# A Study of Relationships between the CI Scores (E-C) of High-score & Low-score Groups and Their Language Learning Strategies

Jianjun Liu School of Foreign Languages, Ludong University, China Email: liujianjun126@126.com

*Abstract*—This paper investigates the relationships between language learning strategies and consecutive interpretation (CI) scores (E-C) of 120 English major students in China through a quantitative study. The analysis shows that there exist significant differences of using meta-cognitive strategy and cognitive strategy between high-score group and low-score group, sub-CI scores are positively correlated with the two strategies, and meta-cognitive strategy can positively predict the total scores. This indicates that the use of language learning strategies does have an impact on interpreting study.

Index Terms-interpreting, high-score group and low-score group, language learning strategies, CI scores

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Learning strategies refer to the intended activities by the learners to achieve more success. They include macro-regulation and process of planning, micro-methods and techniques. In recent years, research on learning strategies at home and abroad has made fast progress with more diversified angles and broadened scopes. The study on the relationship between strategies and scores has attracted more attention because it could, to certain extent, shed light on the effect and efficiency of the strategies used and their guidance to practical foreign language teaching and learning.

The macro-study on strategy-score relationship focuses on the relation between strategies and total score. For instance, Bialystok (1981) found that only functional practices can explain the significance differences of second language proficiencies; Wen Qiufang (1996) found that strategies of linguistic practices and dependence on mother tongue could significantly predict scores of CET 4 (College English Test Band 4); Jiang Xiaohong's study (2003) showed that those successors of CET4 tended to use more meta-cognitive strategy, cognitive strategy, memory and affective strategy. Yet some other scholars have different findings. They don't agree functional and linguistic practices have a strong relation with scores of language tests nor have a significant influence on them (Liu Runqing, 2000). The micro-study on strategy-score relationship focuses on the relation between learning strategies and individual technique of SLA (Second Language Acquisition). For example, Phakiti (2003) carried out a research on the relations between students' reading comprehension and cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. The results showed that test scores were positively correlated with cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, and the level of meta-cognition decreased gradually from the high-score group, medium-score group to the low-score group. Other scholars agreed with Phakiti that students' strategies differed in reading and influenced their comprehension ability (Xu Yulong, 2003; Yang Xiaohu, 2002; Zou Shen & Zhang Yanli, 2002). Memory strategy was positively correlated with scores of vocabulary tests (Wang Wenyu, 1998) and meta-cognitive strategy was closely related with vocabulary volume and knowledge, and four types of cognitive strategies positively correlated with total scores of vocabulary tests (Wu Xia & Wang Qian, 1998). Micro-study also exploits the relations among strategies and spoken language, listening and writing (Wang Lifei, 2002; Gao Haihong, 2000; Liu Shaolong, 1996).

Nowadays in China majority of studies about learning strategies focuses on students' performance in CET 4, CET 6 (College English Test Band 6), TEM 4 (Test for English Major Band 4), TEM 8 (Test for English Major Band 8) and PETS (Public English Test), and relations among strategies, total scores and sub-scores of these tests. Fewer scholars touched the field of interpreting, which we can say is an embodiment of multi-skills, such as listening, speaking, writing, analyzing and translating. A few existed strategy studies on interpreting were mainly concentrated on direct strategies, such as memory strategy (Li Fangqin, 2004; Xu Han, 2007), note-taking strategy (Dai Weidong & Xu Haiming, 2007; Xu Haiming, 2008) and communicative strategy (Wang Shaoxiang, 2007; Wei Jiahai, 2007). These studies were more like conclusion of professional experiences or contrast between professional interpreters and non-professional interpreting learning process and scores. Interpreting actually belongs to language learning process (Robinson, 2997) and is also a process of problem-solving. There are many unexpected variables in the process of interpreting, such as fast delivery of speech, speakers' strong accents, density of input information, unfamiliar topics, unbalanced distribution of effort, any of which may possibly lead to interpreter's failure to understand SL (source language), loss of information

and even the stop of interpreting. In order to keep the three-party-communication going, the interpreter should not only have enough bilingual knowledge and interpreting skills, but also quick response and strategies to handle the unexpected emergencies and compensate the errors of language understanding and expression. The successful understanding and analyzing of SL and reconstruction in TL (target language) not only depend on the help of direct strategies and skills, such as note-taking, memory and compensation strategies, but also the guidance of some indirect strategies like cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies.

