



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

System

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/system](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/system)

## Exploring strategy use in L2 speaking assessment



Heng-Tsung Danny Huang

National Taiwan University, No. 1, Sec. 4, Roosevelt Road, Taipei, 10617, Taiwan

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 20 July 2015

Received in revised form 16 August 2016

Accepted 27 August 2016

#### Keywords:

Test-taking strategy use

Speaking assessment

Validation

General English Proficiency Test

### ABSTRACT

In a bid to expand the body of research on test-taking strategy use for L2 speaking tests, this study investigated the test-taking strategies and their relationship with the performance on the speaking component of a large-scale standardized English proficiency measure in Taiwan, namely, the General English Proficiency Test – Intermediate (GEPTI-S). A total of 244 Taiwanese EFL learners participated in the official study by sitting for two sets of GEPTI-S and completing a custom-designed survey inventory. Exploratory factor analyses and two-step structural equation modeling performed on the collected data led to three primary findings. First, the GEPTI-S test-taking strategy use comprised three sets of strategic behaviors: cognitive strategy use, communication strategy use, and affective strategy use. Second, the GEPTI-S did induce construct-relevant strategic behaviors, which offered evidence to bolster the validity argument for its score interpretations. Third, communication strategy use influenced GEPTI-S performance in a direct manner, while cognitive strategy use and affective strategy use both did so indirectly. In light of these findings, the researcher proposes implications for L2 speaking assessment theory, methods, and practice.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

As posited by Cohen (2006), test-taking strategies in the domain of language assessment comprise three sub-sets of strategies: *language learner strategies*, *test management strategies*, and *test-wise strategies*. To define, *language learner strategies* refers to “the ways that respondents operationalize the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as the related skills of vocabulary learning, grammar, and translation” (Cohen, 2012a, p.97). In comparison, *test management strategies* allow the test-takers to respond to the test items and/or tasks in a meaningful way, whereas *test-wiseness strategies* enable them to do so by relying on their knowledge of “testing formats or other peripheral information” rather than the “expected cognitive processes” and thus represent construct-irrelevant strategies (Cohen, 2012b, pp. 263–264). Essentially, the deployment of test-taking strategy use comes under the governance of strategic competence, the latent construct that permits L2 learners/users to “cope in an authentic communicative situation and ... keep the communicative channel open” (Canale & Swain, 1980, p.25). To date, the importance attached to this latent construct in the theoretical models of communicative competence and L2 ability have led language-testing researchers to attempt empirical studies that probed test-taking strategies with respect to their interaction with proficiency levels (e.g., Nikolov, 2006; Phakiti, 2003), their impact on test performance (e.g., Song, 2005; Yoshizawa, 2002), and their contribution to validating L2 tests (e.g., Anderson, Bachman, Perkins, & Cohen, 1991; Yang, 2012). In concert with this line of research endeavors and in recognition of test-

E-mail address: [dannyhuang123@ntu.edu.tw](mailto:dannyhuang123@ntu.edu.tw).

taking strategies in L2 speaking assessment being largely an as-yet-underexplored terrain, the present study thus investigated the test-taking strategies associated with the speaking component of a locally-developed large-scale standardized English proficiency measure in Taiwan, the General English Proficiency Test – Intermediate (GEPTI-S), in a bid to expand the body of research on test-taking strategy use in L2 oral tests, gauge the relationship of test-taking strategies with the GEPTI-S performance, and assess the validity argument of the proposed score interpretations and uses based on the GEPTI-S performance.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Test-taking strategies: theoretical grounds and empirical studies

Strategic competence constitutes the latent construct that underlies the deployment of test-taking strategies. Thus far, this latent construct has been included in several widely-acclaimed theoretical frameworks or models configured to give a clearer shape to communicative competence or L2 ability (e.g., [Bachman & Palmer, 2010](#); [Bachman, 1990](#); [Canale & Swain, 1980](#); [Douglas, 1997](#); [Fulcher, 2003](#)). For instance, In [Douglas' \(1997\)](#) Speech Production Model developed to accommodate the then-current understandings of communicative competence, the strategic component enables L2 speakers to set adequate communicative goals based on their assessment of the context at hand and comprises primarily three sets of strategies: metacognitive strategies (i.e., strategies that “direct cognition and behavior”), language strategies (i.e., communication strategies “assessing the discourse situation ... setting communicative goals ... constructing a linguistic plan for accomplishing the goals, and controlling linguistic execution”), and cognitive strategies (i.e., strategies that “control encoding and retrieval functions”) ([Douglas, 1997](#), p.5). Additionally, these three groups of strategies would interact with one another to form a three-tiered system that allows the language users to interpret the context in order to formulate and implement communicative goals and plans.

