Communicative Strategies in Second Language Acquisition

A Study of Chinese English Learners' Attitude and Reported
Frequency of Communicative Strategies

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Abstract

Communicative strategies not only play an important role in communication but they also contribute to second language acquisition. Communicative strategies (CS) can help to keep the communication channel open, encourage hypothesis formation and automatization. The overall aim of this essay is to find out whether there is a relationship between Chinese English learners' attitudes toward the use of communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them in actual communication. Forty Chinese English majors are selected randomly to participate in this investigation. They were divided into two different groups according to their different level of language proficiency. The main methods of this essay are two questionnaires and an interview.

Based on the framework of achievement strategies and reduction strategies and through the investigation of the relationship between the attitude toward communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them in communication, three tentative conclusions have been drawn. Firstly, a learner's attitude of CS has some influence on the use of CS. Secondly; Chinese learners of English tend to use reduction strategies most often. Finally, Chinese learners seldom use achievement strategies although they tend to believe the important role of achievement strategies in communication. What is more, this essay also analyzes the two groups of students' different attitudes and different reported frequency of using CS and finds some reasons for those differences. After the above analyses, the essay categorizes three main factors which affect learners' attitudes and their reported frequency of using CS. It includes the learner itself, the learning context, and the communication context.

Key words:　Communicative strategies; SLA; Attitude; Reported frequency

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1. Introduction

In our daily communication, there exist no ideal speakers or hearers of a language. There is still no one who can master a language perfectly and use it appropriately in all social interactions. Without doubt, in the process of communication, we may come across a great number of problems. In order to overcome these problems, we have to use some communicative strategies.

Communicative strategies (CS) play a significant role in second language acquisition (SLA). According to Corder (1978), reduction strategies can be regarded as "risk-avoiding" while achievement strategies may be seen as "risking-taking". He also suggests that achievement strategies (L2-based strategies, cooperative strategies, L1-based strategies and nonverbal strategies) will contribute to successful language learning. Furthermore, Færch and Kasper (1983) hold the same view. They argue that achievement strategies encourage hypothesis formation and risk is essential for automatization. Tarone (1980), however, expresses a different notion, namely that any kinds of communicative strategies can contribute to successful SLA.

This essay attempts to investigate the relationship between Chinese students' attitudes towards communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them in communication. This essay further endeavours to analyze the factors that affecting the learners' choice of CS. It also put forward some implications for learners' learning and using of CS.

1.1 Aim

This essay focuses on the communicative strategies which are applied in the students' process of second language acquisition. The overall aim of the essay is to find out whether there is a relationship between the attitude of Chinese learners of English towards the use of communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them in actual communication. More specifically, the aim of the essay can be stated as follows: (1) to survey Chinese learners' differences in attitudes towards communicative strategies; (2) to investigate the reported frequency of using communicative strategies; and (3) to examine the correlation between attitudes toward five communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using

them in actual communication. Furthermore, the study will put forward some factors that affecting learners' choice of CS. Based on the analysis and findings, this study attempts to offer some pedagogical implications for the learning and using of CS.

1.2 Material and method

For collecting ample and reliable information and data, this study includes two questionnaires and one interview. Forty students were selected randomly to participate in the questionnaires and the interview for collecting information. Through detailed analysis and comparison of the students' responses to the questionnaires and the interview, the study tries to reach sound conclusions.

1.2.1 Participants

The participants of this study are 40 English majors who were chosen randomly from a university in China. Twenty of them are freshmen who have not passed TEM-8 (TEM-8: Test for English Majors, Band 8) and another 20 are senior students who have passed TEM-8. The result of TEM-8 is used as a criterion of language proficiency in this study. They are reliable because TEM-8 is national proficiency test for English majors, which is organized every year to check English majors' proficiency of English after four years of training of university education.

All of them have been studying English since Grade One in their Junior Middle Schools, that is to say, they have had English learning experiences for seven to ten years. Among these 40 students, 28 are females while the other 12 are males. All the participants are in their twenties (20-24 years old). Their willingness of take part in the questionnaires and their anonymity was guaranteed. The details of subjects for this study are shown in Table 1:

Table 1   Description of Participants

	Participants for investigation	
Linguistic level	Not passed TEM-8	Passed TEM-8
Grade	1	4
Sex	Female 15 Male 5	Female 13 Male 7
Average age	20	23
Number	20	20

University students were chosen firstly because university students in China have learned English for at least six years in the middle school. They have acquired a relatively large amount of basic language knowledge and they are cognitively more mature. Secondly, they have a good knowledge of their own strength and weaknesses in learning English, especially in dealing with the basic aspect of English: communication. They have acquired some strategies in dealing with communication itself and have the ability to compare the different strategies. Furthermore, with two different groups of students, the data conveys more comprehensive and detailed information for analysis.

1.2.2 Questionnaires

According to Parrot (1993), questionnaires are often used to provide data about the general and common characteristics and preferences of learners, as well as to elicit the response of learners to specific factors in their learning process. Two main questionnaires on communicative strategies for Chinese learners of English were used as the main instruments for this study. These two questionnaires were created with the help of the description of communicative strategies by Færch and Kasper (1983). The goal of the two questionnaires is to assess learners' attitudes towards communicative strategies and the reported frequency at which learners use different communicative strategies for communication.

Questionnaire 1

Questionnaire 1 (see Appendix 1) is about the students' attitudes towards Communicative Strategies. Five questions are in this part. The questionnaire covers Chinese learners' attitudes towards four main communicative strategies: L2-based strategy, cooperation strategy, L1-based strategy, nonverbal strategy and reduction strategy. For each of the questions, five choices are offered. "1" stands for "do not agree at all"; "2" stands for "tend to oppose"; "3" stands for "have neutral attitude"; "4" stands for "almost agree"; "5" stands for "agree entirely". The participants were asked to select the one that best represented their thoughts.

Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire 2 (see Appendix 2) is about the reported frequency at which learners use different communicative strategies for communication. It includes twenty statements describing some strategies. Each statement stands for a minor strategy.

The questionnaire includes four parts. Part A of the questionnaire stands for L2-based communicative strategies. It has five statements, sub-divided into six minor groups: substituting, generalizing, exemplifying, word coining, restructuring and describing. Part B stands for cooperative strategies. It has five statements, including appealing for assistance from a native speaker or teachers. Part C has three statements, representing L1-based strategies. Part D includes four statements, representing nonverbal communicative strategies, such as communication with the help of gestures, facial expression, posture, touch and eye contact. Part E of the questionnaire represents reduction strategies, and includes three statements, consisting of two kinds of reduction strategies: formal reduction and functional reduction strategies. Questionnaire 2 also uses a five-point scale, "1" stands for "never use"; "2" stands for "hardly ever use"; "3" stands for "sometimes use"; "4" stands for "often use"; "5" stands for "always use". Each category is assigned the value of one to five respectively. Thus, a higher score indicates a more frequent use of a particular strategy.

1.2.3 Interview

Apart from the two questionnaires, the instrument for this study also includes an interview. The interview intends to provide additional and more specific information. The brief informal interview serves as the participants' after-thought explanations about their choice of strategies. Thus, the questions used in the interview are mainly based on the participants' responses to both questionnaire 1 and questionnaire 2. Nonetheless, the questions are mainly about why and how the participants chose certain items in the questionnaire. With the prompting of the researcher the interviewees could spontaneously comment on his or her cognitive process for the previous answers to the researcher's questions concerning their choices of strategies to certain items. Ten students were chosen as interviewees who differ in their linguistic level, in the attitudes towards the use of communicative strategies and in the reported frequency of using the communicative strategies. The interview focuses on the following two aspects: (1) the reasons of positive attitude toward the use of communicative strategies; (2) the reasons for a high/low frequency of using a particular communicative strategy.

The interviews were carried out on an individual basis and conducted in the form of computer-accessed personal interviewing. The interviewer and one participant at a time communicated through the chatting software-QQ. The content of the interviews was recorded for further analysis.