With its increasing political, economic and cultural exchanges with international societies, China needs more and more interpreters. Interpreting has been selected as a compulsory course in universities for students of foreign language major. How to learn interpreting and how to nurture more qualified interpreters are new challenges facing the academia. Therefore it will be of necessity and practical significance to strategy research and interpreting teaching, to study the relations between strategies and interpreting learning, and differences of strategy use between good learners and poor learners.

#### II. RESEARCH DESIGN

## A. Questions to Answer

This study will answer the following questions: (1) what are the differences on using learning strategies by high-score group (hereafter referred as HSG) and low-score group (hereafter referred as LSG)? Which differences have statistical significance? (2) What are the relations between learning strategies and sub-CI scores of all students? (3) What are the relations between learning strategies and LSG?

#### B. Research Subjects

225 sophomores of English major of the School of Foreign Studies in one university of China.

## C. Research Tool

The author used the Oxford Learning Strategy Questionnaire (1990) and divided learning strategy into six types: memory strategy, cognitive strategy, meta-cognitive strategy, affective strategy, social strategy and compensation strategy based on other scholars' methods (O'malley & Chamot, 2001; Wen Qiufang, 1996; Cohen, 2000). The questionnaire has 47 questions with 5 Likert scales ranging from Level 1(I never do it) to Level 5(I always do it).

The scores were from an English-Chinese consecutive interpreting test, part of the semester final exam. The scores were given based on three aspects with different proportion of the total score (100 marks): fidelity (50%), expression (30%) and target language (20%). Fidelity is based on two sub-scores, understanding of SL (25 marks) and completeness of utterance (25 marks); expression is judged on three sub-scores: the interpreter's pronunciation and intonation (10 marks), articulation and fluency (10 marks), and logical structure of utterance (10 marks); target language evaluates the students' grammar (10 marks) and vocabulary of TL (10 marks).

## D. Data Collection and Calculating

The questionnaires were directly given to students after examination, and then collected on site. There were 220 standard questionnaires except 5 ineligible ones. Input every student's scores resulted from their answers to six strategies into computer and use SPSS to calculate the average score for each learning strategy. Rank the students according to scores of interpreting test. The first sixty students from the top belong to the HSG (high-score group), and the sixty students from the bottom of list is the LSG (low-score group). Then use SPSS to analyze the data of 120 students and carry out independent-samples T test, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

#### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Differences of Sub-scores of Interpreting Tests

INDEPENDEN I-SAMPLES I TEST FOR SUB-SCORES OF LSG AND HSG
TABLE 1

		LSG	HSG			
Sub-scores	Average	Standard Deviation	Average	Standard Deviation	t Value	Significance
Understanding of SL	15.0667	2.6609	25.5167	1.4320	26.788	.000
Completeness of TL	14.1333	1.9438	17.0833	0.7431	10.980	.000
Pronunciation & Intonation	6.7333	1.1179	8.3000	0.5615	9.701	.000
Logical Structure	6.2000	1.0704	8.1667	0.3758	13.428	.000
Articulation & Fluency	6.2167	1.0100	8.3000	0.5909	13.791	.000
TL Grammar	6.9333	1.1179	8.4500	0.5017	9.588	.000
TL Vocabulary	6.8333	1.0918	8.2000	0.4034	9.095	.000
Total Score	62.1167	8.3810	84.0167	2.9198	19.114	.000

We can see from Table 1 that the two groups differ significantly on total scores and sub-scores; therefore they are two different groups. The differences of sub-scores rank from the highest to the lowest as follows: understanding of SL(t=26.788), articulation and fluency (t=13.791), logical structure (t=13.428), completeness of TL (t=10.980), pronunciation and intonation (t=9.701), TL grammar (t=9.588) and TL vocabulary (t=9.095). The biggest difference between HSG and LSG is the understanding of SL. Understanding SL, the first step of interpreting, covers two parts: listening and understanding. It is the base of the other steps of interpreting. The students need to distinguish every English sound and at the same time put them together to identify the specific word, sentence and the whole utterance at large. How well the students understand the SL largely depend on their comprehensive language knowledge and skills. Generally speaking students with a higher comprehensive capability will have high scores in understanding SL, the opposite is also true. The smallest difference between HSG and LSG is TL vocabulary. The author thinks the reason lies in that during E-C interpretation most students can freely and skillfully use Chinese (mother tongue) to express the converted meaning given that they have totally understood the English message. Because of the time limit and immediacy of interpreting test, students did not have enough time, which might be possible for written translation, to elaborate on words chosen. Simple and clear expression was the first choice for most students. Therefore there is no big difference between HSG and LSG on TL vocabulary (Chinese).