Despite such theoretical grounding underscoring the importance of strategic competence in L2 ability, only a few empirical studies have targeted the strategies mobilized in the context of speaking assessment. As one such effort, [Shohamy \(1994\)](#) compared the strategies induced by direct versus semi-direct oral tests and discovered that the former elicited more switches to L1 whereas the latter induced more self-correction and paraphrasing strategies, among other qualitative differences. [Yoshida-Morise \(1998\)](#) explored the test-taking strategies harnessed in oral interview test situations and revealed the directional relationship between proficiency levels and strategy use. [Swain, Huang, Barkaoui, Brooks, and Lapkin \(2009\)](#) and [Barkaoui, Brooks, Swain, and Lapkin \(2013\)](#) examined the strategic behaviors elicited by the speaking section of the TOEFL iBT and found that test-takers reported utilizing five major groups of strategies to complete the test: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, communication strategies, approach strategies (i.e., strategies that orient the test-takers to the task at hand such as recalling the test questions), and affective strategies (i.e., strategies that draw on self-talk or mental control to cope with affect such as encouraging oneself). Further, metacognitive strategy use was found to correlate significantly negatively with approach strategy use ( $r = -0.43$ ) and communication strategy use ( $r = -0.72$ ), while cognitive strategy use and communication strategy use were significantly negatively related ( $r = -0.37$ ). However, these strategies had all failed to contribute to test performance in any statistically significant manner. [Huang \(2013\)](#) probed the strategic behaviors in performing the IELTS Speaking Test and uncovered that both testing and non-testing groups reported employing six distinct groups of strategies to sit the test: approach strategies, communication strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (i.e., strategies that prompt the test-takers to interact with the examiner to complete the test task such as asking the examiner questions). Moreover, communication strategy use was found to bear a significantly negative relationship with affective strategy use ( $r = -0.20$ ), approach strategy use ( $r = -0.33$ ) and metacognitive strategy use ( $r = -0.62$ ); affective strategy use related significantly negatively to cognitive strategy use ( $r = -0.34$ ) and metacognitive strategy use ( $r = -0.17$ ); social strategy use shared a significant, inverse relationship with cognitive strategy use ( $r = -0.35$ ) and metacognitive strategy use ( $r = -0.35$ ). Additionally, irrespective of the contexts, strategy employment did not function to produce significant changes in performance, a finding that corresponded to those reported by [Swain et al.'s \(2009\)](#) and [Barkaoui et al.'s \(2013\)](#) research.

### 2.2. Strategy taxonomies

In the past four decades, the fields of second language acquisition and language testing alike have seen many taxonomies advanced to systematically classify language learner strategies and/or test-taking strategies in an effort to gain better insight into the second language learning, communication, and test-taking processes (e.g., [Barkaoui et al., 2013](#); [Bialystok, 1990](#); [Cohen & Upton, 2007](#); [Cohen, 2006](#); [Dörnyei & Scott, 1997](#); [Huang, 2013](#); [Nakatani, 2006](#); [Nikolov, 2006](#); [Oxford, 1990](#); [O'Malley & Chamot, 1990](#); [Purpura, 1997, 1998](#); [Swain et al., 2009](#); [Yoshida-Morise, 1998](#)). In the arena of second language acquisition, for instance, [O'Malley and Chamot \(1990\)](#) propounded a prominent typology of language learning strategies that includes metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Further, [Nakatani \(2006\)](#) posited a communication strategy classification based on the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory that he constructed through rigorous development procedures, a classification which contains nine strategies for coping with speaking problems, such as socio-affective strategies, and eight strategies for coping with listening problems, such as fluency-maintaining strategies. In the realm of language testing, for example, [Purpura \(1997; 1998\)](#) capitalized on a Human Information Processing model and prior research to

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4941456>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4941456>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)