

An Action Research on Effects of Applying Listening Strategies on Academic Performance of Chinese High School Students' IELTS Listening

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Abstract: With the increasing advancement of international exchanges, more Chinese high school students intend to study at prestigious universities abroad through achieving high scores in the IELTS exam, which has therefore become a stepping stone for further study overseas. Based on the theoretical framework regarding the listening strategies of O'Malley and Chamot as well as English Curriculum Standard for Senior High School (2017), taking 57 students as the research subjects, this study adopts action research for 16 weeks combined with research instruments of test, questionnaire, and interview, to explore the effects of applying listening strategies on IELTS listening scores. The results indicate that the effective use of listening strategies has positive effects on students' academic performance. Students' awareness of employing listening strategies has risen, and their average score has significantly improved.

Keywords: Listening Strategy, IELTS Listening Teaching, Action research, High School Students

1. Introduction

With the development of globalization, IELTS, as an internationally recognized language proficiency test, has become one of the main exams for Chinese high school students to study abroad. According to the official website of IELTS China, with an average of one candidate taking the exam every eight seconds, there has been over four million IELTS candidates worldwide in 2023^[1]. For Chinese candidates, listening is relatively easy among IELTS four modules. According to statistics from the IELTS Global website in 2022, the average score of listening for Chinese academic candidates is 6.2, which is higher than the output modules of speaking 5.7 and writing 5.8 respectively; However, compared with other countries around the world, Chinese candidates still have more room for improvement in their listening^[2].

Although listening comprehension is an input test, it is a positive process. Anderson & Lynch believed that listening comprehension is the process by which listeners break down the phonetic information in short-term memory into words, phrases, clauses, or other language units through analysis, and use existing knowledge to connect psychological representations in the brain with existing knowledge to make a correct understanding of the listening material^[3]. Deep processing is the key to achieve deep learning, it is combined with acquiring new knowledge^[4]. Therefore, simply doing exercises is far from enough for students to improve their listening comprehension. The IELTS exam not only tests candidates' speed of reaction and spelling ability, but also focuses on the overall understanding of the material, which requires candidates to have strong capability of information capture, recognizing keywords and making correct judgments. Students should also have the ability to distinguish interfering information and have strong coping skills for synonym substitution.

However, for most of Chinese English learners, their listening comprehension are still weak^[5]. Deficiency in the cultivation of listening strategies results in less word accumulation for the listening scenarios^[6]. Excessive attention is mainly paid to the acquisition of details in listening materials, while neglecting the exploration of the overall understanding of the content^[7]. Especially in the IELTS exam, it is challenging for candidates to quickly identify the interference information, clarify the logical relationship and sentence structure of the text as well as use synonym substitution of vocabulary, which puts a lot of pressure on them^[8]. For those who have not undergone extensive and systematic practice and training, even if their English proficiency is good, they may not necessarily achieve high scores.

This study aims to first examine the current situation of using listening strategies among high school

students learning IELTS in China and then explore the effects of applying listening strategies on improving students' listening performance.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study mainly combines the framework of O'Malley' and Chamot learning strategy and the requirements for students' core competencies from the English Curriculum Standard for Senior High School (2017), which analyzes the specific application of listening strategies such as prediction, shorthand, repetition, summary, and association in IELTS listening, in order to explore the positive effects of using strategies on improving students' performance.

O'Malley and Chamot classified learning and listening strategies into three categories: meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and social/ emotional strategies^[9]. Meta-cognitive strategy is the cognition of the learning process, which is used to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning, namely the organization and arrangement of listening comprehension. Its main function is to help students activate attention, maintain and keep emotional states, so that students could perceive, understand and store the information heard, and consciously experience how to choose appropriate strategies as per their needs. Cognitive strategy refers to the interaction between learners and language materials, which is a specific technique used by students to process input information by using their existing knowledge. Social/emotional strategies refer to learners' support for their learning behavior through interacting with others and regulating emotions. These three strategies appear at different stages of learning tasks. Meta-cognitive strategies and social/emotional strategies can be applied at stages before, during and after tasks; Cognitive strategies are only employed during task conducting. Meta-cognitive strategies include selective attention, planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation; Cognitive strategies embodies utilizing target language resources, prediction, shorthand, association, deduction, utilizing visual imagery, avoiding native language, focusing on meaning, summarizing, repeating, categorizing, etc; Social and emotional strategies are composed of cooperation, questioning, and self talk.

