Taiwanese EFL Learners' Use of Learning Strategies in Developing Job Interview Skills

Kentei Takaya[a]

New York University Shanghai

Abstract: This study investigates Taiwanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' use of strategies in developing job interview skills in English. The participants were 40 EFL learners majoring in English at a private university in Taiwan. The study was part of a four-week job interview training program, during which they prepared for a mock interview test. The students learned about the job interview process, expressions, and related language use, and practiced with their peers inside and outside the class. Throughout the training, they submitted weekly diary entries describing how they developed their job interview skills. Thematic analysis of these entries revealed various learning strategies and their applications. These included cognitive strategies, such as practicing and structuring output; metacognitive strategies, which involved arranging extra time to practice, planning the interview task by doing research on the Internet, and monitoring and evaluating their learning process; and social strategies, where students exchanged feedback collaboratively.

Keywords: job interview skills, learning strategies, collaborative learning, learner autonomy, EFL learners

Background

In our increasingly globalized world, English as a foreign language (EFL) learners have unprecedented opportunities to engage in international careers. Taiwan launched the Bilingual 2030 policy to strengthen the English communication skills of its citizens, particularly among the younger generation, by 2030. According to Taiwan's National Development Council, "The government has launched the Bilingual 2030 policy precisely to boost the competitiveness of Taiwan's young generation to enable the next generation to enjoy better job and salary opportunities" (National Development Council, 2024, para. 2). This policy will be guided by a twofold vision, namely, "helping Taiwan's workforce connect with the world" and "attracting international enterprises to Taiwan; enabling Taiwan industries to connect to global markets and create high-quality jobs" (National Development Council, 2024, para.3). To thrive in an increasingly competitive global job market, higher education must place greater emphasis on creating "employability-development opportunities" (Harvey, 2001) to ensure that graduates are equipped with skills necessary to thrive in job interviews to secure employment (Krishnan et al., 2024).

Hou et al. (2021) claim that "Universities realise the need to provide sufficient educational activities and training to facilitate student employment" (p.296). As employability is now an important indicator for university rankings such as QS World University Rankings, and as a key measure for quality assurance (QA) for the Higher Education Evaluation & Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT), "the employability issue has successfully drawn the attention of institutions in Taiwan and has impacted institutional policy making and initiatives accordingly" (Hou et al., 2021, p.309).

As many companies and multinational corporations require English when recruiting employees (Chanh, 2023), the present study investigates the specific strategies employed by Taiwanese EFL

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a   Correspondence can be directed to: kentei.takaya@nyu.edu

learners as they develop their job interview skills in English at one of Taiwan's top-tier private universities. This study extends beyond a mere examination of strategy types to explore their practical application within both collaborative and autonomous learning settings. Studies on good language learners (GLLs) have shown that GLLs use diverse strategies to enhance language acquisition (Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). Language learning strategy, defined as "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self- directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford 1990, p.8), plays a crucial role in developing various aspect of learners' language skills, including job interview skills, in their second/foreign language (L2). Kawai (2008), drawing on research conducted in China, Japan, and the U.S., claims that "Those who develop good oral skills appear to be frequent strategy users regardless of culture and learning context" (p. 219). Rubin (1975) argues that an exploration of the internal processes and cognitive strategies of GLLs may lead to the formulation of well-developed theories that can be effectively taught to others. Language learning strategies can be taught (Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Oxford, 2017), but it is crucial to first understand both the nature and application of strategies employed by language learners in developing effective approaches to teaching L2 job interview skills.

Research on Job Interview Training

In the evolving global job market, mastering English job interview skills has gained attention from researchers worldwide. A study examining employers' perspectives on the importance of English proficiency and communication skills among graduates entering the workforce in Malaysia revealed that, while English proficiency is crucial, "good communication skills can increase employability and opportunities for career advancement" (Ting et al., 2017, p.315). Suraprajit (2020) specifically analyzed communication strategies employed by Thai prospective employees during job interviews. The study identified common strategies such as code-switching and asking for repetition, which were frequently used to overcome communication challenges. Suraprajit's research emphasized the need for targeted training on communication strategies to address specific difficulties encountered in job interview settings.

Krishnan et al. (2024) investigated the performance of Malaysian fresh graduates in job interviews using the Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) framework to analyze their use of English. The study revealed that successful candidates were more likely to employ positive and evaluative language, leaving a strong impression on interviewers.