## B. The Differences on Learning Strategies

 TABLE 2

 INDEPENDENT-SAMPLES T TEST FOR LEARNING STRATEGIES OF HSG AND LSG

		LSG	HSG			
	Average	Standard Deviation	Average	Standard Deviation	t Value	Significance
Meta-cognitive Strategy	3.0092	.5116	3.3537	.4698	3.841	.000
Cognitive Strategy	2.9806	.4239	3.2111	.3952	3.081	.003
Memory Strategy	2.9500	.4627	3.0709	.4565	1.440	.152
Social Strategy	3.0361	.4939	3.1667	.5377	1.385	.169
Affective Strategy	2.8472	.5976	3.0333	.5573	1.764	.080
Compensation Strategy	3.2667	.4696	3.4417	.5069	1.962	.052

Table 2 shows that HSG and LSG differ significantly on the using of meta-cognitive strategy (t=3.841,p<0.01) and cognitive strategy (t=3.081, p<0.01) while the differences on using the other strategies are not statistically significant. The author thinks that the HSG students have much stronger discipline of self-study than LSG students and are good at making study plans to monitor and regulate the learning process. While facing the threshold of interpreting course which has a much higher demand on comprehensive qualities, many students get lost and cannot find better ways to acquire enough vocabulary, acute listening and quick response to SL, immediate conversion of SL to TL and handle the intense pressure on spot. Therefore they need the guide of meta-cognitive strategy to make effective study plan. Cognitive strategy is kind of direct strategies, which is used by learners to solve problems in one specific activity. By checking the students' notes of interpreting (students' notes were collected after test), the author found big differences between HSG and LSG (the author will discuss it in details in another paper). Most HSG notes are simple, clear and logical with identical symbols and links while those of LSG notes are hard to read with too simple contents, confusing structures or messy handwriting. This shows that HSG students are more skillful at using note-staking, a kind of supplementary tools, to reduce the burden of memory and save more effort for analyzing SL and expressing in TL. According to the talks with HSG students after tests, the author found they tended to focus more on the key words of the utterance to get the main idea of the message, which can also be regarded as one cognitive strategy.

From Table 2 we can also find that the difference between LSG and HSG on using compensation strategy (p=0.052) is very close to the significance level (p < 0.05). This probably shows that HSG students tend to use more compensation strategy. As interpreting is a three-party communication by speaker, interpreter and listener, compensation strategy can be used to maintain the flow of communication. When being unable to understand the input message, or to find the equivalent expression in TL, the HSG students may take compensation strategies, such as replacement, generalization and omission, to make up for the information loss and keep the communication going. LSG students may just give up any compensation approaches, which will lead to "silence", or "stop" of interpreting.

### C. Correlation Analysis

To what extent do the differences on using learning strategies by LSG and HSG correlate with the total score and sub-scores of interpreting test? The author carried a correlation analysis based on the data of 120 students. The results are showed in Table 3:

	Meta-cognitive	Cognitive	Memory	Social	Affective	Complementation
	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy
Understanding of SL	.324**	.324**	.092	.125	.159	.173
Completeness of TL	.256**	.245**	.038	.05	.128	.139
Pronunciation & Intonation	.318**	.306**	.042	.097	.147	.190*
Logical Structure	.296**	.310**	.065	.120	.121	.150
Articulation & Fluency	.382**	.343**	.163	.114	.249**	.173
TL Grammar	.295**	.347**	.127	.135	.133	.169
TL Vocabulary	.325**	.330**	.083	.163	.201*	.168
Total Score	.341**	.341**	.094	.123	.173	.181*

TABLE 3 CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF SCORES AND LEARNING STRATEGIES OF ALL STUDENTS

\*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05

From Table 3 we can find that meta-cognitive strategy is significantly correlated with all the sub-scores. This proves that meta-cognitive strategy is the most important learning strategy and plays a crucial role in controlling the whole learning process, improving study efficiency, planning and monitoring the examination process. The highest Pearson's correlation coefficient (r=.382 p<0.01) is between meta-cognitive strategy and "articulation and fluency" in TL expression. We know that the most important feature of meta-cognitive strategy is the self-monitoring ability, that is, to monitor, inspect and rectify the output of language. The linearity of spoken language plus time limitation is likely to create speaker's ambiguous expression. Therefore a qualified interpreter must use self-monitoring before talking to avoid any incomplete or ambiguous expression (Yang Chengshu, 2005:239). When having understood the SL message, students paid more attention to their expression, especially the fluency and clearness. Therefore the "fluency and articulation" ranks the highest in correlation with meta-cognitive strategy. "Understanding of SL" and "TL vocabulary" are also highly correlated with meta-cognitive strategy (r=.324, r=.325). This can be explained by another feature of meta-cognitive strategy, use of attention. Attention is the only catalyzer to transfer "sensory memory" into "short-term memory". Characterized by instantaneity, interpreting requires students to understand and store the SL information, to analyze and express in TL instantly. Any distraction will lead to loss of information, misunderstanding or wrong expression. Therefore concentration is crucial to interpreting. As the interpreting test is of English to Chinese (B-A), students are more comfortable with expressing in their mother tongue and there don't exist too many difficulties in matching words and retrieving information from long-term memory. Therefore they have comparatively time and effort to concentrate on choice of words and monitor the outputs.

