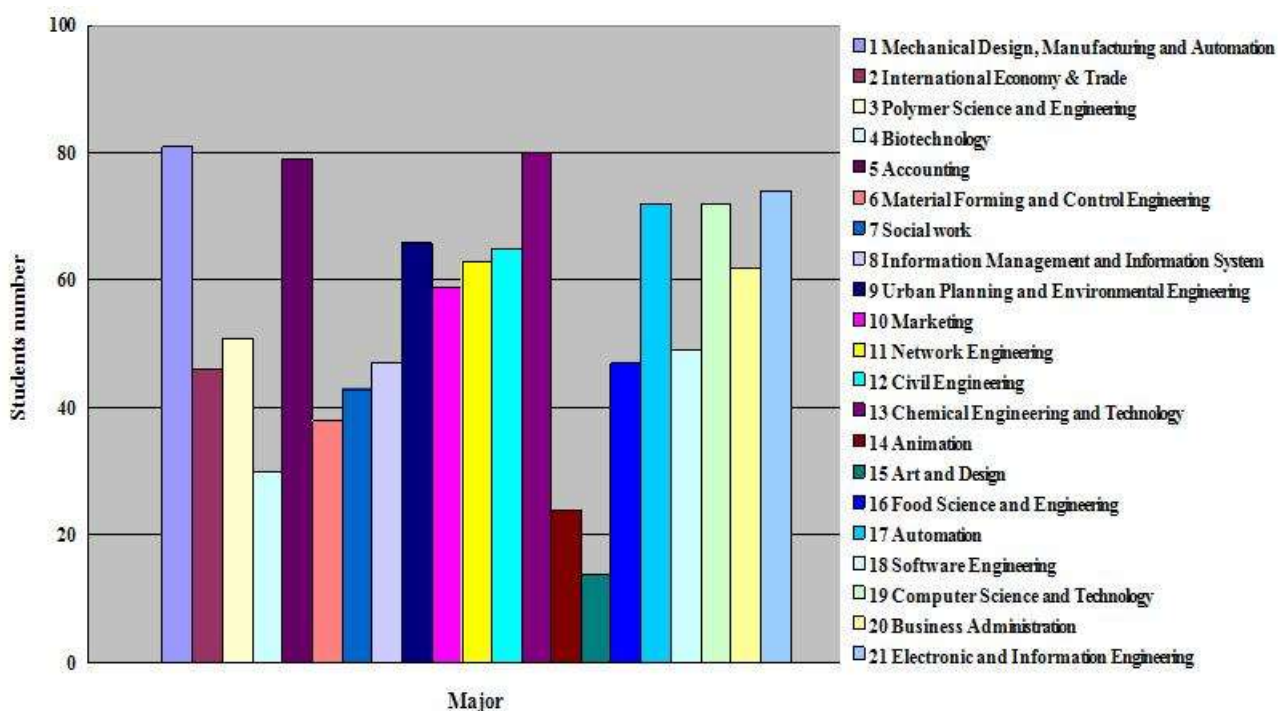


Figure 5.2 Distribution of sample according to the majors

In the above figure, the columns of the horizontal axis (major) stand for the 21 different

¹³⁹ The sophomore students from AIT belong to 31 different majors. In my survey, there are students from 21 of these majors.

¹⁴⁰ The later coding of these 21 different majors – as one of the variables in SPSS program – was also done according to this order.

majors, which were just presented and numbered according to the order in which they were imported into the SPSS program. The vertical axis (frequency) stands for the total number of students from each major.

Introduction to the origins of the samplings

In addition, the sample chosen for this questionnaire is also geographically sprinkled over 21 different places (including 17 provinces, three autonomous regions and one municipality city);¹⁴¹ however, most of the students are from Henan Province. The precise distribution and information of the places the subjects are from is presented and numbered in the following map. The order of the numbers is in accordance with the emergence of the provinces when they were coded into the program:¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Including Taiwan, China has altogether 23 Provinces, 4 Municipalities, 5 Autonomous Regions and 2 Special Administrative Regions. The subjects in my study are from Henan Province, Hebei Province, Shanxi Province, Shandong Province, Guangxi Province, Zhejiang Province, Fujian Province, Anhui Province, Jiangsu Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Hainan Province, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Liaoning Province, Sichuan Province, Jiangxi Province, Guizhou Province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, Jilin Province, Shaanxi Province, Hunan Province and the City of Tianjin. In the following figure, the number in blue stands for Provinces, number in green for Autonomous Regions and number in red for Municipality.

¹⁴² The 21 different places are also numbered in the SPSS program in the process of coding, for example, Henan Province is numbered as 1, Hebei Province is numbered as 2, and so on.

Chinese places which research samplings are from

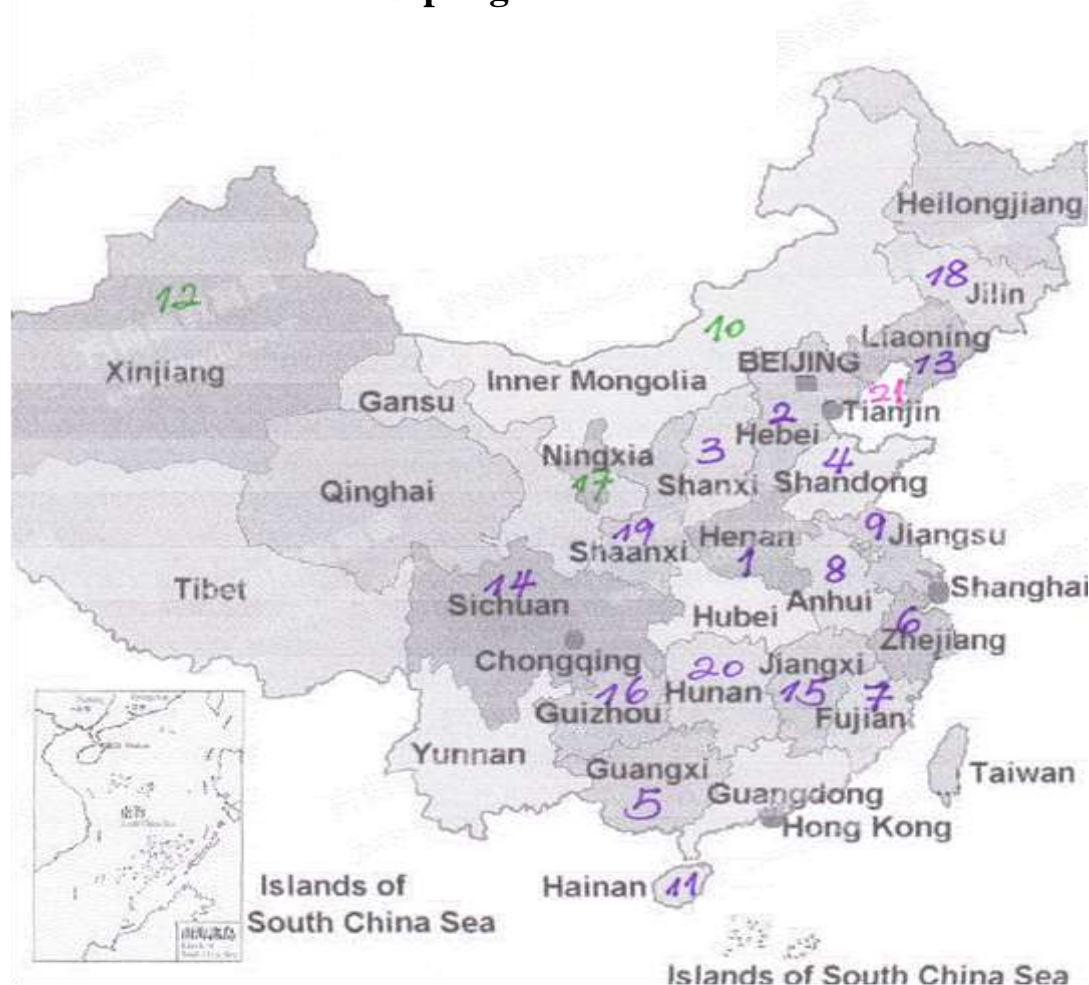


Figure 5.3 Distribution of sample according to the provinces they are from

5.2.2 Construction of questionnaire¹⁴³

“The most frequently used method for identifying students’ learning strategies is through questionnaires.” (Chamot, 2005: 115) Like all the questionnaires used for scientific and empirical research and used as a type of instrument for collecting data where the goal is to look for differences (cf. Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011: 126), the listening strategy questionnaire in this investigation is also a very useful and practical survey technique

¹⁴³ The questionnaire is also a research instrument in this study, besides which the other two instruments I use in this paper are SPSS 16 and the CET-Band 4 test.

designed to test the use of listening comprehension strategies and the consciousness of applying these strategies in English learning as well as in listening training among a specific group of Chinese non-English major students. The purpose of conducting this survey is to find out what kinds of listening strategies they use more frequently or infrequently, to compare how they use these strategies, to confirm the level of consciousness of their use of these strategies as well as to uncover some possible reasons from a cross-cultural perspective that underlie the choices and application of listening strategies among all the research subjects involved in this research.

5.2.2.1 Research questions and design of the questionnaire

The design and construction of my questionnaire was based on a literature review process and category matrices. It went through several steps from the original design to the completion of the final version. The original questionnaire was first drafted in English from August 2009 to February 2010 and was then translated into Chinese¹⁴⁴ in March of the same year.

The original questionnaire included two sections. The first section served the primary purpose of getting an overall picture of the basic knowledge and information of the subjects, consisting of a brief explanation of the purpose of this study, a short introduction to answering the questionnaire, a personal investigation of their matriculation number¹⁴⁵ and the provinces they were from. Besides this information, another criterion was their marks in the recent listening comprehension test¹⁴⁶ in CET-Band 4. The second section was regarded as the principal part. It was made up of 44 items¹⁴⁷ relating to six different categories of listening comprehension strategies that were defined, classified, suggested and applied by

¹⁴⁴ The Chinese version of the questionnaire was translated and modified with the aid of some Chinese professors and English teachers.

¹⁴⁵ The purpose of recording the matriculation number was to help me find the subjects for the later interview more easily.

¹⁴⁶ In order not to influence the feelings of the subjects and to get relatively objective results, I got a list of their marks in listening comprehension instead of putting it as a question item in the first section of the questionnaire. The marks were coded into the SPSS program as an important variable.

¹⁴⁷ The questionnaire was constructed with 44 items that equal 44 different strategies. After carrying out the pilot questionnaire interview, I cut down the research question items to 36, since eight of them were either confusing to the students or impractical.

Rebecca Oxford. Among these strategies, 5 items tested for memory strategies, 7 items for cognitive strategies, 7 items for compensation strategies, 12 items for metacognitive strategies, 5 items for affective strategies and 8 items for social strategies.¹⁴⁸ In addition, each item was followed by a 4-point Likert scale ranging from ‘Never’, ‘Sometimes’, ‘Often’ to ‘Always’. Furthermore, each item contained another question asking the research subjects if they consciously used this listening comprehension strategy or not.¹⁴⁹ Finally, the content and layout of the main questionnaire were drawn up with the help of primary¹⁵⁰ and secondary knowledge, including the following resources:

1. my own experiences of English learning and teaching, especially the investigation and training of English listening comprehension, my research on listening comprehension strategies as well as my observation and knowledge about how Chinese students learn and listen to spoken English
2. my understanding of the real conditions and the Chinese cultural context under which Chinese university non-English major students learn English and train their listening comprehension
3. previous studies of other researchers in the field of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies included in academic publications
4. a basic model of listening strategies drafted by Andrew D. Cohen, Rebecca L. Oxford and Julie C Chi
5. the application and training of listening strategies suggested by R. L. Oxford in: *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know* (1990)

¹⁴⁸ The design of the questionnaire was based on the classification of strategies put forth by Oxford, claiming that there are six kinds of strategies. After investigating the Chinese students within the domain of these six categories of strategies, I found that strategies for western students are different from those for Chinese students. This means that the meaning of the strategies is different between western and Chinese students. The details will be explained in a later part.

¹⁴⁹ In order to evaluate the level of consciousness that the research samples used listening comprehension strategies, I asked the students to self-evaluate if they used these strategies consciously or unconsciously. Since consciousness or unconsciousness is difficult to measure, research subjects’ self-evaluation and self-report should be the most suitable and simplest method to obtain the corresponding data.

¹⁵⁰ Primary knowledge not only includes my own knowledge, understandings and experiences but also the results of the discussions from colloquiums. The secondary knowledge includes the findings of previous research conducted by other researchers included in books, articles and other archives.

6. strategies identified and described in A. D. Cohen's *Language learning: Insights for learners, teachers, and researchers*. NY: Newbury House/Harper Collins, 1990
7. results from some colloquia held by the Didaktik der sprachlichen und ästhetischen Fächer der Fakultät EPB der Universität Hamburg
8. suggestions from some professors from Germany and China¹⁵¹

In short, on the one hand, the design and construction of the questionnaire was based on the theoretical framework of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies suggested and constructed by previous researchers. On the other hand, the questionnaire could also be applied to investigate my hypothesis and its theoretical framework. The following research questions are relevant in my study:

1. To what extent are listening comprehension strategies used by non-English major university students in China to improve their listening proficiency?
 - 1.1) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are often used by them to improve their listening proficiency?
 - 1.2) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are less frequently used by them?
2. What are the differences and similarities in the use of listening comprehension strategies between high and low scoring students?
 - 2.1) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies do the students with relatively high and low listening proficiency utilize more frequently to train their listening proficiency?
 - 2.2) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies do the students with relatively high and low listening proficiency use less frequently?

¹⁵¹ The professors include: Helene Decke-Cornill (Educational Department at Hamburg University), Andreas Bonnet (Educational Department at Hamburg University), Rosemarie Mielke (Educational Department at Hamburg University) Wang Yihong (School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University). In addition, Meinert A. Meyer (Educational Department at Hamburg University) helped me with sections of theories and Knut Schwippert gave me valuable suggestions about the factor analysis and helped me with data analysis (Educational Department at Hamburg University).

3. At which level of consciousness do students use listening comprehension strategies?

3.1) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are used with a higher level of consciousness by students?

3.2) What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are used with a lower level of consciousness by students?

5.2.2.2 Revision of the questionnaire

Although the questionnaire was designed with the help of abundant academic and empirical research, problems or limitations were inevitable. Problem areas included the target research sample of non-English majors with Chinese cultural and educational backgrounds as well as the specific circumstances of learning English and training their listening comprehension in China. In order to obtain a scientific and practical research survey, it was absolutely necessary to improve and reconstruct the questionnaire taking the above-mentioned aspects into account. That is to say, more supporting information about the Chinese contexts corresponding to the special and specific cultural, educational environment, English learning circumstances and the personal traits of the research samplings needed to be considered. Accordingly, a pre-interview on the questionnaire was indispensable to provide some insight into the characteristics of the research subjects. In the course of this procedure, the questionnaire was modified and improved after the pilot interview had been carried out.¹⁵²

Obviously, the evaluation and selection of suitable students for the questionnaire is a very important step and it can determine what the contents of the ultimate questionnaire should be. Therefore, I first contacted the students' English teachers and talked with them. This gave me an insight into the students' personal characteristics and level of English knowledge. It also helped me to find out which students were likely to communicate with me and would be suitable for the short conversation since the students chosen needed to be talkative and ready to share their feelings and opinions about the questionnaire with others.

¹⁵² The pre-interview on the questionnaire was carried out in the form of a talk or conversation with selected interviewees.

After some consideration and discussion with several English teachers, I finally chose N=30 students, including 15 male and 15 female students. The students had different majors and varying levels of English skills.

In order to help the students being interviewed reduce and overcome their tenseness, nervousness and fear, and to avoid raising the main topic directly, I started by talking about some other topics such as their hometown, majors, spare time and interests. I then gradually led the conversation to the questionnaire-oriented issues: their intention and methods of learning English and training listening comprehension as well as their problems or difficulties with listening to English. Only by means of this approach could the students gradually adapt to the free conversation and thus a pleasant and interactive atmosphere was created.¹⁵³ After a short conversation, I led them into a discussion about the questionnaire, such as the number and meaning of all the listening strategies.

I first let them read through all the items in the questionnaire and then asked for their personal comments on these in order to see if they could understand them and if the interpretation of these items was clear to them. In other words, their suggestions and opinions about the items were used to help me reconstruct the final questionnaire. The pilot interview was conducted in the form of ask-answer, self-talk and discussion. The whole process was carried out successfully and took fifteen hours, spread over five days.

I collected some important and valuable comments and suggestions from these subjects. The results of the pilot interview on the questionnaire focused on the following points:

- b. Firstly, the number of items posed a problem. Forty-five items were too many for most of the students. They responded that they soon felt tired and that little by little they would have lost their interest and patience reading these before needed to go on reading and going on to answering the main part of the questionnaire after having finished the 35th or 36th item. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that number of items in the questionnaire was not suitable and needed to be cut down to

¹⁵³ Setting up a pleasant interview atmosphere serves to motivate and stimulate the students to talk as much as they can without any fear and hesitation and thus leads to the success of the whole interview process.

an acceptable level.

- c. Secondly, some items in the questionnaire needed to be revised or deleted due to the actual English learning condition of my target group. There were some listening strategies which were not very clear or practical to the students. For example, some listening strategies: ‘speak with foreign teachers’,¹⁵⁴ ‘ask foreign teachers later’, ‘speak with native speakers’,¹⁵⁵ ‘practice skim listening’,¹⁵⁶ ‘prepare for a guest lecture or a specific talk’,¹⁵⁷ and so on. These were not suitable for the real English learning condition of my target group and needed to be revised or deleted.
- d. Thirdly, some ideas in this questionnaire needed additional explanation. For example, some students did not understand what the exact meaning of ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ utilization of listening strategies was. Accordingly, I had to explain these when conducting the real survey.

According to their feedback and suggestions, I removed some ambiguous items and revised some impractical ones. The final questionnaire¹⁵⁸ consisted of 36 items, which are generalized and presented in the following table:

¹⁵⁴ In a lot of Chinese universities such as the one where I conducted my questionnaire, there are normally no foreign teachers for the non-English major students. In a lot of Chinese cities, it is very unlikely for students to encounter native English speakers, let alone talking with them in English. Therefore, some strategies which are not in accordance with the English learning conditions of Chinese students had to be deleted or revised.

¹⁵⁵ Because the students commented and stressed that they had very little opportunity to speak with native speakers, I modified the strategies from ‘speak with native speakers’ to ‘when I listen to English’ or ‘when I watch English programs’.

¹⁵⁶ The students reported that they had never even heard of this strategy or used it. Therefore, these kinds of strategies had to be deleted from my questionnaire.

¹⁵⁷ The students said that their English teachers or university never provide them with such lectures or talks in English.

¹⁵⁸ The final questionnaire sheet is attached in the Appendices (see the Chinese and English version in Appendix I and Appendix II).

Table 5.1 Categories of listening comprehension strategies in the questionnaire

Classification of listening comprehension strategies	Questionnaire items
Memory Strategies <i>Creating Mental Linkages</i> ¹⁵⁹ Associating/ Elaborating ¹⁶⁰	Item6. I pay attention to the context of what is being said, by remembering the context to understand what I am listening to. Item11. When I listen to English I always associate the new language information with familiar concepts in my memory.
<i>Applying Images and Sounds</i> ¹⁶¹ Representing sounds in memory ¹⁶² Using imagery ¹⁶³	Item28. When I listen to English, I pay attention to the rise and fall of speech by native speakers – the music of it to remember and understand what I have heard. Item29. I look for associations between the sounds of a word or phrase in the new language and the sound of a familiar word. Item31. When I listen to English, I create a mental image in order to remember what I have heard.
Cognitive Strategies <i>Practicing</i> ¹⁶⁴ Repeating ¹⁶⁵	Item15. I do my best to imitate the way native speakers talk. Item25. I practice all the sounds in the new language until I am comfortable with them.

¹⁵⁹ 'Creating mental linkage' is a subcategory of memory strategies and it focuses on building the association between the new and old knowledge. Three strategies form this category: 'grouping', 'associating/elaborating' and 'placing new words into a context'.

¹⁶⁰ 'Associating/elaborating' involves "associating new language information with familiar words already in memory." (Oxford, 1990: 60)

¹⁶¹ 'Applying images and sounds' is another category of memory strategies. There are four strategies that belong to this category: 'using imagery', 'semantic mapping', 'using keywords' and 'representing sounds in memory'.

¹⁶² This strategy involves "linking the new word with familiar words or sounds from any language: the new language, one's own language, or any other." (Oxford, 1990: 63)

¹⁶³ Using imagery involves "linking the new word with familiar words or sounds from any language: the new language, one's own language or any other. (*ibid*)

¹⁶⁴ 'Practicing', 'receiving and sending messages', 'analyzing and reasoning' and 'creating structure for input and output' are subcategories of cognitive strategies. There are five strategies belonging to the group of 'practicing': 'repeating', 'formally practicing with sounds and writing systems', 'recognizing and using formulas and patterns', 'recombining' and 'practicing naturalistically'.

¹⁶⁵ Repeatedly listening to native speakers of the new language on a tape or record and imitation of native users of the language are two repeating techniques used for listening training.

<p><i>Creating Structure for input and output</i></p> <p>Taking notes</p>	<p>Item13. When I listen to English material, I write down some words related to the topic.</p>
<p><i>Receiving and Sending Messages</i></p> <p>Getting the ideas quickly</p>	<p>Item23. I listen for those key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning.</p> <p>Item33. When I listen to conversation in English, I listen for specific details to see whether I can understand them.</p>
<p><i>Analyzing and Reasoning</i></p> <p>Reasoning deductively</p>	<p>Item35. When I listen to English, I guess what I hear according to the rules of the grammar.</p>
<p>Compensation strategies</p> <p><i>Guessing Intelligently</i>¹⁶⁶</p> <p>Using other clues¹⁶⁷</p>	<p>Item4. When I listen to English on the radio or English on CDs, I pay attention to the perceptual clues concerning the situation, such as background music or noise.</p> <p>Item8. When I listen to English, I use the address and the titles¹⁶⁸ mentioned as clues to understand what I hear.</p> <p>Item19. I suspect what the speaker will say according to what he has said.</p> <p>Item21. When I listen to English, I use my general background knowledge to grasp the main idea.</p> <p>Item34. When I watch an English program, I always use some clues, such as the speaker's tone of voice; facial expression and body language to understand what he is saying.</p>

¹⁶⁶ 'Guessing intelligently' is a subcategory of compensation strategies. 'Guessing intelligently' involves two different strategies: 'using linguistic clues' and 'using other clues'.

¹⁶⁷ "In addition to clues coming purely from knowledge of language, there are clues from other sources. Some clues are related to language but go beyond (such as forms of address which imply social relationship), and others come from a variety of other sources which are not related to language." (Oxford, 1990: 92)

¹⁶⁸ Oxford stresses that "forms of address, such as titles or nicknames, help learners guess the meaning of what they hear and read." (Oxford, 1990: 92) Actually, this is also a strategy used often by my research samples when they do listening comprehension in their CET-Band 4. CET-Band 4 involves listening comprehension, e.g., listening to a dialogue between professor and student where the listeners can infer the place where this conversation happens from the title 'professor'.

Using linguistic clues ¹⁶⁹	<p>Item17. If I listen to English I do not understand or I have never learned, I use my language knowledge base as a clue to guess the information I have heard.</p> <p>Item32. When I listen to English, I use the speaker's tone to guess the meaning.</p>
<p>Metacognitive Strategies</p> <p><i>Arranging and planning your learning</i>¹⁷⁰</p> <p>Seeking practice opportunities¹⁷¹</p>	<p>Item1. I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as participation in an English corner or an English lecture.</p> <p>Item2. I look for some opportunities to train my English listening comprehension. For instance, I use English songs to train my listening.</p> <p>Item7. If I encounter people in public having a conversation in English, I will listen to see if I can get the gist of what they are saying.</p> <p>Item10. I listen to English talk shows on the radio, watch English TV shows, or go to see English movies to practice and improve my listening comprehension.</p> <p>Item12. I try to make friends who are native speakers of English through the internet and use audio chatting to improve my listening ability.</p> <p>Item36. I look for opportunities to talk to others in English to improve my listening ability.</p>

¹⁶⁹ Oxford believes that “previously gained knowledge of the target language, the learners’ own language, or some other language can provide linguistic clues to the meaning of what is heard or read. Suffixes, prefixes, and word order are useful linguistic clues for guessing meaning.” (1990: 90)

¹⁷⁰ ‘Arranging and planning your learning’ is a subcategory of metacognitive strategies. There are six strategies that belong to this group: ‘finding out about language learning’ ‘organizing’, ‘setting goals and objectives’, ‘identifying the purpose of a language task (purposeful listening/reading/speaking/writing), ‘planning for a language task’ and ‘seeking practice opportunities’.

¹⁷¹ ‘Seeking practice opportunities’ means that students try to find chances to practice their listening comprehension.