1.2.4 Procedure

This investigation was conducted through a systematically and carefully designed procedure. The procedure consists of certain sequential steps, which were conducted with the help of QQ- an instant message (IM) software similar to MSN but more popular among Chinese students to communicate with via the computer.

The first step was to select participants, which was settled with the aid of the researcher's colleague at a university in China. All participants showed great willingness and support when informed about the objective of the study. By selecting their QQ numbers, it was possible for the researcher to communicate directly with them.

Secondly, with the convenience provided by the internet, the questionnaires were sent to one of the researcher's colleagues by e-mail. With the help of the colleague, the students were gathered and the questionnaires for the students were administered in the classroom. After collecting all the responses to the questionnaires, the information was sent back to the researcher by e-mail for analysis. After the analysis of the questionnaires, a brief interview was conducted to get further information about their cognitive process for the questionnaire.

The last step was to collect and analyse the data which came from the two questionnaires and the interview. There are twenty items in the two questionnaires. Each item's score ranges from one to five. In questionnaire 1, it ranges from do not agree at all to agree entirely. In questionnaire 2, it ranges from never use to always use. These data are analyzed by statistical analysis, including, analysis of the learners' attitudes toward CS, the learner's reported frequency of using CS and the relationship between the learners' attitudes and their reported frequency of using CS. The analysis of the learners' attitudes and their reported frequency are used to check and compare the mean scores. This paper also applies to analyze the differences in attitude and the reported frequency of students with two different levels of linguistic proficiency. What is more, the interview will give us some additional and more specific information.

2. Theoretical Background

This section is a literature review of previous research related to how human beings deal with communicative strategies and their relationship between their attitudes and the reported

frequency of using the communicative strategies. It provides the background information for the following analysis.

To begin with, the focus will be on a brief introduction of second language acquisition (SLA). To master second language efficiently, it is better to pay more attention to the learner's age, motivation, learning style and some social factors. After presenting the basic aspects of SLA, this section continues to explore the previously related concepts and studies on the communicative strategies (CS), the general description of communicative competence, the classification of CS, taxonomies of CS. Among all the issues, the essay first observes the concept of SLA.

2.1 The concept of second language acquisition

The content of the following subsections could be referred to the definition of second language acquisition, three key factors of second language acquisition, the relationship between personality and second language acquisition and some sociolinguistic factors in second language acquisition.

2.1.1 The definition of second language acquisition

The systematic study of how people acquire a second language is a fairly recent phenomenon, which mainly began in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Wikipedia (2011), second language acquisition (SLA) is the process by which people learn a second language, that is, it is the process of learning an additional language by someone who has already learned a native language or multiple native languages. It can also refer to the scientific study of the second-language learning process.

As Ellis (2000) points out, SLA can be defined as a study of the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of the classroom. That is to say, the scope of SLA includes not only the informal L2 learning which takes place in informal contexts but also the formal L2 learning which takes place in classroom. The scope of SLA also includes a mixture of these settings and circumstances.

2.1.2 Three key factors of second language acquisition

As Breen (2001) points out, any adequate theory of second language acquisition has to account for three key factors and, crucially, their interrelationship. The three factors are: "(1)

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What the participant brings to the process of second language acquisition, through the activities of certain psychological processes, such as attention or memory. (2) the nature of the actual language learning process; and (3) the outcomes from the process in terms of linguistic or, more broadly, communicative competence in the target language" (Breen 2001, 306-307).

2.1.3 Relationship between personality and second language acquisition

The variables of individual characteristics within the students themselves, effecting second language acquisition basically consist of personal and general factors that relate to all human beings. It is essential to recognise that there are individual differences between learners. A second language learner is different from a very young child acquiring a first language. This is true in terms of both the learner's characteristics and the environments in which second language acquisition typically occurs. As we all know, all second language learners, regardless of age, have already acquired at least one language. This prior knowledge may be an advantage in the sense that they have an idea of how languages work. On the other hand, knowledge of other languages can lead learners to make incorrect guesses about how the second language works, and this may result in errors that first language learners would not make. Furthermore, successful language acquisition draws on different mental abilities, abilities that are specific to language learning, different cognitive maturity and different metalinguistic awareness which allow learners to solve problems and engage in learning a second language.

It is believed that individual differences that are inherent in the learner can predict success or failure in language learning. Such beliefs may be based on our own experience or that of people we have known. For instance, it is believed that extroverted learners can be the most successful learners when they interact without inhibition in the second language and seek opportunities to practise language skills (Lightbown & Spada 2008). In addition to an outgoing personality, other characteristics often believed to predict success in language learning are age, motivation, and learning styles.

Age as an effective factor brings different performance stages in second language learning. Various explanations and interpretations of second language acquisition exist considering age. The relationship between age and success in SLA, though complex in nature, is linked to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) (Lightbown & Spada 2008). CPH is defined as there being

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biological mechanisms specifically designed for language acquisition which cease to be available at or even before puberry. Lightbown and Spada (2008), suggest that older learners have a higher level of problem solving and metalinguistic abilities than younger learners even though some older second language learners may have different word choice, accent or grammatical features as compared to some monolingual native speakers and some second language speakers who began learning the language while they were very young. They also communicate very successfully in the language. Older learners may depend on more general learning abilities which are not as effective for the language learning of young learners, as the more specific, innate capabilities that are available to them. In addition to possible biological differences suggested by the CPH, the conditions for language learning are often very different (Lightbown & Spada 2008).

Motivation is another important aspect of second language acquisition. It is the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language. Motivation includes the following two factors: on the one hand, learners' communicative needs, and, on the other, their attitudes toward the second language community. If learners needs to speak the second language in a wide range of social situations or to fulfil professional ambitions, they will perceive the communicative value of the second language and will therefore be motivated to acquire proficiency in it. Likewise, if learners have a favourable attitude towards the speakers of the language, they will desire more contact with them (Lightbown & Spada 2008). Lightbown and Spada look at motivation from two basic types: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation is characterised by the learner's positive attitudes towards the target language group and the desire to integrate into the target language community. When someone becomes a resident in a new community that uses the target language in its social interactions, integrative motivation is a key component in assisting the learner to develop some level of proficiency in the language. It becomes a necessity, in order to operate socially in the community and become one of its members. Instrumental motivation underlies the goal to gain some social or economic reward through L2 achievement, thus referring to a more functional reason for language learning. With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher pay based on language ability, reading technical material, translation work or achieving higher social status. Both forms of motivation are examined in light of research which has been undertaken to establish the correlation between the form of motivation and successful second language acquisition

(Lightbown & Spada 2008).

The term "learning style" means an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Lightbown & Spada 2008: 59). They divide people into three main learning styles: Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners usually enjoy reading and prefer to see the words that they are learning. They also like to learn by looking at pictures and flashcards. Auditory learners prefer to learn by listening. They enjoy conversations and the chance for interactions with others. They do not need to see words written down. Kinesthetic learners like movement and need frequent breaks in desk activities. Each of us has our own preferred way of learning that is determined by our cultural and educational background and our personalities. So awareness of our learning styles can help us in the second language acquisition.

2.1.4 Sociolinguistic factors and second language acquisition

In the process of second language acquisition, learners need not only the knowledge of language system (such as grammatical and semantic rules) but also an assimilation of the cultural and interactional aspects of the second language. In the following section, we will focus on some important social factors which influence learners' process of second language acquisition, i.e. gender, ethnic identity, sociocultural factors, etc.

2.1.4.1 The influence of gender in the process of SLA

We were usually born and we usually die with a given sex but the concept of gender changes according to time and place. The division into masculine and feminine social roles has recently been replaced by a constructivist and dynamic view of gender. Under this new conception, gender is not a fixed category but may vary depending on the speech and the type of interaction that takes place. Females may be better language learners. They are more sensitive to the new linguistic forms and are more ready to incorporate them into their speech. Thus they will be more likely to rid themselves of any interlanguage forms that deviate from target-language norms. There are no clear-cut explanations yet as to why females outperform males in L2 acquisition. The reason that females hold a more positive attitude seems to have been widely agreed upon. What is more, females are more cooperative and more delicate in dealing with relationship while males emphasize more maintaining their hierarchical relationship.