Cognitive strategy is also significantly correlated with total scores and all sub-scores. It shows that cognitive strategy is the most fundamental strategy needed in SLA. It's also the most widely used direct strategy by SLA learners. Language learners will try various kinds of cognitive strategies when learning a foreign language, yet few of them are aware of them. For instance, students have done many exercises such as note-taking, shadowing, generalization and summary, retelling and paraphrasing during the interpreting study. These linguistic practices and functional practices can enhance their foreign languages as well as interpreting. These rehearsals can also reduce the time and effort in handling information and nurture a sense of automatic conversion when encountering certain familiar input, which means the interpreters can spare more effort to deal with the whole semantic structure of the input and create more accurate and fluent output (Bao Gang, 2005:83). In Table 3 the correlation coefficient between cognitive strategy and "TL grammar" is the highest (r=.347) followed by "articulation and fluency" (r=.343) and "TL vocabulary" (r=.330).

Affective strategy is positively correlated with "articulation and fluency"(r=.249, p<0.01) and "TL vocabulary" (r=.201, p<0.05). This result disagrees with some scholars' findings. Cheng Xiaotang and Zheng Min (2002) found the higher frequency of affective strategy would likely increase learner's anxiety, especially when dealing with grammar and vocabulary tests, the students appeared to be more hesitant to make decisions. Their anxiety and hesitation negatively influenced their scores. But as affective strategy is to use learner's individual elements, such as mood, attitude, motivation and value, to affect language study, it will promote learning if used positively by the leaner, or will result in too much anxiety and even bad scores. Because this research was based on an English-Chinese interpreting test, students were more comfortable with expressing in the mother tongue, and therefore they had the time to adjust the mood and emotion, to monitor a clear and accurate expression in Chinese.

Compensation strategy is positively and significantly correlated with the total score (r=.249, p<0.01) and "pronunciation and intonation" (r=.201, p<0.05). It's also highly correlated with "understanding of SL" and "articulation and fluency". Compensation strategy is a communicative approach employed when the speaker finds the original language plan unable to work and a replacement plan have to be used (Poulisse, 1997). The main goal of compensation strategy is to keep the communication going. It can be sub-divided into achievement strategy and reduction strategy. Achievement strategy encourages the speaker to encounter the problems and remain the macro-language plan unchanged, and bypass the obstacles through language polishing. On the other hand, reduction

strategy chooses to escape the trouble and give up or change the original language plan (Poulisse, 1993). Students may choose either of the two strategies when facing problems, but based on the contexts and self capacity. The use of compensation strategy can enhance the fluency of utterance and earn a better impression from the audiences or a higher score from the teacher. But excessive use of reduction strategy will hurt the faithfulness to the SL and may lead to loss of scores. That is also the reason why in Table 3 compensation strategy is less correlated with "completeness of SL"(r=.139).

It needs to point out that only memory strategy and social strategy have no any correlations with scores of interpreting test. The author does not think memory strategy play an important role in the advanced period of language study. As an advanced course, interpreting has a very high entry threshold for learners: proficient linguistic knowledge and encyclopedia knowledge. After the beginner period, the learners will depend more on skills rather than rote before they become qualified interpreters. The findings of Liu Yunqing and Wu Yian (2000) showed that memory and self-management had no significant correlation with language scores. They concluded that on medium and advanced level of language learning, learners mainly depend on strategies of understanding, summarizing and deduction to master the complicated linguistic skills. Compared with the primary level of learning, this period does not have too many language rules or new words for memorizing. China's university teaching under the influence of traditional education system is still an examination-oriented system to a larger extent. Overemphasizing language knowledge and skills has restrained students from using social strategies. Reid (1987) discussed in his research that Chinese students were vision-centered learners and their knowledge came mainly from traditional classroom through textbooks and blackboards. They seldom had chances to use affective and social strategies.