Various researchers have also explored pedagogical approaches to enhance students' job interview skills. A notable study by Louw et al. (2010) examined the impact of teaching pragmatics to ESL learners in Canada during job interview training. Their findings demonstrated that such interventions contributed to the development of learners' pragmatic competence, resulting in improved performance in mock job interviews.

Lackner and Martini (2017) investigated the impact of self-reflection on university students' interview performance. Using e-portfolios to reflect on significant learning experiences, students showed notable improvement in their ability to respond to behavioral interview questions. The findings suggest that self-reflective practices, especially when integrated into coursework with feedback, can enhance students' interview skills and their ability to articulate their competencies to potential employers.

Sumardi et al. (2020) explored the practice of peer feedback in a job interview class with a flipped classroom approach in a vocational school in Indonesia, revealing its positive impact on job interview preparation. Their study found that peer feedback promoted more interaction with peers and provided valuable insights for error correction, significantly improving students' job interview preparation.

While these studies shed light on communication strategies, language use, pedagogical effectiveness in teaching pragmatics, self-reflective learning tools, and peer feedback in preparing learners for successful job interviews, none have specifically explored the learning strategies that

EFL learners employ to develop job interview skills. This lack of focus on learning strategies leaves a critical gap in our understanding of how learners can be more effective in developing their job interview skills.

The Theoretical Perspectives of the Study

Macaro (2001) claims that the concept of learning strategies appears to be closely linked to that of learner autonomy. Learner autonomy signifies the process whereby learners take responsibility for their own learning (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991). Little (1991) characterizes autonomous learners as individuals who "constantly reflect on what they are learning, why they are learning, how they are learning, and with what degree of success; and their learning is fully integrated with the rest of what they are" (p. 13). It is essential to note that the concept of learner autonomy does not necessarily mean learners have to learn alone (Little, 1990; Reid, 1993). Cooperative learning can also be considered to enable a form of learner autonomy, since the learners, to a large extent, control their own learning (Macaro, 1997). Based on this framework, it can be argued that the cultivation of job interview skills, much like that of other language skills, involves learners taking control over their learning, whether practicing alone or with peers.

Anderson (1980) distinguishes two types of knowledge, namely, declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge refers to knowledge about facts while procedural knowledge refers to knowledge about how to perform tasks. According to Anderson (1993), practice plays a crucial role in converting declarative knowledge into procedural knowledge. He argues that when learners repeatedly engage in tasks or activities related to a specific domain, they gradually internalize their knowledge, which enables them to deploy the acquired skills more automatically and efficiently. This process is applicable to developing L2 job interview skills, as consistent practice can help learners connect their understanding of suitable responses to interview questions with their practical ability to articulate those responses fluently in their target language.

The successful cultivation of L2 job interview skills also necessitates peer practice (Sumardi et al., 2020). Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the inherently social nature of learning, asserting that engagement with others is crucial for an individual's cognitive development. Building on this sociocultural perspective, the process of practicing job interviews with peers emerges as a valuable learning experience. Collaboratively refining interview skills aligns with Vygotsky's notion of knowledge co-construction and finds support in Long and Porter's (1985) assertion that "a small group of peers provides a relatively intimate setting and, usually, a more supportive environment in which to try out embryonic SL [second language] skills" (p. 211). The supportive environment resulting from student–student interaction also enhances learners' motivation (Long & Porter, 1985) and reduces anxiety (Tsui, 1996).

Classification of Learning Strategies

Early research on learning strategies was conducted by researchers such as Rubin (1975, 1981) and Naiman et al. (1978), who studied GLLs. Rubin (1981), on the one hand, divided learning strategies into two primary categories: those that directly affect learning (e.g., clarification/verification, monitoring, memorization, guess/inductive inferencing, deductive reasoning, and practice) and those that contribute indirectly to learning (e.g., creating opportunities for practice and production tricks related to communication). Naiman et al. (1978), on the other hand, classified learning strategies into five primary categories: (1) the active task approach, (2) realization of language as a system, (3) realization of language as a means of communication and interaction, (4) the management of affective demands, and (5) monitoring L2 performance.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) classified learning strategies into three categories, namely, (1) metacognitive strategies, (2) cognitive strategies, and (3) social affective strategies. Metacognitive strategies include "planning for learning, monitoring learning while it is taking place, or self-evaluation

of learning after the task has been completed" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p.8). Cognitive strategies are intended to enhance learning by causing learners to interact with the material to be learned and manipulating it mentally, while social affective strategies refer to interaction with others, such as peers, to obtain feedback and reduce anxiety.