Planning for a language task ¹⁷²	Item18. I work out a plan for the training of my listening competence.
<i>Centering your learning</i> ¹⁷³ Paying attention	Item9. I make every effort to understand what I have heard without translating it word-for-word into my native language. Item26. When I listen to a speaker, I consciously direct my attention ¹⁷⁴ to what he is saying.
Affective Strategies ¹⁷⁵ <i>Taking your emotional temperature</i> Discussing your feelings with someone else	Item5. I talk to other people, such as friends, parents or teacher about my feelings about learning English, especially in English listening.
<i>Encouraging yourself</i> Making positive statements	Item20. When I listen to English, I encourage myself and regulate ¹⁷⁶ my feelings to the best extent.
<i>Lowering your anxiety</i> Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation	Item22. If I do not understand the material I have heard, I will regulate my feelings and listen to it once more.
Social Strategies ¹⁷⁷ <i>Asking questions</i> Asking for clarification or verification	Item14. When I talk to somebody in English, I ask him/her to repeat or slow down if the message is not clear to me.

¹⁷² This strategy involves “identifying the general nature of the task, the specific requirements of the task, the resources available within the learner, and the need for further aids.” (Oxford, 1990: 159)

¹⁷³ ‘Centering your learning’ is a subcategory of metacognitive strategies. It includes three strategies: ‘overviewing and linking with already known material’, ‘paying attention’, and ‘delaying speech production to focus on listening’.

¹⁷⁴ A lot of students have problems in concentrating on what others say; therefore, to let them consciously direct their attention to others is helpful for their understanding of what others say.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Taking your emotional temperature’, ‘encouraging yourself’ and ‘lowering your anxiety’ are three subcategories of affective strategies.

¹⁷⁶ A lot of my research samples lack confidence and they always feel nervous when they listen to English; therefore, it is very important to let them encourage themselves and regulate their nervousness when listening to English.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Asking questions’, ‘cooperating with others’, and ‘empathizing with others’ are three subcategories of social strategies.

<i>Cooperating with others</i> Cooperating with proficient users of the new language Cooperating with peers	Item16. I make an effort to remember unfamiliar words that I hear, and ask teacher or friends later. Item24. I listen to English with my friends, and discuss with them to improve my listening ability.
Becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings	Item27. When I watch English programs, I pay attention to the expression of the speaker to understand what he is talking about. Item 30. When I listen to an English speaker, I listen to his/her tone and expression carefully to feel his/her thoughts and feelings.

The above table presents the 36 items of listening comprehension strategies and classifies them. The left column is a description of the categories in bold print and their subcategories in italics, and the right column stands for the corresponding items. For example, 'creating mental linkages' is a subcategory of memory strategies. 'Associating/elaborating' belongs to 'creating mental linkages' and consists of strategies item 6, item 11 and item 29.

The above table is a categorization of listening comprehension strategies, but in fact, there are always several components in one strategy item. That is to say, one strategy can be grouped into different strategy categories. This depends to a great extent on what the research sample thinks about this strategy. In the above categories, some metacognitive strategies can also be grouped into cognitive strategies due to some sharing components with other cognitive strategies. For example, metacognitive strategies item1, item10 and item12 in the category 'seeking practice opportunities' can also be considered a cognitive strategy in the category of 'practicing naturalistically' since they focus on using the language for actual communication.

In the field of my statistical analysis, the above six different strategies are called latent variable factors and the 36 items are named as measurable indicators. The classification of listening comprehension strategies and questionnaire items is abbreviated in the following

table:

Table 5.2 List of the questionnaire items

Category of listening strategies	Questionnaire items
Memory strategies	
Associating/elaborating	Item6, Item11
Representing sounds in memory	Item28, Item29
Using imagery	Item31
Cognitive strategies	
Repeating	Item15, Item25
Taking notes	Item13
Getting the ideas quickly	Item23, Item33
Reasoning deductively	Item35
Compensation Strategies	
Using other clues	Item4, Item8, Item19, Item21, Item34
Using linguistic clues	Item17, Item32
Metacognitive strategies	
Seeking practice opportunities	Item1, Item2, Item7, Item10, Item12, Item36
Planning for a language task	Item18
Paying attention	Item9, Item26
Affective strategies	
Discussing your feelings with someone else	Item5
Making positive statements	Item20
Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation	Item22
Social strategies	
Asking for clarification or verification	Item14

Cooperating with peers	Item16, Item24
Developing cultural understanding	Item3
Becoming aware of others' thoughts and feelings	Item27, Item30

The above table clearly presents each listening strategy and its corresponding items shown in my questionnaire. As presented in this table, listening comprehension strategies involved in my study are: memory strategies which consist of two different strategies including five items; cognitive strategies which consist of four different strategies including six items; compensation strategies which consist of two different strategies including seven items; metacognitive strategies which consist of three different strategies including nine items; affective strategies which consist of three different strategies including three items and social strategies which consist of four different strategies including six items.

5.2.3 Conducting the questionnaire in the field

I now turn to the important step of collecting the research data. The quantitative data from the listening strategy questionnaire were collected from mid-March until late April, 2010. In order to carry out the whole process of this survey in the field systematically and successfully, I prepared a step-by-step schedule: I first investigated non-English-major sophomore students, conducted a discussion with some of them and then determined and selected the research subjects from different departments. According to their timetable of English lessons, I formulated a research plan. I also personally contacted their English teachers to ask for their approval and assistance in getting the students to participate in this research.

After these preliminary preparations, I started the field survey. The questionnaire sheet was handed out to all selected subjects and the survey was launched during their English classes.¹⁷⁸ The whole process was carried out under my instruction and with the help of

¹⁷⁸ In order not to disturb or distract the students, I went to each classroom at the beginning of their English lesson. I firstly introduced the questionnaire and then explained to the students the purpose of conducting such research as

other English teachers.¹⁷⁹ The students were informed that they could ask for clarification or explanation if some items were not clear to them or if they needed more time to fill out the questionnaire. Moreover, they were also reassured that not only their responses and feedback to the questionnaires, but also their names would be kept absolutely confidential. Their English teachers and I constantly stressed that the results were only used for research and would not have any negative effects on their grades in any English tests. The implication of the conscious or unconscious use of listening strategies was explained by me or other English teachers. The complete questionnaires were collected right after the subjects finished answering. The total administration time took an average of twenty-five minutes.¹⁸⁰ All of the students answered the questionnaires in their own classrooms without any difficulty. The survey was launched in this way class by individual class and the whole activity lasted for around five weeks.

5.2.4 Data entry

The step of data entry is also a very important one in the whole process of quantitative research. This step was taken by selecting the valid surveys and importing the data. In quantitative research, data entry is regarded as a particularly important procedure for linking data collection and data analysis. Actually, generation of the collected data began to be input into SPSS 16 program at the same time as the questionnaires were being answered in another class. During this process, the items in the questionnaire were converted one by one into different variables employed for coding the quantitative data. The number of all the variables obtained turned out to be 76¹⁸¹ (see the following table of the coded variables, in which the

well as its significance to them and to college English learning and teaching. This served to give the students more interest and motivation to complete the survey paper.

¹⁷⁹ Those other English teachers and I explained to the students how to answer the questionnaires to make sure that they were answered correctly and validly. This ensured that most of the questionnaire papers were valid.

¹⁸⁰ Twenty-five minutes was the average time. Of course, the exact time needed varied from class to class. Twenty-five minutes were needed for the distribution and collection of the questionnaire sheet as well as the explanation of the questionnaire items. The actual time for filling out the whole questionnaire took between fifteen to twenty minutes.

¹⁸¹ These 76 variables consist not only of the variables taken from the questionnaire items but also of the variables from the first section. In addition, these 76 variables are the original variables first coded into the SPSS program, while during the step of analysing data, more variables were generated.

variable number, variable names and the explanation of each single variable are presented). Hence, the original quantitative code book was set up by means of these 76 code names.

What is more, during the real process of importing these collected data, I transformed the multiple choices of using this strategy ‘never or seldom’ with ‘1’, ‘sometimes’ with ‘2’, ‘often’ with ‘3’ and ‘always’ with ‘4’. Additionally, to each listening comprehension strategy the answer of using it consciously was transformed into ‘2’ while unconscious utilization of this strategy was transformed into ‘1’. Furthermore, if one item was chosen as ‘never or seldom’, the additional question following it was generated as ‘0’.¹⁸² Ultimately, the data coding work took three days after finishing the data collection.¹⁸³

Finally, after discarding some invalid questionnaire sheets,¹⁸⁴ there were altogether 1,162 questionnaires¹⁸⁵ with valid responses that could be captured in the SPSS program for the later data analysis.

¹⁸² If the students answered the strategy with ‘never or seldom use’, there was no more consideration of using it consciously or unconsciously.

¹⁸³ The time spent coding the data started from the beginning of conducting the questionnaire and lasted about 40 days altogether.

¹⁸⁴ While selecting the valid questionnaire papers, I found that some of the papers were not answered at all, or some of them were just circled without having been looked at in detail.

¹⁸⁵ Although there were 1,162 valid papers coded into the SPSS program, among them there were 1,109 students who took part in CET-Band 4 and obtained their listening grades, which will be mentioned and discussed again in the later chapter on quantitative data analysis.

Table 5.3 The variables coded into SPSS

Number	Variable Name	Explanation (label)
1	MN	Matriculation number
2	MoL	Marks of listening
3	From	Which province are you from?
4	An1	The answer of the first question
5	C1	If you use this strategy consciously?
....
...
74	An36	The answer of the 36 th questions
75	C36	If you use the 36 th question consciously?
76	Major	Major

The above table is a description of the original variables¹⁸⁶ used in this research. The first column ‘number’ refers to the variable number from the first to the last one when I put the gathered statistical data into SPSS program; the second column is the abbreviation of each variable, and the third column stands for the detailed explanation of each variable. For example, MN refers to matriculation number; An1 is an abbreviation of Answer1. It stands for the answer of the first part of questionnaire item1: asking students how often they use this strategy; C1 is an abbreviation of answering the second part of item1: asking students if they use the first strategy item consciously or unconsciously. The ellipsis refers to the variable number from 6 to 73, standing for the answers from the 2nd to the 35th item. So, this table shows that there were altogether 76 original variables when I first coded the data into the SPSS program.

¹⁸⁶ During the procedure of data analysis in Chapter 6 some new variables emerged.

5.3 Other research instruments

Apart from the questionnaire as the central instrument for data collection, there were other research instruments that were also helpful and used as a testing criterion for this research. In the following sections, I will introduce these instruments.

One of these instruments was the CET-Band 4 (College English Test-Band 4), which I have already presented previously (see Section 2.3.2.5). This test was carried out in December 2009 when the research samples studied were in the first semester of their second year. I obtained the results of their listening comprehension before I conducted the questionnaire. The reasons that I chose the CET-Band 4 as one of my research instruments are listed here:

- CET-Band 4 is a very standardized English test and it can meet the requirement of the large-scale standardized tests in terms of validity and reliability. Test results are objective and can be more easily acknowledged by the public than other types of examination.
- CET-Band 4 is always carried out with very good organization by universities or colleges with two examiners and a unified fixed test time. This can, to a great extent, guarantee the objective and accurate results of the exams.
- The students took part in this test at the same time, so the test and its results were fair for every student.
- As introduced in the previous chapter, the results of their examination papers were evaluated by qualified teachers organized by the Examination Center; therefore, their ultimate marks appear to be reliable.

The above-mentioned explanation highlights the fact that compared to other listening comprehension tests the CET-Band 4 is the most suitable instrument and criterion for evaluating the students' English comprehension and classifying the samplings into effective and ineffective English listeners.

In addition to the questionnaire and CET-Band 4, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)¹⁸⁷ was used for data analysis.

5.4 Chapter summary

This chapter reported the quantitative design of my study in the light of research sample and quantitative data collection. First, regarding the research sample, participants were described according to their majors and the original places they were from. Second, as the core part of this chapter, design, improvement and conduction of the questionnaire were introduced respectively. Finally, the way the quantitative data were generated and other research instruments needed for this study were explained. In the following chapter, the gathered quantitative data will be analyzed in the light of item analysis, validity and reliability, the statistical description of the use of listening comprehension strategies and correlations analysis.

¹⁸⁷ SPSS is a comprehensive and flexible statistical analysis, which is normally used in quantitative data analysis.

Chapter 6: Statistical analysis from quantitative data

“A data description is an essential part of a quantitative analysis, and is achieved through descriptive statistics.”

Dimitra Hartas (2010: 339)¹⁸⁸

In the previous chapter, I have talked about the research samples, the research instruments with a focus on the design, the improvement and conduction of the questionnaire as well as the procedures of quantitative data collection and data entry. Now I have come to the stage of the analysis of the data gathered. In the following, the analysis procedures and results will be discussed in more detail.

6.1 Quantitative data analysis and interpretation

This chapter primarily describes how the final results of the quantitative research reflect the theoretical framework as well as the hypothesis. In the first stage of the quantitative data analysis, I shall examine the validity and reliability to make sure that this scale is stable and consistent. In the second stage, I shall explore the frequency and level of consciousness in the use of listening comprehension strategies by the research samplings and compare the similarities and differences between the relatively good and poor English listeners. Finally, a correlation analysis will be conducted to explore the interrelationship between some variables, such as listening proficiency and the frequency and consciousness of the use of listening comprehension strategies.

¹⁸⁸ Dimitra Hartas is Associate Professor in the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick, UK. Her research and teaching interests focus on disability issues, children's language development and children's rights. See http://books.google.de/books/about/Educational_Research_and_Inquiry.html?id=OPaGQCbObgQC&redir_esc=y, June 20, 2013.

6.2 Validity and reliability analysis

As a first step, I shall analyze the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. It is a very important process to test the validity and reliability in quantitative research since a valid and reliable scale is a prerequisite for further analysis. Therefore, the concepts of validity and reliability as well as the related analysis will be introduced in the following sections.

6.2.1 Validity

Lyons & Doueck maintain that “validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concepts that the researcher is attempting to measure.” (2010: 127) For every academic work, the logical link between the items of the scale has to be measured.

The validity of a study is an important criterion regarding the meaningfulness of the results and the overall value of research. The concept of validity is concerned with the question as to whether we measure what we set out to measure, and this question goes to the heart of an inquiry. (Hartas, 2010: 74)

Validity includes internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the validity of the measuring instrument and it consists of content and construct validity; external validity refers to the validity tested by means of the external criterion and consists of predictive and concurrent validity. Content validity concerns the correlation of scale items or questions and the coverage of the scale. Therefore, content validity has to be measured in this study.

6.2.1.1 Factor analysis

In the field of social science, factor analysis is always used to analyze the content validity. Factor analysis is a statistical method used to describe validity among a number of potentially unobserved variables. Xiaoqing Qin points out that factor analysis can summarize and infer a few factors that are able to reflect the information most variables represent, and explain the observational facts by means of investigating the inter-dependent relationship

among the multiple original variables. The primary purpose of factor analysis is to establish the simplest concept system and to reveal the most essential connection between the variables (cf. 2003: 50). Factor analysis consists of two different categories: exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), traditionally, has been used to explore the possible underlying factor structure of a set of observed variables without imposing a preconceived structure on the outcome, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a statistical technique used to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables. CFA allows the researcher to test the hypothesis that a relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs exists. (Suhr, 2005:1)

Whether EFA or CFA should be used to test a scale depends on whether the scale is designed based on the hypothesis of the factor structures or not. If the basic factors behind the observed data are unknown, factor analysis should be used to explore the dimensions of the basic variables (exploratory factor analysis). If there is a hypothesis about the factor numbers or structures according to the research theories, factor analysis should be used to examine the hypothesis and test the validity of each structure (confirmatory factor analysis). Since my research is based on Oxford's theories of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies (see Chapter 3 and 5), and my questionnaire is designed by means of six categories of strategies (six factors), confirmatory factor analysis is used to test the latent factors within this scale and to see if the primary component can represent each factor.

6.2.1.2 Analysis of confirmatory factor analysis

In this section, I shall conduct confirmatory factor analysis of each group of listening comprehension strategies (see detailed data in Tables 1 to 6, Appendix III) to see if these six factors generated from this scale can be confirmed. As a result, the data show that the results of CFA are relatively satisfactory. Only strategy item 5 (affective strategy) should be removed from its previous category and combined into another category, since its value under extraction (0.119) is too low (see communalities in Table 5, Appendix III). When I analyze this strategy 'I talk to other people, such as friends, parents or teachers about my

feelings about learning English, especially in English listening' once more, I find that this strategy also owns the characteristics of social strategies and thus it should be regrouped into social strategies.¹⁸⁹

In addition, *Total Variance Explained* presented in Tables 1 to 6, Appendix III shows that cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies function with more than one component whose eigenvalue is above 1.0.¹⁹⁰ This means that these variables are extracted according to their different inner relationship; therefore, listening comprehension strategies can be categorized into different groups according to their different intrinsic characteristics. The result of confirmatory factor analysis serves to confirm Oxford's point of view that learning strategies support each other mutually when learners use them and an overlap exists among the strategy groups (cf. Oxford, 1990: 16) and strategies can be classified differently in the light of new insights (cf. Oxford, 1990: 22).

Although cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies have more than one component extracted, the first component of these three categories is much bigger than the other ones (see detailed data in Table 2, Table 4 and Table 6, Appendix III). This indicates that the first component can better explain and incorporate the common traits of all variables within that group. Therefore, the first component in these categories is considered an acceptable one. To sum up, the results of the validity analysis confirm that these six structures have relatively good validity and they can, to great extent, cover the common characteristics of all variables in these structures.

¹⁸⁹ This strategy item is categorized into the subgroup of 'cooperating with others' within social strategies.

¹⁹⁰ In confirmatory factor analysis, components are extracted by means of principal components analysis that analyzes all of the variance among the variable. For principal component analysis, the initial communality (see Tables 1 to 5, Appendix III) tells us how much variance the item has in common with the set of all components and it is always 1.0. That's because the number of the initial variables can determine the number of components. Initial eigenvalues is also an important concept that stands for the variances of factors. In this study, two eigenvalues (2.062 and 1.0659) are above 1.0 within categories of cognitive strategies; three eigenvalues (2.361, 1.129 and 1.050) are above 1.0 within categories of metacognitive strategies; two eigenvalues (1.995 and 1.086) are above 1.0 within categories of social strategies. Through the % of variance shown in the above-mentioned tables, we can see that the first eigenvalue of each structure (factor) contains more percent of total variances (34.375, 26.230 and 33.250).

6.2.2 Reliability

In addition to validity, reliability of this scale also needs to be tested. “Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of a measurement, and is concerned with whether the results of a study are replicable (repeatable).” (Hartas, 2010: 71) Consistency reflects the relationship between the internal items and it examines if each item has accurately measured the same contents and traits of the whole scale. Stability refers to the reliable coefficient after repeated tests on the same groups of subjects at different periods of time through the same measuring instrument (questionnaire). If the measuring instrument is more stable and consistent, it is more reliable. The higher the consistency and stability of the measuring instrument, the higher its reliability.

Due to the limited time, the research samplings in this study could not be tested repeatedly. Therefore, the reliability of the data has been measured by means of the indicator that reflects the internal consistency.

6.2.2.1 Reliability analysis – Cronbach alpha

Although there are many methods used for examining the reliability of a measuring instrument, *Cronbach alpha*¹⁹¹ is regularly used to test the internal consistency of a scale and to determine the items that influence its consistency. The primary purpose of this step is to find out if some questionnaire items impede the consistency and stability of the whole scale and if we need to delete unsuitable ones. The Cronbach alpha coefficient swings between 0.00 and 1.00; in this interval, the higher coefficient indicates stronger internal consistency of the measuring instrument and more reliable results. The criterion of 0.70 is normally considered to be a minimally acceptable alpha value. However, Cronbach alpha coefficient is likely to be affected by item numbers. That is to say, the coefficient is normally higher when there are more items in a certain structure; otherwise, the coefficient might be lower. Therefore, we also accept the alpha value that is lower than 0.70; sometimes we even accept the alpha

¹⁹¹ Cronbach's coefficient was proposed in 1951 by Cronbach.

value that is lower than 0.60 when there are fewer items in one factor.

6.2.2.2 Values of Cronbach alpha in this study

Generally speaking, the reliability of the scale needs to be tested from two different aspects: One aspect refers to the internal consistency of the whole scale¹⁹² and the other aspect is the internal consistency of the items included in every factor or structure.

With respect to the first aspect, the Cronbach alpha of the whole scale including all strategy items is firstly measured and the final value turns out to be 0.898 (see detailed data in Table 7, Appendix III). The value 0.898¹⁹³ shows that the whole scale has relatively high consistency and reliability.

In regard to the second aspect, we have to see how many factors are included in this scale. There are six different structures (six new variables shown in SPSS program as mean1, mean2, mean3, mean4, mean5 and mean6)¹⁹⁴ standing for six categories of listening comprehension strategies. As mentioned above, the item numbers involved in these six structures (see Chapter 4) and the corresponding Cronbach alpha coefficient are respectively presented as the following: *five vs. 0.607 (memory strategies) six vs. 0.610 (cognitive strategies), seven vs. 0.755 (compensation strategies) nine vs. 0.626 (metacognitive strategies), three vs. 0.447 (affective strategies) and six vs. 0.583 (social strategies)* (see detailed data in Tables 8 to 13, Appendix III). From these values, we can see that the coefficient of Cronbach alpha is relatively low (especially the Cronbach alpha of affective and social strategies). The specific data of these six groups show that within the category of affective strategies, strategy item 5 (see *Item-Total Statistics* in Table 12, Appendix III) destroys the reliability and consistency of this structure.¹⁹⁵ This means that this strategy item needed to be deleted from its previous category and combined into another structure.

¹⁹² One scale can consist of several factors or structures.

¹⁹³ If we delete any one from these 36 items, the Cronbach coefficient will be equal or even less than 0.898. Therefore, the whole structure is quite stable and reliable, and all items can stay within this scale.

¹⁹⁴ *Mean1, Mean2, Mean3, Mean4, Mean5 and Mean6* stand for the mean values of using these six categories of listening comprehension strategies respectively.

¹⁹⁵ In Table 6, Appendix IV, we can see that when we delete the strategy item5, the coefficient of Cronbach alpha becomes bigger.

6.2.3 Second test of reliability

In this step, I shall test reliability once more, with item 5 regrouped into social strategies. Therefore, two categories (affective and social strategies) should be restructured and thus two new variables are generated (named as mean7 and mean8 in SPSS program).¹⁹⁶ After the second reliability test, the Cronbach alpha of affective and social strategies has been changed (see detailed data in Tables 14 to 15, Appendix III). Therefore, the final Cronbach values of each group of strategies are shown as follows: memory strategies (five vs. 0.607), cognitive strategies (six vs. 0.610), compensation strategies (seven vs. 0.755), metacognitive strategies (nine vs. 0.626), affective strategies (two vs. 0.573) and social strategies (seven vs. 0.605). Although the Cronbach values are still low, this is so far the best result I could get.¹⁹⁷

6.3 Statistical description of the use of listening comprehension strategies among all students

Having tested the validity and reliability of this measuring instrument, I now go back to consider my research questions again (see Chapter 5). My research aims to find out to what extent listening comprehension strategies are used by Chinese non-English major students to improve their listening proficiency. In other words, what kinds of strategies are used more or less frequently by them? Therefore, I shall statistically describe the use of listening comprehension strategies among all research samplings. In this step, listening

¹⁹⁶ These two variables are labeled as affective strategies 2 and social strategies 2 in SPSS program.

¹⁹⁷ Among the Cronbach values of these six groups of listening comprehension strategies, the Cronbach values of compensation strategies are 0.755 which is relatively high; the values of the other strategies (memory, cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies) are more than 0.60, thus also reaching a statistically significant level and only the Cronbach value of affective strategies is smaller than 0.60. Overall, the Cronbach value of these six different groups of listening comprehension strategies is not very high. However, the questionnaire is designed upon abundant theories and the discussion results from my colloquium with other professors and PhD students and it was improved with the pilot interview on the questionnaire (see Chapter 5). The research samples chosen for the questionnaire are also big enough. Taking the above reasons into consideration, I can say that the results of reliability test are so far the best that I can get. The possible reasons that lead to the relatively low values can be explained from theoretical and practical perspectives: the theoretical aspect argues that during the learning process, as explained above, each strategy owns several different components. Therefore, different components work together and the value might be reduced; the practical aspect argues that research samplings are from one university, which might influence the objectivity. In future studies (see Chapter 7); the students should be chosen from some different universities, so that the research sample can be more objective.

comprehension strategies are described at two different levels: 36 individual listening comprehension strategies and six categories of strategies.

6.3.1 Statistical description of the use of individual strategies among all students

With regard to the first level, 36 individual listening comprehension strategies are described to find out to what extent these strategies are used by Chinese non-English major students.