The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High School(2017)^[10] proposes the concept of core competencies required by English curriculum, which mainly includes cultivating students' language capability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability. The use of listening strategies is an integral part of cultivating students' learning ability that is comprised of meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, communicative strategies and emotional strategies. Among them, meta-cognitive strategies refers to the one that students use to plan, monitor, evaluate, reflect on and adjust their learning process or outcomes in order to improve their English learning efficiency; Cognitive strategies means the steps and methods that students take to complete specific language learning tasks; Communication strategy refers to the one that is adopted by students to strive for more communication opportunities, maintain communication and improve effectiveness; Emotional strategy are the ones that is adopted by students to regulate their learning emotions and maintain a positive learning attitude. These strategies can be combined and applied to solve more complex problems in learning. The Curriculum Standard clearly states that listening strategies include prediction, reasoning, selective attention, monitoring, evaluation, etc.

This study combines the two theories above and extracts a few of commonly used listening strategies such as association, prediction, repetition, summary, selective attention and evaluation in practice to examine the effects of listening strategies on improving student listening performance.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

The study mainly focuses on the following two research questions: firstly, what is the current situation of the application of listening strategies for Chinese high school students learning IELTS? Secondly, how does the application of listening strategies affect listening performance for Chinese high school students learning IELTS?

3.2. Research Subjects

This study targets at 57 students from two classes at a language school in Jiangbei District, Ningbo, Zhejiang Province. There are 28 male students and 29 female students, all of whom have already received

IELTS tutoring lessons for 2 weeks during the winter vacation previously, but still have additional 16 weeks to go this semester. They are all high school students with similar levels in each class. The school is well-known for tutoring IELTS and TOEFL tutoring programs with a large number of students each year. In addition, with 6 years of IELTS listening teaching experience, the researcher is the listening teacher for one of the 2 classes. Due to the principle of convenience, students from these two classes are selected as the research subjects for the study.

3.3. Research Method and Instruments

This study adopts the action research put forward by Professor Wang Qiang^[11] who claims that action research is a systematic and reflective exploratory activity which involves teachers' direct participation and conducting investigations on problems encountered in teaching practice. With its purpose to continuously improve teaching, achieve optimal teaching results and enhance understanding and recognition of the teaching process, the action research requires a series of steps to complete: observing and identifying problem, analyzing and confirming problem, making action plan, implementing action plan and evaluating the effectiveness of action. In carrying out this action research, research instruments such as questionnaire, test and interview are should be applied.

3.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is developed based on Oxford's famous Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)^[12], which has been widely used by researchers around the world and is referred as "a highly valuable diagnostic tool". Extracting meta-cognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social/emotional strategies from O'Malley and Chamot's listening strategies as well as those mentioned in the The English Curriculum Standard for Senior High School (2017) including meta-cognitive strategies, cognition, communication, and emotional strategies as the main content of the questionnaire, it consists of 24 questions covering several major IELTS listening strategies, the dimensions of the questionnaire are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimensions of the questionnaire.

Items	Questions
Use of strategies	1-11
Listening practice and reflection after class	12-24

The questionnaire uses a Likert 5-point rating system. Students are supposed to choose the option that is consistent with their use of English listening strategy on the 5 grading scale from "1=completely or almost completely inconsistent", "2=usually inconsistent", "3=sometimes consistent", "4=usually consistent", and "5=completely or almost completely consistent". The results of the questionnaire would be analyzed and processed as per the Oxford Language Strategy Scale (SILL) as the following Table 2.

Table 2: Oxford's (1990) frequency standard.