Then the author had a correlation analysis on the data of HSG students and LSG students respectively. The results are showed in Table 4 and Table 5.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF SCORES AND LEARNING STRATEGIES (HSG)									
	Meta-cognitive Cognitive Memory Social Affective Complementation								
	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy			
Understanding of SL	125	.126	.093	.040	146	121			
Completeness of TL	032	.107	.095	042	143	017			
Pronunciation & Intonation	.219	.136	.114	.019	.0940	047			
Logical Structure	084	022	070	.070	054	156			
Articulation & Fluency	.134	076	.061	027	.106	158			
TL Grammar	119	053	040	136	166	106			
TL Vocabulary	.048	154	159	.013	.058	025			
Total Score	025	.067	025	096	005	146			

TABLE 4

CORRELATION ANALYSIS OF SCORES AND LEARNING STRATEGIES (LSG)									
	Meta-cognitive Cognitive Memory Social Affective Complementation								
	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy	Strategy			
Understanding of SL	.128	.243	076	.011	.115	.110			
Completeness of TL	.054	.072	155	073	.081	.035			
Pronunciation & Intonation	.106	.200	153	.018	.039	.186			
Logical Structure	.117	.242	065	.029	.009	.089			
Articulation & Fluency	.251	.383**	.123	.058	.262*	.192			
TL Grammar	.205	.367**	.100	.178	.124	.164			
TL Vocabulary	.205	.359**	.055	.163	.168	.121			
Total Score	.167	.293*	054	.045	.132	.140			

TABLE 5

\*\*p < 0.01, \*p< 0.05

Table 4 shows that learning strategies by HSG students did not correlate significantly with all the sub-scores of interpreting test. As for LSG students, their cognitive strategies significantly correlated with "articulation and fluency", "TL grammar", "TL vocabulary" and the total score, as showed in Table 5. This proved that although LSG students used few cognitive strategies than the HSG students, the effect of cognitive strategies on their scores remained effective. LSG students tried to make up their weakness in understanding the SL by optimizing TL expression (mother tongue) with the purpose of getting more scores from good articulation and standard grammar. Therefore those with more

cognitive strategies would score higher. In addition, the affective strategy of LSG students is also significantly correlated with "articulation and fluency" (r=.262, p<0.05), this also proved the above explanation.

In order to further probe the relations between learning strategy and interpreting scores, the author used stepwise method to carry out a multi-regression analysis on learning strategies and total scores of the 120 students. Only those significant variables (p < 0.05) can enter into the regression formula. The result is showed in Table 6:

TABLE 6

MULTI-REGRESSION ANALYSIS									
	R	$\mathbb{R}^2$	Estimated Standard Error	R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change	В	Beta	t Value	Significance
Meta-cognitive Strategy	.341	.116	11.9386	.109	15.553	8.320	.341	3.944	.000

Meta-cognitive strategy, as the only variable entered into regression formula, can contribute 10.9% to the differences of total scores and therefore positively predict the scores. This further proves the importance of meta-cognitive strategy in interpreting learning. The setup of study plan, self-monitoring and introspection of learning process, and self-evaluation on learning results are all conducive to higher interpreting scores. Other variables failed to enter the regression formula because of their insignificance from the statistical point of view.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The above analysis shows that there exist significant differences of meta-cognitive strategy and cognitive strategy between HSG and LSG, and LSG students tend to use few of these two strategies than HSG students; meta-cognitive strategy and cognitive strategy are significantly correlated with total score and all sub-scores, and meta-cognitive strategy can positively predict the interpreting scores; affective strategy is correlated positively and significantly with "articulation and fluency" of TL expression; the use of compensation strategy has positive and significant correlation with total scores and "pronunciation and intonation" in TL expression. The above findings give us some suggestions for practical teaching: teachers should be fully aware of the importance of learning strategies and then guide or train the students, low-score students in particular, to use these strategies, especially cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Meanwhile, the negligence of students' emotions or affective elements is one of the reasons contributing to the unsatisfied results of faA oreign language teaching in China (Xiang Huaiying, 2003). Therefore, due to the high pressure of the job of interpreting, teachers should pay more attention to students' mental competence and teach them to relieve unnecessary anxiety and finetune the mood. They should also encourage students to control the overall pace of interpreting and TL expression, and when meeting obstacles try to use more achievement strategy to guarantee the flowing of communication.

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**Jianjun Liu** was born in Yantai, Shandong Province, China in 1970. He received his MA degree in linguistics from Dalian Maritime University, China in 1995.

He is currently a lecturer in the School of Foreign Languages, Ludong University, Yantai, China. His academic research mainly focuses on translation and interpreting.