现代外语教学研究著作丛书

周之南 著

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY: LEARNER STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH SPEAKING

中国大学生英语口语策略实证研究

哈爾濱工業大學出版社
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内容提要

本研究以638名来自不同中国大学、不同专业的英语学习者为研究对象，通过使用问卷调查、访谈和观察的研究方法，研究了中国大学生英语口语学习策略和英语口语使用策略的特点。本书提出了一些提高中国大学生英语口语学习策略的认识和使用能力，以及提高学生的英语口语学习效率乃至英语口语水平的教学建议。

本书将为英语教学研究人员、英语教师、广大英语学习者提供有益的参考借鉴。

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作者序

选择研究中国大学生英语口语策略，首先是出于自己作为一名英语教师的责任。多年的英语教学经历使我感到提高学生英语口语能力的紧迫性，急切地希望能够帮助学生找出问题和解决问题的途径，以便尽快提高他们的英语口语水平。

本研究对我国大学英语口语策略进行了较大规模的实证研究。通过使用问卷调查、访谈和观察的研究方法，研究了 638 位中国大学生英语口语学习策略（Language Learning Strategies for English Speaking）和英语口语使用策略（Language Use Strategies for English Speaking）的特点。

研究发现了中国大学生英语口语使用策略的 7 大特点和 5 种英语口语学习者类型，探讨了英语口语策略选择与其他影响语言学习的因素，如：年龄、性别、学习英语时间长短、口语水平，以及口语能力的自我评价等之间的关系，找出了对英语口语成绩有正面影响的 9 种英语口语学习者策略，阐述了中国大学生在英语口语的学习和交流过程中口语学习策略的特点和不足。

由于中国大学生英语口语的学习策略和交际策略方面意识不强，缺乏训练，我认为要提高我国大学生的英语口语交流能力，应该先提高他们的英语口语学习能力和学习效率，并在我国大学生的英语口语教学中引入英语口语策略的培训以及对英语口语学习方面出现的各种问题的咨询和帮助。

本研究从开始设想、设计、实施、研究，到总结成果和成书，历时数年。其间得到过许多人，包括上海外国语大学的多位老师，以及在北京、广州、哈尔滨的多位朋友、学生和家人的激励与帮助，在此表示诚挚的谢意。

希望本书能够提高我国英语教育工作者和英语口语学习者对

我国大学生英语口语策略的认识，对大学英语课堂教学中实施口语策略训练提供参考，并为中国大学英语课程设计者们在课程设计、教材编写、教师培训，以及课堂教学等诸方面提供有价值的借鉴。

由于作者水平有限，书中疏漏之处，敬请同行专家及各位读者批评指正。

周之南
2008 年 10 月
于哈尔滨工业大学

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Chapter 1

Introduction

『本章导读』 本章概述了国内外口语策略的研究概况，说明了研究中国大学生英语口语策略的目的，提出了本研究所要回答的问题，指出了研究的理论及实践意义。

在我国大学英语教学日益重视培养学生的口笔语实践能力和交际能力的今天，研究我国部分大学生在学习英语口语时的学习策略和实际口语交际时使用的策略，以及策略的使用和其他语言学习相关因素之间的关系，将会为我国大学英语教育者和决策者了解我国大学生英语口语现状和需求，进而改革大学英语口语教学提供依据。

It has been long debated in the field of Chinese college English education that the focus of teaching and learning should be shifted from the former knowledge-centeredness, test-centeredness and teacher-centeredness to skill-centeredness, communication-centeredness and learner-centeredness (O'Malley et al. 1985a, Weinstein & Mayer 1986:315, Cohen 1998, Nunnan 1999). Various articles, books, studies and research have discussed how learners process information and what strategies they employ to understand and learn a second language, and what effective and efficient ways of English language teaching can be inferred from such studies (Oxford 1990, Cohen 1990, O'Malley & Chamot 1990, Wenden 1991, Brown 1991, Rubin & Thompson 1994, Mendelsohn 1994, McDonough 1995). As Nunan indicated in his book, within the field of education in the last two decades, a gradual but significant shift has taken place, resulting in less stress on teachers and teaching and greater emphasis on learners and learning (Nunan, 1988).

In fact, China's college English education has been endeavoring such a shift with the official issue of a national college English syllabus, the College English Curriculum Requirements, by the Ministry of Education as a landmark in 2004. The syllabus clearly states the importance of developing students' communicative competence, learning strategies, and intercultural communication skills (College English Curriculum Requirements, Chinese Ministry of Education, 2004). One protruding feature of this newly issued syllabus, unlike the previous college English teaching syllabi which attached great importance to the linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing and translation, emphasizes the development of communicative competence and gives priority to the learning of oral or

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spoken English:

> As a systematic whole, college English has as its maim components knowledge and practical skills of the English language, linguistic knowledge, learning strategies and intercultural communication; it takes theories of foreign language teaching as its guide and incorporates different teaching models and approaches.
>
> The 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. (College English Curriculum Requirements, Chinese Ministry of Education, 2004:16)

There is undoubtedly a crying need both from the government and the public to improve our students' communicative abilities, viz. listening and speaking skills, and to discard the old-fashioned "dumb" English teaching and learning system. However, to improve English proficiency for a whole nation of college students is a hard task which takes long time and great energy, since oral English, standing at the output end of the language learning process, needs the basis of all linguistic knowledge such as knowledge about pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and culture, and skills of reading, listening, writing and interpersonal communication to be learned, practiced, improved and perfected. Almost every aspect of the college English teaching system, from theory to practice, from approaches, pedagogy

to classroom teaching, from teachers to students, needs to be reformed.