A more comprehensive classification was developed by Oxford (1990), who classified learning strategies as direct or indirect. Direct learning strategies are those that directly involve the language being learnt. This category includes *memory strategies* (such as creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action), which help learners store and retrieve new information; *cognitive strategies* (such as practicing, receiving, and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structures for input and output), which "enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means"; and *compensation strategies* (such as overcoming limitations in speaking), which allow learners to "use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge" (Oxford, 1990, p.37). Indirect strategies are those that do not directly involve the target language. Strategies that fall under this category include *metacognitive strategies*, which allow learners to control their own cognition by means of coordinating "the learning process by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating"; *affective strategies*, which help learners "regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes"; and *social strategies*, which encourage learners to learn by interacting with others (Oxford, 1990, p.135).

Despite the existence of various classification schemes, none of the strategies are definitive; nor can the list of strategies be applied confidently to a number of learning situations (Macaro, 1997). Thus, more research is needed to explore the strategies used in contexts that have not been explored extensively, such as those used in developing L2 learners' job interview skills.

Research on the Learning Strategies of Taiwanese EFL Learners

Many studies on language learning strategies in Taiwan have used Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) or the Chinese version of SILL to investigate the frequencies with which different learning strategies are used (Chu et al., 2012; Ju, 2009; Lai, 2009; Yang, 2017; Yeh, 2015). These studies suggest that the more proficient the learners, the more effectively strategies are used. Lai's (2009) study, which examined the relationships between learning strategy use and patterns of strategy use based on language proficiency, revealed that proficient learners used cognitive and metacognitive strategies most frequently, while less proficient learners preferred social and memory strategies to cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Lai further found that the strategies used most frequently by proficient learners were "centering, arranging, and planning one's learning; using analyzing and reasoning skills; and practicing sounds and speaking" (2009, p. 275).

Chang et al. (2007) investigated the influence of gender and major on the use of learning strategies by Taiwanese university EFL learners and found that female learners indicated greater use of strategies than male learners in three of the six categories in SILL (cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies), while humanities and social science students reported using language learning strategies more frequently than students of other majors.

Huang (2012) conducted research to investigate the range of language learning strategies used by Taiwanese university EFL learners who had obtained a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of above 620 using an open-ended questionnaire and interviews and found that the learners favored using metacognitive strategies. Huang's study also revealed that Taiwanese EFL learners used the following 18 strategies to improve their speaking skills:

> 1) talking to oneself, 2) repeating and imitating, 3) creating opportunities, 4) catching opportunities, 5) asking for clarifications and feedback, 6) encouraging oneself, 7) reading aloud, 8) self-monitoring and self-correcting, 9) preparing for intended topics, 10) taking notes, 11) extensive listening, 12) putting new expressions into practice, 13) doing related readings, 14) using circumlocutions or synonyms, 15) looking for correspondent expressions,

16) speaking slowly, 17) only talking with high-proficiency English speakers, and 18) taking control of the topics. (Huang, 2012, p.87)

Huang and Tsai (2024) explored the language learning strategies employed by student-athletes in higher education in Taiwan. Their findings indicate a pronounced preference for metacognitive strategies among student-athletes. They suggest that educators should design lessons that encourage planning, self-monitoring, and evaluation to better support this group of learners.

Berg et al. (2021) conducted a mixed-method study involving Taiwanese university EFL learners to develop the Taiwanese Inventory of Language Learning Strategies (TILLS). Their findings revealed differences between the strategies identified in TILLS and those in the SILL, suggesting that language learning strategies may vary across cultures.

As learning strategies in relation to the development of job interview skills have not been explored in Taiwan, this study addresses the gap in this literature by examining the specific learning strategies that Taiwanese EFL learners use to develop job interview skills, and how they use those strategies to enhance their job interview skills. Thus, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What learning strategies do EFL learners employ in developing their job interview skills in English?
2. How do EFL learners use their strategies in developing their job interview skills in English?

Research Methods

The participants in the present study consisted of 40 third-year university EFL learners (31 females and 9 males) majoring in English at one of the top-tier private universities in Taiwan. The participants in this study can be considered GLLs due to the competitive nature of admission to the English department of this university. The participants were enrolled in one of the department's required courses, namely, a course that focused on developing conversational skills. The course ran twice a week, with each lesson lasting 90 minutes. The 40 participants were from three separate sections of the same course taught by the same instructor, who is also the author of this study, with each section comprising between 13 and 15 students. In this course, the students were asked to prepare for a mock job interview test, and they were given four weeks to prepare for this test. Each participant was asked to sign up for the type of job they were interested in applying for and was interviewed accordingly. The jobs included translator, flight attendant, English teacher, publisher, secretary and receptionist, administrative assistant, public relations officer, trade specialist, and editor. Some of the participants were interested in pursuing further study at a graduate school straight after finishing their undergraduate study, so these participants were asked to prepare for a mock interview for graduate admission instead.