Eckert (2000) provides a much more detailed discussion of girls' networks than boys', and focuses her explanation on the motivations of the girls much more than the boys. However, this work is one of the best variationsist works on gender, and provides most balance between men and women. In fact, one of Eckert's important points is that differences between genders can be explained partly by competition within genders (Coupland and Jaworski 2009).

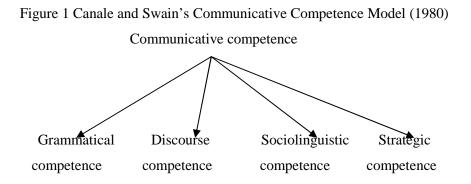### 2.1.4.2 The influence of sociocultural factors in the process of SLA

Since no language can exist in a cultural vacuum, and since no two cultures are exactly identical, second or foreign language learners will inevitably encounter cultural confrontations on their learning route. What second language learners need to do is to accumulate the knowledge pertaining to the target culture so as to develop cross-cultural awareness.

According to Drumm (2001), culture is an attribute of individuals, of small groups, of organizations, and of nations. Cultural factors are always reflected in our daily and professional communication. For example, in countries where Christianity is traditionally prevalent, the expressions, such as *Oh, my God* or *My Lord* can be frequently heard. People's thoughts or ideology is an important component of culture and language is a medium to convey thought. Based on this relation between language and culture, it is easy to understand why a person who knows thousands of words of another language may still find it difficult to communicate with people of that language.

2.2 Basic communicative competence

Chomsky (1965) proposed the two concepts of language form (competence) and language use (performance). These two concepts represent two main aspects of language, and have been discussed for a long period of time. Dornyei and Thurrel (1991) suggest that Communicative strategy is one of the components of communicative competence. Therefore, it is necessary to find out what communicative competence is and the relationship between communicative competence and communicative strategies.

Communicative competence is defined as the knowledge of how to use one's linguistic system appropriately in a situation (Tarone 1981). Furthermore, Canale and Swain (1980) put forward a broader definition of communicative competence. It can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 1 Canale and Swain's Communicative Competence Model (1980)

Communicative competence

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        Communicative competence
       /        |        |        \
Grammatical  Discourse  Sociolinguistic  Strategic
competence   competence  competence      competence
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Canale (1983) looks at strategic competence as a composition of the ability to acquire verbal or non-verbal communicative strategies to compensate for breakdown in communication caused by certain kinds of limitation and also to enhance the effectiveness of communication. They point out that strategic competence is often used when communication problems arise. Learners try to use what they know to communicate with others by using the target language. That is to say, CS are used to compensate for some deficiency in the linguistic system and focus on exploring alternate ways of what one does know for the communication of a message.

After Canale and Swain (1980) had introduced the influential framework of communicative competence, a more comprehensive, stratified model was proposed by Bachman (1990). Based on Canale and Swain's model, he further proposes that communicative competence is to interpret learner's communicative language ability. He holds:

> Strategic competence is the mental capacity for implementing the components of language competence to determine the most effective means of achieving a communicative goal and psycho-physiological mechanisms refer to the actual execution of language as a physical phenomenon (Bachman 1990, 81-91).

That is to say, communicative competence plays a very important role in learners' learning and using of communicative strategies in the process of second language acquisition. Comparing Canale and Swain's model and Bachman's model of communicative competence, we find that in both of their models, strategic competence is an important element in performing its relevant functions. Therefore, the study of communicative strategy is of great importance in the research of communicative competence.

2.3 Definition of communicative strategy (CS)

From different prospects, linguists define communicative strategy in different ways. For example, Tarone (1980) studies CS from the interactional perspective, Brown (1994) looks at CS from the perspective of error resources while Færch and Kasper (1983) perceive CS from psychological approach.

Tarone defines communicative strategies as mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning strategies do not seem to be shared (Tarone 1980, 420). We know that both the speaker and the hearer are involved; successful communication is the responsibility of both speaker and hearer. When the participants are aware of that they do not understand each other, they will resort to a number of strategies: paraphrase, transfer, avoidance, and others.

From the perspective of error resources, Brown suggests that communicative strategy is actually the process of interlingual transfer and the context of learning as a learner tries to get a message through to a hearer or reader (Brown 1994). To some extent, we may determine some linguistic forms not available to the learner at that point of communication. Then communicative strategies can act as the conscious employment of verbal or nonverbal mechanism for communicating an idea. Brown's definition of communicative strategy can help us to reflect what strategies have been used by a speaker through the analysis of errors.

From the psychological perspective, Færch and Kasper (1983) define "communicative strategy as potential conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal" (Færch and Kasper 1983, 36). Færch and Kasper explain similar data in terms of an individual's mental response to a problem rather than as a joint response by two people. According to their definition, in general, there are two possible strategies for solving a communication problem: avoidance strategies and achievement strategies, which will be further discussed in section 2.3.

To sum up, researchers generally agree that the main purpose of CS is to deal with communication problems. In order to understand communicative strategies more clearly, we need to learn some more definitions of CS. Following is a list of definitions of CS taken from recent research.

Table 2   Definitions of CS

Poulisse (1989)	"CSs are strategies that a speaker used to solve the communication problems, which are caused by the lack of appropriate forms in the mental lexical. The speaker compensates either by going to the conceptual stage or by trying out alternative linguistic formulations."
Cohen (2004)	"CS is a systematic attempt by the learner to express meaning by a target language in which the suitable systematic target language rules have not been formed."
Ellis (1994)	"CSs are procedural skills which learner used to overcome the inadequacies of their interlanguage resources."
Stern (1983)	"CSs are techniques of dealing with difficulties in communicating in an imperfectly known second or foreign language."
Corder (1978)	"CS is a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his own idea when faced with some difficulties."

2.4 Classification of communicative strategies

According to the above discussion and the list of strategies, we can come to the conclusion that there are conceptual differences among CS researchers. For Færch and Kasper's and Tarone's taxonomies are clearer and more reasonable than the others', this section will only focus on Færch and Kasper's and Tarone's taxonomies.

2.4.1 Færch and Kasper's psychological strategies

Færch and Kasper (1983), who suggest communicative strategies as a psychological process, believe CS is the solution to the individual's problems of processing rather than the speaker's and the hearer's mutual problems. Færch and Kasper categorize the communicative strategies into two main aspects: achievement communicative strategies and reduction communicative strategies. According to Færch and Kasper's viewpoint, the achievement communicative strategies involve hypothesis and the communicator's practical statement and it can promote language acquisition. On the other hand, when using reduction communicative strategies, the original purpose is changed and it may result in less language acquisition. The following two sub-sections are based on Færch and Kasper and introduce these two categories in detail.

2.4.1.1 Achievement strategies

By using the achievement strategies, learners try to solve communicative problems in the planning phase due to insufficient linguistic resources. According to what resources the learner turns to in trying to solve his communicative problems, Færch and Kasper (1983) subcategorized the achievement CSs into: code-switching, inter-lingual strategies, L1-based strategies, cooperative strategies and nonverbal strategies. Most of the following strategies are connected with problems in the planning phase and some others with problems in the execution phase.

(1) Code-switching

When communicating with others in foreign languages, there is always a switching from L2 to L1. The extent to which the switching happens depends on the interactants' analysis of the real communicative situation (Færch and Kasper 1983). For example, foreign classroom students often share the L1 with their teacher, which enables them to switch code extensively between L2 and L1.