Mean Score	Degree	Frequency
4.5-5.0	Always	High
3.5-4.4	Often	
2.5-3.4	Sometimes	Medium
1.5-3.4	Seldom	Low
1.0-1.4	Never	

The questionnaire has been analyzed through SPSS analysis, which is proved viable in the study as it demonstrates in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3: Reliability Statistics.

Alpha	Standardized Alpha	Number of items
.55	.854	24

Table 4: The Reliability of the Questionnaire.

Questionnaire	
Cronbach α	N of Items
.984	24

According to the data, Cronbach α = .985 > 0.7, therefore, the questionnaire can be used with good reliability.

The validity of the questionnaire as Table 5 and Table 6 shows below has been proved as well.

According to the data, KMO = .641, sig = .000 < 0.05, therefore, the questionnaire can be used with good validity.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test.

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.641
Barlett Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	596.466
	Degrees of freedom	276
	Level of significance	.000

Table 6: The Validity of the Questionnaire

Questionnaire		
KMO measure of sampling adequacy		.641
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	Chi-square	596.466
	df	276
	Sig.	.000

In order to further understand the use of listening strategies by students, the questionnaire was distributed to each student in both classes at the beginning of the semester on March 2nd during self-study time in the classroom. Before filling out the questionnaire, sufficient explanation to students were made to obtain their consent beforehand: there are no right or wrong answers to the questionnaire, and all information they filled would remain confidential and have no impact on their assessments or scores. Students were given ten minutes to complete the questionnaire according to their real situation.

The results were obtained and the statistics were analyzed afterwards. As a result, 57 questionnaires are collected back with the rate of valid questionnaires reaching 100% after careful verification and statistics evaluation.

3.3.2. Test

To test the effects of listening strategy on students' performance, the pre-test and post-test were

implemented at the beginning and end of the semester respectively. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the test materials and visually reflect the real abilities of students, listening Test 2 and Test 3 from the Cambridge IELTS Academic Series of test papers Volume 18 were selected, these 2 papers has no significant difference in the difficulty for students. The listening exam consists of four parts,with 10 questions for each part and in total of 40 questions.

The pre-test was conducted in the first week of semester, and the post-test was arranged in the 16th week at the end of the listening strategy teaching. The grading is calculated based on 1 point per question, with a maximum score of 40 points, the number of correctly answered questions and listening scores are converted according to the official grading standards of the IELTS. As both of the tests simulated the IELTS listening test environment under a very strict exam condition, the results are authentic and reliable.

3.3.3. Interview

In order to supplement from a depth angle, in interview are necessary to test the effects of strategies teaching. After the post-test, 6 students were randomly selected from two classes with 2 high level, 2 medium, and 2 low level for face to face interviews. The interview lasted about 60 minutes in total and an average of 5-6 minutes per student. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into text to ensure its accuracy. Same with the questionnaires, the interviewees were fully informed and the permission from all of them was accepted in advance. Student were mainly asked about 6 core questions as the following Table 7 indicates:

Table 7: Structure and composition of interview outline

Dimensions	Content	Question number
Present problems	Main difficulties in listening	1
Strategies	what are the strategies	2
Helpful or not	performance if helpful or reasons for no help	3, 4
Effects for scores	what are the effects	5
Learning attitudes	positive effects or reasons for no effects	6, 7

4. Research Procedure

The action research is divided into 5 stages lasting from Feb 26th to June 22th in 2024 including Problem Identification, Analyze and confirm problems, Make an action plan, Implementation of Action Plan, Reflection of the Application.

4.1. Problem Identification

After taking over two classes at the beginning of semester, it was found that most students did not perform well in IELTS listening and encountered various difficulties, which has led to low accuracy in class exercises. This phenomenon has triggered the researcher's urgent desire to discover problems and seek solutions.

4.2. Analyze and confirm problems

The researcher adopted action research throughout the teaching practices to find the existing problems in IELTS listening study and aimed to figure out a solution where the application of listening strategies would be used to help students with achieving better results in listening tests.