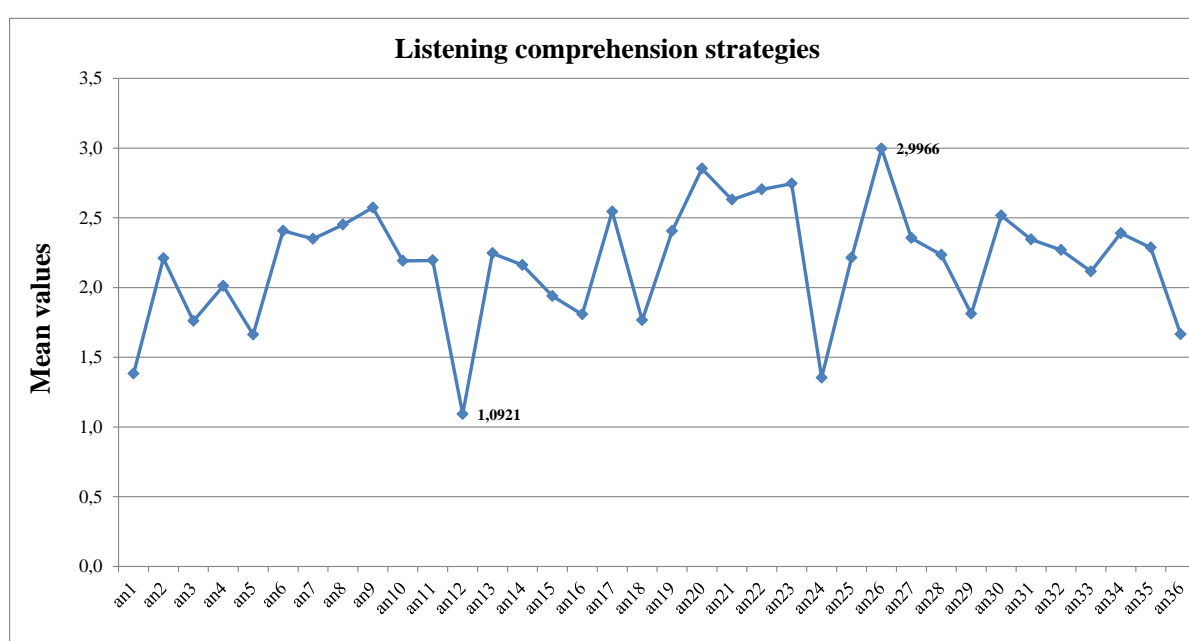


Figure 6.1 Frequency distribution of the use of 36 individual listening comprehension strategies among all students

The above figure describes the mean values and gives us a general overview of the use of 36 strategy items by all students. Due to the 4-likert scale questionnaire and the generated number input into SPSS (see Chapter 5), the highest score of using each listening comprehension strategy is 4.0 and the lowest score is 1.0. Generally speaking, the above description shows that the non-English major students' overall strategy use is at low frequency. All mean values are fewer than 3.0. The highest mean value is the use of strategy item 26 ($M=2.9966$) while the lowest mean value is the use of item 12 ($M=1.0921$) (see detailed data in Table 1, Appendix IV). Through the following table, we can see the five

most and least frequently used listening comprehension strategies.

Table 6.1 The five most and least frequently used listening comprehension strategies

The five most frequently used listening comprehension strategies	Mean frequency of use
An26. When I listen to a speaker, I consciously direct my attention to what he is saying.	2.9966
An20. When I listen to English, I encourage myself and regulate my feeling to the best extent.	2.8528
An23. I listen for those key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning.	2.7450
An22. If I do not understand the material I have heard, I will regulate my feeling and listen to it once more.	2.7037
An21. When I listen to English, I use my general background knowledge to grasp the main idea.	2.6299
The five least frequently used listening comprehension strategies	
An12. I try to make friends who are native speakers of English through the internet and use the audio chat to improve my listening ability.	1.0921
An24. I listen to English with my friends, and discuss with them to improve my listening ability.	1.3531
An1. I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as participation in an English corner or an English lecture.	1.3824
An5. I talk to other people, such as friends, parents or teachers about my feelings about learning English, especially in English listening.	1.6618
An36. I look for opportunities to talk to others in English to improve my listening ability.	1.6641

In the above table, one can see the five listening comprehension strategies most frequently used by my research samplings. The relatively high frequency indicates that my research group can regulate their feelings quite well when they listen to some English materials and can also direct their attention to what the speaker is saying. The use of items 23 and 21 also show that students have to some degree grasped skills to help them better understand English materials, e.g., by means of key words and general backgrounds. Students commented that their English teachers often encourage them to connect their previous knowledge with the new material they are learning or listening to, i.e., some familiar linguistic and grammar knowledge of their mother tongue or foreign languages.

In contrast, the five listening comprehension strategies least frequently used are all connected with interactive communication and cooperative work, and the low frequency of the use of these strategies demonstrates the fact that Chinese non-English major students are not very active in participating in some activities where English is spoken and finding more chances to train their listening proficiency. In addition, students reported that they always study and listen to English alone, they are not used to taking part in group work, listening to English with their friends or discussing their feelings concerning learning English. This also shows that Chinese students tend to emphasize their individual and autonomous studies, while ignoring the important role that cooperativeness and interactive communication can play in their achievements.

6.3.2 Statistical description of the use of six groups of strategies among all students

The above is a general description of the use of 36 individual listening comprehension strategies by all students. As introduced in the previous section, these listening comprehension strategies are categorized in six different groups. Therefore, in the following, I shall describe the frequency distribution in the use of six groups of strategies in order to find out which kinds of strategies are used more or less frequently by them (see detailed data

in Table 2, Appendix IV).

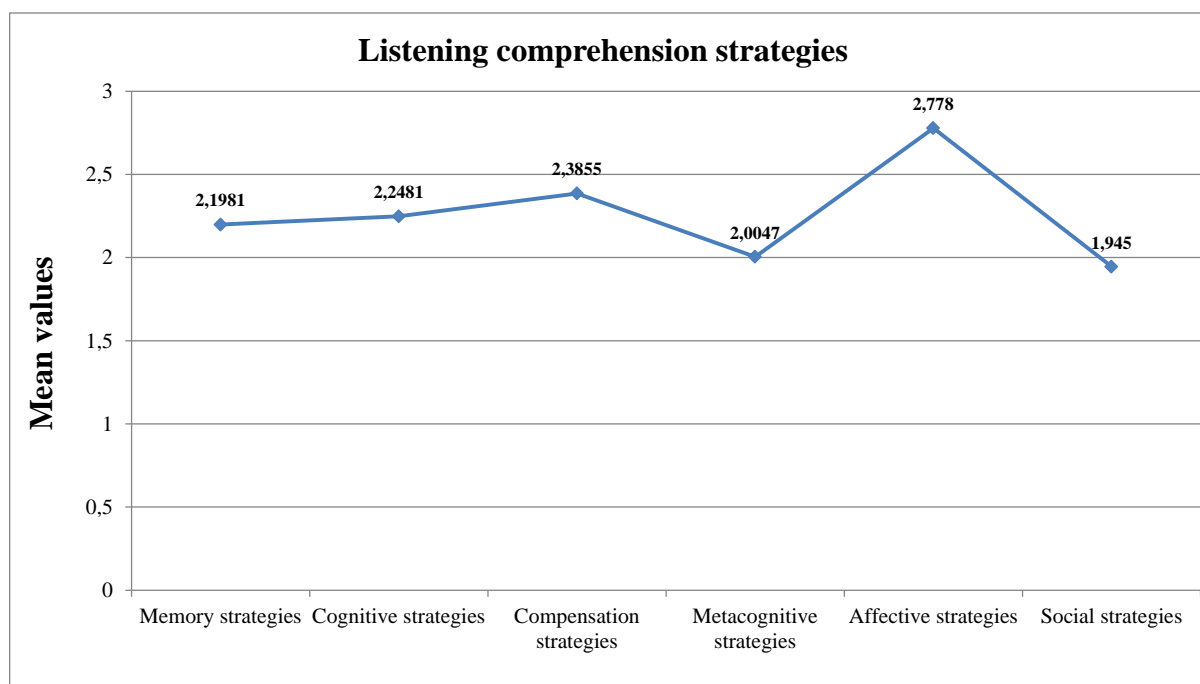


Figure 6.2 Frequency distribution of the use of six groups of listening comprehension strategies among all students

The above table compares the mean values of the use of each group of listening comprehension strategies among all students. The special characteristics in the students' use of strategy categories are shown as follows:

- a. On the whole, the use of each group of listening comprehension strategies among all the students is not very frequent. This implies that Chinese non-English major students, in particular, my research samplings, have little contact with strategies. This low frequency distribution depends to certain extent on Chinese cultural values and educational pattern. "As Chinese society is marked by a high acceptance of power and authority, the students relied heavily on their teachers in their language learning." (Rao, 2006: 505) Therefore, if English teachers do not guide their students in their use of some effective strategies in the learning process, students might persist in their lack of strategy awareness, the more so as students themselves do not pay much attention to their listening comprehension ability and thus seem not overly

interested in selecting appropriate strategies for their listening tasks.

- b. In contrast, among the six groups of strategies, social strategies ($M=1.9450$) are used the least frequently, which indicates that Chinese non-English major students in China do not favor their use. The result matches Jiongying Li's (2002) and Yaping Zhou's (2010) findings.
- c. The affective strategies ($M=2.7780$) are used the most frequently. This phenomenon can also be accounted for by Chinese cultural and educational systems. The traditional Chinese examination system develops and increases students' strong achievement motivation on their English learning. Therefore, as Rao asserts that

Chinese students have a strong drive for success, which makes them ready to use a variety of affective strategies to manage their emotions whenever they are in difficult situation. They constantly encourage themselves through positive statement, and work hard for academic success, career success and a happy family. (2006: 499)

Much in the same way, due to the reality of their English learning environment, Chinese students are not provided with more opportunities to use social strategies or other strategies leading to improvement of listening and communicative abilities, e.g., some subgroups of metacognitive strategies.

So far, the overview of using listening comprehension strategies by all students has been presented according to the mean values. In the following contents, I shall introduce the similarities and differences in using listening comprehension strategies between the relatively good and poor English listeners.

6.4 Statistical comparison of the use of listening comprehension strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

Through the above statistical analysis and description, we have gained a general picture of how and at what kind of level Chinese non-major students use listening comprehension strategies. In addition to this general picture, however, my research interest also focuses on the similarities and differences of strategy use between the relatively good and poor English listeners.

6.4.1 Frequency distribution of strategy use between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

As mentioned above, another focus of my research is to compare the use of listening comprehension strategies between students with relatively good and poor English proficiency. Therefore, according to their scores of listening comprehension in CET-Band 4 (see the introduction in Chapter 2 and 5), I divided students into a high-scoring and a low-scoring group. For the grouping of the students, I adopted the criterion of taking the first and last 25% of the students as the high-scoring and low-scoring group. As a result, the first 309 students with 144 as the lowest marks were considered to be the high-scoring group and the last 298 students with 116 as the highest scores were the low-scoring group. The use of the six groups of strategies between the two groups is described in the figure below (see detailed data in Table 1, Appendix V).

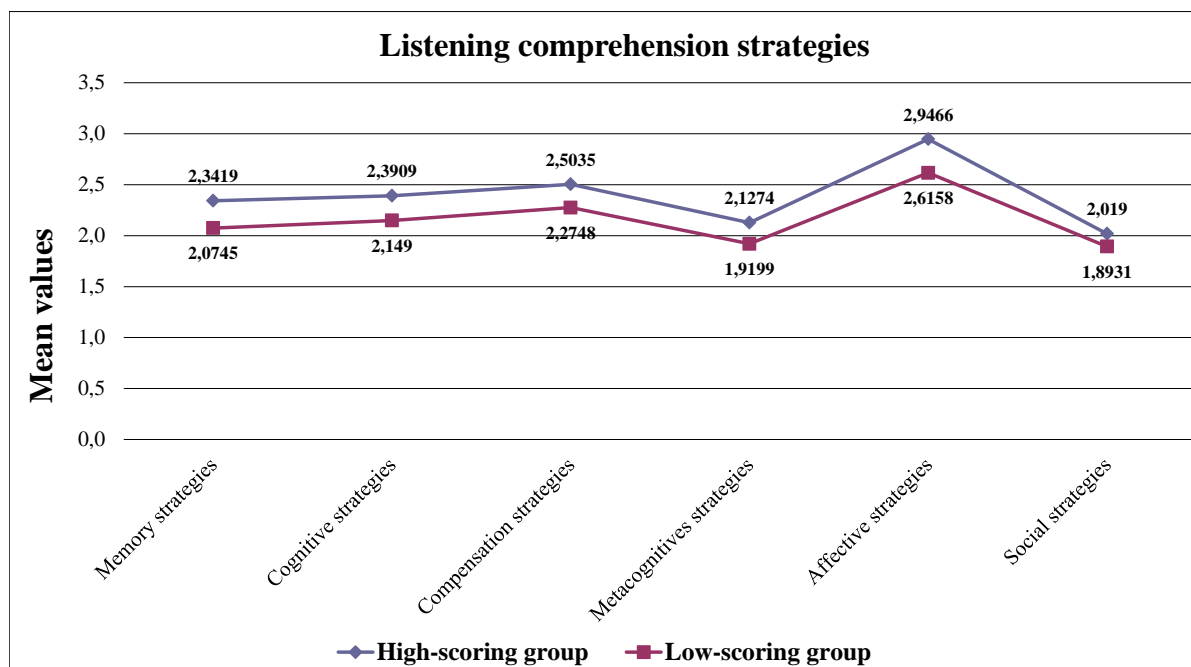


Figure 6.3 Frequency distribution of the use of six groups of listening comprehension strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

The above figure is drawn to compare the use of listening comprehension strategies

between the high-scoring (blue line) and low-scoring group (red line) from the perspective of frequency distribution. From this figure, we can clearly see that students from both groups do not use listening comprehension strategies very frequently; the rank of strategies use among students from the high-scoring group is similar with that from the low-scoring one; in contrast, students from the high-scoring group use strategies more frequently than those from the low-scoring group; among these six groups of strategies, affective strategies are used the most frequently ($M=2.9466$ vs. $M=2.6158$), while social strategies ($M=2.0190$ vs. $M=1.8931$) are used infrequently. This finding is in line with research done by Xiuhua Ma (2010), Qian Wu (2006), Qiannan Yao (2010) and so on.

6.4.2 Independent samples t-test of strategy use

Although we can find conspicuously different mean values in the use of the six groups of listening comprehension strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group from the above figure, we cannot yet decide if these differences are significant or not. In order to find out if significant differences do exist, I shall conduct the independent samples t-test to compare the use of these six groups of strategies between two groups of students.

A t-test is a useful statistical technique for comparing the mean values of two sets of scores. This comparison provides us with a statistic to evaluate whether the numerical difference between two means is statistically significant. In other words, we compare the mean values of two groups on a measured variable that we would have obtained by chance to those obtained at the end of an experimental (or quasi-experimental) manipulation. (Hartas, 2010: 353)

6.4.2.1 Normal distribution of listening comprehension scores

One of the necessary conditions under which an independent samples t-test can be conducted is that the two groups compared should come from a sample with normal distribution. It is theoretically stated that almost all behavioral outcomes of human beings approach normal distribution. Therefore, no matter how and what kinds of research data are collected, the data distribution of a big research sample is always near normal distribution. In this research, we take *the scores of listening comprehension* as an example: If students with higher and lower

scores are similar in number, we can be sure that their scores are normally distributed.

In quantitative research, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test provided by SPSS program is usually used to test the hypothesis of normal distribution (see Table 6.2) below.

Table 6.2 Scores of listening comprehension

Statistics		
Marks of Listening		
N	Valid	1109
	Missing	53
Mean		1.3184E2
Median		1.3000E2
Mode		120.00
Std. Deviation		2.21394E1
Variance		490.152
Skewness		.521
Std. Error of Skewness		.073
Kurtosis		.316
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.147
Range		145.00

The above table covers the descriptive statistic values of listening scores. We can see the numbers of the valid samples N, Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard Deviation and so on. We can find that the value of skewness and kurtosis are respectively .521 and .316, both of them less than 1.0. This means that the distribution does not completely show normality, but approaches that state. Therefore, it is acceptable.¹⁹⁸ In particular, the normal distribution of students' listening scores can be seen more clearly by means of the figure below.

¹⁹⁸ From the diagram below, we can see that the distribution of listening scores is positively skewed.

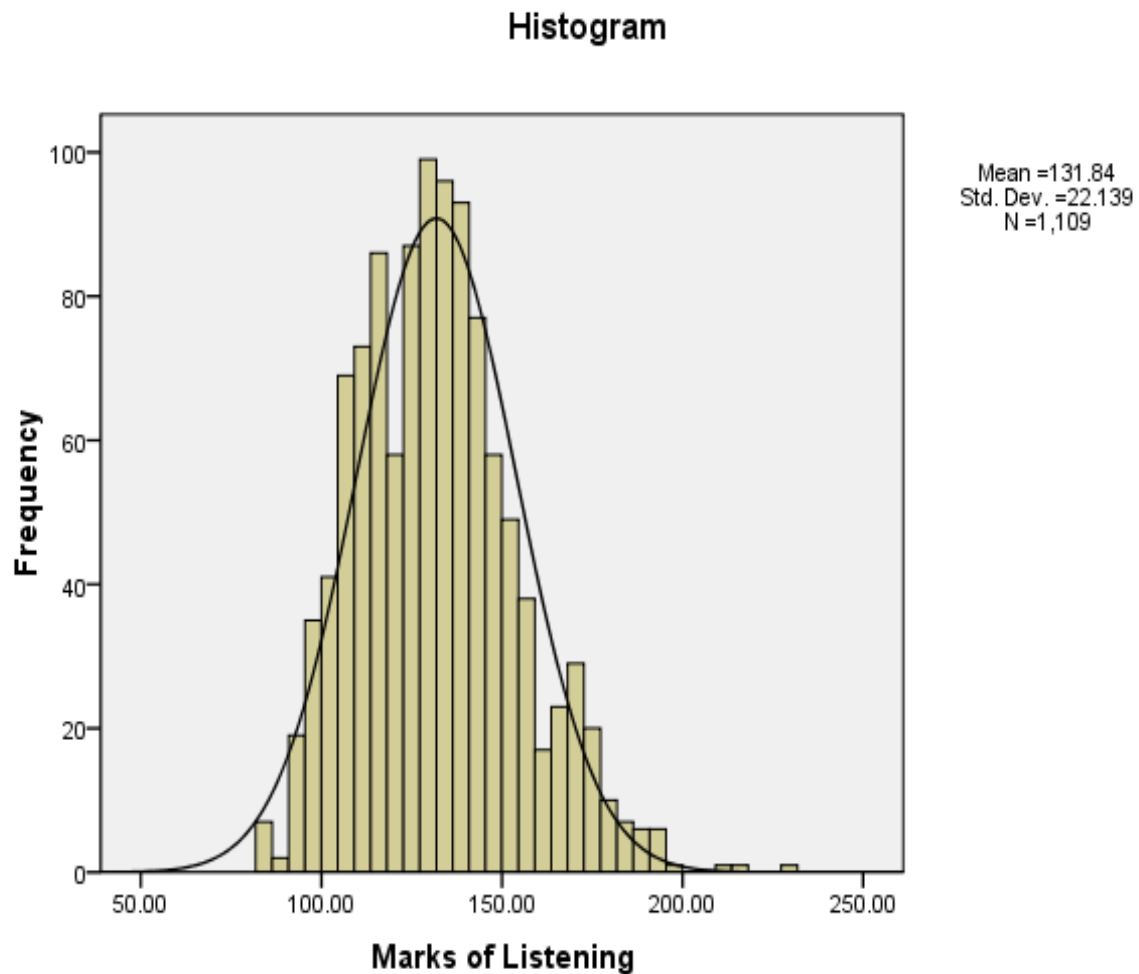


Figure 6.4 Distribution of listening comprehension scores

The above figure clearly describes the distribution of listening scores of my research samplings. From this figure, we can see that: Most students' listening scores are between 130 and 140. The parabola is not completely symmetrical since there are some extreme scores above 200. This indicates that there are only a few students who have extremely high listening proficiency, and most are at a middle level.

6.4.2.2 Results of independent samples t-test

After determining the normal distribution of listening scores, I shall conduct an independent samples t-test. The primary purpose of this step is to see if the differences in the use of the

above-mentioned six groups of strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group is significant or not. The following table gives detailed data:

Table 6.3 Results of independent samples t-test

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Memory strategies	Equal variances assumed	2.214	0.137	6.211	605	0	0.26741	0.04305	0.18286	0.35197
	Equal variances not assumed			6.222	602.754	0	0.26741	0.04298	0.18301	0.35182
Cognitive strategies	Equal variances assumed	2.044	0.153	6.555	605	0	0.24188	0.0369	0.16941	0.31435
	Equal variances not assumed			6.567	602.024	0	0.24188	0.03683	0.16955	0.31421
Compensation strategies	Equal variances assumed	2.106	0.147	5.41	605	0	0.22862	0.04226	0.14562	0.31161
	Equal variances not assumed			5.417	604.189	0	0.22862	0.0422	0.14573	0.31151
Metacognitive strategies	Equal variances assumed	1.238	0.266	6.962	605	0	0.20754	0.02981	0.149	0.26609
	Equal variances not assumed			6.978	599.539	0	0.20754	0.02974	0.14914	0.26595
Affective strategies 2	Equal variances assumed	6.614	0.01	5.879	605	0	0.33083	0.05627	0.22032	0.44134
	Equal variances not assumed			5.868	593.41	0	0.33083	0.05638	0.2201	0.44156
Social strategies 2	Equal variances assumed	3.262	0.071	3.743	605	0	0.12594	0.03365	0.05985	0.19202
	Equal variances not assumed			3.751	600.074	0	0.12594	0.03357	0.06	0.19187

F – The test statistic of the two-sample F test is a ratio of sample variances.

Sig – This is the two-tailed p-value associated with the null that the two groups have the same variance. In this study, the Sig. of memory (0.137), cognitive (0.153), compensation (0.147), metacognitive (0.266), and social strategies 2 (0.071) is higher than 0.05. This indicates that the high-scoring and low-scoring group have the same variance on the above five variables and we should see the data in the columns of *equal variances assumed*. The Sig. of affective strategies 2 (0.01) is lower than 0.05, this means the high-scoring and the low-scoring group have different variance on this variable. Therefore, we need to see the data in the column of *equal variances not assumed*.

T – These are the t-statistics under the two different assumptions: equal variances and unequal variances.

Df – The degrees of freedom is the number of values in a calculation that we can vary.

Sig (2-tailed) – The p-value is the two-tailed probability computed using the t-distribution. It is the probability of observing a t-value of equal or greater absolute value under the null hypothesis. If the p-value is less than pre-specified alpha level, usually 0.05, we can conclude that the difference is significantly different from zero. In this study, the sig (2-tailed) value of the above six groups of strategies are 0.00 and lower than 0.05. This means that students from the two groups have significant differences in using these six variables.

Mean Difference – This is the difference between the means.

Std Error Difference – It is the estimated standard deviation of the difference between the sample means.

95% Confidence Interval of the Difference – These are the lower and upper bounds of the confidence interval for the mean difference. In this study, the value of these six variables is between 0.18286 and 0.35197, between 0.16941 and 0.31435, between 0.14562 and 0.31161, between 0.149 and 0.26609, between 0.2201 and 0.44156, and between 0.0599 and 0.19202. Obviously, no 0 is included in these values, which also means that significant differences exist in using these six variables between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group.

So far, I have compared the similarities and differences in the use of listening comprehension strategies between students from the high-scoring and the low-scoring group. Actually, during the process of analysis, I also found that some students with good listening ability used strategies less frequently; on the other hand, some students who have poor English listening proficiency use strategies more frequently. This finding thus leads me to question whether there exists a positive relationship between strategy use and listening ability, and what kinds of listening comprehension strategies can predict listening ability.

Considering the above question, a correlation analysis between the variables, i.e., listening scores and frequency of strategy use, will be conducted in Section 6.7.

6.4.3 Independent samples t-test of the use of individual strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

The above analysis shows that students with good and poor English listening ability do have differences in using these six groups of strategies. This result made me more interested in finding out if there were differences in the use of each individual strategy between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group. Therefore, after conducting the independent samples t-test, I found that there were six strategy items that do not distinguish students from both groups and I presented them in the following table (see more data in Table 2, Appendix V).

Table 6.4 Presentation of the variables that cannot distinguish students between both groups

		Levene's Test for		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
an1	Equal variances assumed	.781	.377	1.449	604	.148	.07649	.05279	-.02717	.18016
	Equal variances not assumed			1.441	548.610	.150	.07649	.05308	-.02777	.18076
an3	Equal variances assumed	.207	.649	1.738	604	.083	.09849	.05667	-.01281	.20979
	Equal variances not assumed			1.741	603.151	.082	.09849	.05659	-.01264	.20962
an12	Equal variances assumed	.103	.748	-.150	604	.881	-.00445	.02964	-.06266	.05377
	Equal variances not assumed			-.150	601.999	.881	-.00445	.02965	-.06268	.05379
an14	Equal variances assumed	.235	.628	1.858	604	.064	.15024	.08088	-.00860	.30908
	Equal variances not assumed			1.857	602.168	.064	.15024	.08091	-.00865	.30913
an16	Equal variances assumed	1.019	.313	1.516	604	.130	.08748	.05771	-.02586	.20081
	Equal variances not assumed			1.519	601.779	.129	.08748	.05760	-.02564	.20059
an24	Equal variances assumed	.132	.716	-.481	604	.631	-.02046	.04257	-.10407	.06314
	Equal variances not assumed			-.481	603.978	.631	-.02046	.04254	-.10401	.06309

The above table presents the descriptive statistic values of the independent samples t-test on six strategy items between students with higher and lower listening ability.