(2) Inter-lingual transfer

Learners always ignore the IL code when using the code-switching strategy. However, strategies of inter-lingual transfer result in a combination of linguistic features from the IL and L1. Inter-lingual transfer may not only occur on the phonological level but also at the pragmatic level (Færch & Kasper 1983). For example:

> (a) *Native speaker: How do you read the word "think"?*
> *(b) Learner: Um, /sik/*
>
> (in Chinese there is no / θ / for /th/, there is only /s/ similar to / θ / in English)
>
> *(c) Learner: Sorry, it's my secret.*
>
> (Chinese learners of English often use "where are you going?" "Did
> You have your supper?" etc. for greeting).

(3) IL based strategies

By using their IL system, learners may have several ways of coping with communicative problems, such as generalize, paraphrase, coin new words or restructure. From the perspective

of IL, generalization means that learners solve problems in the planning phase by filling "gaps" in their plans with IL items which they would not normally use in such context. While, from the perspective of L2, the strategy resembles overgeneralization of an L2 item, as it results in the extension of an item to an inappropriate context. For example, we often use the word *fruit* to stand for a particular type of fruit, *tangerine*. Paraphrase strategy means the learner replaces an L2 item by describing or exemplifying it. Paraphrase refers to not only the form of description or circumlocutions but also bears the form of exemplification. For instance: "*Lily: …Um, something that you use when your hair is wet and you want to dry it… Marry: Oh, you mean hair dryer*." "*Jack: …You take it when you want to make tea or coffee. Jim: Um, that's kettle*". Word coinage refers to the strategy that the learner replaces an L2 item with a new created L2 item. In the following example the learner wants to talk about "the curve of stadium". E.g. *we were sitting in the rounding of the stadium and …* Restructuring strategy is often applied when the learner realizes that he cannot finish his previous plan, and develops an alternative constituent plan to ensure the expressing of his message.

(4) Cooperative strategy

Færch and Kasper (1983: 67) explain "although problems in interaction are necessarily shared problems and can be solved by joint efforts, they originate in either of the interactions, and it is up to him (the speaker) to decide whether to attempt a solution himself or to signal his problems to his interlocutor and attempt to get the problem solved on a cooperative basis". If the individual decides to resort to his interlocutor that he is experiencing a communicative problem and that he needs help, he makes use of the cooperative communication strategy of "appealing". Appeals can be characterized as "self-initiated other-repairs". As can be seen in the following example: *Student: Miss, how do you spell "star"? Teacher: S-t (and then look at car referring to the word "car"* (Shegoloff 1977: 104).

(5) Nonverbal strategy

Nonverbal strategy means the strategy which learners use to replace a lexical item or an action. In our daily communications, individuals often use nonverbal strategies, such as mime, gesture and sound-imitation. Although nonverbal strategies are less systematic than verbal behaviour, it is still very important in interpersonal interaction. Furthermore, nonverbal language including not only the gestures, posture, facial expression but also other signs which

are possible to present by a communicator, for instance, his address or his hair style (Færch and Kasper 1983).

2.4.3.2 Reduction strategies

In order to prevent producing non-fluent or incorrect utterances by using insufficiently acquired rules, learners may make up their mind to communicate by "reduced" systems which concentrate on old rules. When a second language learner interacts with a native speaker, the native speaker may use some simplified version of their L1 system to match the learner's receptive level. Therefore, reduction strategies play an important role in learners' process of second language acquisition.

(1) Formal reduction strategies

In Færch and Kasper's reduction strategies, there are two main aspects. Firstly, it is the formal reduction strategies. The formal reduction strategies refer to the reduction by which parts of linguistic system are avoided. Learners tend to adopt formal reduction strategies mainly for the following two reasons. First of all, learners want to avoid making mistakes. Error avoidance, to some extent, may be psychologically determined. Some second language learners may fell terribly about communicating in a foreign language. They have forbidden doing this unless they can do so without exhibiting linguistic handicaps. Some second language learners believe that linguistic correctness is a prerequisite for the success of communication. Secondly, second language learners want to increase their fluency. Varadi (1980) argues that second language learners may notice that elimination of certain formal elements does not interfere with the transmission of meaning. It may facilitate communication by increasing fluency. Tarone (1980) also points out that formal strategies are employed to increase efficiency in speech production.

All levels of the interlanguage system are susceptible to formal reduction. However, when looking at different communicative status of items from different linguistic levels, there are important differences about whether the learner can reach his communicative goal by using a reduced system.

As at the phonological level, some items are indispensable in communication, learners cannot simply communicate by a reduced phonological system. What is more, some particular phonemes are restricted to specific words which can still not use a reduced phonological

system, such as topic avoidance.

The case at the morphological level is similar to that at the phonological level. In most communicative situations, grammatical morphemes are generally in particular linguistic contexts. That is to say, in the case of morphological reduction, an item has often to be compensated by the application of various achievement strategies, normally by replacing the avoided morphological item with syntactic or lexical items. Nevertheless, even if grammatical morphemes are normally indispensable components of a sentence, they are frequently semantically redundant. When in a real communicative case, learners may prevent from using some of these unnecessary features.

Blum and Levenston (1978) provide several reasons why learners should try to use the reduction strategies in their lexical system. Firstly, particular lexicons may be difficult to pronounce or belong to irregular or infrequent morphological classes. Secondly, they may impose morphological, syntactic or lexical restrictions on the context that the learner finds difficult to observe.

(2)Functional reduction strategies

Færch and Kasper (1983) point out that functional reduction may affect the following three main types of elements of the communicative goal: actionable communicative goal, modal communicative goal and propositional communicative goal.

Functional reduction of the actionable communicative goal may be reduced when learners experience difficulties in performing specific speech acts. Functional reduction of modal communicative goal may occur to the learners who experience problems in making their utterance appropriate for politeness or social distance. When coming across communicative tasks which demand other types of speech acts (for example, argumentative directive functions), learners may experience considerable problems in performing tense. In this case, they either avoid engaging in communication situations which are likely to necessitate the use of such functions, or abstain from using them in communication (Færch & Kasper, 1983).

Functional reduction of the propositional content includes strategies such as topic avoidance, message abandonment, and meaning replacement. By using topic avoidance is meant that learners manage to prevent the occurrence of topics that are certain to present difficulties. Topic avoidance is used only in connection with problems in the planning phase; in contrast,

message avoidance can be used in connection with problems in the execution phase. The result of topic avoidance and message avoidance is that the learner gives up referring to a specific topic, while, meaning replacement is different from this. Færch and Kasper (1983) describe meaning replacement in the following way: confronted by a planning or retrieval problem, learners operate within the intended propositional content and preserve the topic but refer to it by a more general expression. The result of meaning replacement is a certain amount of vagueness.

2.4.2 Tarone's social strategies

Different from psycholinguistically orientated researchers, such as Færch and Kasper (1984) who think of them as psychological process, Tarone (1980) studies communicative strategies from the perspective of social interaction. She elaborates the definition of CS by saying: "…mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (1980, 288). According to her, "… meaning structures include both linguistic and socio-linguistic structure" (Tarone 1980, 288).

Tarone (1980, 233-241) summarizes communicative strategies under the following three main types. The list is as follows:

(1) Paraphrase

Paraphrase includes three subcategories:

(A) Approximation: The use of a target language vocabulary item or structure, which the learner knows is not correct, but which shares semantic features with the desired item to satisfy the speaker (e.g. "pipe" for "water pipe").

(B) Word coinage: The learner's creation of a new word in order to communicate a desired concept (e.g. "airball" for "ballon").

(C) Circumlocution: The learner's describing the characteristic or elements of an object or action instead of using the appropriate TL structure (e.g. "She is, uh, smoking something. I don't know what its name is. That's, uh, Persian, and we use in Turkey, a lot of").

(2) Transfer

Transfer has four elements in it:

(A) Literal translation: the learner's translating word for word from the native language (e.g. "He invites him to drink" for "They toast one another").

(B) Language switch: the learner's using the native language term without bothering to translate (e.g. "balon" for 'ballon" or "tirtil" for "turtle").

(C) Appeal for assistance: the learner asks for the correct term or structure (e.g. "what is this?").

