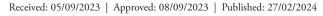# COMMENT ON "CONTRAST BETWEEN CHINESE AND WESTERN CULTURAL VALUES AND ITS EFFECTS ON ENGLISH LEARNING IN CHINA"

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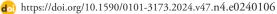
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With the increasing importance of English as a global language and the growing cultural exchanges between China and the West, there is a need to address the challenges Chinese students face in developing effective English communication skills. While many Chinese students have a good command of English in terms of grammar and vocabulary, they often struggle with expressing themselves appropriately due to cultural differences between China and Western countries.

Chinese students tend to approach English learning from their own cultural perspective, which can result in the emergence of Chinglish—a mixture of English and Chinese language patterns that may hinder effective communication (Aldawood, 2019, p. 330). This phenomenon arises from a lack of understanding and research into the Western countries' cultural nuances. To overcome these challenges and improve English proficiency, it is crucial to bridge the traditional moral and cultural disparities between China and the Western world.

Zhang (2024) aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the positive and negative influences of both Chinese and Western cultures on English language acquisition.

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By understanding the cultural differences and their impact on language learning, Chinese students can develop a more accurate and culturally appropriate command of English. The article also proposes measures to enhance the positive impact of cultural exchange on English learning, such as promoting intercultural awareness, incorporating authentic materials from Western cultures into language learning and encouraging immersive language experiences through study abroad programs or language exchange activities (Barber, 2018, p. 205). By acknowledging and addressing the cultural disparities between China and the Western world, Chinese students can develop stronger communicative abilities in English, while also gaining a deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication. Ultimately, this article aims to guide English language learners in navigating the complexities of cultural differences and fostering effective communication skills in an increasingly interconnected world.

1 Influence of cultural differences on learning English

Cultural differences can have a significant impact on the process of learning English, particularly for non-native speakers from different cultural backgrounds. These differences can affect various aspects of language acquisition and communication, including language use, pronunciation, vocabulary and pragmatic skills. Here are some key influences of cultural differences on learning English.

Cultural norms and values shape how language is used in different societies. Politeness conventions, speech styles and social interaction patterns vary across cultures. Students from cultures that emphasize indirectness or face-saving strategies may find it challenging to adapt to the more direct communication style often found in English-speaking countries. Understanding and mastering the pragmatics of English, including appropriate language use in different social contexts, are crucial for effective communication.

Cultural differences can significantly impact pronunciation and accent. Different languages have distinct sound systems, intonation patterns and speech rhythms. Students from certain language backgrounds may face difficulties in accurately producing English sounds and intonation patterns. Cultural influences on pronunciation should be taken into account to ensure effective communication while also promoting intelligibility and mutual understanding.

Vocabulary reflects cultural values, experiences and references. Students may encounter challenges in understanding English idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms and culturally specific vocabulary. Cultural differences in metaphors, idioms and symbolic meanings can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Expanding cultural awareness and exposure to diverse English language contexts can help students navigate these challenges.

English is deeply intertwined with the native English-speaking countries' cultural context. Literature, history, customs and traditions play a significant role in language usage and comprehension. Students from different cultural backgrounds may struggle with understanding references to Western cultural contexts, historical events, or literary works. Developing cultural literacy and engaging with English language materials that reflect diverse cultural contexts can enhance comprehension and communication skills.

Different societies have distinct sociocultural norms and values that shape communication styles, social hierarchy and interpersonal relationships. Students may need to adapt to different communication expectations, such as turn-taking patterns, levels of directness, or formality. Understanding the English-speaking countries' sociocultural dimensions can help students navigate these norms and develop appropriate communication strategies.

To address the influence of cultural differences on learning English, educators and learners should foster cultural sensitivity, promote intercultural communication and provide opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural interactions. Incorporating diverse cultural content, encouraging discussions on cultural perspectives and creating an inclusive learning environment can enhance language-learning outcomes and promote effective intercultural communication skills.

2 Impact of traditional Chinese and western morality on English learning

The impact of traditional Chinese and Western morality on English learning is multifaceted and can influence language acquisition, communication styles and cultural understanding. Here are some key aspects to consider.

Communication Styles: traditional Chinese morality places emphasis on humility, collectivism and indirect communication. In contrast, Western morality often values individualism, assertiveness and direct communication. These differing cultural norms can influence English learners' communication styles, with Chinese learners tending to be more indirect and Western learners more direct. Understanding these differences can help learners navigate intercultural communication effectively.

Language Use: traditional Chinese morality emphasizes respect for authority, politeness and hierarchical relationships. This can affect language use in English learning, with Chinese learners sometimes displaying excessive deference or avoidance of direct expressions. Conversely, Western moral values may encourage learners to be more assertive and outspoken. Striking a balance between cultural values and English language conventions is essential for effective communication.

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Critical Thinking and Creativity: traditional Chinese morality places a strong emphasis on conformity, obedience and rote learning. In contrast, Western morality values critical thinking, creativity and independent thought. English learning, in a Western context, often promotes open discussion, analysis and individual expression. Encouraging Chinese learners to embrace critical thinking and creativity can enhance their English language skills and foster a broader perspective.