Campion and Campion (1987) pointed out that most research on job interview training indicates that the training process involves some combination of lectures, discussion, role-playing or practice, feedback, and reinforcement. All these elements were included in the job interview training of the present study, but in addition to these elements, the students in this study were assigned a partner from their class and had to practice their job interview skills with their partners outside the class for at least one hour every week. Every week they had to submit a one-page diary entry reflecting on and describing their process of developing their job interview skills.

Studies on learning strategies have been presented based on either retrospective analysis (O'Malley et al., 1985; Wenden & Rubin, 1987) or concurrent analysis of an ongoing task (O'Malley et al., 1989). Diaries have been considered "important introspective tools in language research" (Nunan, 1992, p.118). Oxford et al. (1996) define diaries as "a type of self-report which allows learners to record on a regular basis numerous aspects of their learning process, including but not limited to the use of specific language learning strategies" (p. 20). Through diary entries, "learners write personal observations about their own learning experiences and the ways in which they attempted

to solve language problems" (Chamot, 2005, p.114). According to Gass and Mackey (2007), "[d]iaries can yield insights into the learning process that may be inaccessible from the researcher's perspective alone" (p. 48). Rubin (2003) claims that "[d]iaries can be used very effectively to help students become aware of their learning process and to begin to reflect on new ways to address their learning problems" (p. 14).

Oxford (2014) highlights that learner journals or diaries, in contrast to more structured instruments like interviews or questionnaires, often provide unique data not typically captured through these methods. Despite their limitations, such as subjectivity and potential memory-related inaccuracies (Carson & Longhini, 2002; Oxford et al., 1996), diary studies are valued for their ability to offer authentic insights that are difficult to obtain otherwise (Bailey, 1983; Stakhnevich, 2005). In this study, to ensure data trustworthiness and systematic analysis, learners' diary entries were coded using Oxford's (1990) established taxonomy of learning strategies. This taxonomy was selected for its comprehensive nature and practical orientation towards supporting both teachers and learners, as highlighted by Norlund Shaswar and Wedin (2019).

Several dynamics played a role in shaping the data collection process. First, the fact that the author was also the instructor may have influenced the level of openness in the students' diary entries. While the participants were explicitly assured that their diary entries would have no impact on their grades, the existing relationship between the instructor and students might have led some students to be more guarded or selective in their reflections. However, this familiarity could also have encouraged trust, leading to more candid and detailed entries from some students.

The classroom environment also contributed to data collection. The course was designed to foster a supportive atmosphere, where students felt comfortable practicing and discussing their interview skills with their peers. This collaborative environment likely enhanced the quality of the data, as students were more willing to engage in reflective practices and share their learning experiences in their diaries.

The timing and format of diary submissions presented both challenges and benefits. Requiring weekly diary entries ensured that reflections were fresh and closely tied to the students' recent experiences, reducing the potential for memory-related inaccuracies. However, some students may have found it difficult to consistently reflect in-depth every week while they were busy practicing and trying to improve their overall job interview performance. Additionally, the open-ended nature of the diary entries, while valuable for capturing a wide range of insights, may have led to variability in the type and depth of information provided by different students. Nevertheless, since "developing learners' capacity for critical reflection is seen as one of the principal aims of an autonomy-fostering learning environment" (Cotterall, 1999, p.40), it was hoped that the diary assignments would still encourage them to reflect critically on their development of job interview skills.

Findings

Students' diary entries were anonymized and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis was guided by the research questions of the study: (1) What strategies were used when students developed their job interview skills? and (2) How did they use those strategies? As an initial step, the diaries were coded to identify the range of strategies employed during the students' job interview preparation. These strategies were then categorized by matching them with those in Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of learning strategies. Table 1 shows the strategies identified in the diaries and the number of students who described using those strategies.