(D) Mine: the learner uses nonverbal strategies in place of a meaning structure (e.g. "clapping one's hands to illustrate applause").

(3) Avoidance

(A) Topic avoidance: a learner's using of passing concepts for which the vocabulary or other meaning structures are not known to them.

(B) Message abandonment: a learner's beginning to talk about a concept but being unable to continue due to lack of meaning structure, and stopping in mid-utterance.

2.4.3 Advantages and disadvantages of the classification of CS

Many researchers (such as Tarone 1980, Færch & Kasper 1983, Poulisse 1989, Ellis1994, Stern 1983, and others) provide an overall view of the communicative strategies system. All of their classifications are on a different criterion and made a great contribution to the studies of this field.

There are some similarities in the above-listed strategies. The criteria that are motivated to reduce, to achieve, or to consult different sources of information, inevitably lead to similar classification of utterances produced by different communicative problems of the learners. That is to say, these classifications are strikingly converging.

Three possible reasons can be taken into consideration for this convergence. Firstly, researchers build on the work of their colleagues by taking existing suggestions for taxonomic distinctions as a starting-point and refining them to their own ideas. It is not surprising, therefore, to find continuity in the analysis of a problem. Secondly, there are obvious differences in the chosen criteria. In this situation, the organization of classification would possibly be a different surface structure which reflects the same fundamental structure. Namely, all the criteria for organizing the taxonomies would be different expressions of the same critical communicative differences. As Bialystok (1990) verifies, "it is plausible that the

decision to describe a concept (Tarone's paraphrase) necessarily implicates extended use of the target language (L2-based strategy for Bialystok, and Færch and Kasper), all of which is indispensable motivated by achievement (Færch and Kasper's achievement strategies)". Finally, all the classifications are descriptions of linguistic utterances, but are applied to the problem of learner behaviour. Reachers claim that the learner has used a particular strategy on the basis of the form that the leaner produced. The organization of utterance in the classifications is based on various levels of inference from the underlying mental processes, or behaviour, which produced them (Huang 2005).

All the researchers' classifications have their own advantages and disadvantages; therefore, they provide a good opportunity for a further study. Nowadays, most Chinese learners realize the importance and necessity of developing intercultural communicative competence. So, Chinese school students, especially English majors, should pay more attention to the communicative strategies.

3. Analysis and discussion

This chapter shows the major findings of the analysis of Chinese learners' attitudes and the reported frequency of using communicative strategies. These results are obtained via statistic analysis, variance analysis, correlation analysis and factor analysis. Moreover, the analysis and discussion are carried out in accordance with the theoretical background that is elaborated on in the chapter 2. It firstly focuses on the analysis of the following three questions:

Question 1
Do Chinese learners of English have a positive attitude to communicative strategies? Do the two different groups of students have same or different attitudes toward communicative strategies? What are the reasons for the same or different attitudes toward communicative strategies?

Question 2
How often do Chinese learners of English use communicative strategies? In a more specific way: Do the advanced Chinese learners of English often use achievement strategies? Do the less advanced Chinese learners of English often use reduction strategies? What the reasons for Chinese learners' reported frequency of using the communicative strategies?

Question 3

Does the positive attitude towards achievement strategies lead to higher reported frequency of using them? In other words, if a learner has a positive attitude to achievement strategies, does he or she often use them? Similarly, does a negative attitude toward reduction strategies lead to a lower reported frequency of them? What the reasons for the relationship between learners' attitudes toward the communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them?

Apart from these three questions, this section will also discuss the factors which affect the learners' attitudes toward the CS and the factors which affect their reported frequency of using the CS. It includes: Do learners' personality factors (such as a learner' attitude, level of language proficiency, gender, age) will affect learner attitude towards the CS? Do social factors (such as learning context and communication context) affect learners' choice of the CS? Then, it will also categorize some implications for Chinese learners to use the CS in a more effective way.

In this part, the date collected from the two questionnaires and the interview are compared and analyzed from different angles. There are two main ways in this essay to deal with the date. One is the average value. The average value cannot only used to reflect the general condition of a set of date, but also used to compare different sets of date to see the differences between groups. Another method is the standard deviation. The standard deviation in this essay is used to indicate the fluctuation range between a group of numbers. That is to say, the higher the standard deviation is, the wider the fluctuation range of a group numbers will be, while the lower the standard deviation is, the narrower the fluctuation range of a group numbers will be.

Table 3 and Table 4 are used to present the data. Table 3 shows the learners' overall attitudes toward the communicative strategies and table 4 shows the overall reported frequency of using the communicative strategies. The results will be dealt with on the overall level first, which allows us to have a general view of the difference. After that analysis, it will be made a discussion between the two different groups, as well as different proficiency levels within each group.

Table 3   The total results of questionnaire 1

Types of CS	The reported frequency of the occurrence of the response					Total number
	5	4	3	2	1	5
L2-based Strategy	2	27	11			40
Cooperative Strategy	3	26	11			40
L1-based Strategy	4	21	15			40
Nonverbal Strategy	2	15	23			40
Reduction Strategy		4	22	12	2	40
Total number of the five types	11	93	82	12	2	200

Table 4 The total results of questionnaire 2

Types of CS	The reported frequency of the occurrence of the response					Total number
	5	4	3	2	1	5
L2-based Strategy	5	26	64	87	18	200
Cooperative Strategy	4	73	72	49	2	200
L1-based Strategy	8	23	74	11	4	200
Nonverbal Strategy	6	19	72	61	2	200
Reduction Strategy	3	39	71	7		120
Total number of the five types	26	180	352	251	26	800

3.1 Analysis of learners' attitudes toward CS

Through the calculation of average value and standard deviation, we find that it exist the differences between the degree to which Chinese learners recognize the importance of the achievement strategies and the degree to which learners use reduction strategies. To say it in a more specific way, most Chinese learners have a positive attitude to achievement strategies and negative attitude to reduction strategies.

From table 5, we can see that the average value for achievement strategies ranges from 3.50 to 4.00 which mean most of the learners' attitudes toward achievement strategies range from the

level of having a neutral attitude to the level of almost agreeing. However, the value for reduction strategies is only 2.70, which is much lower than the value for achievement strategies. That also means most learners' attitudes toward the reduction strategies range from the level of tend to oppose to have a neutral attitude toward it. The standard deviation of the five groups is from 0.56 to 0.72, which shows these five groups' scores are close to the means respectively, with slight difference. It also shows that most Chinese learners tend to recognize the significant role which achievement strategies play in communication, and do not entirely realize the role of the reduction strategies. This comparison shows that the degree which both types of learners' attitude towards the reduction strategies is different; however, neither of the two level students definitely agrees with the role which reduction strategies play in communication. That is to say, levels of students tend to agree that the achievement strategies and tend to disagree with the reduction strategies.

Table 5 Average value and standard discrepancy for communicative strategy view

Types of CS	Average value	Standard deviation
L2-based Strategy	3.82	0.59
Cooperative Strategy	3.80	0.56
L1-based Strategy	3.72	0.64
Nonverbal Strategy	3.50	0.59
Reduction Strategy	2.70	0.72

The study also investigates the differences in the view of reduction strategies of learners with two different levels of language proficiency (one group of students who have passed the TEM-8 and another group of students who have not passed the TEM-8). Table 6 shows that the learners' attitudes towards reduction strategies differ greatly among the two different levels of language proficiency.

We can see from table 6 that less advanced students' attitude toward the reduction strategies is are little more than 3.00 which means most of the less advanced learners' attitude toward the reduction strategies is among the level of neutral attitude to the level of almost agree, while the advanced students' attitude toward the reduction strategies is a remarkably less than 3.00 which indicates that the advanced students' attitude toward the reduction strategies is among

the lever of do not agree to the level of tend to oppose. In addition, the standard deviation of the advanced students' attitude toward the reduction strategies is 0.67, while the standard deviation of the less advanced students' attitudes toward the reduction strategies is 0.60. This means that 40 students' attitudes toward the communicative strategies are quite different. This comparison between the average value and the standard deviation shows that the two groups of learners' view about the reduction strategies are different. We can also see from the comparison that students of the higher level of language proficiency are agree less to the reduction strategies than the students of the lower level of language proficiency.