4.3. Make an action research plan

During the 16 weeks teaching of this semester, the author focuses on training students how to use listening strategies in IELTS listening test. At the start of each lesson, the vocabulary and homework review would be completed first. Students are supposed to do specialized exercises every 3 weeks to consolidate their learning outcomes. The final four weeks were allocated for mock exams and reflections.

Table 8 as following is the plan of Action Research which covers the items of Stage, Task, Time, Duration, Data collection and Objective.

Table 8: Action Research Plan.

Stage	Time	Duration	Tasks	Data collection	Objective
Find problem	Feb 26 th -29 th	1 week	Observation	Class practice/ assignments	Discover problems
Analyze /confirm problems	Mar 1st in class	30 min	Pre-test	Collect scores	Understand students' initial proficiency /how strategies are used
	Mar 2 nd after class	10-15 min	Questionnaire	SPSS analysis/Excel statistics	
Make teaching plan	Mar 3 rd after class	60 min	Make lesson plan	/	To guide and carry out teaching appropriately
Implement the teaching Plan	week1-2	4 h	Question types Introduction/fill in the blanks and exercises	Class teaching /practice	Strategy teaching/guide students on how to use strategies
	week3	2 h	Specialized exams of fill in the blanks questions/analysis		
	week4-5	4 h	Map questions and exercises		
	week6	2 h	Specialized exams of Map Question/analysis		
	week7-8	4 h	Multiple choice questions and exercises		

	week9	2 h	Specialized exams of Multiple Choice Exam /analysis		
	week10-11	4 h	Paired questions exercises		
	week12	2 h	Specialized exams of Paired questions /analysis		
	week13-16	8 h	Summary/mock exam/Q&A/self-assessment and review		
Evaluate the effectiveness	Jun 22 nd In class	30min	Post-test	Collect scores	Compare with the pre-test
	Jun 22 nd after class	60min, 5-6 min per student	Face to face interview	Transcribe audio into text	Find out the effects

4.4. Implementation of Action Plan

The specific implementation of listening strategy teaching is as following:

4.4.1. Retrieve the background knowledge

The theoretical basis is the application of Schema Theory in second language listening. As a concept in cognitive psychology, schema is a "reflection or positive organization of past experiences". When new things appear, the brain can retrieve previously stored information and combine it organically, thereby accelerating the learning and mastery of new things^[13]. Chinese students need to accumulate a large amount of background knowledge such as scene words, and sentence patterns due to cultural differences. The vocabulary of IELTS scenarios is relatively fixed ranging from daily life to academic topics, so learners can familiarize themselves with the relevant content of scenario topics, pay attention to expanding the vocabulary of scenarios and eliminate new word barriers encountered in listening so that they could quickly respond in exams. Students need to be guided how to categorize and summarize vocabulary as well as sentence patterns according to the theme and question types; By focusing on accumulating scene corpus, targeted results could be achieved. Listening vocabulary of IELTS can be subdivided into categories such as banking, school, work, technology, culture, travel, etc., forming a vocabulary framework is effective for all learners. After several practice sessions, the author found that from the third week onwards, students have been used to quickly browsing through questions before audio plays, consciously retrieving their knowledge to associate accumulated scene words, and improving their accuracy in guessing new words in the context. They can also quickly identify the main idea during the listening process. More importantly, most students begin to consciously accumulate vocabulary related to the topic after class at their spare time, which enables them do better in exams.

4.4.2. Use imagination and association to make predictions

Prediction strategy is the one used by listeners to estimate the content they are about to hear based on their own relevant knowledge before the occurrence of listening comprehension. It can effectively help learners understand what is the listening about and infer unfamiliar vocabulary as well as central ideas of discourse, and underlying meanings of materials. The application of prediction strategies for English

listening teaching is not only a requirement of the exam oriented curriculum, but also an effective way to enhance learners' listening comprehension ability^[14].