Table 1. Types of Strategies Identified and the Number of Students Who Used Them

	Direct Strategies	Indirect Strategies	
Strategy Types	Cognitive Strategies	Metacognitive Strategies	Social Strategies
Number of Students	40	35	14

The most prominent strategies identified in students' diaries are cognitive strategies, which were found in all 40 students' (100%) diaries. These included their actual practices as well as their creation of structured output. Metacognitive strategies, utilized by 35 students (87.5%), were also widely adopted. These strategies included arranging extra time to practice, planning the interview task by doing research on the Internet, and monitoring and evaluating their own learning process. Additionally, 14 students (35%) used social strategies by collaboratively exchanging feedback with their peers and supporting each other while practicing. The ways in which these strategies were used will be discussed in the subsequent section.

Cognitive Strategies

Practicing

All students in this study wrote about their practice during the process of preparing for the mock job interview exam. One notable way of practicing shown in their diaries was repetition as shown in Extract 1.

> Extract 1
> *During the previous practice, I think I still didn't do very well with the self-introduction part. Therefore, I have practiced the self-introduction part several times at home.* (Student#04/F/ Week 4 Diary)

As shown in Extract 1, a student tried to improve her fluency by repeatedly practicing the same interview question, which she felt she was not answering well.

Talking to oneself, which is a strategy also found in Huang's (2012) study, emerges as a noteworthy practicing strategy among certain students, as exemplified in Extracts 2 and 3.

> Extract 2
> *Since the first interview practice, I've continuously thought about the interview questions from the list and come up with some workable answers. Moreover, I've been trying to speak out my answer when I walk and run alone. Therefore, I feel that I answered more smoothly than I did last time.* (Student#16/F/Week 2 Diary)

> Extract 3
> *It's better for me to practice all the time, even on my way to the classes. Although people might think that I'm stupid talking to myself, it doesn't bother me, because I enjoy practicing it.* (Student#28/F/Week 4 Diary)

In Extract 2, the learner engages in the continuous contemplation of interview questions, actively formulating and refining responses while walking or running alone. The distinctive feature of this practice lies in vocalizing these answers, and the participant asserts that this unconventional approach contributed to a perceived enhancement in the smoothness of their responses to those interview questions. Similarly, Extract 3 highlights the importance of consistent practice through self-talk, as the participant commits to refining their interview skills by engaging in self-dialogue even during routine activities, such as commuting. Both examples illustrate that verbalizing responses to interview questions during solo practice is a valuable strategy for reinforcing and internalizing learned responses, potentially leading to enhanced performance.

Students' description of their job interview practices in their diary entries also provided valuable insights into the benefits of practicing. Consider Extracts 4 and 5 where students discuss the benefits of practicing.

Extract 4
I have practiced for the job interview for almost two weeks. Like the proverb says, "practice makes perfect." I think the proverb is absolutely right in the job interview. The more you practice, the more confidence you have in the interview. (Student#05/M/Week 2 Diary)

Extract 5
Through our continued practicing with each other, we gradually became more familiar with the commonly asked questions and how we could respond to them. (Student#25/F/Week 3 Diary)

These accounts show that there are many advantages associated with practicing constantly. For example, Extract 4 reveals that a student gained more confidence as he practiced more, and Extract 5 indicates that one student, after continuing to practice, became familiar with the types of questions commonly asked in job interviews and how to respond to them.

Creating Structure of Output

To optimize their performance in job interview practice, some students took notes and brainstormed responses to certain interview questions. The following examples provide concrete instances of how notetaking contributes to the optimization of performance in job interview simulations.

Extract 6
In order to practice and introduce myself more smoothly, after I had finished my practice with my partner, I instantly wrote down five adjectives. They are optimistic, responsible, concentrated, thoughtful, and challenging. In my personal opinion, I think these qualities are extremely important for being a translator. (Student#04/F/Week 3 Diary)

Extract 7
It is hard to think of good answers to show our personalities and characteristics that are suitable for the job. Therefore, in our practice, we brainstormed for some time and decided to prepare the answers for our next practice. (Student#02/F/Week 1 Diary)

Extracts 6 and 7 illustrate the difficulties students encountered in articulating their personalities and the characteristics deemed suitable for employment, prompting a deliberate effort to brainstorm and formulate answers in advance, aiding them in refining their job interview skills.

Metacognitive Strategies

Arranging and Planning Learning

Analysis of students' diary entries revealed a proactive approach to arranging extra time to practice and plan their learning. Consider Extracts 8 and 9, which show students optimizing practice opportunities by increasing the frequency and duration of their practice sessions beyond the stipulated requirements.