Table 6 Analysis of discrepancy of CS among the learners at two different levels of language proficiency

Types of CS	Pass the TEM-8		Not pass the TEM-8	
	Average value	Standard deviation	Average value	Standard Deviation
L2-based Strategy	3.95	0.68	3.70	0.47
Cooperative Strategy	3.98	0.59	3.60	0.50
L1-based Strategy	3.90	0.64	3.55	0.60
Nonverbal Strategy	3.75	0.63	3.35	0.48
Reduction Strategy	2.35	0.67	3.05	0.60

The interview found the reasons for why learners have this negative attitude toward reduction strategies. The learners with a higher level of language proficiency set a higher goal for their communicative competence. Most of them try their best to deal with the problems in communication, achieving the communicative goal and thus improving their second language acquisition. Therefore, most of them do not have a positive attitude towards reduction strategies. On the other hand, the learners with a lower level of language proficiency are restricted by their limited language resources, so they have more possibilities of reducing their communicative goal to avoid communicative problems. What is more, most of them also realize that the frequent use of reduction strategies hinders the development of their second language acquisition.

As we can see from table 6, the advanced students' attitudes toward the achievement strategies range from 3.75 to 3.95 which means the advanced students' attitudes toward the

achievement strategies are from the level of sometime use it to the level of always use it. The less advanced students' attitudes toward the achievement strategies are from 3.35 to 3.70 which means the less advanced students' attitudes toward the achievement strategies are from the level of sometime use it to the level of often use it. The standard deviation of the advanced students is from 0.59 to 0.68 and the standard deviation of the less advanced students is from 0.47 to 0.60. The range of the standard deviation of these two groups is almost the same. Through these data, we find that the learners, regardless of their language proficiency, have similar views about achievement strategies. They almost realize the importance of achievement strategies and agree to use it in their communication. Based on the interview, there are three factors affecting learners' attitude toward the achievement strategies.

Firstly, to what degree do learners understand the significance of communicative strategies, and how it affects their attitude toward achievement strategies? Most of the interviewees do not know the great importance of the communicative strategies in second language acquisition. However, by using achievement strategies in their communication, they have formed some understanding of communicative strategies and strengthened their view of it. In this process of using achievement strategies, learners realize their weak points in their linguistic system and they try every means to overcome those problems. In turn, it deepened and reinforced learners' understanding of achievement strategies. Secondly, through the investigation, it shows that the attitude towards language learning also affects the learners' attitudes to achievement strategies. It reflects that learners with higher level of language proficiency attach themselves to meaning and frequency. Most of them may consciously create the environment for second language learning. This group of students have a positive attitude to achievement strategies and use them courageously. On the other hand, learners with lower level of language proficiency focus on form and accuracy and cannot consciously avoid the interference of L1. This group of students are less likely to use achievement strategies. Finally, cultural differences play an important role in influencing learners' view of achievement strategies. For example, most Chinese have the opinion that it is impolite to use gesture, postures and other body language in communication. This opinion has a great influence on learners' view of nonverbal strategy.

3.2 Analysis of the learners' reported frequency of using CS

In question 1, both of the two level learners' attitude toward the achievement strategies and their attitude toward the reduction strategies have been deal with. In question 2, the learners' reported frequency of using communicative strategies will be discussed. As can be seen from table 7, both of the levels learners' reported frequency of using of achievement strategies is from 2.78 to 3.15 which reflects that most of the learners belong to the level of hardly never use it to the level of sometimes use it. The standard deviation of the achievement strategies are from 0.72 to 0.84 which shows these two groups' scores are close to the respective means with little difference, while the reported frequency of using reduction strategies is a little higher than the reported frequency of using the achievement strategies. It got the number of 3.38 which means that both of the levels of learners' reported frequency of using the reduction strategies are among the level of sometimes use it to the level of often use it.

Table 7 Average value and standard deviation of the reported frequency of using communicative strategy

Types of CS	Average value	Standard deviation
L2-based Strategy	3.05	0.72
Cooperative Strategy	3.14	0.84
L1-based Strategy	3.15	0.81
Nonverbal Strategy	2.78	0.81
Reduction Strategy	3.38	0.63

The reason for why most Chinese learners not often use achievement strategies can be analyzed from two aspects. One is from the history of English teaching in China. Different from Europe, English teaching in China has overemphasized the accuracy of language. In order to avoid making errors in communication, the learners may not be willing to take the risk of using terms or rules which they are not sure about. The other one is from the natural context of language learning in Chinese classroom. Communication in classroom context is lack of necessary information gap; therefore Chinese learners often reduce their communicative goal to avoiding the problem.

After that we analyze the reported frequency of using communicative strategies by learners of different language proficiency. From table 8, we can see that the less advanced students'

reported frequency of using reduction strategies is 3.6 which means that most of the less advanced students' reported frequency of using reduction strategies is from the level of sometimes use it to the level of often use it. The advanced students' reported frequency of using the reduction strategies, on the other hand only reached the level of 3.0 which means that that most of the advanced students' reported frequency of using reduction strategies is from the level of hardly ever use it to the level of sometimes use it. The standard deviation of the advanced students is 0.68 while the standard deviation of the less advanced students is 0.74. This investigation shows that learners of lower level of language proficiency prefer to use the reduction strategies more frequently. This finding is almost the same with some researchers', such as Ellis (1983), Tarone (1977) and Færch and Kasper (1983). These researchers argue that the learners with higher language proficiency use achievement strategies more frequently than those with lower language proficiency. However, this finding has not been discovered in this investigation. From table 8, the advanced students' reported frequency of using achievement strategies is from 2.9 to 3.2 which means that the advanced students' reported frequency of using achievement strategies is from the level of sometimes use it to the level of often use it. The less advanced students' reported frequency of using achievement strategies is from 2.7 to 3.0 which means that the less advanced students' reported frequency of using achievement strategies is still from the level of sometimes use it to the level of often use it. We can see that students' reported frequency of using achievement strategies is more or less 3.00 which refers to the degree of use it sometimes. That is to say, whatever the level of language proficiency is, Chinese learners do not use achievement strategies very often.

Table 8 Analysis of discrepancy of the reported frequency of using CS among the learners at two different levels of language proficiency

Types of CS	Pass the TEM-8		Not pass the TEM-8	
	Average value	Standard deviation	Average value	Standard Deviation
L2-based Strategy	3.22	0.69	2.89	0.75
Cooperative Strategy	3.24	0.83	3.04	0.85
L1-based Strategy	3.27	0.77	2.94	0.89
Nonverbal Strategy	2.93	0.79	2.65	0.82
Reduction Strategy	3.09	0.68	3.67	0.74

Through the interview, two main reasons can be found to explain why Chinese learners do not use achievement strategies frequently. First of all, in China, the learning situation of the foreign language restricts the use of achievement strategies. Just like Ellis (1985:186) argues, "learners may use fewer communicative strategies in a classroom environment than in a natural environment, particularly if focus on correct L2 use, rather than on fluent communication". Furthermore, through the interview, many students complain that "we have little chance of oral communication in English, let alone the use of these achievement strategies." That is to say, in China, the priority of English teaching has been given to reading and writing which leads to the exceedingly inadequate communication situation. Secondly, the inadequacy of strategic competence also restricts the use of achievement strategies. For example, a student, who has passed TEM-8, describes his use of L2-based strategies as follows:

> I felt that using this method is troublesome, for I can not express myself in spite of using lots of descriptions, and using so much roundabout way descriptions will interrupt other's talk or deprive other people of the opportunities to talk. Therefore I seldom use it.