In the process of exploring the structural characteristics of listening materials and inferring listening content, students' generalization and creative thinking are improved^[15]. The main prediction techniques include: theme/topic prediction, sentence/keyword prediction, grammar structure prediction, phrase collocation prediction, logical relationship prediction, speaker stress and pitch prediction, synonyms replacement prediction, character relationship and contextual prediction, etc. At first, most students felt lost of the key points and the information they heard which was passed by in an instant; Through class consolidation training and after class exercises, students can gradually learn to use the above prediction techniques after 2 weeks. They are able to listen with emphasis and selectivity so that they can reduce memory burden and improve listening quality. In class practice, it was clearly found that students have become used to underlining key words and phrases before listening, further more, their answering speed and accuracy have improved as well.

4.4.3. Shorthand training

Special attention should be paid to recording the names, numbers, development trends, etc, to quickly record information, the proper techniques should be developed accordingly. Simple symbol shorthand are addressed, for example, the directional arrow "↑" can be used to indicate an upward movement while the downward arrow ↓ implies a decrease or decline.

4.4.4. Memory training

The process of listening comprehension requires the use of two types of memory: short-term memory and long-term memory. Loftus & Loftus (1976) found that short-term memory is essential in listening because listeners must be able to maintain key parts of speech in short-term memory for a long time, which helps with continuous input of listening materials^[16]. One of the training is repetition, which specifically refers to the recitation and retelling of listening materials. For example, shadowing and retelling. They are the effective 2 ways of that. Colin Cherry first used the term "shadowing" in binaural listening experiments, and other scholars have conducted similar experiments since then. Numerous studies have shown the effectiveness of shadowing in teaching^[17]. The operation is as following: at the beginning of the practice, listen extensively to the IELTS transcripts, students have no need to understand everything but pay attention to the pronunciation and intonation when following, and mark the parts that cannot be heard clearly; Try to pay attention to the sentences that they don't understand clearly in the second round of following reading, and look up unfamiliar words if really don't understand; After familiarizing with the transcripts for the third time, comes the content following mode, students are asked to pay attention to grammar, wording, and language expression at the same time; After fully understanding the listening material, attempt to provide an overview and retell it. The author have found that at the beginning, most students were unable to keep up with the audio speed, but with encouragement, they continued to persist until after 3 weeks, students' listening and recognizing abilities improved significantly, so did their listening accuracy; At the same time, muscle memory of vocabulary and sentence pronunciation has been established as well. They familiarized themselves with phonetic characteristics such as swallowing, linking, rereading, and weak reading. Through follow-up training, learners' listening comprehension ability of the corpus is gradually improving, meanwhile, they seemed to have simultaneously enhanced their oral English and other language abilities.

Another technique of repetition is to retell after listening, where learners organize and summarize the content of the listening material, which is beneficial for improving their listening comprehension and cultivating language sense. Due to the time limit, students were guided to use shadow reading and retelling alternately. After 3 weeks, it was found that students not only improved their listening accuracy and question answering speed in mock exams, but also made significant progress in their pronunciation, intonation, and oral expression. More importantly, shadow reading stimulate students' learning motivation and class participation, which other researchers have come to a similar conclusion^[18].

4.4.5. Selective attention training

During the listening process, as the audio is played only once but for a long time, students' attention is easily distracted, a focused training is helpful to improve this. The pace of training can be gradually carried out by starting with materials of for one minute and then increased to longer ones. Students are required to take notes, learn to write summaries and key points while listening.

4.4.6. Feedback and revision

Guide students to analyze their own mistakes and make a summary. Knowing more about their current

listening level, reasons for their mistakes and weak areas are vital for their development. Before the mock exam, students are asked to review all the exercises and exam mistakes they have made previously. Researcher has found that the more students review, the less likely they are to make mistakes during exams. According to the comparison of mock exam scores, students who have learn to summarize and feedback have remarkably improved faster.

4.5. Reflection of the Application

After the action research, students' awareness of listening strategies has been greatly enhanced, they have learned to use strategies in listening exams and the accuracy have boosted as well; The active participation with hand eye combination by using strategies has stimulated students' learning attitude and enthusiasm, thereby promoted their learning outcomes.

However, there are still some problems existing, for a few of students with insufficient vocabulary, even if listening strategies are used, the improvement is not distinct for them; After class training requires students' autonomy, and some students didn't usually do so which obviously prevented them from making progress.