Cultural Perspectives: traditional Chinese morality is deeply rooted in Confucianism, emphasizing filial piety, harmony and social roles. Western morality, influenced by various philosophical and religious traditions, may prioritize individual rights, personal autonomy and egalitarianism. These differing perspectives can influence learners' interpretations of English language content, literature and cultural references. Developing cross-cultural awareness and understanding is crucial for accurate comprehension and effective communication.

Ethical Considerations: both traditional Chinese and Western moral values provide ethical frameworks for language use. Chinese learners may prioritize harmonious communication, saving face and avoiding conflict, while Western learners may focus on honesty, transparency and individual rights. Navigating ethical considerations in English learning requires an understanding of cultural differences and developing ethical sensitivity within the context of English language usage.

Educators can foster a balanced approach by promoting cultural awareness, facilitating intercultural dialogue and encouraging learners to reflect on their cultural values in relation to English learning. Emphasizing the importance of effective communication, while respecting cultural diversity, helps learners navigate the complexities of language acquisition, cultural understanding and ethical considerations in English learning.

3 Concrete manifestation of cultural differences between China and the west

Conflicts between China and the West, in terms of equality consciousness and hierarchical concepts, are evident. In Western countries, a strong sense of equality prevails, where self-respect is seen as essential for respecting others. However, in China, while self-respect is also emphasized, the cultural context may differ, with significant importance placed on collectivism, hierarchical relationships and traditional values like the Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues. The family environment in China, with its high patriarchal status and strong interdependence among generations, plays a crucial role in shaping children's character.

In contrast, Western families tend to prioritize individualism and independence, with less emphasis on extended family ties. Family harmony is measured differently in

the West, based on individual and cultural values, emphasizing mutual respect, effective communication, support and understanding among family members.

Regarding the impact of these family cultures on English learning, both Chinese and Western cultures can have positive and negative effects. In Chinese culture, the emphasis on education and academic excellence can motivate students to excel in language learning. However, strict discipline and rote memorization may hinder creativity and critical thinking skills. On the other hand, the focus of Western culture on individualism and freedom may provide opportunities for students to explore and express themselves, enhancing their language learning skills. Nevertheless, the lack of pressure and discipline may result in a lack of motivation to learn or practice the language.

Moreover, Chinese students' strong adherence to seniority and etiquette may create a negative learning style, leading to dependency on teachers' guidance and a passive approach to learning. The lack of proactive communication and confidence can hinder students' ability to engage with the learning process independently. The impact of family culture on English learning can vary based on individual circumstances and differences. Both Chinese and Western family cultures have their strengths and weaknesses in shaping students' language learning experiences. A balanced approach that combines the best aspects of both cultures can help foster a more holistic and effective language-learning environment. With the acceleration of globalization, learning English has become an increasingly important skill. However, due to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, it has brought many difficulties to English learning. Therefore, some special strategies need to be adopted to overcome these obstacles and make English learning smoother. Here are some English learning strategies:

Due to the differences between Chinese and Western cultures, some Chinese students may feel insecure and think they are at a disadvantage in English learning. In order to overcome this psychological barrier, some positive measures can be taken, such as encouraging themselves to speak more, listen more and practice more, to enhance their language expression ability and improve self-confidence. Compared with Chinese, English is a language that pays more attention to communicative ability. Therefore, in the process of English learning, attention can be paid to cultivating their own language communication skills, such as increasing the time for oral practice. While learning English listening, it is important to pay attention to changes in pronunciation and intonation, and try to have practical communication with foreigners.

As English is an international language, it has a complex cultural background behind it. Therefore, while learning English, the cultural background of the English language should also be deeply understood, such as the English-speaking coutries' history, geography, culture and other knowledge, which can not only enhance the language expression ability, but also can better understand and deal with the cultural questions in the English test.

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English attaches great importance to the application of customary language and slang, which are an important part of English expression. Therefore, when learning English, attention should also be paid to learning English idioms and slang, and actively using them in practical communication, in order to make English expression more natural and fluent, thereby enhancing the comprehensive ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Conclusions

It is important to recognize that cultures cannot be deemed better or worse, as they are unique and shaped by different historical, social and philosophical factors. Chinese culture emphasizes harmony, while Western culture values science, conquest and exploration. Each culture has its own strengths and contributions. When learning English, it is crucial to understand the cultural differences between China and the West. This understanding allows for better comprehension of the distinct communication styles influenced by these cultures. Cultural exchanges are increasingly prevalent worldwide, exemplified by international music festivals like Coachella in the United States and Glastonbury in the United Kingdom. These events bring together artists and attendees from diverse backgrounds, promoting cultural exchange through music, performances and shared experiences (Polat, 2019, p. 222). Furthermore, there has been a significant rise in international student exchange programs, indicating a growing interest in cross-cultural learning opportunities. This trend leads to enhanced understanding and collaboration among individuals from different backgrounds. Language, as a primary carrier of culture, undergoes corresponding changes during these exchanges. Therefore, placing emphasis on cultural knowledge not only introduces new perspectives into one's own culture, but also facilitates the promotion of one's culture to the world, achieving the goal of cross-cultural communication. In English teaching, it is essential to acknowledge the impact of cultural differences on instruction. Educators should strive to better understand the different countries' language and culture. By understanding the disparities between Chinese and Western cultures, learners can overcome obstacles in English acquisition. Thus, it is necessary to enhance cultural awareness and integrate it with English language teaching, leading to improved English proficiency and more effective instruction.

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