In this table, the Sig. (under the column of *Levene's Test for Equality*) of these six variables is presented as follows: an1 (0.377), an3 (0.649), an12 (0.748), an14 (0.628), an16 (0.313) and an24 (0.716), and all of the data are higher than 0.05. This means that the high-scoring and low-scoring groups have the same variances on these variables. Therefore,

we should see the data in the columns of *Equal variances assumed*. And the Sig. (2-tailed) values are higher than 0.05: an1 (0.148), an3 (0.083), an12 (0.881), an14 (0.064), an16 (0.130) and an24 (0.631). This means that students from two groups show no differences in their use of these variables. In other words, these variables cannot distinguish students with different listening proficiency.

In addition, regarding *95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*, the values are shown respectively as follows: between -0.02717 and 0.18016; between -0.01281 and 0.20979; between -0.06266 and 0.05377; between -0.00860 and 0.30908; between -0.02586 and 0.20081; between -0.10407 and 0.06314, which include 0. This also confirms that these variables cannot distinguish students with good and poor English listening proficiency.

In order to see how frequently students from both groups use the above six individual strategies, I compare the frequency distribution of their use between students from two groups.

Table 6.5 Frequency distribution of the use of six individual strategies between students from both groups

Group Statistics					
	high-scoring group and low-scoring group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
an1	1	309	1.4401	0.55286	0.03145
	2	297	1.3401	0.4816	0.02795
an3	1	309	1.8123	0.72325	0.04114
	2	297	1.7172	0.6684	0.03878
an12	1	309	1.11	0.36154	0.02057
	2	297	1.1145	0.3681	0.02136
an14	1	309	2.2816	0.98776	0.05619
	2	297	2.1313	1.00317	0.05821
an16	1	309	1.835	0.7442	0.04234
	2	297	1.7475	0.67298	0.03905
an24	1	309	1.3398	0.53245	0.03029
	2	297	1.3603	0.51482	0.02987

The above table compares the frequency distribution of the use of the six individual strategies between students with higher and lower listening proficiency. We can see that the above strategies are not used frequently by students from both groups, and the mean values are shown as: 1 (1.4401 vs. 1.3636), 3 (1.8123 vs. 1.7138), 12 (1.1100 vs. 1.1145), 16 (1.8350 vs. 1.7475) and 24 (1.3398 vs. 1.3603). As to the strategy item14 (2.2816 vs. 2.1313), they use it a little bit more frequently than the other five variables; however, the use of strategy item14 is still infrequent when compared with other strategies in the whole scale.

Table 6.6 Description of strategies similarly used by students from the high-scoring and the low-scoring groups

Metacognitive strategies <i>Arranging and planning your learning-</i> Seeking practice opportunities	AN1. I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as participation in an English corner or an English lecture. AN12. I try to make some friends who are native speakers of English through the internet and use audio chatting to improve my listening ability.
Social strategies <i>Empathizing with others-</i> Developing cultural understanding <i>Asking questions-</i> Asking for clarification or verification <i>Cooperating with others-</i> Cooperating with proficient users of the new language	AN3. I try to know more cultural background knowledge to understand what I hear.
	AN14. When I talk to somebody in English, I may well ask him/her to repeat or slow down if the message is not clear to me.
	AN16. I make an effort to remember unfamiliar words that I hear and ask the teacher or my friends later. AN24. I listen to English with my friends, and discuss

Cooperating with peers	with them how to improve my listening ability.
------------------------	------------------------------------------------

Source: Oxford (1990) and results from SPSS.

There are four different categories presented in the above Table 6.6. The first category includes two listening comprehension strategies: Items 1 and 12 belong to **metacognitive strategies – seeking practice opportunities**. When I compare them with other strategies in this category, I can easily find that in contrast to others, these two strategies own to great extent social features, i.e., *taking part in social activities* and *making friends with native speakers*. To sum up, students with relatively good or poor listening proficiency share the following similarities in their use of these strategies:

- They show an inactivity or unwillingness to take part in some public English activities or performances and seek any opportunities to speak with native speakers and to train their listening ability.

Conversations with students¹⁹⁹ convince me that it is very difficult for Chinese students to meet people who speak English in their environment. Lacking opportunities of speaking and listening to English is thus a big obstacle for them. Most students complained that they felt their oral English was so poor that they were always afraid of making mistakes in public or in front of other people; therefore, they were not willing to speak English with others.

Even though students stressed that they were reluctant to speak English in public because of their introverted personality, the influences of the Chinese tradition, cultural

¹⁹⁹ In May 2011, I conducted my conversation with students who had taken part in my questionnaire in order to find out some reasons that would account for the phenomena interpreted from the questionnaire. There were altogether 41 students involved in conversation, including 29 students with higher marks of listening comprehension and 12 students with lower marks. The students were chosen for further conversations with me according to the following criteria: the students in my questionnaire were divided into different groups: a high-scoring group with frequent use of memory strategies, a low-scoring group with frequent use of memory strategies, a high-scoring group with less frequent use of memory strategies, a low-scoring group with less frequent use of memory strategies. Likewise, there were also four groups with cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, social strategies, therefore, there were altogether 24 groups from which I chose some students. Since a student could belong to different groups, I finally chose 41 students covering all groups.

background and ‘face’ concept (see Chapter 2) should not be ignored. Most of them said that if they made mistakes in front of others, they felt very embarrassed and shameful; they tried to keep their ‘face’ in front of friends, teachers and classmates. They have thus gradually formed the habits of keeping silent in public, in English classes or at occasions where English is spoken. To a great extent, they expressed their anxiety when learning, using and listening to English. As a result, their attitudes and anxiety towards English make them become more and more passive in attending any English activities or looking for any opportunities to improve their English knowledge and listening comprehension.

Social strategies (including the second, third and fourth categories) shown in Table 6.6 – are also used by students from both groups with the following similarities:

- Students from both groups do not pay much attention to the cultural background of the target language and do not connect English knowledge with cultural knowledge.

As for this phenomenon, I talked to the students and most of them told me that they seldom pay much attention to the cultural background of the target language and they never realize the important role cultural knowledge plays in language learning. First of all, their English teachers do not impart much knowledge concerning the cultural background of the target language to them. Secondly, students never realize that cultural knowledge can help them better learn and comprehend English. Thirdly, during their usual language learning they focus on vocabulary learning and the CET-Band 4 exercises, while ignoring other knowledge related to English knowledge. This implies, to some extent, that Chinese students have been inflexible in learning English and they have not been capable of connecting different knowledge realms. Lack of cultural knowledge of the target language is one of the reasons that blocks Chinese students’ listening proficiency (cf. Sun, 2006: 66).

Sifeng Zhang & Wenxue Zhang maintain that Chinese Confucian doctrine manacles students’ innovative ability and flexibility in learning (cf. 2005: 83). Besides, Anyu Liu states that educational elements of Chinese college, e.g., teaching content and curriculum, teaching methods, teaching management and campus cultural environment, are also

influencing factors that impede students' autonomous learning (cf. 2003: 109f). Obviously, the cultural background and educational conditions of Chinese colleges have an important influence on the choice and use of listening comprehension strategies among Chinese non-English major students.

- Students from both groups seldom use some social strategies, e.g., *let others repeat the message or let them slow down, asking questions and cooperating with others* while learning and listening to English.

As presented above, the third and fourth category in Table 6.6 include two different social strategies, and we can see that students in my study use these strategies less frequently. They are normally reluctant to cooperate with their friends and consult with their teachers. As for this phenomenon, most students commented as follows:

- They feel very impolite if they ask people to repeat or slow down while they are speaking. They do not like to interrupt other people even though they cannot completely understand what others are saying.
- They also feel very embarrassed or ashamed if they ask people to explain or to repeat what has been said, since this behavior would reveal their ignorance.
- Since their childhood, they were seldom trained to discuss with others or to have group discussions in their English classes. In addition, outside their English classes, they always learn English individually.
- They still stressed that it was not easy for them to quickly improve their listening proficiency or increase listening marks in their CET-Band 4 within a limited period of time²⁰⁰ and they paid more attention to vocabulary and grammar learning as well as reading comprehension. Therefore, mechanically remembering vocabulary and doing more CET-Band 4 exercises become their primary ways to learn English and increase

²⁰⁰ Limited time refers to the time during which they can prepare for their CET-Band 4. As mentioned in Chapter 4, CET-Band 4 is organized twice a year. University students have to pass it during their four years of study; otherwise they cannot get their Bachelor's degree. Therefore, they always try to find the most efficient and easiest methods that can help them increase their marks in a short time.

their scores in CET-Band 4. In accordance with this attitude, Yuan et al. state that passing the CET-Band 4 test has become a goal of which the students with poor English proficiency are hard in pursuit, while their interest in English learning has been inhibited. Therefore, active learning has gradually turned into passive learning (cf. 2004: 29).

6.5 Statistical description of listening comprehension strategies within each group

Sections 6.3 and 6.4 describe the use of listening comprehension strategies between students with unequal listening proficiency in the light of 36 individual and six groups of strategies. In this section, I shall compare the use of listening comprehension strategies within each strategy group in order to describe the similarities and differences. There are three subgroups within memory strategies, four subgroups within cognitive strategies, two subgroups within compensation strategies, three subgroups within metacognitive strategies, two subgroups within affective strategies and four subgroups within social strategies (see detailed data in Tables 1 to 7, Appendix VI).

6.5.1 Comparison within the group of memory strategies

Regarding memory strategies, three subgroups can be distinguished: The first group is named *associating/elaborating* and includes items 6, 11 and 29; the second is named *representing sounds in memory* and related to item 28; and the third is named *using imagery* and related to strategy item 31.

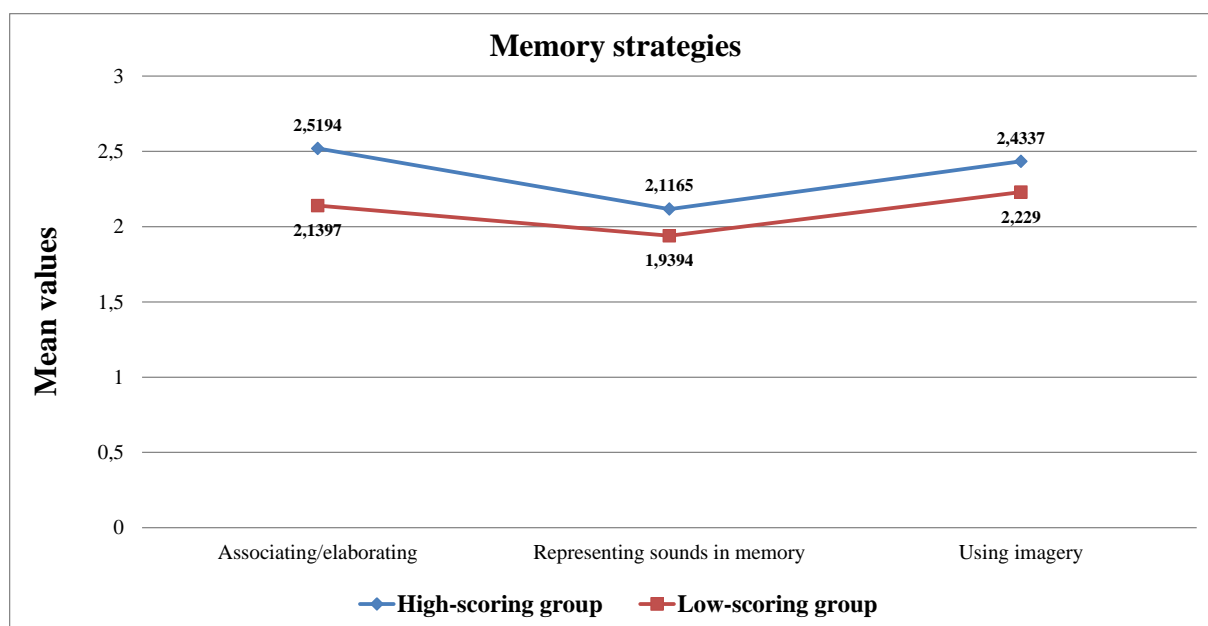


Figure 6.5 Frequency distribution of the use of memory strategies

The above figure describes the use of three kinds of memory strategies. From this chart we can see that the students from both groups show their low frequency of using strategies, e.g., *representing sound in memory* and *using imagery*. The mean values of these two subgroups are under 2.5. The low frequency reflects that most Chinese students do not pay attention to the role that *sound* and *imagery* play in training their listening comprehension. Only the mean value of the use of the strategy *associating/elaborating* by good listeners is above 2.5 ($M=2.5194$). With regard to the low frequency of using memory strategies, most students said they always use memory strategies to learn vocabulary or to fulfill a reading task. However, they do not believe that memory strategies contribute to their listening proficiency and thus they seldom use memory strategies to accomplish a listening task. This shows that memory strategies are used more to learn vocabulary and reading comprehension than listening comprehension among Chinese non-English major students.

6.5.2 Comparison within the group of cognitive strategies

Within the group of cognitive strategies, there are four subgroups to be interpreted: *repeating*

including strategy items 15 and 25, *taking notes* referring to strategy item 13, *getting the ideas quickly* consisting of strategy items 23 and 33, as well as *reasoning deductively* with strategy item 35.

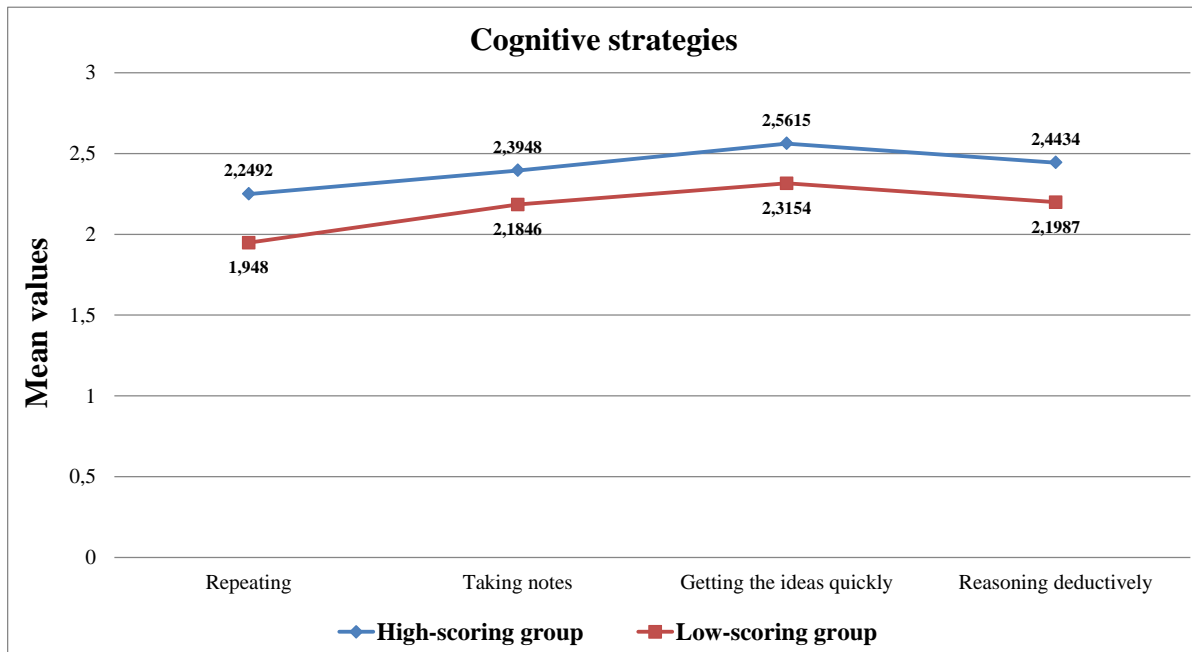


Figure 6.6 Frequency distribution of the use of cognitive strategies

Within the group of cognitive strategies, strategies such as *getting the ideas quickly* are used more frequently by students from both groups while strategies such as *repeating* are used less frequently by them. This shows that students normally pay more attention to the contents they have heard and find some special words or phrases to help them better understand the contexts, but they do not like to imitate the native speakers and practice their pronunciation. As for this phenomenon, most students commented that they could not pronounce the words correctly so that they were not confident with their pronunciation. Therefore, they always practiced writing English words instead of verbally repeating them. Therefore, lack of oral training and incorrect pronunciation are factors that, to a great extent, impede the use of more cognitive strategies.

6.5.3 Comparison within the group of compensation strategies

Within the group of compensation strategies, there are two subgroups, one subgroup is

named as *using other clues* including strategy items 4, 8, 19, 21 and 34, and the second is *using linguistic clues* consisting of strategy items 17 and 32.

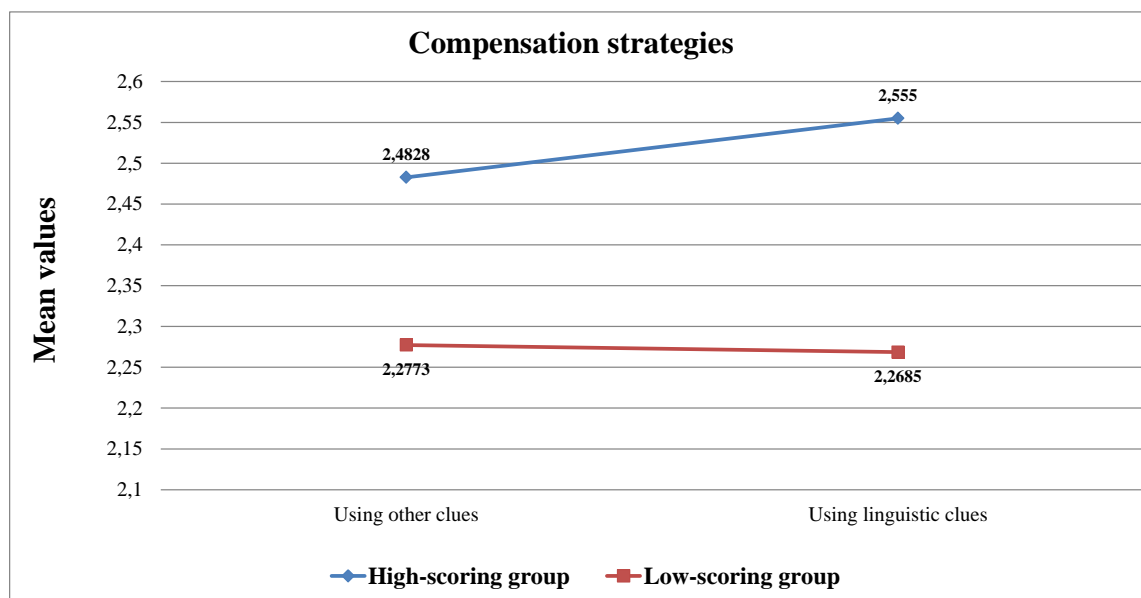


Figure 6.7 Frequency distribution of the use of compensation strategies

From the above figure, we can see that compared with students who are not proficient in listening comprehension, good English listeners normally find more clues to assist them in understanding what they hear. Actually, through my discussion with students I found that *guessing intelligently from linguistic contexts* is a primary method that Chinese students use to accomplish some English tasks during their listening process.

6.5.4 Comparison within the group of metacognitive strategies

Within the category of metacognitive strategies, there are three subgroups: The first one, *seeking practice opportunities* includes the strategy items 1, 2, 7, 10, 12 and 36, the second one, *planning for a language task*, includes strategy item 18 and the third one, *paying attention*, includes strategy items 9 and 26.

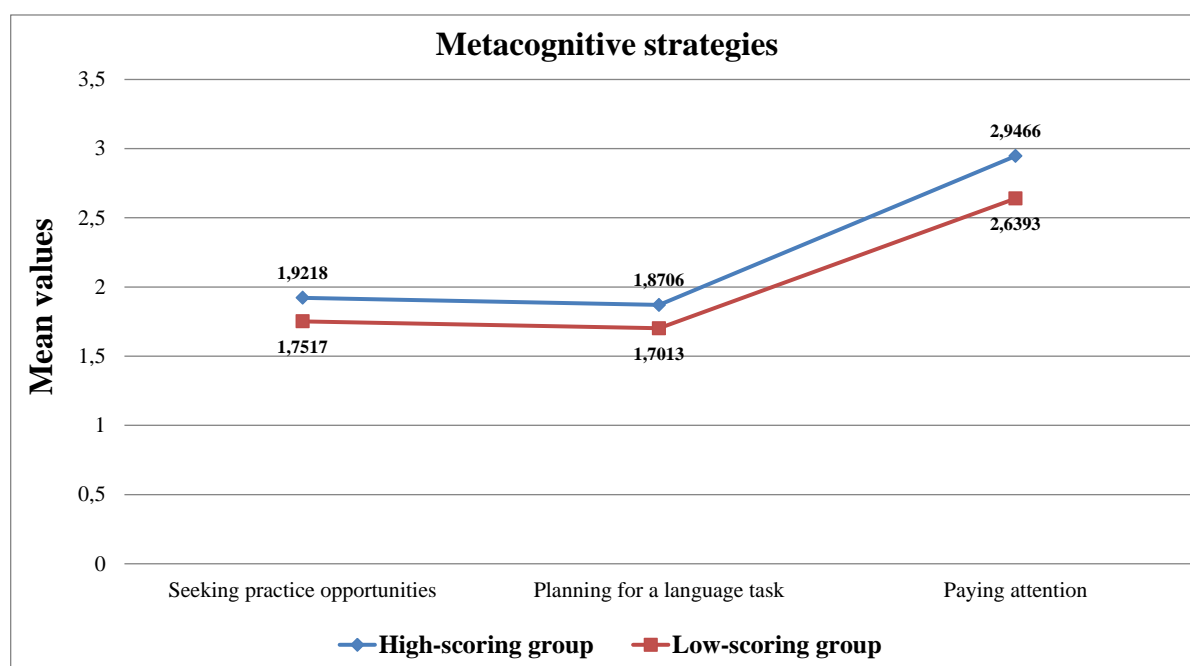


Figure 6.8 Frequency distribution of the use of metacognitive strategies

The above figure describes the frequency of the use of three subgroups of metacognitive strategies. In this figure, the strategies *paying attention* are used most frequently while the other two kinds of strategies *seeking practice opportunities* and *planning for a language task* are used less frequently by students. This indicates that students usually direct their attention to what they are listening to, but they do not seek enough opportunities to practice their listening comprehension. In addition, they are not active in training their listening comprehension, e.g., they do not like to plan any listening tasks or organize listening training. In a word, the findings show that Chinese non-English major students have a relatively limited learning autonomy and ability to plan learning assignments.

Students in my study reported that the most frequent and possible opportunities they seek for practicing their listening comprehension are *listening to English songs* or *watching English films*, rather than *talking to somebody in English* and *involving themselves in some social activities where English is spoken*. When I analyzed the strategies of *seeking for practice opportunities*, I found that this strategy includes two aspects: One aspect should be called *media-training-oriented opportunity* including strategy items 2 and 10; and the other

one should be called *social-activity-oriented training opportunity* including strategy items 1, 7, 12 and 36. Therefore, I compared these two aspects of this subgroup of strategies between students from the high-scoring and the low-scoring groups:

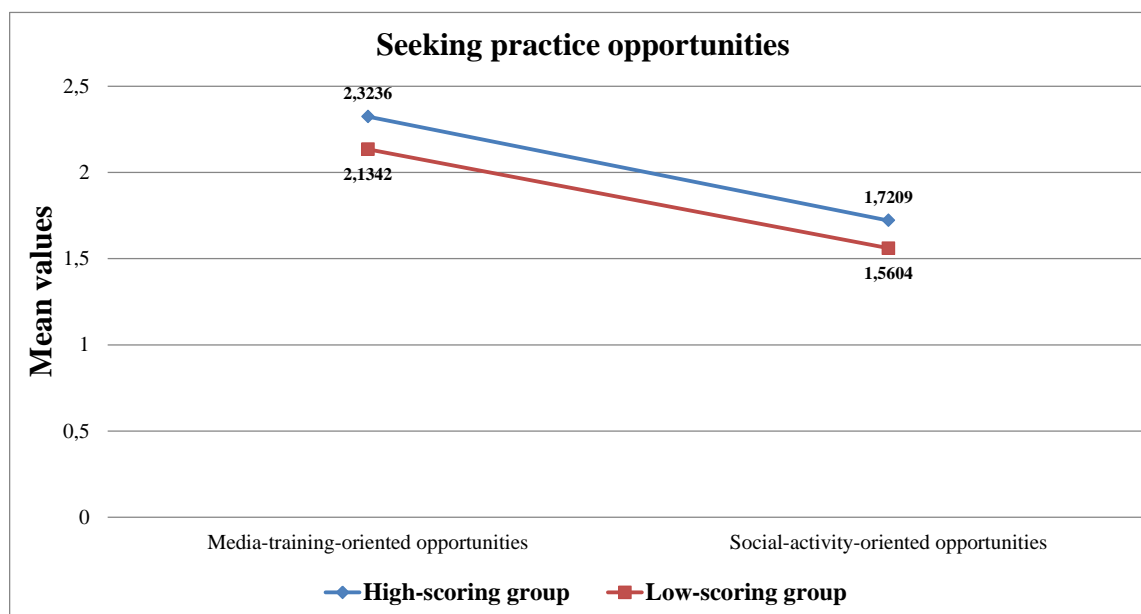


Figure 6.9 Frequency distribution of two aspects of the strategies 'seeking practice opportunities'

The above figure reflects the real condition under which Chinese non-English major students learn English: Most of them only use some media tools, e.g., English songs or films to train their listening comprehension, but are reluctant to seek more chances to speak or communicate with others in English. My discussion with the students in my study confirmed the fact that students' anxiety in losing 'face' directly influences their choice and use of listening comprehension strategies.