5. Research Results and Discussion

Hereby is the main analysis and discussions about the results of questionnaire survey, tests and interviews. Based on the data analysis, a conclusions were drawn as following to answer the two questions that this study intends to answer:

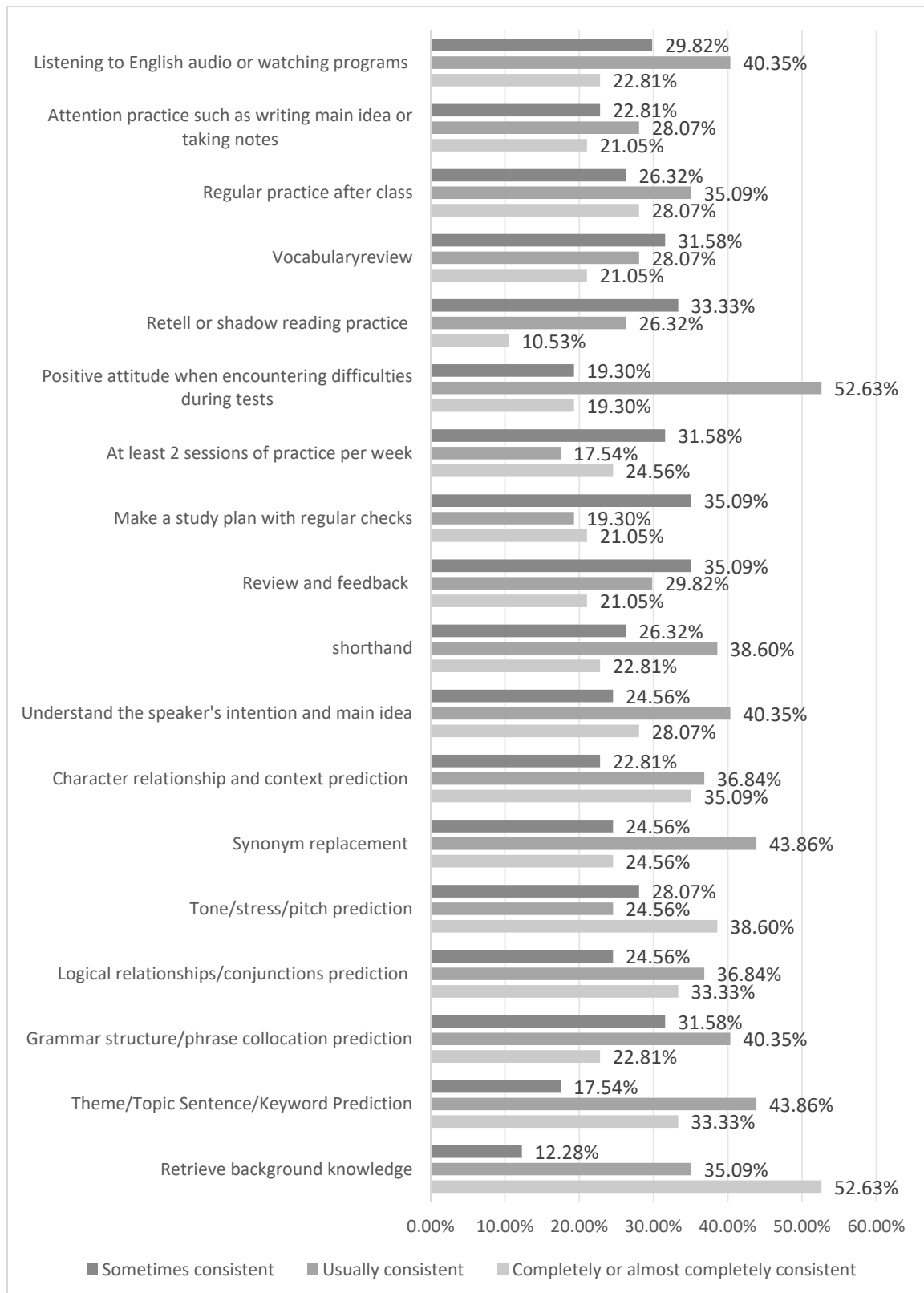
5.1. The current situation on the application of IELTS listening strategies