Extract 8
We decided that we would practice at least twice every week, and Thursday was the first time we practiced. (Student#07/F/Week 1 Diary)

Extract 9
For the second practice, this time we tried to make our meeting longer to ensure that we could have enough time to discuss more interview questions. (Student#08/F/Week 2 Diary)

Extract 8 highlights the commitment of the students, as they made the decision to conduct practice sessions at least twice a week, surpassing the required frequency of once a week. In Extract 9, the student further demonstrated her dedication by extending the duration of the second practice session. The decision to lengthen the meeting was aimed at allowing sufficient time for an in-depth discussion covering a wider range of interview questions. These examples demonstrate that this strategic approach allowed students to capitalize on the time available and actively enhance their proficiency in job interview skills.

Some students actively sought resources online as part of their preparation to enhance their job interview performance. In Extracts 10, 11, and 12, the significance of online resources in the context of job interview preparation becomes evident.

> Extract 10
> *Before the second interview practice, I made some preparations for the interview. I searched for some possible interview questions on the internet to have a basic idea of what the questions would be like*. (Student#30/F/Week 2 Diary)

> Extract 11
> *We were not really familiar with what types of additional skills our jobs require. We tried to fill some in by surfing on the internet. What we might find could be the answers to our short-term goals in the job we were applying for. […] I think enough preparation in gathering information about the job and required skills can help in improving our confidence.* (Student#01/F/Week 3 Diary)

> Extract 12
> *Since I understood the importance of familiarity with the company applied to, I did some research about the organization in terms of their geographical features, their educational missions, and their requirements of candidates.* (Student#03/M/Week 3 Diary)

Extract 10 illustrates a proactive approach as the participant undertook preliminary research, seeking potential interview questions online to gain a foundational understanding. Extract 11 demonstrates how the internet fills knowledge gaps on job requirements and skills and how gathering information can help students boost their confidence. Extract 12 further demonstrates the strategic utilization of online resources to become familiar with the company to which the student was applying.

Monitoring and Evaluating Learning

Most of the students who used metacognitive strategies commented on their progress in improving their job interview skills. Some even evaluated their job interview performance during practice by comparing it with previous practice sessions. Oxford (1990) maintains that strategies to evaluate learning include self-monitoring and self-evaluating

The self-monitoring strategy, as described by Oxford (1990), involves identifying errors in understanding or producing the new language, determining their significance, tracking their source, and striving to eliminate them (p. 140). In this study, the self-monitoring strategy specifically entails learners recognizing areas in their job interview performance that require improvement. Extract 13 demonstrates a student realizing the need to elaborate on responses after monitoring her output.

> Extract 13
> *My responses still tend to be short. I am not able to expand the conversion … Thus, I have to do more research in advance so that I might have more to say.* (Student#32/F/Week 2 Diary)

In Extract 13, the student notices her tendency to provide brief answers and acknowledges the need to enhance the depth of her responses by conducting more thorough research in advance. Another student, as mentioned in Extract 14, reflects on her lack of lexical repertoire to express herself formally in an interview context.

Extract 14
There were some difficulties that I had, including that I lacked the necessary words. I think I have to know how to use the proper words when I practice. (Student#28/F/Week 2 Diary)

Extract 15 features another student who observed excessive use of fillers such as "ums" and "ahs" during practice a week before the mock job interview and decided to improve in this regard.

Extract 15
Although we were able to answer most of the questions, there were still lots of "ums" and "ahs." Another thing we need to work on is to shorten our thinking time. I believe if we say our answers out loud, our thoughts will become clearer, and our answers can be more organized. So, I guess these will be the major aspects we need to improve before the actual mock job interview next week. (Student#16/F/Week 3 Diary)

Extract 15 exemplifies how self-monitoring not only involves identifying linguistic shortcomings, but also extends to addressing non-lexical elements, such as speech fillers (e.g., *ums* and *ahs*), to improve overall communication effectiveness. Such fillers are common disfluencies that indicate hesitation on the part of the speaker (Corley & Stewart, 2008, pp.589-590). These examples collectively illustrate how the self-monitoring strategy can enhance metacognitive awareness among language learners, enabling them to identify and address their weaknesses for improved performance.

Self-evaluating as a strategy, according to Oxford (1990), involves evaluating one's progress in the target language in comparison to earlier stages. Extracts 16, 17, and 18 indicate the same learner evaluating her performance against previous practice sessions during Week 2 to Week 4.