6.5.5 Comparison within the group of affective strategies

Within the category of affective strategies, there are two subgroups: one is named *making positive statements*, referring to strategy item 20; the other is named *using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation* and refers to item 22.

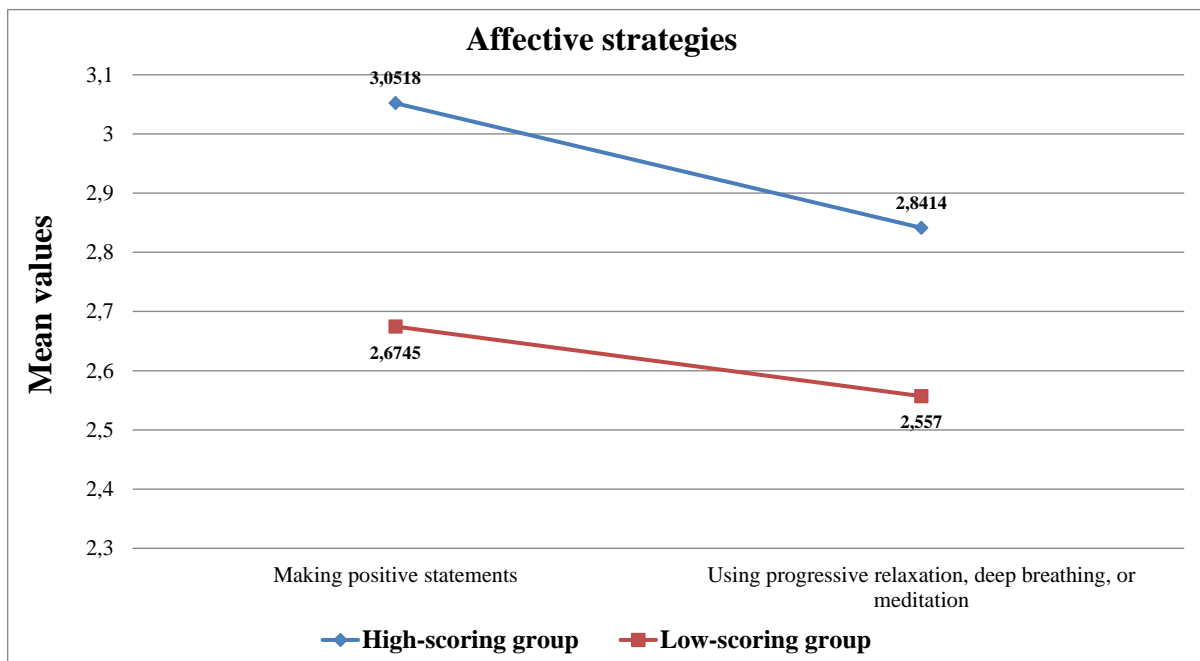


Figure 6.10 Frequency distribution of the use of affective strategies

This figure shows that these two kinds of affective strategies are used more frequently by students from both groups. As shown above, mean values of these four kinds of strategies vary from 2.557 to 3.0518. This indicates that students can better regulate and control their nervous feelings when they learn English. Taking the low frequency of using metacognitive strategies, my conversation with students and the test of validity and reliability²⁰¹ into consideration, I draw the conclusion that the application of affective strategies among Chinese non-English major students is only restricted to their self-learning and self-regulation. Their anxiety when listening to English can be reduced through their own regulation, but their anxiety when speaking English in public or using English in social communication situations is still high. The reasons for high anxiety when using English is caused to a great extent by Chinese traditional culture and Chinese collectivist society (see Chapter 2), since students overly emphasize ‘face’ and ‘social recognition’ in front of other people.

²⁰¹ As explained in the previous parts, after the validity and reliability test, I regrouped one affective strategy, item 5 ‘share their feelings with somebody else’ into social strategies.

6.5.6 Comparison within the group of social strategies

Within the group of social strategies, there are four subgroups: the first one is named *asking for clarification or verification* referring to strategy item 14, the second one *cooperating with others* including strategy items 5, 16 and 24, the third one *developing cultural understanding* owning strategy item 3 and the fourth one *becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings* consisting of strategy items 27 and 30.

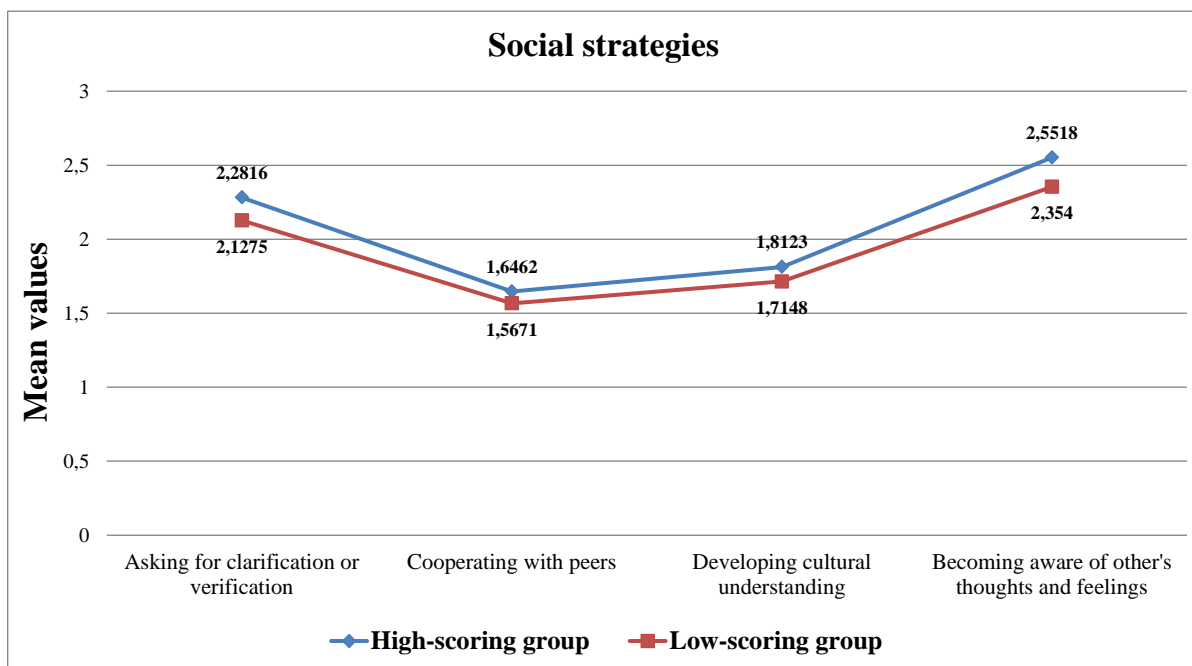


Figure 6.11 Frequency distribution of the use of social strategies

The above figure compares the frequency distribution of using four subgroups of social strategies. From this chart, we can see that these social strategies are used quite differently by students: The strategy of *becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings* is used most frequently while the strategy of *cooperating with peers* is used least frequently. This implies that students would rather observe the expression of English speakers in order to attempt to guess what they are thinking and experiencing than involve themselves in social interaction in order to improve their listening ability through cooperating with other people. This phenomenon confirms the fact that Chinese students are more accustomed to their individual development than cooperation with their peers and others.

6.6 Statistical description of the level of consciousness²⁰² in the use of listening comprehension strategies

In the above, listening comprehension strategies were analyzed in order to find out how frequently students used them and answer the first two research questions (see Sections 1.3 and 5.2.2.1). In this section, these strategies will be checked again in order to find out which strategies are more or less consciously used by students and answer my third research question; in other words, it is aimed at finding out at which level these listening comprehension strategies are consciously used by the research samplings. As I explained in Chapter 5, due to the difficulty in measuring the level of consciousness, I asked research samplings to self-evaluate and self-report if they use each individual strategy consciously or not.

6.6.1 Consciousness in the use of six groups of strategies

The main objective of this step is to find out at which level students consciously use listening comprehension strategies. Thus, another six new variables (shown in the SPSS program as: mean 9, mean 10, mean 11, mean 12, mean 13 and mean 14)²⁰³ came into being.

6.6.1.1 Consciousness of strategy use among all students

The following diagram is used to describe the level consciousness in the use of listening comprehension strategies in terms of mean values (see detailed data in Table 1, Appendix VII).

²⁰² In the previous chapter, I explained that one of my research questions focuses on finding out if students consciously or unconsciously use listening comprehension strategies. The consciousness level is tested based on the statistical data input in SPSS program: 'conscious use of each strategy' is transformed as '2' while 'unconscious use' is as '1' (see Chapter 5). Therefore, 1.5 is regarded as a vital point to determine consciousness or unconsciousness.

²⁰³ These variables are labelled conscious level of using memory strategies, conscious level of using cognitive strategies, conscious level of using compensation strategies, conscious level of using metacognitive strategies, conscious level of using affective strategies and conscious level of using social strategies in SPSS program.

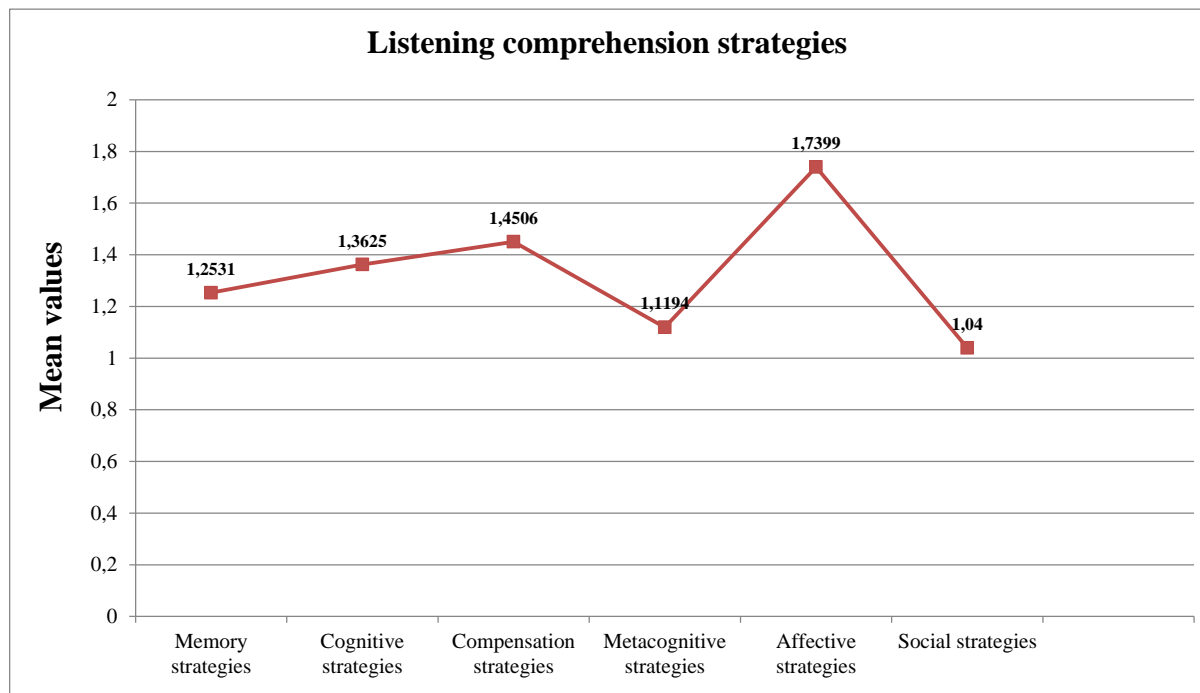


Figure 6.12 Mean values of the conscious use of six groups of listening comprehension strategies

The above diagram describes the degree of consciousness shown in the use of listening comprehension strategies among all students. It shows that among the six groups of listening comprehension strategies, only the mean value of the use of affective strategies is above 1.50 which is thus regarded as a critical dividing point or standard to evaluate the conscious degree of using listening comprehension strategies; by contrast, the mean values of using the other five strategies are lower than 1.50. This statistical description implies that only affective strategies are used at a high consciousness level while the other five kinds of strategies are used at a low consciousness level, among which social and metacognitive strategies are used the least consciously.

We can easily see the relationship between frequency and consciousness in the use of the six groups of strategies from a comparison between Figure 6.2 and the following Figure 6.13.

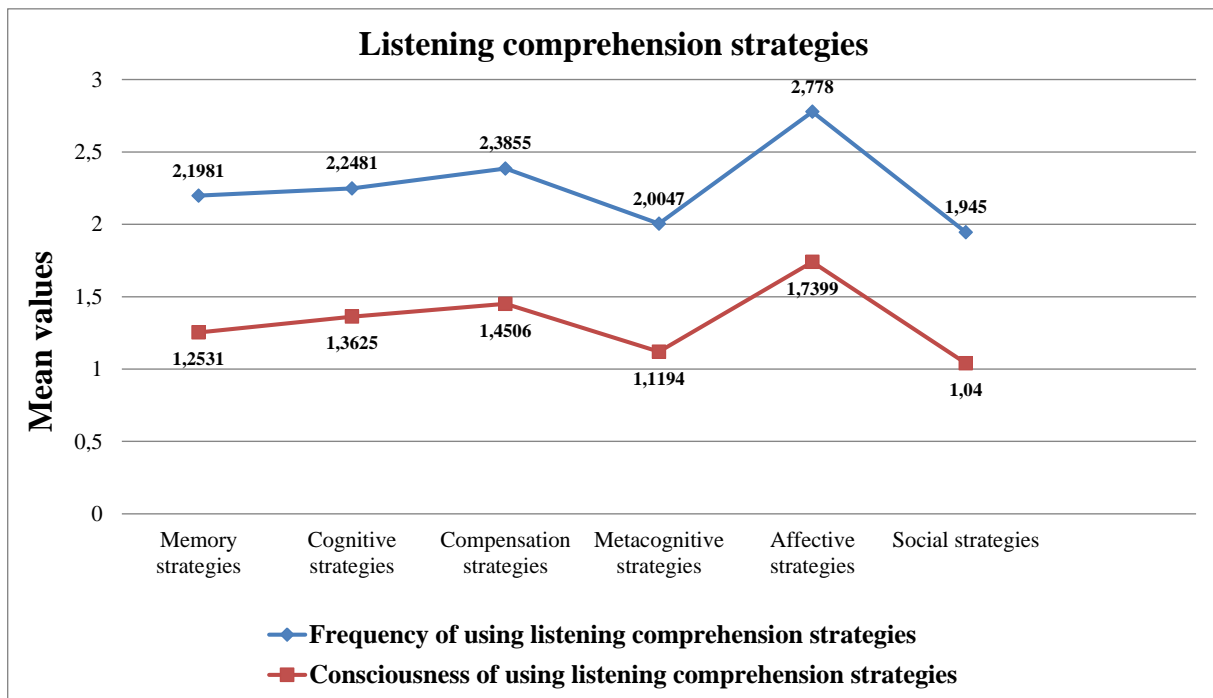


Figure 6.13 Comparison of frequency and consciousness of the use of the six groups of listening comprehension strategies

The above figure describes the relationship between frequency and consciousness of the use of six groups of strategies. The blue and red lines with similar ranking tell us that the frequent use of listening comprehension strategies is proportional to the degree of their consciousness. This implies that, like other types of knowledge, strategies can be either implicit or explicit knowledge for language learners; conscious use of listening comprehension strategies depends, to a certain extent, on the frequency of their use.

To sum up, the degree of frequent use of strategies can, to some extent, decide the degree of conscious use, and vice versa. However, in order to find out if the correlation between them reaches the level of significance, I shall conduct a correlation analysis in Section 6.7.

6.6.1.2 Consciousness of strategy use between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

I shall now compare listeners from both groups in order to find out their differences and similarities in the conscious use of six groups of listening comprehension strategies (see detailed data in Table 2, Appendix VII).

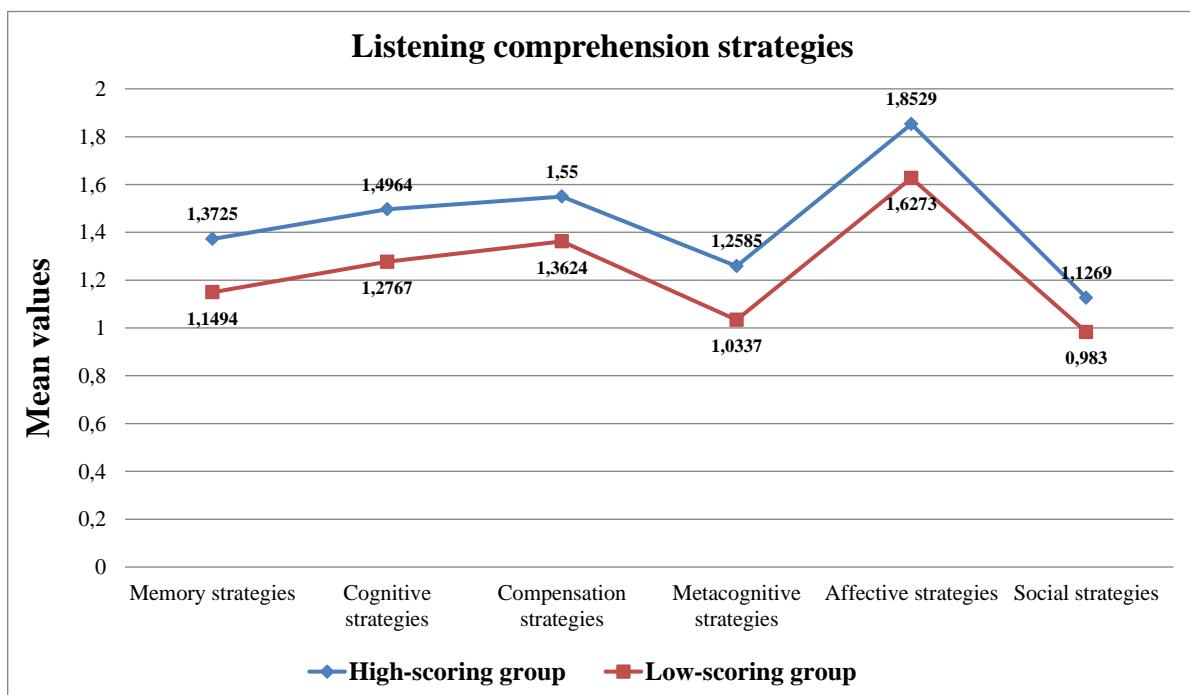


Figure 6.14 Conscious use of six groups of listening comprehension strategies between the good and poor English listeners

The above diagram with blue and red lines serves to compare the degree of consciousness in the use of listening comprehension strategies between students from both groups: students with good listening ability show higher consciousness than poor English listeners. This implies that the degree of consciousness is positively related to the listening ability of Chinese non-English-major students. As for students with relatively good listening ability, mean values of their conscious use of affective and compensation strategies are above 1.50; while for poor English listeners, only the mean value of the conscious use of affective strategies is above 1.50.

In order to find out if significant differences exist in the conscious use of those six different groups of listening comprehension strategies between the good and poor English listeners, I shall conduct an independent samples t-test between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group. The final results (see detailed data in Table 3, Appendix VII) prove that there do exist significant differences in the conscious use of strategies between good and poor English listeners.

6.6.2 Consciousness of the use of individual listening comprehension strategy items

In the above section, I analyzed six groups of listening comprehension strategies to see whether and to what degree they are consciously used by students. I shall now show at which level students consciously use each individual listening comprehension strategy.

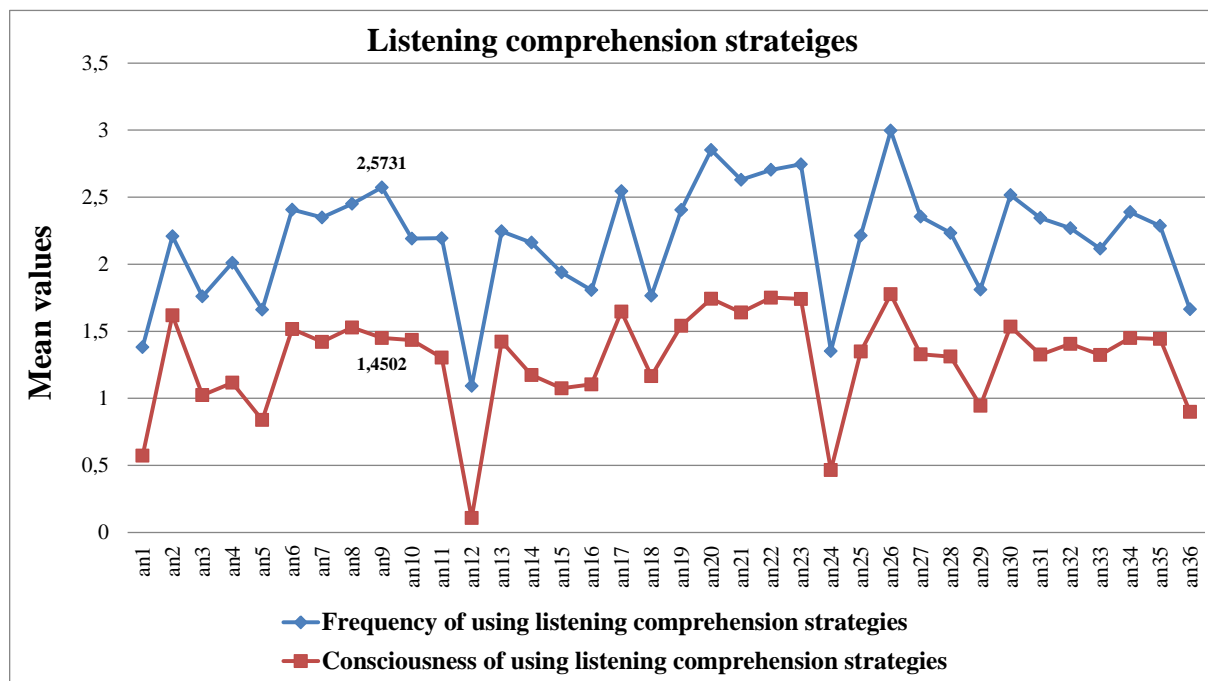


Figure 6.15 Frequent and conscious use of 36 listening comprehension strategies

In the above figure, the blue line stands for the frequency of the use of listening comprehension strategies and the red line stands for the consciousness level of their use. We

can see that the above two lines show similarities. If we take 2.5 and 1.5 as the dividing points to distinguish the higher and lower frequency and consciousness of strategy use, we can see that the higher and lower points of these two lines influence each other. In other words, if the red points go above 1.5 and the blue points go above 2.5, this indicates that the students relatively frequently and consciously use listening comprehension strategies. In fact, after observing these 36 variables, we can find that the mean score of frequently using strategy item 9 is above 2.5 ($M=2.5731$) while the mean score of consciously using it is under 1.5 ($M=1.4502$).

According to the statistical analysis, the use of the strategy ‘I make every effort to understand what I have heard without translating it word-for-word into my native language’ is more frequent but less conscious. This finding implies that students have been trained not to translate word for word what they hear while listening to English and they have formed the good habit of automatically using this strategy, without paying extra attention to it. Students involved in my research also commented that their English teachers always emphasize that they should try to quickly grasp the main ideas when they listen to English instead of translating them word for word. They have consciously trained themselves to apply this strategy in their listening processes and found it a useful method. This finding can, to some extent, confirm the hypothesis that listening comprehension strategies can be practiced to become automatic.

6.7 Correlation analysis²⁰⁴ of listening proficiency and frequency and consciousness of listening comprehension strategies use

After analyzing how frequently and consciously students use listening comprehension strategies, we can see that frequency and consciousness of strategy use to a certain extent influence listening proficiency. In order to find out if the *influence* is up to statistical significance, I shall conduct a correlation analysis in this section. Correlation analysis is a statistical technique to quantify the dependence of two or more variables; in other words, it is used to compare the uncertain interrelationship between two or more variables, in order to find if these variables have positive, negative or zero interrelationship with each other. For example, the interrelationship between the use of listening comprehension strategies and listening proficiency can be presented through the following figure:

²⁰⁴ Correlation analysis explores the covariant relationship among variables but not the causal relationship. We normally use Pearson's correlation coefficient to measure the correlation between two or more variables. Coefficient value is between +1 and -1, which means that these variables can be positively or negatively correlated. In other words, when x becomes bigger, y can become either bigger or smaller. The variables are positively or negatively closely connected when their coefficient is near +1 or -1. There are different standards to divide the level of coefficient. One standard is five degrees of correlation. Highly strong correlation: if the value is between 0.8 and 1.0; strong correlation: if the value is between 0.6 and 0.8; moderate correlation: if the value is between 0.4 and 0.6; weak correlation: if the value is between 0.2 and 0.4; very weak or no correlation: if the value is between 0 and 0.2. Another standard one is four degrees of correlation: variables can be considered highly correlated if correlation coefficients are between 0.7 and 0.9; variables can be considered moderately correlated if correlation coefficients are between 0.5 and 0.7; variables have a low correlation if correlation coefficients are between 0.3 and 0.5; variables have little correlation if correlation coefficients are less than 0.3. In this study, I take 0.3 as a criterion to evaluate if an interrelationship exists between two variables or not.