The questionnaire statistics has indicated that the awareness of listening strategies is relatively weak before the strategy teaching was carried out. Table 9 is the summary from the questionnaire statistics *Table 10*, which reveals the average ratio of fully employing the 9 commonly used strategies were just 32.40% and those who chose usually adopting strategies were less than 38% while the option of sometimes using strategies were even lower with only 23.6%. From the data, it's clearly demonstrated that the most frequently used strategies were retrieve background knowledge and Tone/stress/pitch prediction, as for ones that should be frequently used in listening such as prediction strategies, the numbers remained comparatively small.

Table 9: Questionnaire statistics for commonly used strategies.

Strategy(ies)	Completely or almost completely	Average ratio	Usually consistent	Average ratio	Sometimes consistent	Average ratio
Retrieve background knowledge	52.63%	32.40%	35.09%	37.80%	12.28%	23.60%
Theme/Topic Sentence/Keyword Prediction	33.33%		43.86%		17.54%	
Grammar structure/phrase collocation prediction	22.81%		40.35%		31.58%	
Logical relationships/conjunctions prediction	33.33%		36.84%		24.56%	
Tone/stress/pitch prediction	38.60%		24.56%		28.07%	
Synonym replacement	24.56%		43.86%		24.56%	
Character relationship and context prediction	35.09%		36.84%		22.81%	
Understand the speaker's intention and main idea	28.07%		40.35%		24.56%	
shorthand	22.81%		38.60%		26.32%	

Table 10: Questionnaire statistics.



From the Table 10, it indicates students had very little consolidation practice after class, only 24.56% of students did it more than twice a week. Few students would do targeted and effective practice, for example, only 10.53% of students were fully aware of using paraphrasing or repeating, and only 26.32% and 33.33% of students chose "usually" or "sometimes" respectively; Only 21.05% and 22.81% of students were able to actively engage in attention training and listen to audio. Another important finding

is that most students did not regularly review what they have learned in class, with less than 30% able to do so completely and less than 36% did that occasionally.

5.2. Effects of listening strategies application on listening performance

The researcher found that students had weak awareness of listening strategies, and many students did not use listening strategies correctly and effectively, so it is very necessary to carry out strategy teaching among students. Prior to strategy teaching, a pre-test was conducted on a total of 57 students from two classes. The following Table 11 is the general description of the results of the pre-test.

Table 11: Listening Pre-test scores.

Class	Number of Students	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Average Value	Standard Deviation
class A	30	5.5	4.5	4.9	0.31
class B	27	7	5.5	6	0.48

From the table above, one of the classes had a highest score of 5.5 but the average score is only 4.9; The other class had a highest 7, but the average is just 6. The standard deviations of the two classes are 0.31 and 0.48 respectively, indicating a low degree of dispersion. Through pre-test, it was found that the students' listening performance was not satisfied.

After the implementation of the strategy teaching, a post-test was conducted on the same students, and the results showed as follows Table 12:

Table 12: Listening post-test scores.

Class	Number of Students	Highest Score	Lowest Score	Average Value	Standard Deviation
class A	30	6	4.5	5.4	0.45
class B	27	7.5	5.5	6.7	0.46

By comparing students' pre - and post- test results, it can be seen that the use of listening strategies has a positive effects on scores. The average score for class A has increased from 4.9 to 5.4, and the highest score is higher than the pre-test. The improvement of class B is obviously as well, the average score has increased from 6 to 6.7 and the highest score also increased compared to the pre-test. The degree of dispersion between the two classes has slightly increased but still within a reasonable range.