That is to say, learners who have less adequate strategic competence in their communication will make less use of the achievement strategies while the learners who have the more adequate strategic competence in their communication will more often use the achievement strategies. The use of L2-based strategy is also affected by strategic competence. Most Chinese learners can only use the simple conventionalities such as "*Well*", "*You know*", and they cannot use the more complicated ones such as "*How shall I put it*", "*To be quite honest*". It is because of the limited knowledge of these conventionalities that learners cannot make their utterances more fluently by using various conventionalities in different situations.

The interview also found that the learners' reported frequency of using the L2-based strategy affects the reported frequency of using the cooperative strategy. Many Chinese learners seldom use the strategy of appealing for assistance when communicating with foreigners. However, they often use the strategy of appealing for assistance when communicating with Chinese teachers or Chinese students, such as "*How to say...?*".

3.3 Analysis of the relationship between learners' attitudes and their reported frequency of using CS

So far, we have discussed the main factors affecting the learners' attitudes of communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them through the first two questions. This section analyzes the relationship between the two. We can clearly see from table 5 and table 7 that there exists a correlation coefficient between the learners' attitudes toward communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them. To put it more specifically, the positive attitude towards cooperative strategy, nonverbal strategy and L1-based strategy leads to a high reported frequency of using them. In return, the more actively the students use the communicative strategy, the more they realize the important role that they play in second language acquisition.

As far as L2-based strategy is concerned, a positive attitude does not necessarily lead to a high reported frequency of using it. The possible reason for this is that L2-based strategy requires learners' higher level of language proficiency and communicative competence compared with other achievement strategies. Namely, L2-based strategy prerequisites substantial vocabulary and enough grammatical knowledge. What is more, through the interview, we find that most students are afraid of using exemplification, explanation, and other roundabout way descriptions in their communication. Therefore, the reported frequency of using this achievement strategies does not match the strongly positive attitude towards it. For the reduction strategies, a negative attitude towards it does not necessarily lead to a lower reported frequency of using it. From the analysis we find that most of the learners do not agree to the use of reduction strategies, but they use them quite often. The main reason for this is that most Chinese learners are afraid of making mistakes in their communication.

3.4 Factors affecting the learners' choice of communicative strategy

According to Færch and Kasper's (1983) analysis of communicative strategies, it is not difficult to conclude that a learner implements a series of mental assessment and planning before using a particular strategy in his/her communication. When one assesses the situation, he may have to take many factors into consideration: when and where the communication takes place, what the problem is, where the topic is from, who and who participate in the communication. This section will focus on the factors which influence the learners' choice of

communicative strategies. There are many factors affecting the use of communicative strategies, such as the learner's level of language proficiency, the learner's personality and communicative experience, a learner's attitude towards communicative strategies, the topic source, and the communication situation. This section will categorize these factors into the following three aspects: learners, learning context and communicative context.

3.4.1 Learners

From the above analysis, we find that learners' attitudes, level of language proficiency and their personality may have some impact on the use of communicative strategies.

First of all, learners' attitudes towards a particular strategy affect the use of it. Normally speaking, a positve attitude brings high frequency of using it. It can clearly be seen that the learners' positive attitude toward cooperative, L1-based strategy and nonverbal strategy leads to their more active use of them. As for Chinese learners of English are concerned, however, a positive attitude to L2-based strategy does not necessarily lead to active use of it. Similarly, a negative attitude to reduction strategy does not result in low reported of using it. This abnormality may result from the learning situation, traditional teaching method and the inadequacy of strategic competence, as we analyzed in the previous section. Therefore, we may speculate that learners' attitudes have greater influence on the learners' use of strategies. In the formal classroom learning context, the normality (positive attitude leads to high reported frequency of using, and negative attitude to low reported frequency of using) may be realized by increasing communicative activities and developing learners' communicative competence.

Secondly, learners' level of language proficiency may influence their choice of communicative strategies. Tarone (1977) argues that the regular students whom she investigates prefer using reduction strategies to using achievement strategies. Ellis (1983) also found that one of the learners in his longitudinal study opted for reduction strategies in the earlier stages, but increasingly turned to achievement strategies as he progressed. Furthermore, we can find the same results in our analysis. Generally speaking, learners of higher language proficiency level tend to use achievement strategies, whereas the learners of lower language proficiency level prefer reduction or L1-based strategies.

Finally, learners' personalities may also affect their choice of communicative strategies. Tarone (1977) suggests that personality is highly related to the choice of communicative strategies. As in our analysis, it shows that younger learners and male learners prefer to use reduction strategies and L1-based strategies. On the other hand, the elder learners and female learners tend to use the achievement strategies more frequently.

3.4.2 Learning context

Though the analysis of the two questionnaires and the interview, we can come to the conclusion that various areas of learners' language systems (morphology, lexis, pragmatics and discourses) reflect specific features of the original learning context. Kasper (1981) showed that L2 learning in classroom situations produces specific communication patterns in the learners' IL utterance. For instance, learners may use fewer strategies in a formal classroom situation than in a real-life situation, especially when the teaching focus is on the accuracy of L2 use rather than on fluent communication.

3.4.3 Communication context

Apart from learners and learning context, communication context also affects a learner's preference for a particular communicative strategy. The learner's communicative experience and his assessment of the context will determine his choice of communicative strategies. For example, communication with a teacher in a language classroom will cause one use of language style, and communication with a friend will cause another use of language style. Learners with rich experience of communication in IL may use the strategies differently from those with little experience of communication in IL, because they know which strategies are more successful.

The central significance in researching communicative strategies is their effectiveness in improving L2 communications. Ellis (1985) hold that the best strategy is the one with sufficient proficiency and to fit the specific meaning. He argues that L1-based strategies are less effective than L2-based strategies. Similarly, as we found in this essay, L1-based strategies always lead to misunderstanding. Some of the learners often use several communicative strategies, first trying one (e.g. an L1-based strategy) and then resorting to another (e.g. an L2-based strategy) to supplement the first choice to try again if it failed.

Above all, the results of the factors which affect the choice of communicative strategies are either mixed or inconclusive. Ellis (1985: 403) argues: "there is only speculation". It is believed that each of the factors we discussed above does not determine independently the choice of communicative strategies. It is the interaction of the factors that determines the choice of communicative strategies.

3.5 Implications

The content of the following subsections could be referred to put forward some implications for Chinese English learners. It includes raising the learners' metacommunicative awareness of CS, encouraging the use of achievement strategies and focusing on fluency and accuracy.

3.5.1 Raising the learners' metacommunicative awareness of CS

A learners' attitude toward communicative strategies certainly influences his or her use of communicative strategies and ultimately affects his or her communication and second language acquisition. Therefore, to cultivate a learner's strategic competence, the learner's metacommunicative awareness of CS should be raised. Raising metacommunicative awareness means deepening of what a learner understands of the higher order executive skills which may include planning for, monitoring, or evaluating the success of communicative activities. Therefore, the most important thing is to understand the nature, the characteristics, and the function of the CS in communication and second language acquisition. As Kellerman (1991: 158) argues: "there is no justification for providing training in compensatory strategies…Teach the learners more language and let the strategies look after themselves". What is more, we need to training the use of grammar, words, and coherence of sentences and devote most of our efforts to learning the language itself rather than practising communication strategies.

3.5.2 Encouraging the use of achievement strategies

Achievement strategies contribute to successful second language acquisition. Achievement strategies in the planning phase, as mentioned earlier, encourage hypothesis formation, and achievement strategies in the execution phase are essential for automatization. However, Chinese learners of English do not use them frequently in actual communication although they have understood the important roles of achievement strategies in communication and

second language acquisition. According to this, we should pay more attention to the development of linguistic competence and the development the strategic competence in terms of English leaning in China.

On the one hand, learners should first focus on the acquisition of grammar and words, because linguistic competence is fundamental to communication and a precondition for the development of strategic competence. On the other hand, learners should be made to understand the nature and the important roles of L2-based strategies, cooperative strategies, and nonverbal strategies. Moreover, communication opportunities should be created so that learners have a chance to use the achievement strategies and build their strategic competence. All in all, the combination of the two aspects seems beneficial to communication and second language acquisition.