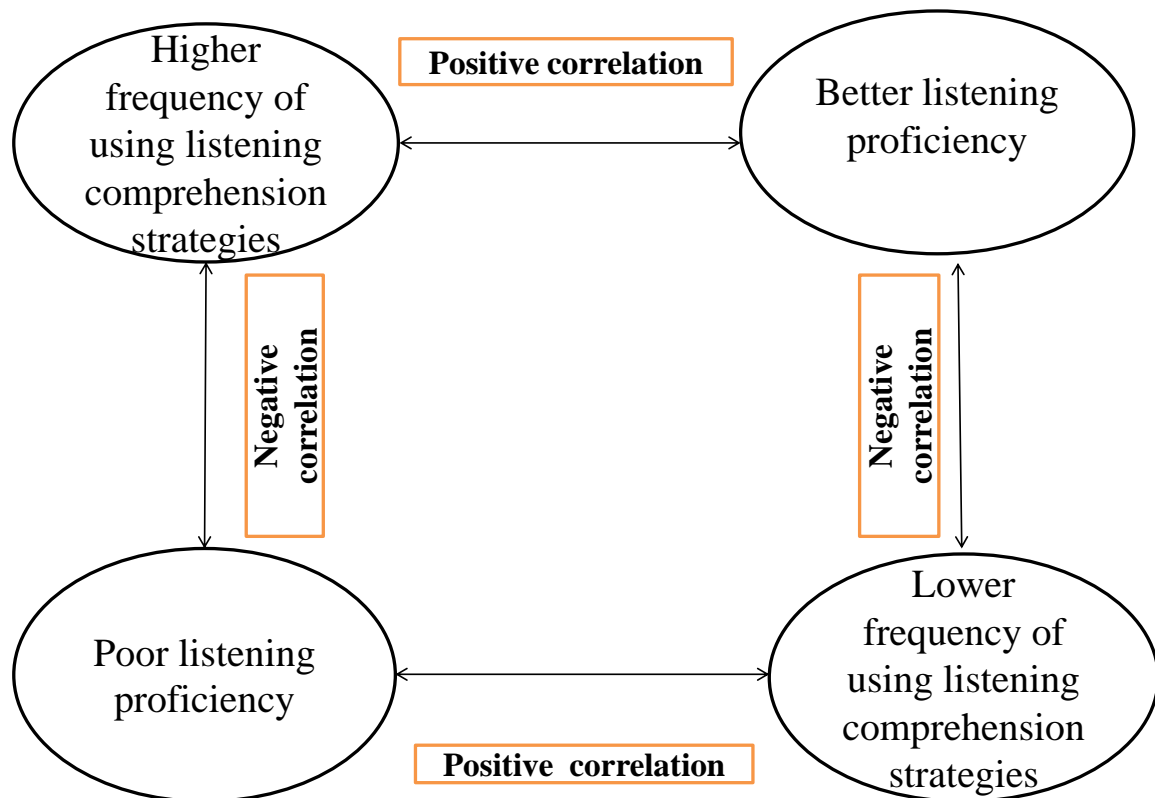


Figure 6.16 Correlation between the use of listening comprehension strategies and listening proficiency

In the above figure, the positive and negative relationship between listening proficiency and the use of listening comprehension strategies are illustrated, e.g., if higher frequency of using listening comprehension strategies results in good listening proficiency, i.e., whether these two have a positive interrelationship. If, on the other hand, higher frequency of strategy use leads to poor listening proficiency, these two are negatively correlated.

In the following, the relationship between three variables will be conducted: *listening scores, frequency and consciousness of the use of the six groups of listening comprehension strategies.*

6.7.1 Correlation between listening scores and frequency of strategy use and the interrelationship between the six strategy groups

In this step, I shall conduct a correlation analysis between two important variables: *listening scores* and *frequency of the use of six groups of listening comprehension strategies* in order to find out which kinds of listening comprehension strategies are correlated with listening achievements and if the correlation is significant.

From the results of the correlation analysis, we can find that those six groups of listening comprehension strategies have almost no correlation with listening scores. After correction for attenuation,²⁰⁵ the correlation coefficient between listening scores and the use of each group of strategies is shown in the following table:

²⁰⁵ Correction for attenuation is a method to adjust the correlation coefficient because of errors of measurement when two or more variables are correlated. The formula of correction for attenuation is $rx'y' = r_{xy} / \sqrt{r_{xx} * r_{yy}}$. $rx'y'$ stands for the value of correction for attenuation, r_{xy} stands for correlation coefficient, r_{xx} is a measure of reliability within variable x, r_{yy} is a measure of reliability within variable y. Here, r_{xy} refers to the original correlation coefficient. r_{xx} refers to the reliability of listening scores and I assume the reliability value is 1.0. r_{yy} refers to reliability of frequency of listening comprehension strategies use, as discussed in section of 6.2.3, and the reliability value of these six groups of strategies are 0.607, 0.610, 0.755, 0.626, 0.573 and 0.605.

Table 6.7 Correlation between listening scores and frequency of the use of six groups of strategies as well as the interrelationship between the six groups

Correlations								
		Scores of listening comprehension	Memory strategies	Cognitive strategies	Compensation strategies	Metacognitive strategies	Affective strategies 2	Social strategies 2
Scores of listening comprehension	Pearson Correlation	1	.262**	.271**	.193**	.305**	.289**	.151**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0	0	0	0
	N	1109	1109	1109	1109	1109	1109	1109
Memory strategies	Pearson Correlation	.262**	1	.628**	.673**	.492**	.427**	.568**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0	0	0	0
	N	1109	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162
Cognitive strategies	Pearson Correlation	.271**	.628**	1	.632**	.614**	.462**	.617**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0		0	0	0	0
	N	1109	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162
Compensation strategies	Pearson Correlation	.193**	.673**	.632**	1	.507**	.500**	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0		0	0	0
	N	1109	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162
Metacognitive strategies	Pearson Correlation	.305**	.492**	.614**	.507**	1	.389**	.574**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0		0	0
	N	1109	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162
Affective strategies 2	Pearson Correlation	.289**	.427**	.462**	.500**	.389**	1	.387**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	0		0
	N	1109	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162
Social strategies 2	Pearson Correlation	.151**	.568**	.617**	.601**	.574**	.387**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	N	1109	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162	1162
**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-								

The above table presents the correlation coefficient between listening scores and the frequency of the use of each listening comprehension strategy group as well as the coefficient between these six groups. The findings, on the whole, show that among the six groups of listening comprehension strategies, only the use of metacognitive strategies is positively correlated with listening proficiency ($P=0.305$); in other words, only metacognitive strategies can to some extent predict students' listening achievements. More specifically, students who more frequently use metacognitive strategies can achieve a better performance in their listening comprehension. The result is in agreement with other previous

research, e.g., Xiarong Zhou (2000), Fengshi Yuan (2004), Ying He (2006), and so on. Metacognitive strategies are an effective tool for learning English and it guides the implementation of the learning process. As analyzed in Section 6.5.4, there are three kinds of metacognitive strategies involved in this study. The relatively high predictive ability of metacognitive strategies on listening proficiency illustrates that the synthesized application of the metacognitive strategies ‘seeking practice opportunities, planning for a language task and paying attention’ is correlated to students’ listening proficiency. However, my previous discussion and Figure 6.13 demonstrate that Chinese students use metacognitive strategies, especially ‘seeking practice opportunities and planning for a language task’ quite infrequently and their consciousness of using such kinds of strategies is also very low. Therefore, teachers should increase students’ understanding of metacognitive strategies and systematically guide them to more frequently use the three kinds of metacognitive strategies.

In addition, the above chart outlines the correlation between these six groups of listening comprehension strategies and it describes the close interrelation between each one. This result also tells us that when students use strategies to train their listening comprehension, they do not just use one kind of strategy; all strategies mutually support each other to assist their learning process and exchange input and output information. The findings also confirm Oxford’s theories that learning strategies support each other mutually.

In the above, the correlation between listening scores and the frequency of the use of six groups of listening comprehension strategies was described. In the following, I shall conduct a correlation analysis between listening scores and the consciousness of strategy use in order to see if listening scores are correlated with the conscious use of each group of strategies.

6.7.2 Correlation between listening scores and consciousness of strategy use

The primary objective of this step is to find out if the consciousness of using strategies can affect students’ achievement and what kinds of strategies are correlated with their listening proficiency. After the correction for attenuation, the correlation coefficient between these

two variables is as follows:

Table 6.8 Correlation between listening scores and conscious use of each group of strategies

		Correlations					
		Scores of listening comprehension	Conscious level of using memory strategies	Conscious level of using cognitive strategies	Conscious level of using compensation strategies	Conscious level of using metacognitive strategies	Conscious level of using social strategies
Scores of listening comprehension	Pearson Correlation	1	.224**	.235**	.185**	.280**	.255**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0	0	0
	N	1109	1089	1086	1088	1108	1059

The above table conveys the descriptive statistic values of the correlation analysis between listening scores and the consciousness of the use of each group of strategies. We can see Pearson values of these six groups strategies range from 0.152 to 0.280 and do not reach the statistical significance. This means that there is no correlation between listening proficiency and the consciousness of the use of the groups of listening comprehension strategies. The results imply that when students use strategies in the process of listening to English, the conscious level of that use does not have much predictive ability on listening proficiency.

6.8 Chapter summary

Chapter six described and analyzed quantitative data focused on answering the research questions. In this chapter, the use of listening comprehension strategies was analyzed to find out: the most and least frequently used listening comprehension strategies among all students; the similarities and differences in using strategies between good and poor English listeners; how strategies are consciously used by all students as well as between students from two groups; and the correlation between some variables such as listening scores and the frequency and consciousness of listening comprehension strategies use. In the following chapter, I shall present the results, indicate the research limitations and point out concerns for future studies.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In the previous chapter, I analyzed and gave descriptive information of the quantitative data. In this chapter, I shall interpret the analysis results and drew conclusions for the whole study. Therefore, to begin with, the main contents of each chapter will be briefly reviewed.

In Chapter 1, I gave a short introduction to this research and talked about the research background, purpose, assumptions and hypothesis, and primary theories, and then I outlined the structure of this work.

The following chapters (from Chapter 2 to 6) are the main body of my dissertation. In the theoretical part, I introduced Chinese universities in the light of the Chinese higher education system, the development of student numbers and the unbalanced distribution of Chinese universities. In order to better explore my research I also discussed Chinese cultural context based on the theories of Hofstede, in particular his theories of ‘Collectivism-Individualism’ and ‘Long-Term Orientation’. In addition, I sketched English teaching and learning in China in the light of six historical stages (see Chapter 2). Next, I discussed theories of foreign language acquisition, compared the two important concepts ‘acquiring’ and ‘learning’, expounded the implication of different foreign language acquisition theories (Behaviorist, Cognitivist, Constructivist and Interlanguage theories) on language learning strategies and elaborated on explicit and implicit knowledge taking the theories of interface position into account (see Chapter 3). I further discussed language learning strategies from the perspective of their origins, definition, and classification with special emphasis on Rebecca Oxford’s theories and classification of language learning strategies. Moreover, I talked about the empirical research of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies conducted in China, pointing out the difficulties that Chinese students find in listening to English. I also spoke of the factors that affect the choice of language learning strategies and listening comprehension strategies (see Chapter 4).

In the empirical part, I discussed my research method taking the questionnaire and research samplings into consideration, tested the validity and reliability, and conducted the

independent samples t-test and correlation analysis to compare the use of listening comprehension strategies between the successful and unsuccessful English listeners and to confirm the interrelationship between listening proficiency and the frequency and consciousness of listening comprehension strategies use (see Chapter 5 and 6).

7.1 Results of this study

As introduced in Chapter 1, this study focuses on how listening comprehension strategies are used by Chinese non-English major students. Accordingly, the following research questions must be considered and answered: What kinds of listening comprehension strategies are used more or less frequently by Chinese non-English major students; what are the similarities and differences in the use of listening comprehension strategies between the successful and unsuccessful English listeners; what is the level of consciousness of listening comprehension strategies use among the research samplings; what is the correlation between listening proficiency and the frequency and consciousness of strategy use and what possible factors influence the choice and use of listening comprehension strategies. In the following, I shall present the results concerning the above research focuses.

7.1.1 New findings of more strategies categorized into social strategies

One of the findings in this dissertation is that some strategies used by Chinese non-English major students are different from Oxford's classification strategies. As explained in Chapter 3, according to Oxford's taxonomies, language learning strategies include two subcategories: Direct strategies consist of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies; indirect strategies comprise metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

When we analyze each strategy, we can clearly see that one strategy can be grouped into different categories according to different components included in it. The results of confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach coefficient interpreted in the previous chapter indicate that the categories of cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies (three groups) have more than one component extracted. This indicates that each strategy contains different

components. The variance of the first component of each group is big enough to explain the common traits of this group. In addition, there are no big differences among the communalities of all variables included in each group. This also confirms that the above-mentioned three groups have good validity.

However, as to the category of affective strategies, the communality of strategy item 5 ‘I talk to other people, such as friends, parents or teachers about my feelings about learning English, especially in English listening’ is much smaller than the others. This means that the affective component of this item is not recognized by language learners and it is not suitable for its category. Meanwhile, the reliability test also confirms that this item destroys the whole structure. Therefore, it should be categorized into another category. Actually, we can easily see that this strategy also comprises a social component. The second reliability test proves that this strategy is used by Chinese students more as a social than an affective strategy²⁰⁶ and is more soundly placed in the social strategies category.

Likewise, some strategies ‘I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as participation in an English corner or an English lecture; I try to make friends who are native speakers of English through the internet and use the audio chat to improve my listening ability’ own a metacognitive component that belongs to the subcategory ‘seeking practice opportunities’; however, as discussed in Chapter 6, these two strategies ask for more social activities or communication and thus seem more social to Chinese students. Therefore, I analyzed this strategy in the light of two categories ‘media-training-oriented opportunities’ and ‘social-activity-oriented opportunities’ (see Figure 6.9). Due to its obvious lack of relevance to Chinese students, I suggest that ‘seeking social-activity-oriented opportunities’ should belong to social strategies in future studies and research.

The above explanation of different components included in one strategy also implies that the six categories of strategies and the individual strategies in each category discussed in this study is just a rough one. In fact, some strategies can be grouped into different categories at the same time. This phenomenon can also account for the fact that the Cronbach coefficient of

²⁰⁶ It is not hard to see that this strategy owns both affective (i.e., taking about feelings) and social traits (i.e., talking to other people). Chinese students do not use this strategy frequently because of its social traits.

each structure is not very high, but just at an acceptable level.

The finding of this study confirms the fact that when students use listening comprehension strategies they do not only use one kind; instead, they use different strategies to help them learn English and fulfill their learning tasks. And the results of the correlation analysis indicate that the strategies they use influence and support each other in the process of foreign language learning. This finding is in agreement with Oxford's opinion that language learning strategies, such as direct and indirect strategies as well as their subcategories, mutually support each other in the learning process. The following figure cited from Oxford (1990: 15) can better present the interrelationships between direct and indirect strategies and among the six strategy groups.

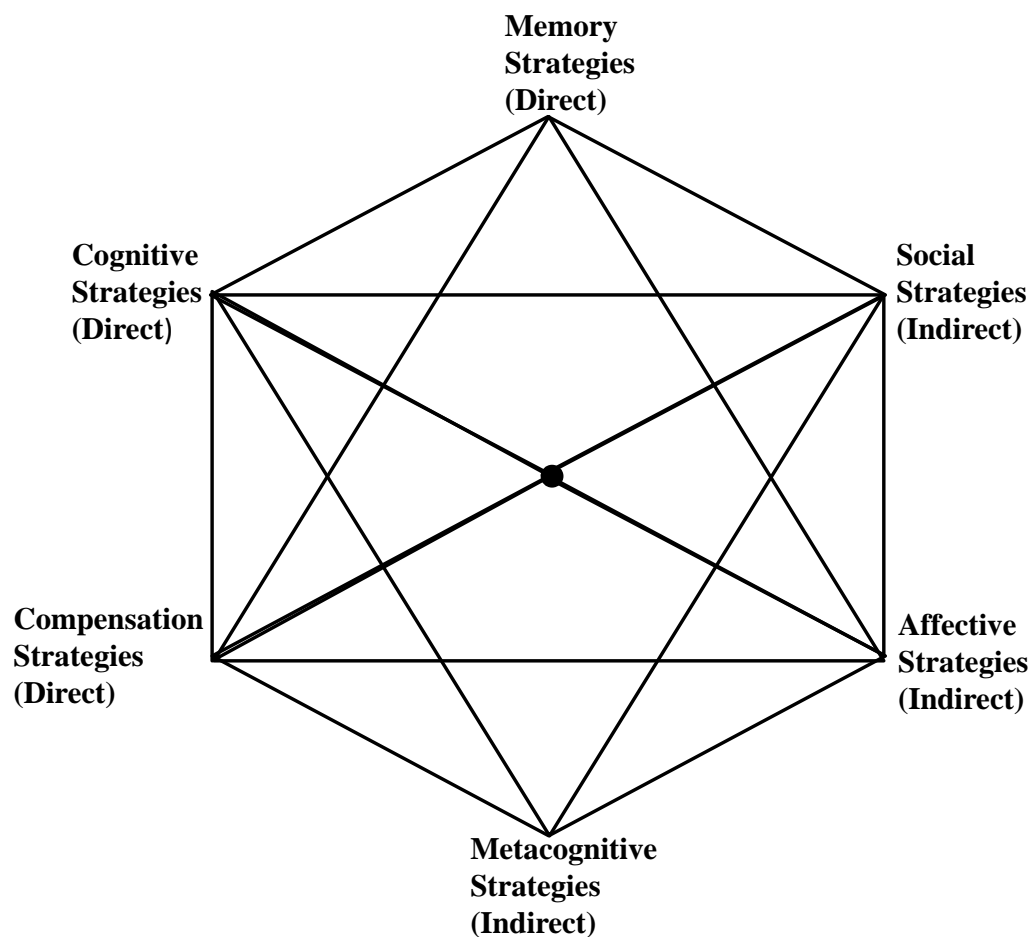


Figure 7.1 Interrelationships between direct and indirect strategies and among the six strategy groups. Source: Oxford (1990:15).

7.1.2 Similarities and differences in listening comprehension strategy use between the good and poor English listeners

In order to better answer the research questions, this dissertation has also explored the similarities and differences in the use of listening comprehension strategies by successful and unsuccessful English listeners. The similarities and differences manifest themselves as the follows:

- Listening comprehension strategies are used at a low frequency level by students with relatively good and poor listening proficiency alike. This implies that Chinese non-English major students have little contact with strategies in their English learning process, in particular in developing their listening ability.
- Among the six groups of listening comprehension strategies described, affective strategies are used the most frequently and social strategies are used the least frequently by students from both groups.
- As for the use of 36 individual listening comprehension strategies, students from both groups show significant heterogeneousness in their use of them with the exception of the six strategies such as ‘I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as participation in an English corner or an English lecture; I try to make friends who are native speakers of English through the internet and use the audio chat to improve my listening ability. (Seeking practice opportunities); I try to know more cultural background knowledge to understand what I hear. (Developing cultural understanding); When I talk to somebody in English, I ask him/her to repeat or slow down if the message is not clear to me. (Asking for clarification or verification); I make an effort to remember unfamiliar words I hear, and ask teachers or friends later; I listen to English with my friends, and discuss with them how to improve my listening ability. (Cooperating with proficient users of the new language; cooperating with peers).’ Among them, the first two strategies are metacognitive strategies whereas the latter four are social strategies.

- In addition to the similarities in using listening comprehension strategies between students with higher and lower listening proficiency, students also show differences in using them: Among the 36 strategies, students from the high-scoring group more frequently use the other thirty strategies besides the above-mentioned six ones. This demonstrates that students with higher listening ability have more contact with strategies and pay more attention to using them than those with lower listening proficiency.

From the above, we can see that Chinese non-English major students are quite capable of regulating their feelings and adjusting their emotions but are less able to actively involve themselves in activities where English is spoken, cooperate with their peers or ask their teachers for help. These findings can be explained and interpreted from two perspectives.

First, through the use of listening comprehension strategies analyzed and interpreted in the previous chapter, we can see that foreign language acquisition theories (Behaviorist, Cognitive, Constructivist and Interlanguage learning theories) and their implicit understanding of what learning a language involves and how learners learn underlies English teaching and influences and limits the choices and uses of listening comprehension strategies among Chinese non-English major students.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 and 4, the Western framework of international English Language Teaching/Learning (individualistic, creative, autonomous, etc.) and the Chinese context do not link up easily and some traditional teaching methods prevail in many English classes, in particular in English classes for non-English major students in today's China. For example, although the Grammar-translation Method is generally considered to be outdated, it is still a primary method used by most English teachers and students in English classes in China. Under the influence of such teacher-dominated and text-focused classroom teaching, both teachers and students are more concerned with learning grammar and vocabulary knowledge than improving their communicative ability. The main learning tasks of students are to master grammar rules and enhance vocabulary volume. And they are accustomed to

fulfilling their learning tasks by means of reading English literature, doing translation exercises and mechanically remembering vocabulary. Chen et al state that

[b]ased on the grammar-translation approach, the goal of English learning is for students to be able to read and translate passages and articles between Mandarin and English whilst speaking skills are vastly neglected by both teachers and students. Some teachers may perceive communicative English as only necessary for teaching Chinese people who are about to go to English-speaking countries, but not for the majority of learners. (2010: 2)

Due to the critical effect of this teaching pattern and approach, students are encouraged to use more language learning strategies related to mastering grammar rules (grammar learning strategies) or increasing vocabulary (vocabulary learning strategies) than strategies contributing to improving their listening proficiency and communicative skills (listening comprehension strategies). This teaching method indeed plays a role in strengthening students' language knowledge and vocabulary volume, but it still prevents them from cultivating their communicative competences.

Apart from the Grammar-translation Method, under the influence of behaviorist ideas of language learning, some medias, e.g., English songs, radio and movies, (see Chapter 6) are the primary methods that Chinese students use to exercise their listening comprehension. As analyzed in Chapter 4, the audio-lingual approach, covering practice, imitation and repetition is also used in English classes of Chinese students. As a result, pattern practice has become a basic teaching method that English teachers always suggest in this teacher-directed model. However, this method focuses more on students' passive imitation while ignoring their active creativity and use of language.

Therefore, the disadvantage of solely using the traditional teaching approach provides us with some suggestions for the modern English language classroom. On the one hand, English teachers should be prepared to think about the teaching methods they choose. According to students' diversity in language development, they should adopt different approaches. While they are teaching in a traditional way, some modern teaching methods, e.g., Communicative Language Teaching should be integrated into the English classroom, so that students can be

taught in accordance with their aptitude. Rao states that

English teachers in China should avoid going to the two extremes and reconcile the Grammar-translation Method with Communicative Language Teaching to promote strategies that lead to a greater emphasis on communication, not primarily on test-taking. (2006: 505)

On the other hand, students should realize the importance of selecting different teaching methods and actively cooperate with their teachers in English classes so that each teaching method can fully play its role and achieve its expected effectiveness. They should understand the important role that constructivist and interlanguage theories play in their language learning and actively develop their creativity of language based on previous language, e.g., rebuild new sentences, reconstruct discourse and construct the connection between the new language and their previous knowledge or mother tongue.

Second, Chinese traditional culture and the education system introduced in Chapter 2 can also help us better understand the way the research samplings choose and use listening comprehension strategies. Although Confucius and Hofstede are socialists from different countries (Chapter 2), their theories influence Chinese people and help us to understand the Chinese social and cultural backgrounds. Chinese university students' lack of use of social strategies depends to a great extent on the environment under which they live and the traditional culture that cultivates and forms Chinese personalities and characteristics. Therefore, "it is critical to examine the role that cultural and educational backgrounds play in English education for Chinese students." (Chen et al., 2010:6)

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Chinese students' strong collective orientation has resulted in socialization for achievement and identification. On the one hand, they do not involve themselves too much in English-speaking occasions or activities in order not to lose face and social recognition. On the other hand, "in Chinese learning context, students hardly have any chance to learn English in real social context, so they have no opportunity to practice the use of social strategies." (Zhou, 2010: 155) In addition, the Chinese traditional educational and examination system, especially, CET-Band 4 increases students' motivation to get higher scores in their tests, while decreasing their interests in cultivating their listening and

communicative abilities.²⁰⁷ In order to increase their scores and pass CET-Band 4 tests, students are more interested in using some strategies that can easily help them to get higher scores in a short time. “Therefore, they frequently used the learning strategies that could prepare them for the discrete-point, structurally based English examinations.” (Rao, 2006: 505) Obviously, in order to enhance students’ awareness and motivation to make use of strategies leading to an improvement of their communicative competences, it is of great necessity to increase the proportion of listening and speaking and reduce the proportion of grammar knowledge in the examinations.