Through interviews, it was found that after strategies teaching, most students have attached importance to applying them in exams and exercises. Among them, 80% of students have clearly learned how to use strategies, and the commonly used ones are: theme/topic sentence prediction, keywords prediction, grammar structure prediction, phrases collocation prediction, logical relationship and conjunction prediction, synonym replacement prediction, character relationship and context prediction, etc; The main difficulties that students still have include speaking too fast, new words, and too much information, which makes it difficult to allocate attention well and often leads to leaving out information. At the same time, inability to distinguish between connected and weak pronunciation, not understanding long sentences are often the main obstacles for them. However, 30% of students mentioned using strategies has little effects on their grades, but these students admitted that they rarely practiced and trained themselves after class. Further more, there' a significant difference between high-level, medium and low level learners in terms of their feedback of the effects on listening performance. High level students are able to consciously train practice after class, with accumulating a large amount of new words and familiarize themselves with scene vocabulary, they are proficient in using listening strategies in tests.

Medium level students are still flustered and unable to effectively use strategies especially prediction and imagination/association when encountering unfamiliar words; One student among the low-level students mentioned that the use of strategies had improved their academic performance, but the other three students still felt that there was not much change occurred but they were not engaged in class learning and hardly practiced it after class anyway.

Therefore, in addition to practicing in class, after class consolidation is essential for students. It is necessary to maintain a good habit of regularly reviewing and summarizing as well as accumulating vocabulary. 90% of students believe that regardless of whether the improvement in scores is significant or not, the use of strategies has a very positive impact on learning attitudes which they have clearly noticed whereas 10% of them were not quite sure about this.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary and Findings

This study lasted for 16 weeks, during which strategy teaching was conducted throughout the semester. The pre-test results as well as statistics from questionnaire indicated that most students still have difficulties in IELTS listening comprehension and they didn't have awareness of using listening strategies either, which can be used to answer the author's question 1 previously raised: what is the current situation on the application of IELTS listening strategies. The post-test results shows that after 16 weeks of listening strategy teaching, significant progress has been made, which means strategies application can help students improve their listening capabilities, this conclusion could be used to answer question 2: effects of listening strategies application on listening performance.

6.2. Implications of the Study

In terms of the process of the action research, implications to both the teacher and learners are as following:

Firstly, according to the post-test, there were still a few students whose listening performance did not improve significantly. Through interviews, it was found that these students rarely did consolidation practice after class. Therefore, students should be encouraged and monitored to practice both in class and after class. Meanwhile, they should be cultivated to have the awareness of using strategy when doing the listening comprehension consciously. Secondly, Through interviews, it was revealed that the effectiveness of strategy use varies among students of different levels, which means in the process of action research, formative evaluation is very necessary: by regularly practice and doing exercises, reflecting about the students' progress, as well as communicating with students, teacher are able to gain a deeper understanding of their attitudes and find out how they used listening strategies, then the teaching adjustment would be made accordingly in a timely manner.

6.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

This article mainly studies the effects of IELTS listening strategies on listening comprehension. Through teaching practice, combined with research instruments such as tests, questionnaires and interviews, the author confirms through experiments that the correct use of listening strategies can help students achieve better results in listening comprehension. However, there are still deficiencies. Firstly, the length of the research is not long enough. In future research, it is necessary to extend it, in addition, it is of great importance to find out ways where learners could take the initiative to use strategies after class or during their homework; Secondly, the sample size of the students involved is not sufficient, and in the future, the research scope should be expanded by increasing the number of research subjects so that comparison between the use of this strategy and the correlation with academic performance will be more significant. Thirdly, as the researcher is also the teacher for one of these 2 classes, to some extent the subjectivity might occur during the research. For the future study, another IELTS listening teachers could be invited to observe the teaching for her feedback and suggestions.

Overall, the application of listening strategies and performance are closely connected. As Cohen believes that foreign language learning strategies are steps that second language learners consciously choose in order to improve the effect of language learning or language use^[19]. While high school students in China still have a lot to develop in this area. In order to improve their listening comprehension, teachers need to consciously cultivate their awareness of strategies in an active way, strengthen their thinking

quality, and play a key role in promoting the formation of core competencies through teaching^[20]. Various strategies could be adopted to enhance their listening comprehensive capabilities.

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