3.5.3 Focusing on fluency and accuracy

Learning situations, as stated above, have important influence on the use of communicative strategies. Learners use fewer strategies in a classroom environment than in a natural environment, particularly if the teaching focuses on correct L2 use, rather than on fluent communication. This finding has some implications for English teaching in China.

English teaching in China has over-emphasized the importance of form and accuracy. The vast majority of English teachers at both high school and college have made painstaking efforts to teach trains of grammatical rules. Such classroom environment has seriously prevented the use of achievement strategies and thus hindered the development of strategic competence, and it finally affects second language acquisition. So the priority should be given to meaning and fluency. After the learners have overcome the psychological fear of making errors, the learners have the possibility to learn and attain the goal of accuracy and fluency. What is more, more communication should be introduced into language learning in the Chinese learning context. These communication activities include classroom discussion, role playing, English corner, watching English films or videos, etc. In such activities, learners have possibilities of being aware of communicative strategy and of using communicative strategies.

4. Summary and conclusion

The investigation is designed to explore two different groups of Chinese learners' attitudes toward communicative strategies and their reported frequency of using these communicative strategies. In addition, it tries to find the relationship between learners' attitudes toward the CS and their reported frequency of using the CS. It also aims at investigate the factors that affect the two groups of students' attitudes and their reported frequency of using the CS.

Through the detailed analysis and discussion which is based on the two questionnaires and the interview, the research finds that Communicative strategies play an important role in communication and have significant influence on second language acquisition. Communicative strategies in general keep the channel open and help to secure more input for learners. Based on the communicative strategies models, communicative strategy is defined as potentially conscious plans for solving communicative problems in reaching a particular communicative goal. From the psychological point of view, communicative strategies can be classified into achievement strategies and reduction strategies. The achievement strategies include cooperative strategies, L2-based strategies, L1-based strategies and nonverbal strategies. The reduction strategies include formal reduction strategies and functional reduction strategies. The use of these strategies is restricted by several communicative variables, such as learners, learning situation and communicative context, etc.

Through the investigation of the relationship between the attitude toward communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them in communication, three tentative conclusions have been drawn. First of all, we find the Chinese learners' overall attitude toward the communicative strategies. It shows that most Chinese learners tend to agree about the role which achievement strategies play in communication but they do not entirely agree with the reduction strategies. However, the attitude from the two different groups is quite different. One is that we find the learners with the lower language proficiency are more likely to agree about the reduction strategies than those learners with higher language proficiency. The reasons for this are that the learners with a higher level of language proficiency set a higher goal for their communicative competence. Most of them try their best to deal with the problems in communication, achieving the communicative goal and thus improving their second language acquisition. Therefore, most of them do not have a positive attitude towards reduction strategy. On the other hand, the learners with a lower level of language proficiency

are restricted by their limited language resources, so they have more possibilities of reducing their communicative goal to avoid the communicative problems. We also find that learners, regardless of their language proficiency, have similar views about the achievement strategies. However, the learners with higher language proficiency are more likely to agree with the achievement strategies than the learners with lower language proficiency. The reason for this includes to which degree learners understand the significance of communicative strategies, learners' attitudes toward language learning and culture differences.

Secondly, Chinese learners of English use reduction strategies most often. The learners with lower level of English proficiency are more likely to use these strategies than those with higher level of English proficiency. Chinese learners seldom use achievement strategies, although they tend to believe the important role of achievement strategies, such as achievement strategies in planning phase encourage hypothesis formation and achievement strategies in execution phase are essential for automatization. The learners with lower level of English proficiency are less likely to use these strategies than those with higher level of English proficiency We find that the reasons for this is that Chinese learners' learning situation, and strategic and linguistic competence restrict the use of achievement strategies. The factors affecting Chinese learners' view of achievement strategies include the view of language learning, cultural differences and the degree to which learners realize the role of achievement strategies in second language acquisition and communication. Among the achievement strategies, the attitudes towards cooperative strategies, L2-based strategies and nonverbal strategies are positively relevant to the reported frequency of using them.

Thirdly, we discussed the relationship between learners' attitudes and their reported frequency of using communicative strategies. The positive attitude towards cooperative strategy, nonverbal strategy and L1-based strategy leads to a high frequency of using them. In return, the more actively the students use communicative strategies, the more they realize the important role that they play in second language acquisition. On the other hand, the more learners tend to agree with the reduction strategies, the more frequent will they use in their communication which in turn affects the improvement of their second language acquisition.

Finally, we investigated the factors affecting the learners' attitudes toward the communicative strategies and their reported use of the communicative strategies, such as learners' attitudes,

learners' personal level of language proficiency, learners' personalities, the learning context and communication context.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire on attitudes towards communicative strategies
Personal Particiculars：

Class：   **Age：**   **Sex:**

Linguistic Level：TEM（ ）

Directions: *please write 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 in the* [   ]

1=I do not agree at all to the use of this CS
2=I tend to oppose to the use of this CS
3=I have neutral attitude to the use of CS
4=I almost agree to the use of this CS
5=I agree entirely to the use of this CS

（1）L2-based strategies：运用释意、近义词、举例说明、描述等方法。   [   ]
   (Using translation, exemplification, explanation or synonym etc. to the target term.）

（2）Cooperative strategies: 直接或间接向对方询问某一正确表达法。   [   ]
   （Directly or indirectly asking for a particular correct expression.）

（3）L1-based strategies：在用外语交际时借助于母语来解决问题。
   （如："婚外恋" 是不正确的，而且也是不被接受的。）   [   ]
   （use L1 language in the communication, e.g.：*extramarital love* is morally wrong

     and can not be accepted）

（4）Nonverbal strategies：运用手势，脸部表情、声音模仿等非语言交际手段。
   （using gesture, facial expression, vocal imitation, etc. to help communication）
                                                                    [   ]

（5）Reduction strategies：放弃、简化某一话题和回避某一语言形式。   [   ]
   （Abandoning a particular topic or avoiding a particular term/rule.）

Appendix 2

Questionnaire on reported frequency of using communicative strategies
Personal Particiculars：

Class：   **Age**：   **Sex:**

Linguistic Level：**TEM（ ）**

Directions: *please write 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 in the* [   ]
1=I never use this strategy
2=I hardly ever use this strategy
3=I sometimes use this strategy
4= I often use this strategy
5= I always use this strategy

Part A

（1）I use general English words to replace some specific words which are unfamiliar to me.   [ ]

（2）I like paraphrase in communication.   [ ]

（3）I describe a concept in a roundabout way when I can not find an appropriate TL item to talk about it.   [ ]

（4）I make up new words in order to express a desired concept.   [ ]

（5）I give an example of something for which I do not know the word.   [ ]

Part B

（6）If I don't understand something in English, I ask the speaker to slow down or say it again.   [ ]

（7）I consult some authorities---a native speaker or the teacher.   [ ]

（8）I ask the speaker to clarify what is he or she talking about.   [ ]

（9）I ask the speaker for correct term or structure.   [ ]

（10）I provide a response for an anticipated question by guessing from communicative context.   [ ]

Part C

（11）I insert some Chinese when I can not find an accurate English word to achieve a particular communicative goal.   [ ]

（12）I translate word for word from the native language.   [   ]

（13）I think of the form of the item in Chinese and then translate it into the L2.
                                                                        [   ]

Part D

（14）I use gesture to help my communication.   [   ]

（15）I use facial expression to help my communication.   [   ]

（16）I use eye contact to aid my communication.   [   ]

（17）I use paralanguage (such as laughing, yelling, moaning) to express my emotion in
     communication.   [   ]

Part E

（18）I try not talk about concept for which the TL item or structure is not know to me.
                                                                        [   ]

（19）I have begun to touch a concept but can not continue, therefore stop in mid-
     utterance.   [   ]

（20）I avoid using L2 rules of which I am not certain.   [   ]