Extract 16
I thought the second practice was better than the last time, but I know it was different when I was in a real job interview. Therefore, I have to prepare well, and I hope I can do better than this time. (Student#30/F/Week 2 Diary)

In Extract 16, the student reflects on the improvement in Week 2, which was the second practice session, and comments about the need for better preparation to do even better than this round of practice.

Extract 17
The third time practicing the job interview is easier for me now. It was the third time practicing the job interview, and it is easier for me now. I can answer almost all the questions fluently compared to the previous practice time. (Student#30/F/Week 3 Diary)

Extract 17 highlights the student's growing confidence and fluency in job interview scenarios in Week 3. The student's comparison with the previous practice session emphasized the positive progression, providing a clear indicator of improvement in her job interview skill development.

Extract 18
I think the practice becomes better and better. At least we can answer all the questions. I also have some basic knowledge from the many times we've practiced. (Student#30/F/Week 4 Diary)

By Week 4, the student perceives even more progress, as shown in Extract 18, highlighting increased fluency in answering questions compared to earlier practice sessions. As the above examples demonstrate, students' self-evaluation of their job interview skills each time they practiced reassured them as they found themselves improving each time.

Social Strategy

Peer Feedback

In their reflective diaries, students consistently reported engaging in collaborative efforts with their peers, exchanging valuable feedback and suggestions during practice sessions. The collaborative nature of these interactions is emphasized in the following examples, highlighting the significance of peer engagement in the exchange of feedback and suggestions.

> Extract 19
> *Every time, after we finish the seven minutes, we would give each other feedback and try to solve the weaknesses … Every practice, it was great that we would receive each other's feedback.* (Student#10/F/Week 1 Diary)

> Extract 20
> *The way we practiced was that we asked each other questions in turn and then gave each other some suggestions and comments.* (Student#08/F/Week 2 Diary)

As evident in Extracts 19 and 20, students employed a systematic approach to offer constructive feedback, taking turns and timing their responses during interview practice. This structured process allowed them to strike a balance between addressing interview questions and helping each other improve. Extracts 21, 22, and 23 further reveal the benefits derived from peer feedback.

> Extract 21
> *During the practice with my partner, we not only discussed what and how to respond to some of the questions, but also corrected some of each other's pronunciations that were wrong, which is also essential to a job interview.* (Student#25/F/Week 4 Diary)

> Extract 22
> *My partner told me to pay attention to the tense I used while speaking. As I talked, I switched tenses again and again. Maybe I have to calm down and think before I start to talk.* (Student#10/F/Week 1 Diary)

> Extract 23
> *My partner did offer me lots of useful suggestions … For example, she asked me some questions about my journalism courses and my experiences in journalism. I was stuck at that moment because I couldn't translate some specific names of journalism courses immediately. Therefore, she suggested that I should search for the English names of those courses, which might be useful for me to reply to my interviewers. She also gave me a piece of advice about talking about the details of courses in the Journalism and English Departments.* (Student#07/F/Week 2 Diary)

In Extract 21, students took the initiative to correct each other's pronunciation, recognizing the importance of clear articulation in a job interview context. Extract 22 further illustrates the benefits of peer feedback, as the student received valuable advice from their peer on maintaining consistency in verb tenses during verbal communication. Moreover, Extract 23 provides a concrete example of a student receiving strategic advice from their partner about handling specific questions related to the field of the job they were applying for.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the diverse range of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies used by EFL students in Taiwan to develop their job interview skills. The prominence of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in this study aligns with Lai's (2009) observation that proficient learners frequently use these strategies.

The benefit of cognitive strategies, such as practicing and creating structured output, found in the data corroborates Oxford's (1990) assertion that these strategies enable learners to produce new language effectively. The students' emphasis on repetition and self-talk as practicing strategies mirrors Huang's (2012) findings, which identified talking to oneself and repeating and imitating as common strategies among Taiwanese EFL learners. Extensive speaking practice outside the classroom, as highlighted by Sun (2012), is known to enhance students' confidence and perceived gains in their speaking skills. This is evident in the diary entries, which clearly demonstrate how the students' persistent engagement in practice activities became a powerful strategy for proceduralizing their declarative knowledge, contributing to their perceived improvement in the fluency of their responses to interview questions while also boosting their confidence.