Yet the above mentioned aspects of college English teaching reform will not be a mission impossible when the nature of college English learning is well understood. A new college English educational system focusing on the development of real communication skills such as listening and speaking can be successfully established and well implemented only when the nature of oral English learning and oral communication of Chinese college students is understood by educators. This research, aiming at discovering on the one hand some features of oral English learning viz. oral English learning strategies, and on the other hand the use of English in oral communication, viz. oral English production and communicative strategies by Chinese college students, is to cut a bit off the iceberg of revealing and understanding some truth of the most tangible and elusive nature of human communication.

1.1 Development of the Study on Speaking Strategies

The process and ability of language production have always been core issues in psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition studies (Wang Lifei & Zhou Dandan 2004). But, since the mental process of oral production is so much harder than language comprehension (Carroll 1999: 192), and the verbal behavior of oral production is so difficult to be collected, recorded, transferred and analyzed, the studies on oral production of second language learners at home and abroad are less thrived and fruitful than those on other linguistic skills like listening, reading and writing.

On the other hand, "strategies have become a bit of a bandwagon in ELT over the past 20 years or so" (Tony Ridgway 2000). The study of language learning strategies began in 1975 when Rubin got her paper "What the 'good language learner' can teach us" published in TESOL Quarterly. In her paper, Rubin summarized seven strategies employed by the "good language learner". After Rubin, came Naiman et al. and Stern, and then Wenstein and Mayer, Chamot, Oxford, Rod Ellis and many other applied linguists who took their professional interest in the path of language learning strategies.

Precisely speaking, the sign of the beginning of research on English learning strategies in China is the postgraduate thesis by Huang Xiaohua of Guangzhou Foreign Languages Institute in 1984. In the following twenty years, researches into language learning strategy can generally be divided into two stages. From 1984 to 1992, the beginning stage in which, the number of researchers was too limited and the range of researches too narrow, with consequently too scarce results. However, from 1993 on, researches have been carried out in wider range, then, more fruitful and influential results have been consequently obtained, with some of the results playing important roles in foreign language teaching and learning.

The major concerns of the researches into language learning strategies have been: the "good language learner"; the difference between the "good language learner" and the "poor language learner"; language learning strategies; the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and success in second/foreign language learning; factors that affect the use of language learning strategies; and methods for and effectiveness of, language learning strategies training.

In the past decades, studies about language learning strategies

have made rapid progress; however, researchers have not yet got a common ground on the definition of learning strategy. There is a table in *The Study of Second Language Acquisition* by Rod Ellis (1997: 531), listing all the definitions given by previous researchers, such as Stern, Dansereau, Weinstein & Mayer, Chamot, Rubin, Cohen, Green & Oxford, etc. on learning strategies. The changes in these definitions reveal that in early work there was a focus on the product of language learning strategies (linguistic or sociolinguistic competence), while now there is a greater emphasis on the processes and characteristics of LLS (language learning strategies).

Researches into what learners do to learn a language has resulted in the identification of specific strategies and in attempts to classify them in some way. Different researchers have classified their lists of behaviors according to various criteria.

In China, from 1993 to 2003, there have been around 20 "up-to the standards" (Wang Lifei & Zhou Dandan 2004) essays about the teaching and learning English speaking. For the difficulties in carrying out research on speaking, and the complicated process of language output, the research findings are far from sufficient in providing insights and suggestions for English language teaching and learning.

1.2 The Goal of This Study

Nowadays, English teaching and learning is still one of the major concerns in Chinese college education, since the important role of English as an international language has long been recognized. Also, as the focus of education has been shifted from teaching to learning, many

researchers are paying increased attention to learners than to teachers.

The purpose of this research is to find out about the strategy use in learning English speaking and in actual English speaking activities, for example, the most commonly adopted strategies, the least adopted by Chinese college students, and the possible correlation between strategy use and language output regarding speaking skills. With such knowledge, suggestions for educators as to how to guide and train students in strategy use can be made, so that in a few years, the overall English speaking proficiency of Chinese college students can be hopefully improved.

1.3 The Research Questions

This study on Chinese college students' strategies of oral English, through a combination of qualitative means and quantitative means, tries to answer the following questions:

(1) What oral English learning strategies are used by most Chinese college English learners?

(2) What oral English using strategies are employed by Chinese college English speakers?

(3) Are there any differences in English speaking strategy use between male and female students, English majors and non English majors, and more successful and less successful learners of college English?

(4) What is the relationship between strategy preference and oral English proficiency? Are they correlated? If yes, what is the correlation?

(5) What pedagogical and theoretical suggestions can be inferred and proposed in the enlightenment of this study?

The answers to the above mentioned questions adequately, or even partly, will throw a light on the reform of Chinese college English teaching and learning, by providing first-hand information of the oral English learning strategies, production strategies and communicative strategies used by college English learners. Chinese college educators will understand on a profound scale the situation and problems of oral English learning of Chinese college English learners then to be able to take these into consideration while designing curricula, writing textbooks and proposing teaching approaches.

1.4 Methodology and Procedures: An Empirical Study

In comparison with the abundant literature of language learning strategies, researches into specific learning skills such as listening, writing and vocabulary strategies are rare. Language learning strategy subsumes such a broad range that general conclusions that have obtained by former researchers may not be applied to every specific one. Therefore, the author is determined to carry out an investigation on speaking strategy use among Chinese college students. In order to know what specific strategies are used by Chinese college students while learning to speak and during speaking, and to know whether there are significant differences between advanced-level students and ordinary students in Chinese colleges, the author tries to carry out an investigation by using a questionnaire, an interview, and some observations to analyze the results in detail.

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