7.1.3 Level of consciousness of listening comprehension strategies use

As discussed in Chapter 5, another research focus of my study was to find out the level of consciousness in the use of listening comprehension strategies by Chinese non-English major students. Like explicit and implicit knowledge, conscious and unconscious use of listening comprehension strategies and the conversion between them has been a debated topic for a long time (see Chapter 3). To determine which kinds of strategies are more consciously and unconsciously used as well as the relationship between conscious or unconscious use of listening comprehension strategies are also among the primary reasons for my interest in this study.

The results show that listening comprehension strategies can be consciously and unconsciously employed by Chinese non-English major students. However, the overall level of conscious use of listening comprehension strategies is quite low, although good English listeners more consciously use strategies than poor ones. Correlation analysis shows that the consciousness or unconsciousness of using strategies has no significant interrelationship with listening proficiency. In other words, listening proficiency is not influenced by the level of consciousness of strategies use.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Although more and more Chinese students, as mentioned in Chapter 4, are interested in improving communicative ability for the purpose of studying abroad or finding better jobs, most students are still concerned with increasing their scores on English tests. Thus they emphasize grammar and vocabulary learning as well as the examination skills, ignoring listening comprehension and communicative skills.

²⁰⁸ The results of correlation analysis between the variables such as listening scores, frequency and consciousness of using strategies are interpreted later.

Among the six groups of listening comprehension strategies, affective and metacognitive strategies are employed at a more conscious level by good English listeners; only affective strategies are utilized at a more conscious level by poor ones. The results also imply that only when students more consciously use listening comprehension strategies, can they more frequently use them. The conscious degree can influence the frequency of strategy use among Chinese non-English major students, and vice versa.

Moreover, the understanding of implicit and explicit knowledge, students' self-reports²⁰⁹ of using listening comprehension strategies and Chinese cultural backgrounds contribute to helping us comprehend the cognitive process of strategies. The conversion or interface of conscious and unconscious employment of listening comprehension strategies among Chinese non-English major students is presented in the following model:

²⁰⁹ As explained in Chapter 5, I conducted conversations with more than 40 students from different groups divided by their listening scores and frequency of using strategies.

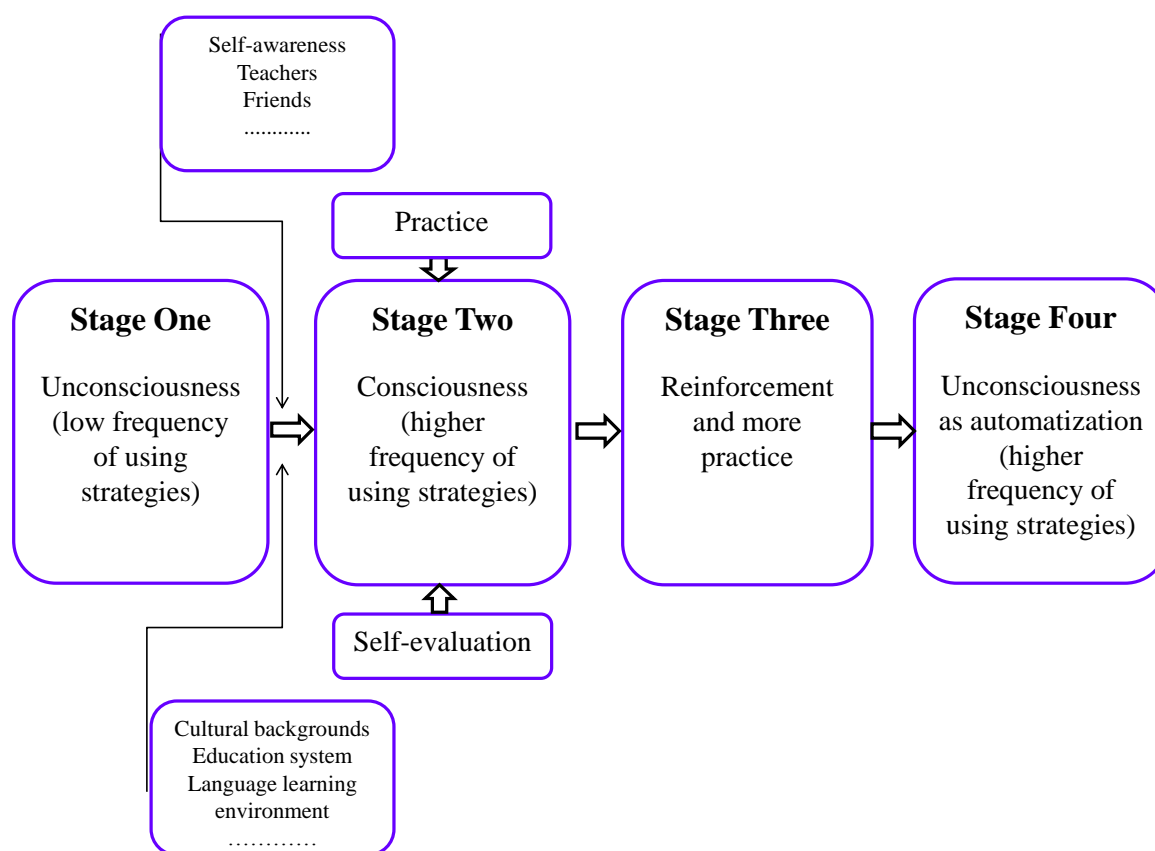


Figure 7.2 Cognitive process of listening comprehension strategies use among the research samplings

The above figure describes the cognitive process of using listening comprehension strategies among the Chinese non-English major students. In this figure, ‘consciousness of using listening comprehension strategies’ refers to the realization of using strategies and emphasizes the subjective recognition of using them; in contrast, ‘unconsciousness of using strategies’ refers to a lack of awareness of strategy use.

From the figure, we can see that there are four different stages (unconsciousness – consciousness – reinforcement and more practice – unconsciousness as automatization) that make up this cognitive learning process. The first stage is an unconscious one. In this stage, students use some methods to listen to English, but they do not realize these are listening comprehension strategies that can help them with their listening proficiency. Therefore, they

have a low frequency of using such strategies. The second stage is a conscious one with higher frequency of using them. In the transition from the first to the second stage, their self-awareness, English teachers or friends play an important role. It is their self-awareness, English teachers or friends that make Chinese students become aware of the application of listening comprehension strategies. However, the realization from the first step to the second one is also negatively influenced by some factors such as cultural background, education system, language learning environment, and so on. Once they can overcome the negative influences of the above-mentioned elements, they can consciously practice and evaluate the strategies they use or have used. After their self-evaluation, they might find which kinds of strategies can really improve their listening proficiency based on their self-evaluation. And then during the third stage, they will consciously reinforce and do more practice using the effective strategies. The fourth stage is also an unconscious one. In this stage, students use listening comprehension strategies at an autonomous level with higher frequency and without conscious awareness.

For example, some listening comprehension strategies such as ‘I try to know more cultural background knowledge to understand what I hear (M=1.7599); I talk to other people, such as friends, parents or teachers about my feelings about learning English, especially in English listening (M=1.6618); I listen to English with my friends, and discuss with them to improve my listening ability (M=1.3531); I try to make friends who are native speakers of English through the internet and use the audio chat to improve my listening ability (M=1.0921).’ and so on are not frequently used by Chinese students, since they have not realized that these are kinds of listening comprehension strategies that can help them with their listening proficiency. Therefore, these strategies are still used at the first stage, unconsciously and with low frequency.

Although some strategies such as ‘I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as participation in an English corner or an English lecture (M=1.3824); I look for opportunities to talk to others in English to improve my listening ability (M=1.6641)’, and so on, have been introduced or recommended by their English teachers or friends, students

still cannot consciously use these strategies with higher frequency due to negative influences from the Chinese cultural background, education system and language learning environment.

Strategies such as ‘I look for some opportunities to train my English listening comprehension. For instance, I use English songs to train my listening (M=2.2091); When I listen to English, I encourage myself and regulate my feeling to the best extent (M=2.8528); When I listen to a speaker, I consciously direct my attention to what he is saying (M=2.9966)’, and so on, are used more consciously and frequently by students since they have realized that these kinds of strategies can lead to the improvement of their listening proficiency. The frequency distribution discussed in the previous chapter tells us that even though students have reinforced their practice of strategy use, they have not been able to use them at the fourth stage – unconsciousness and automatization.

In addition, as mentioned above, the frequency of mean values and consciousness of using strategies indicate that the strategy ‘I make every effort to understand what I have heard without translating it word-for-word into my native language (M=2.5731)’ is used by Chinese students more frequently but with lower consciousness. Through my talks with the research samplings, I found that this strategy has been taught a lot by Chinese teachers so that it is used more frequently by students. Students also commented that when they listen to English, they automatically try to pay attention to what they have heard and not to translate it word-for-word. For them, they can accomplish this listening process automatically without thinking they are using a strategy (see 6.6.2 for a more detailed explanation).

Therefore, the above discussion confirms O’Malley and Chamot’s interpretation of learning strategies: learning strategies are both used consciously in initial stages of learning and used automatically after constant practice. In addition, the findings supplement this knowledge applied in the Chinese context: learning strategies can be used unconsciously at the first stage and consciously and automatically at later and higher stages.

7.1.4 Correlation between listening proficiency, frequency and consciousness of listening comprehension strategies use

This dissertation also explored the interrelationship between some variables such as: listening proficiency, frequency and consciousness of using listening comprehension strategies among the research samplings. The primary purpose of the correlation analysis was to find out if the frequent and conscious use of listening comprehension strategies could predict their listening proficiency and what kinds of listening comprehension strategies had better predictive ability than others.

With regard to the variables of listening scores and frequency of using listening comprehension strategies, the results tell us that: the frequency of using the overall listening comprehension strategies have almost no predictive values as to the listening proficiency of the research samplings; in addition, among the six categories of strategies, only metacognitive strategies play a role in predicting students' listening achievements. Therefore, to use some metacognitive strategies more frequently might be a way to increase students' listening ability. Obviously, this result provides English teachers with some implications for their English teaching. They should encourage students to use more effective metacognitive strategies to plan and organize their learning tasks, monitor and identify problems arising during their learning process, and evaluate and manage their own learning. Even so, the low relationship between the use of strategies and listening scores to some degree contradicts our assumption that the use of strategies lead to language proficiency and listening competences. What we can say is that learning strategies do not necessarily help students whose average use of strategies is quite low. We can also draw the conclusion that teachers' teaching strategies might play a role in students' language proficiency.

Regarding the variables of listening scores and the consciousness of using listening comprehension strategies, the results show that: the correlation coefficient between the consciousness of using each group of strategies and listening scores is quite low, even the highest coefficient merely reaches $M=0.280$ (the conscious use of metacognitive strategies).

This finding indicates that the conscious level of using strategies does not influence students' listening scores. Considering the positive influence of the frequent use of metacognitive strategies on listening proficiency and the above-mentioned cognitive process, we can come to the conclusion that students should be trained to use metacognitive strategies both at the conscious and unconscious leading to automatization levels, since these two stages of learning strategies play a similar role in improving students' listening proficiency.

7.2 Limitations of the present study

Like most scientific research, even though my study has fulfilled my research purposes and answered my research questions, it is still necessary to consider the limitations of the present study prior to providing suggestions for future research. The limitations can be discussed from the aspects of research samples, design and conduction of questionnaire and research methods.

Research samples

As discussed in Chapter 5, my research sample, with more than a thousand sophomore students, is chosen from Anyang Institute of Technology (AIT). Although this study thus relies on a relatively large research sample and includes students from many different provinces and with different majors (see Section 5.2.1.2), it is restricted to the same institute due to time and budget constraints. Therefore, the participants might not be representative of all non-English major students.

Design of questionnaire

Although my questionnaire is designed and revised based on Oxford's theories and classification of language learning strategies (1990) and some other resources (see Sections 5.2.2.1 and 5.2.2.2), questionnaire items might not be comprehensive enough to reflect the general status of choosing and using listening comprehension strategies among all Chinese non-English major students. What is more, one of my research focuses was to find out how

and to what level my research samplings consciously used listening comprehension strategies. In order to answer this question, I could not find a better approach than to ask students to report if they used strategies consciously or not. Asking students to self-evaluate and report their consciousness can, to a certain extent, help me gather more valid data, but it is still limited to participants' self-understanding of the concepts of 'consciousness' and 'unconsciousness' and their self-awareness of their level of consciousness in using strategies. Therefore, their potential inability to completely understand these two terms and objectively and accurately evaluate their level of consciousness might have been an important obstacle on the way to objective and accurate quantitative data.

Conduction of questionnaire

Due to the limited time, this survey was not conducted during extra time, but during the English classes of the research samplings (see Section 5.2.2.3). Even though the survey was successfully conducted with the help of their English teachers, participants were inevitably influenced by this sudden incident. Participants' better understanding of this survey, questionnaire items and the related concepts depended on the explanation of their English teachers and me. However, our explanation at their English classes might not have been clear enough for all students. Thus, the accurate degree of quantitative data could be reduced.

Research methods

Owing to the expected difficulties that were involved in interviews and the barriers that prevented me from getting more objective information,²¹⁰ this study was carried out based on quantitative research only. Although the gathered quantitative data are statistically objective and comprehensive within a wide scope, they cannot describe the research samplings and explain the phenomenon for the choice and use of listening comprehension strategies in depth.

²¹⁰ The possible barriers are presented as follows: As introduced in Chapter 4, Chinese students are not willing to speak too much before their teachers or other strangers. Therefore, the formal interview is difficult to organize to get more objective information. In addition, due to Chinese research samplings, interviews have to be conducted in Chinese and translated into English which may harm the understanding of the interviewees. This increases the difficulties of using the qualitative research method.

7.3 Suggestions and new perspectives for future research

The discussion and consideration of the above limitations provide us with recommendations and new perspectives for future research.

For future studies in this area, research samplings should be more carefully considered and selected. It is recommended to choose research samplings from different universities or institutes so that they could to a greater extent cover the target population and ensure the representativeness of the research sample. Based on the listening comprehension strategies discussed in this dissertation, more effective strategies that reflect participants' overall status of listening comprehension learning should be investigated. Once participants are recruited, a research group should be set up to help participants understand the primary concepts and questionnaire items involved so that they can better answer each research question.

With regard to research methods, qualitative design should be applied to accompany quantitative design in the future study. Trying to overcome some negative influences and conduct successful interviews is necessary for qualitative design. Interviews not only complement questionnaires, but also contribute significantly to triangulation. With regard to examining participants' consciousness of using listening comprehension strategies, it is much more necessary to encourage participants to introspect their authentic feelings than just ask them to self-report on questionnaire items; in addition, a good interview can bring more valuable information for excavating the factors that influence the use and choice of strategies. However, as explained in Chapter 2, Chinese students are always afraid of speaking openly in front of others. Therefore, considering how to guide Chinese students to speak their thoughts boldly is much needed in future research.

In addition to the above consideration of potential limitations of this study, there are some new research perspectives that inspire further investigation. Now that the use of listening comprehension strategies does not predict listening proficiency, I am more interested in finding the decisive factors that determine the listening ability of Chinese students.

This study also explores the Chinese cultural variability that influences the choices and

uses of listening comprehension strategies. As explained in Chapter 2 and 6, Chinese traditional culture to a great extent affects students' application of social strategies and communicative skills. This finding makes me more interested in further investigating the cultural variability from a cross-cultural perspective to see if it has the same influences on Chinese students abroad, e.g., in Germany or other non-English speaking countries. Therefore, my future research will focus on probing the cross-cultural issues and comparing the choices and uses of listening comprehension strategies between Chinese students in China and in Germany. The primary purpose of conducting such research is to find out how Chinese traditional culture is affected interculturally and what role it plays in strategies used among Chinese university students studying in Germany.

I have shown that the use of metacognitive strategies and the influence of the Chinese cultural background are the most important factors in the learning process of the non-English major students in China. This allows for the conclusion that the relationship between the comparatively stable cultural backgrounds to the demanding capacity of metacognition gains much of my attention for future research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

问卷调查（听力策略）

各位朋友你们好！

本问卷是为学术研究而设计，旨在为研究中国学生所用的听力策略提供统计数字。研究分析和结果不仅会对英语教学具有教育和建设性的意义，而且会对学生英语学习，特别是对听力理解策略的学习和培养具有重要的指导作用。在本问卷中所涉及的信息只是为这项研究需要所设计，并不涉及任何相对于个人的评价。此外，我们也负责对你们所给的所有信息予以保密。希望能得到大家的理解和支持！

谢谢！

你的学号	
来自省份	

填写问卷指南

下面是一份涉及 36 项听力策略的问卷调查，你们需要根据自己对每一项的使用情况选出最为适合自己的选项，如果你们选择了从不使用这种策略，你们则不需要考虑是否有意识地使用这种策略，如果你们选择了另外三项中的其中一项，你们则还需要考虑你们是否在有意识或是无意识地使用该策略。

例如：

我参加一些讲英语的课外活动，如英语角或是说英语的讲座。

☒ 从不 ☐ 有时 ☐ 常常 ☐ 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 ☐ 是 ☐ 不是)

我参加一些讲英语的课外活动，如英语角或是说英语的讲座。

☐ 从不 ☒ 有时 ☐ 常常 ☐ 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 ☒ 是 ☐ 不是)

1)	我参加一些讲英语的课外活动，如英语角或是说英语的讲座。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
2)	我寻找一些练习英语听力的机会，例如听英文歌曲来练习听力。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
3)	我会了解一些文化背景知识来更好地理解所听到的。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
4)	当我用收音机或者是 CD 听英语时，我会注意一些和场景有关的理性线索，如背景音乐或是噪音。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
5)	我会和别人，如朋友，家长，或是老师谈我学习英语特别是在英语听力方面的感受。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
6)	我留意说话人所说的上下文，通过记忆上下文，来理解我正在听的内容。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
7)	如果在公共场合遇到讲英文的人在谈话，我要聆听去看是否能明白他/她的谈话。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
8)	当我听英语时，我会注意所听到的称呼或是一些头衔的词来作为线索帮助我更好地理解。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
9)	当我听英语时，我努力注意我所听到的，而不将它们逐字翻译成汉语。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
10)	我听收音机中的英语谈话节目，看英文电影或电视节目来练习听力。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
11)	当我听英语时，我将新的语言信息和记忆中已熟悉的语言概念联系起来。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
12)	我在互联网上尽量多交一些讲英语的朋友，利用语音聊天来提高听力。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
13)	当我听英文材料时，我会记下一些和主题相关的词。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
14)	当我和别人用英语交谈时，如我有听不明白的话，我会让对方重复一下或放慢速度。

	<input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
15)	我尽力去模仿英语母语者的谈话方式。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
16)	我努力记住我所听到的生词, 事后我会问一下老师或是同学。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
17)	当我听到我不懂的词汇, 我会利用已有的语言基础作为线索来猜测听到的语言信息。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
18)	我会给自己制定一个英语听力计划。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
19)	当我听英语时, 我根据已说过的话来猜测对方将要说什么。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
20)	当我听英语时, 我会鼓励自己, 把自己的心态调整到最佳状态。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
21)	当我听英语时, 我利用我的常识背景知识去尽力抓住主要意思。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
22)	当我没有听明白我所听的材料时, 我会调整一下自己的情绪再听一下。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
23)	当我听英语时, 我会听那些能够表达意义的关键词。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
24)	当我听英语时, 我会和同学一起来听, 之后要和同学来交流, 以此来提高听力能力。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
25)	我会练习英语单词的发音直到熟悉为止。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
26)	当我听英语时, 我会集中思想去注意对方在说什么。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
27)	当我看英语节目时, 我注意说话人的表情, 以此来更好地理解他/她所谈的内容。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)

28)	当我听英语时, 我注意说话人语言的起伏---语音语调来记忆理解所听到的。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
29)	当我听英语时, 我会寻找英语中一个生疏单词或短语的发音和一个熟悉单词或短语发音之间的联系。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
30)	当我听英语时, 我认真听说话人的语气和表达方式来体会他/她的想法和心情。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
31)	当我听英语时, 为了方便记忆我常常把听到的在大脑中用影像勾画出来。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
32)	当我听英语时, 我会利用讲话人的音调来作为推测意思的线索。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
33)	当我听英语时, 我听特殊的细节去看我是否理解它们。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
34)	当我看英语节目时我利用一些线索, 例如说话人的语调, 面目表情和肢体语言来猜测我所听不懂的话。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
35)	当我听英语时, 我会根据一些已知的常规语法知识来对听到的话进行推测。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)
36)	我会寻找机会和别人用英语交谈来提高听力水平。 <input type="checkbox"/> 从不 <input type="checkbox"/> 有时 <input type="checkbox"/> 常常 <input type="checkbox"/> 总是 (我有意识地使用上述策略。 <input type="checkbox"/> 是 <input type="checkbox"/> 不是)

多谢你们的理解和合作

祝愿你们在今后的学习中取得更好的成绩!

Appendix II

Questionnaire (Listening Comprehension Strategies)

Dear friends,

There is a questionnaire of listening comprehension strategies designed to be used in this research. The results and the analysis will be of constructive and educational significance for the English teaching and learning. All the information is designed only for the research need, and they will not involve any evaluation about individual person. And we will be responsible for keeping secret for all the information you have given.

Thanks!

Your Matriculation Number?	
From which province are you?	

Instruction to answering the questionnaire

The following is a questionnaire including 36 listening comprehension strategies; you should choose the suitable option from each strategy according to your personal condition. If you choose 'you never use this strategy', you do not need to consider if you use this strategy consciously or not, but if you choose one of the other three answers, you should also consider if you use this strategy consciously or not.

For example:

I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as English corner and English lecture.

☒ Never or seldom ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I use the above listening strategy consciously. ☐ Yes ☐ No

I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as English corner and English lecture.

☐ Never or seldom ☒ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

I use the above listening strategy consciously. ☒ Yes ☐ No

1)	<p>I attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken, such as English corner and English lecture.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
2)	<p>I look for some opportunity to train my English listening comprehension, for instance, I use English songs to train my listening.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
3)	<p>I try to know more cultural background knowledge to understand what I hear.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
4)	<p>When I listen to English on the radio or other English CD, I always pay more attention to the perceptual clues concerning the situation, such as the background music or noise.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
5)	<p>I talk to other people, such as friends, parents or teacher about my feeling in learning English, especially in English listening.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
6)	<p>I pay attention to the context of what is being said, by remembering the context to understand what I am listening to.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
7)	<p>If I encounter people in public having a conversation in English, I will listen to see if I can get the gist of what they are saying.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>

8)	<p>When I listen to English, I use the address and the titles mentioned as clues to understand what I hear.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>
	<p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
9)	<p>I make every effort to understand what I have heard without translating it word-for-word into my native language.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>
	<p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
10)	<p>I listen to the English talk shows on the radio, watch English TV shows, or go to see English movies to practice my listening comprehension.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>
	<p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
11)	<p>When I listen to English I always associate the new language information with familiar concepts in my memory.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>
	<p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
12	<p>I try to make some friends who are native speakers through the internet and use audio chatting to improve my listening ability.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>
	<p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
13)	<p>When I listen to the English material, I write down some words relating to the topic.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>
	<p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
14	<p>When I talk to somebody in English, I may well ask him/her to repeat or slow down if the message is not clear to me.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>
	<p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
15)	<p>I do my best to imitate the way native speakers talk.</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
16)	I make an effort to remember unfamiliar words I hear, and ask teacher or my friends later. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
17)	If I listen to the vocabulary I do not understand or I have never learnt, I use my language knowledge base as a clue to guess the information I have heard. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
18)	I work out a plan about listening training. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
19)	I suspect what the speaker will say according to what he has said. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
20)	When I listen to English, I encourage myself and regulate my feelings to the best extent. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
21)	When I listen to English, I use my general background knowledge to grasp the main idea. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
22)	If I do not understand the material I have heard, I will regulate my feelings and listen to it once more. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

23)	<p>I listen for those key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
24)	<p>I listen to English with my friends, and discuss with them how to improve my listening ability.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
25)	<p>I practice all the sounds in the new language until I am comfortable with them.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
26)	<p>When I listen to the speaker, I conscious direct my attention to what he is saying.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
27)	<p>When I watch English program, I pay attention to the expression of the speaker to understand what he is talking.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
28)	<p>When I listen to English, I pay attention to the rise and fall of speech by native speakers – the music of it, to remember and understand what I have heard.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
29)	<p>I look for associations between the sounds of a word or phrase in the new language with the sound of a familiar word.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p> <p>I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
30)	<p>When I listen to English, I listen to his tone and expression carefully to feel his thoughts and feeling.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always</p>

	I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
31)	When I listen to English, in order to remember what has been heard or read I create a mental image of it. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always
	I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
32)	When I listen to English, I use his tone as the clue of guessing the meaning. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always
	I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
33)	When I listening to English, I listen for specific details to see whether I can understand them. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always
	I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
34)	When I watch English program, I always use some clues, such as the speaker's tone of voice; facial expression and body language to guess the saying that I cannot understand. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always
	I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
35)	When I listen to English, I guess what I hear according to the rules of the grammar. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always
	I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
36)	I look for some opportunities to talk to others in English to improve my listening ability. <input type="checkbox"/> Never or seldom <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> Often <input type="checkbox"/> Always
	I use the above listening strategy consciously. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Appendix III

Validity and Reliability Test

1. *Confirmatory factor analysis*

Table 1 Validity of memory strategies

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
an6	1.000	.370
an11	1.000	.413
an28	1.000	.405
an29	1.000	.354
an31	1.000	.407

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.948	38.963	38.963	1.948	38.963	38.963
2	.875	17.500	56.463			
3	.786	15.716	72.179			
4	.719	14.377	86.556			
5	.672	13.444	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component
	1
an6	.608
an11	.642
an28	.636
an29	.595
an31	.638

Extraction Method:
Principal Component
Analysis.

a. 1 components
extracted.