Cohen (2007) emphasizes that metacognitive strategies are crucial because they involve a process where "the learner consciously and intentionally attends selectively to a learning task, analyzes the situation and task, plans for a course of action, monitors the execution of the plan, and evaluates the effectiveness of the whole process" (p. 32). Findings from this study reveal that students employed these strategies by monitoring and evaluating their progress to identify areas needing improvement, which led them to extend their practice time and brainstorm responses through online research. This extended practice time is consistent with Sun's (2012) findings on the benefits of extensive speaking practice outside the classroom, reinforcing the idea that deliberate, self-directed practice is essential for bridging the gap between declarative and procedural knowledge. Furthermore, the application of metacognitive strategies by the students in this study has been shown to significantly boost their confidence and perceived improvement in their ability to respond to interview questions. This aligns with Forbes and Fisher's (2018) research, which demonstrates that the use of metacognitive learning strategies in developing foreign language speaking skills leads to improved student confidence and proficiency in the target language.

Social strategies, particularly peer feedback, further emphasize the value of collaborative learning environments in language acquisition. Drawing on Pica et al.'s (1996) argument that "language learners are frequently and increasingly each other's resource for language learning" (p. 60), the practice of offering and receiving feedback during these sessions allowed students to identify their weaknesses, such as mispronunciations, incorrect use of tenses, and other flaws in their job interview performance that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. This collaborative learning process mirrors the positive outcomes of integrating peer feedback in job interview classes observed in Sumardi & Aniq's (2020) study, reinforcing the importance of incorporating peer feedback into EFL curricula to improve students' interview skills. The collaborative nature of the process, characterized by mutual support and constructive feedback exchange among peers, also echoes Storch's (2002) assertion that language learning thrives in collaborative settings.

In this study, affective strategies, which Oxford (1990) describes as methods for controlling emotions, attitudes, and motivation through relaxation, self-encouragement, and self-reward, were not observed in the data. This absence might be due to the students being instructed to document the process of developing their job interview skills, possibly leading them to believe that how they managed their emotions, attitudes, and motivation was not relevant to include in their diaries. Additionally, they might have felt uncomfortable or shy about sharing their affective management strategies in a diary that would be read by their instructor.

Overall, the findings from this study contribute to the broader literature on language learning strategies by providing empirical evidence of the specific strategies used by Taiwanese EFL learners in job interview preparation. These strategies identified in this research can be integrated into future job interview training to boost students' confidence and improve their ability to respond smoothly to interview questions, ultimately enhancing their overall job interview performance.

Limitation

There are some limitations to this study that need to be taken into consideration in future research. First, the sample size of 40 students may not represent all EFL students in Taiwan who can be considered as GLLs. Future studies with a larger sample size could provide more insight into the kind of strategies GLLs use and how they employ those strategies in developing job interview skills. In addition, since the data was a self-report account of their process of preparing for mock job interviews, collected through diary entries, participants may not have reported every single strategy they employed. Future studies could include multiple data collection methods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the strategies used. This could involve combining self-reports with interviews and surveys to ensure a complete and more accurate picture of the participants' use of strategies.

Conclusion

This study investigated the strategies used by EFL learners, focusing on Taiwanese students, to develop job interview skills. The findings revealed that cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies are crucial in bridging the gap between learners' declarative knowledge of what to say to respond to job interview questions and their procedural knowledge of how to articulate those responses fluently in the target language. By emphasizing these strategies, this research contributes to the evolving research on job interview training in higher education.

The findings also contribute to the growing body of literature on language learning strategies, particularly in the context of EFL learners preparing for global workforce integration, as well as the objectives of Taiwan's Bilingual 2030 policy by offering practical learning strategies to increase the competitiveness of Taiwan's young generation in the global job market. As EFL programs strive to enhance students' English communication skills for the international job market, the insights from this research provide practical applications for educational policies and curricula. Curriculum developers should incorporate these strategies into EFL job interview training programs to improve learners' preparation to compete in the global job market and equip them with practical tools for navigating job interviews.

While the study's context is grounded in Taiwanese higher education, the insights gained extend far beyond this setting. The actionable strategies identified can be adapted and applied in various EFL contexts worldwide, offering educational institutions valuable tools to enhance the employability of their graduates. Integrating targeted job interview training into EFL programs is not only beneficial but necessary as employability becomes an increasingly important metric for university rankings and quality assurance globally. By integrating research outputs on job interview training, as suggested by Krishnan et al. (2024), institutions across diverse EFL contexts can better prepare undergraduates for successful employment. This approach fosters linguistic competence, builds confidence, and ensures students are ready to excel in real-world job interviews.

Ultimately, enhancing job interview training within EFL programs supports the broader vision of preparing a globally competitive workforce. This research thus contributes to elevating educational standards and improving the global employability of graduates in various EFL contexts.

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