Table 2 Validity of cognitive strategies

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
an15	1.000	.628
an25	1.000	.641
an13	1.000	.377
an23	1.000	.499
an33	1.000	.472
an35	1.000	.511

Extraction Method: Principal
Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.062	34.375	34.375	2.062	34.375	34.375
2	1.065	17.755	52.130	1.065	17.755	52.130
3	.824	13.730	65.860			
4	.700	11.664	77.523			
5	.694	11.570	89.093			
6	.654	10.907	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
an15	.483	.628
an25	.501	.624
an13	.601	-.123
an23	.664	-.243
an33	.649	-.224
an35	.595	-.397

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.

Table 3 Validity of compensation strategies

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
an4	1.000	.314
an8	1.000	.362
an19	1.000	.440
an21	1.000	.445
an34	1.000	.413
an17	1.000	.435
an32	1.000	.441

Extraction Method: Principal
Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.850	40.713	40.713	2.850	40.713	40.713
2	.921	13.157	53.870			
3	.809	11.554	65.424			
4	.672	9.599	75.023			
5	.639	9.122	84.145			
6	.606	8.651	92.795			
7	.504	7.205	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component
	1
an4	.560
an8	.602
an19	.663
an21	.667
an34	.642
an17	.659
an32	.664

Extraction Method:
Principal Component
Analysis.

a. 1 components
extracted.

Table 4 Validity of metacognitive strategies

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
an1	1.000	.465
an2	1.000	.482
an7	1.000	.645
an10	1.000	.485
an12	1.000	.381
an36	1.000	.538
an18	1.000	.480
an9	1.000	.442
an26	1.000	.623

Extraction Method: Principal
Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.361	26.230	26.230	2.361	26.230	26.230
2	1.129	12.543	38.773	1.129	12.543	38.773
3	1.050	11.668	50.441	1.050	11.668	50.441
4	.955	10.615	61.056			
5	.819	9.098	70.154			
6	.756	8.396	78.551			
7	.737	8.187	86.738			
8	.639	7.101	93.839			
9	.555	6.161	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
an1	.416	.395	-.368
an2	.651	-.110	.215
an7	.533	-.256	-.543
an10	.632	-.044	.289
an12	.325	.515	.097
an36	.609	.293	-.285
an18	.518	.239	.392
an9	.359	-.342	.443
an26	.455	-.606	-.221

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 3 components extracted.

Table 5 Validity of affective strategies

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
an5	1.000	.119
an20	1.000	.661
an22	1.000	.662

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.442	48.063	48.063	1.442	48.063	48.063
2	.960	32.003	80.065			
3	.598	19.935	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component
	1
an5	.346
an20	.813
an22	.813

Extraction Method:
Principal Component
Analysis.

a. 1 components
extracted.

Table 6 Validity of social strategies

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
an14	1.000	.314
an16	1.000	.581
an24	1.000	.539
an3	1.000	.308
an27	1.000	.643
an30	1.000	.697

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.995	33.250	33.250	1.995	33.250	33.250
2	1.086	18.097	51.347	1.086	18.097	51.347
3	.876	14.595	65.942			
4	.816	13.606	79.548			
5	.704	11.740	91.288			
6	.523	8.712	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
an14	.473	.300
an16	.543	.535
an24	.512	.526
an3	.523	-.186
an27	.705	-.382
an30	.667	-.502

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.

2. Reliability test of the scale – Cronbach alpha

Table 7 Reliability analysis – scale (alpha)

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	1143	98.4
	Excluded ^a	19	1.6
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.898	36

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an1	772.773	180.955	.219	.898
an2	764.514	177.924	.372	.896
an3	769.064	177.223	.387	.896
an4	766.500	174.595	.400	.896
an5	770.009	179.539	.298	.897
an6	762.555	173.560	.445	.895
an7	763.115	174.304	.397	.896
an8	762.091	173.430	.455	.895
an9	760.884	176.949	.283	.898
an10	764.742	176.680	.376	.896
an11	764.663	174.063	.462	.895
an12	775.731	183.057	.177	.898
an13	764.173	174.056	.441	.895
an14	765.039	175.052	.330	.898
an15	767.235	173.943	.426	.896
an16	768.521	177.368	.364	.897
an17	761.164	173.022	.524	.894
an18	768.968	177.807	.352	.897
an19	762.572	173.506	.484	.895
an20	758.058	173.279	.476	.895
an21	760.324	171.793	.547	.894
an22	759.598	174.622	.438	.895
an23	759.195	173.578	.498	.895
an24	773.080	180.066	.298	.897
an25	764.541	175.176	.371	.897
an26	756.649	175.524	.427	.896
an27	763.132	171.735	.510	.894
an28	764.304	172.336	.523	.894
an29	768.548	175.172	.422	.896
an30	761.479	172.441	.558	.894
an31	763.185	173.483	.423	.896
an32	763.963	172.963	.531	.894
an33	765.512	174.854	.449	.895
an34	762.800	172.473	.538	.894
an35	763.736	174.767	.438	.895
an36	770.000	176.054	.430	.896

Table 8 Reliability of memory strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1158	99.7
	Excluded ^a	4	.3
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.607	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an6	8.5829	5.054	.348	.560
an11	8.7962	5.143	.379	.544
an28	8.7556	5.079	.373	.547
an29	9.1805	5.346	.336	.566
an31	8.6468	4.828	.374	.547

Table 9 Reliability of cognitive strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1154	99.3
	Excluded ^a	8	.7
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.610	6

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an15	11.6057	6.595	.287	.590
an25	11.3319	6.525	.302	.584
an13	11.3007	6.434	.352	.562
an23	10.8016	6.426	.401	.543
an33	11.4315	6.530	.390	.548
an35	11.2582	6.657	.335	.569

Table 10 Reliability of compensation strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1159	99.7
	Excluded ^a	3	.3
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.755	7

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an4	14.6885	10.919	.405	.740
an8	14.2494	10.750	.445	.731
an19	14.2959	10.711	.496	.720
an21	14.0699	10.590	.500	.719
an34	14.3123	10.870	.468	.726
an17	14.1562	10.837	.493	.721
an32	14.4314	10.826	.498	.720

Table 11 Reliability of metacognitive strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1159	99.7
	Excluded ^a	3	.3
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.626	9

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an1	16.8456	9.592	.231	.615
an2	16.0224	8.704	.435	.570
an7	15.8835	8.158	.339	.592
an10	16.0414	8.435	.405	.572
an12	17.1415	10.260	.187	.623
an36	16.5703	8.594	.397	.576
an18	16.4676	9.028	.307	.598
an9	15.6601	8.757	.214	.631
an26	15.2381	8.829	.299	.600

Table 12 Reliability of affective strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1161	99.9
	Excluded ^a	1	.1
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.447	3

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an5	5.5573	1.990	.112	.573
an20	4.3652	1.149	.361	.167
an22	4.5151	1.224	.366	.162

Table 13 Reliability of social strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1160	99.8
	Excluded ^a	2	.2
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.583	6

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an14	9.7914	5.187	.259	.579
an16	10.1431	5.807	.307	.544
an24	10.5966	6.275	.287	.556
an3	10.1905	5.947	.283	.554
an27	9.5948	4.814	.428	.484
an30	9.4336	5.273	.396	.504

3. *Second test of reliability*

Table 14 Second test of reliability of affective strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1161	99.9
	Excluded ^a	1	.1
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.573	2

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an20	2.7037	.674	.402	. ^a
an22	2.8536	.746	.402	. ^a

a. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions. You may want to check item codings.

Table 15 Second test of reliability of social strategies

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	1160	99.8
	Excluded ^a	2	.2
	Total	1162	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.605	7

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
an5	11.9500	7.378	.271	.583
an3	11.8526	7.116	.290	.577
an14	11.4534	6.267	.276	.595
an24	12.2586	7.462	.296	.579
an16	11.8052	6.911	.330	.565
an27	11.2569	5.922	.426	.526
an30	11.0957	6.433	.389	.542

Appendix IV

Frequency of the use of listening comprehension strategies among all students

Table 1 Statistical description of the use of 36 individual strategies among all students

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
an1	1161	1	4	1.3824	0.52375
an2	1162	1	4	2.2091	0.6511
an3	1162	1	4	1.7599	0.69079
an4	1161	1	4	2.0112	0.89194
an5	1162	1	4	1.6618	0.61567
an6	1162	1	4	2.4071	0.8904
an7	1161	1	4	2.3488	0.92276
an8	1161	1	4	2.4505	0.88249
an9	1162	1	4	2.5731	0.92914
an10	1162	1	4	2.191	0.75829
an11	1162	1	4	2.1945	0.82492
an12	1162	1	4	1.0921	0.3462
an13	1162	1	4	2.2453	0.86121
an14	1162	1	4	2.1609	1.00511
an15	1160	1	4	1.9388	0.89609
an16	1162	1	4	1.8072	0.71457
an17	1161	1	4	2.5444	0.80621
an18	1162	1	4	1.7651	0.69628
an19	1162	1	4	2.4045	0.83315
an20	1162	1	4	2.8528	0.86358
an21	1162	1	4	2.6299	0.85609
an22	1161	1	4	2.7037	0.8211
an23	1161	1	4	2.745	0.80651
an24	1161	1	4	1.3531	0.55337
an25	1161	1	4	2.2136	0.89781
an26	1162	1	4	2.9966	0.77203
an27	1161	1	4	2.3549	0.91717
an28	1159	1	4	2.2338	0.85354
an29	1162	1	4	1.8107	0.80392
an30	1162	1	4	2.5164	0.80277
an31	1161	1	4	2.3445	0.93504
an32	1162	1	4	2.2694	0.80411
an33	1161	1	4	2.1154	0.78704
an34	1162	1	4	2.389	0.82811
an35	1160	1	4	2.2862	0.81242
an36	1161	1	4	1.6641	0.72218
Valid N (listwise)	1144				

Table 2 Statistical description of the use of six groups of strategies among all students

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Memory strategies	1162	2.1981	0.53793
Cognitive strategies	1162	2.2481	0.46565
Compensation strategies	1162	2.3855	0.53702
Metacognitive strategies	1162	2.0047	0.36369
Affective strategies	1162	2.778	0.70541
Social strategies	1162	1.945	0.42023
Valid N (listwise)	1162		

Appendix V

Frequency of the use of listening comprehension strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

Table 1 The comparison of the use of strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring groups

Group Statistics					
	High-scoring and low-scoring group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Memory strategies	High-scoring and low-scoring group	309	2.3419	0.55497	0.03157
		298	2.0745	0.50341	0.02916
Cognitive strategies	High-scoring and low-scoring group	309	2.3909	0.47762	0.02717
		298	2.149	0.42922	0.02486
Compensation strategies	High-scoring and low-scoring group	309	2.5035	0.53879	0.03065
		298	2.2748	0.50086	0.02901
Metacognitive strategies	High-scoring and low-scoring group	309	2.1274	0.39011	0.02219
		298	1.9199	0.34179	0.0198
Affective strategies	High-scoring and low-scoring group	309	2.9466	0.6568	0.03736
		298	2.6158	0.72881	0.04222
Social strategies	High-scoring and low-scoring group	309	2.019	0.4394	0.025
		298	1.8931	0.38687	0.02241

Table 2 Statistical results of independent samples t-test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
an1	Equal variances assumed	.781	.377	1.449	604	.148	.07649	.05279	-.02717	.18016
	Equal variances not assumed			1.441	548.610	.150	.07649	.05308	-.02777	.18076
an2	Equal variances assumed	27.255	.000	4.235	604	.000	.23412	.05528	.12555	.34269
	Equal variances not assumed			4.249	593.851	.000	.23412	.05510	.12591	.34233
an3	Equal variances assumed	.207	.649	1.738	604	.083	.09849	.05667	-.01281	.20979
	Equal variances not assumed			1.741	603.151	.082	.09849	.05659	-.01264	.20962
an4	Equal variances assumed	1.292	.256	3.935	603	.000	.28105	.07142	.14078	.42132
	Equal variances not assumed			3.942	601.987	.000	.28105	.07130	.14103	.42107
an5	Equal variances assumed	.184	.668	3.281	604	.001	.16779	.05115	.06735	.26824
	Equal variances not assumed			3.286	602.934	.001	.16779	.05106	.06751	.26808
an6	Equal variances assumed	.347	.556	6.789	604	.000	.48083	.07082	.34174	.61992
	Equal variances not assumed			6.779	596.285	.000	.48083	.07093	.34153	.62012
an7	Equal variances assumed	4.252	.040	4.064	604	.000	.30192	.07430	.15601	.44783
	Equal variances not assumed			4.066	603.811	.000	.30192	.07426	.15607	.44776

an8	Equal variances assumed	.035	.851	3.755	603	.000	.26481	.07053	.12630	.40333
	Equal variances not assumed			3.752	599.053	.000	.26481	.07059	.12618	.40345
an9	Equal variances assumed	.275	.600	3.605	604	.000	.26805	.07437	.12201	.41410
	Equal variances not assumed			3.604	602.415	.000	.26805	.07438	.12197	.41413
an10	Equal variances assumed	4.473	.035	2.300	604	.022	.14377	.06252	.02099	.26654
	Equal variances not assumed			2.303	603.658	.022	.14377	.06244	.02115	.26639
an11	Equal variances assumed	4.637	.032	4.291	604	.000	.28528	.06649	.15470	.41586
	Equal variances not assumed			4.291	603.197	.000	.28528	.06648	.15471	.41585
an12	Equal variances assumed	.103	.748	-.150	604	.881	-.00445	.02964	-.06266	.05377
	Equal variances not assumed			-.150	601.999	.881	-.00445	.02965	-.06268	.05379
an13	Equal variances assumed	.251	.617	3.129	604	.002	.21300	.06808	.07929	.34672
	Equal variances not assumed			3.127	601.074	.002	.21300	.06813	.07921	.34680
an14	Equal variances assumed	.235	.628	1.858	604	.064	.15024	.08088	-.00860	.30908
	Equal variances not assumed			1.857	602.168	.064	.15024	.08091	-.00865	.30913
an15	Equal variances assumed	4.028	.045	4.509	603	.000	.33249	.07374	.18767	.47731
	Equal variances not assumed			4.522	593.225	.000	.33249	.07352	.18810	.47689
an16	Equal variances assumed	1.019	.313	1.516	604	.130	.08748	.05771	-.02586	.20081
	Equal variances not assumed			1.519	601.779	.129	.08748	.05760	-.02564	.20059

an17	Equal variances assumed	.000	.983	4.948	604	.000	.32153	.06498	.19391	.44915
	Equal variances not assumed			4.948	603.243	.000	.32153	.06498	.19392	.44914
an18	Equal variances assumed	.496	.481	3.070	604	.002	.17021	.05544	.06133	.27909
	Equal variances not assumed			3.079	598.079	.002	.17021	.05529	.06163	.27880
an19	Equal variances assumed	.307	.580	2.293	604	.022	.15289	.06669	.02192	.28385
	Equal variances not assumed			2.293	603.364	.022	.15289	.06668	.02194	.28383
an20	Equal variances assumed	15.570	.000	5.562	604	.000	.38175	.06863	.24696	.51653
	Equal variances not assumed			5.551	591.758	.000	.38175	.06877	.24668	.51681
an21	Equal variances assumed	.015	.904	3.123	604	.002	.21506	.06888	.07980	.35033
	Equal variances not assumed			3.125	603.968	.002	.21506	.06883	.07989	.35024
an22	Equal variances assumed	12.965	.000	4.338	604	.000	.28924	.06668	.15829	.42018
	Equal variances not assumed			4.328	589.309	.000	.28924	.06683	.15797	.42050
an23	Equal variances assumed	11.365	.001	3.932	603	.000	.25583	.06506	.12805	.38360
	Equal variances not assumed			3.925	593.964	.000	.25583	.06517	.12783	.38383
an24	Equal variances assumed	.132	.716	-.481	604	.631	-.02046	.04257	-.10407	.06314
	Equal variances not assumed			-.481	603.978	.631	-.02046	.04254	-.10401	.06309
an25	Equal variances assumed	16.985	.000	3.736	604	.000	.26727	.07153	.12678	.40775
	Equal variances not assumed			3.745	599.896	.000	.26727	.07136	.12712	.40741

an25	Equal variances assumed	16.985	.000	3.736	604	.000	.26727	.07153	.12678	.40775
	Equal variances not assumed			3.745	599.896	.000	.26727	.07136	.12712	.40741
an26	Equal variances assumed	1.722	.190	5.633	604	.000	.34569	.06137	.22516	.46622
	Equal variances not assumed			5.623	594.200	.000	.34569	.06148	.22494	.46644
an27	Equal variances assumed	1.153	.283	2.826	603	.005	.19000	.06723	.05795	.32204
	Equal variances not assumed			2.824	600.308	.005	.19000	.06727	.05788	.32211
an28	Equal variances assumed	.871	.351	4.231	604	.000	.26861	.06349	.14392	.39329
	Equal variances not assumed			4.239	601.677	.000	.26861	.06336	.14417	.39304
an29	Equal variances assumed	.196	.658	2.627	604	.009	.17188	.06544	.04337	.30039
	Equal variances not assumed			2.632	601.254	.009	.17188	.06530	.04364	.30012
an30	Equal variances assumed	.887	.347	3.333	603	.001	.21898	.06570	.08994	.34801
	Equal variances not assumed			3.336	602.938	.001	.21898	.06565	.09005	.34790

an31	Equal variances assumed	.228	.633	2,749	604	.006	.21143	.07692	.06037	.36250
	Equal variances not assumed			2,748	602,644	.006	.21143	.07693	.06034	.36253
an32	Equal variances assumed	4,306	.038	3,904	604	.000	.24978	.06398	.12413	.37543
	Equal variances not assumed			3,906	603,923	.000	.24978	.06394	.12420	.37536
an33	Equal variances assumed	9,824	.002	3,584	604	.000	.23209	.06476	.10491	.35928
	Equal variances not assumed			3,589	603,486	.000	.23209	.06467	.10508	.35911
an34	Equal variances assumed	.013	.909	1,970	604	.049	.12945	.06570	.00042	.25848
	Equal variances not assumed			1,970	602,923	.049	.12945	.06570	.00042	.25848
an35	Equal variances assumed	5,436	.020	3,889	603	.000	.24742	.06361	.12249	.37235
	Equal variances not assumed			3,892	602,922	.000	.24742	.06357	.12258	.37226
an36	Equal variances assumed	.066	.797	4,529	604	.000	.26710	.05898	.15128	.38293
	Equal variances not assumed			4,544	594,623	.000	.26710	.05878	.15165	.38255

Appendix VI

Frequency of the use of listening comprehension strategies within each group between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

Table 1 Comparison of the use of memory strategies

Group Statistics				
high-scoring and low-scoring group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Associating / Elaborating	1	309	2.5194	0.67632
	2	297	2.1397	0.68268
Representing sounds in memory	1	309	2.1165	0.70089
	2	297	1.9394	0.59675
Using imagery	1	309	2.4337	0.943
	2	297	2.229	0.94874

Table 2 Comparison of the use of cognitive strategies

Group Statistics				
High-scoring and low-scoring group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Repeating	1	309	2.2492	0.77357
	2	298	1.948	0.65634
Taking notes	1	309	2.3948	0.82539
	2	298	2.1846	0.85053
Getting the ideas quickly	1	309	2.5615	0.63917
	2	298	2.3154	0.63789
Reasoning deductively	1	309	2.4434	0.79417
	2	297	2.1987	0.76952

Table 3 Comparison of the use of compensation strategies

Group Statistics					
High-scoring and low-scoring group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Using other clues	1	309	2.4828	0.57083	0.03247
	2	298	2.2773	0.52978	0.03069
Using linguistic clues	1	309	2.555	0.63467	0.03611
	2	298	2.2685	0.63039	0.03652

Table 4 Comparison of the use of metacognitive strategies

Group Statistics					
High-scoring and low-scoring group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Seeking practice opportunities	1	309	1.9218	0.43983	0.02502
	2	298	1.7517	0.36857	0.02135
Planning for a language task	1	309	1.8706	0.72708	0.04136
	2	298	1.7013	0.63144	0.03658
Paying attention	1	309	2.9466	0.62254	0.03542
	2	298	2.6393	0.63556	0.03682

Table 5 Comparison of the use of strategies ‘media-oriented opportunities’ and ‘social-activity-oriented opportunities’

Group Statistics					
high-scoring and low-scoring group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Media- training-oriented opportunities	1	309	2.3236	0.64877	0.03691
	2	297	2.138	0.56455	0.03276
Social-activity-oriented opportunities	1	309	1.7209	0.45758	0.02603
	2	297	1.5623	0.39942	0.02318

Table 6 Comparison of the use of affective strategies

Group Statistics					
High-scoring and low-scoring group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Making positive statements	1	309	3.0518	0.8001	0.04552
	2	298	2.6745	0.89033	0.05158
Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, or meditation	1	309	2.8414	0.7713	0.04388
	2	298	2.557	0.87141	0.05048

Table 7 Comparison of the use of social strategies

Group Statistics					
High-scoring and low-scoring group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Asking for clarification or verification	1	309	2.2816	0.98776	0.05619
	2	298	2.1275	1.00362	0.05814
Cooperating with others	1	309	1.6462	0.46128	0.02624
	2	298	1.5671	0.39185	0.0227
Developing cultural understanding	1	309	1.8123	0.72325	0.04114
	2	298	1.7148	0.66857	0.03873
Becoming aware of other's thoughts and feelings	1	309	2.5518	0.76271	0.04339
	2	298	2.354	0.71516	0.04143

Appendix VII

Statistical description of the level of consciousness in the use of listening comprehension strategies

Table 1 Consciousness in the use of strategies among all students

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Conscious level of using memory strategies	1142	1.2531	0.53487	0.01583
Conscious level of using cognitive strategies	1138	1.3625	0.49857	0.01478
Conscious level of using compensation strategies	1140	1.4506	0.47324	0.01402
Conscious level of using metacognitive strategies	1161	1.1194	0.42826	0.01257
Conscious level of using affective strategies	1109	1.7399	0.47282	0.0142
Conscious level of using social strategies	1156	1.04	0.48488	0.01426

Table 2 Consciousness in the use of strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

Group Statistics					
high-scoring and low-scoring group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Conscious level of using memory strategies	1	308	1.3725	0.48407	0.02758
	2	292	1.1494	0.57735	0.03379
Conscious level of using cognitive strategies	1	307	1.4964	0.44124	0.02518
	2	291	1.2767	0.55395	0.03247
Conscious level of using compensation strategies	1	308	1.55	0.39115	0.02229
	2	287	1.3624	0.53037	0.03131
Conscious level of using metacognitive strategies	1	309	1.2585	0.39625	0.02254
	2	297	1.0337	0.46786	0.02715
Conscious level of using affective strategies	1	306	1.8529	0.34774	0.01988
	2	275	1.6273	0.57007	0.03438
Conscious level of using social strategies	1	308	1.1269	0.44422	0.02531
	2	296	0.983	0.52001	0.03023

Table 3 Independent samples t-test of consciousness in the use of strategies between the high-scoring and the low-scoring group

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the	
									Lower	Upper
Conscious level of using memory strategies	Equal variances assumed	8.067	0.005	4.906	593	0	0.21726	0.04429	0.13028	0.30424
	Equal variances not assumed			4.895	575.788	0	0.21726	0.04438	0.13008	0.30443
Conscious level of using cognitive strategies	Equal variances assumed	11.669	0.001	4.987	591	0	0.2091	0.04193	0.12675	0.29146
	Equal variances not assumed			4.974	567.651	0	0.2091	0.04204	0.12652	0.29168
Conscious level of using compensation strategies	Equal variances assumed	10.698	0.001	4.576	590	0	0.18004	0.03935	0.10276	0.25732
	Equal variances not assumed			4.548	548.282	0	0.18004	0.03959	0.10228	0.2578
Conscious level of using metacognitive strategies	Equal variances assumed	4.578	0.033	5.729	603	0	0.20842	0.03638	0.13697	0.27986
	Equal variances not assumed			5.721	594.364	0	0.20842	0.03643	0.13687	0.27996
Conscious level of using affective strategies	Equal variances assumed	83.55	0	5.782	571	0	0.2266	0.03919	0.14962	0.30357
	Equal variances not assumed			5.687	450.445	0	0.2266	0.03985	0.14829	0.3049
Conscious level of using social strategies	Equal variances assumed	5.221	0.023	3.206	601	0.001	0.12899	0.04023	0.04998	0.208
	Equal variances not assumed			3.201	588.466	0.001	0.12899	0.0403	0.04984	0.20814

Erklärung

Ich versichere, dass ich diese Arbeit selbständig angefertigt, keine andere als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt und die den benutzten Werken wörtlich oder inhaltlich entnommenen Stellen als solche kenntlich gemacht habe. Ich versichere, dass ich keine kommerzielle Promotionsberatung in Anspruch genommen habe.

Hamburg, 26.09.2013