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A Research on China's EFL Learners' Self-Individual Self-Efficacy's Impacts on Learning Achievement Based on Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

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Abstract:

With the wave of globalization, the language learning has been become a must by which language learner can facilitate multi-cultural communication. However, many factors exert negative influence on EFL learners' achievements in China due to cultural difference and students' inner elements. The paper is to make research on how Hofstede's cultural dimensions affect learners' self-efficacy and it further has remarkable effects on their language accomplishments. Qualitative methods such as interview, document analysis method and inductive method will be adopted in order to test students' individual self-efficacy level and its influence on learning fruits. What's more, the article makes full use of questionnaire to survey students' self-efficacy and their willingness to participate in English-spoking to find out cultural dimensions' effects on language learning. It can be concluded that students with high level of self-efficacy are more willing to take part in spoking communication. Besides, uncertainty avoidance and collectivism have great impact on learners' self-efficacy and learning performance. Therefore, the paper will be as a constructive reference for promoting learning accomplishments in educational sphere.

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy was first introduced by Bandura [3]. He said that factors influencing the cognitive processing of efficacy information arise from enactive, vicarious, exhortative, and emotive sources. After its introduction, self-efficacy has been studied in many disciplines such as health [32,40,18,59,56,2,29,6,10,53,8,54,15,39,35,23,7] and mathematics [37,46,42] etc. However, it seems that self-efficacy has been applied in diverse fields that are unrelated in exterior facets but all these researches in fact have innate relationships with education. It can be proved in another standpoint. All kinds of aspects such as health and business' talents need to learn to enhance their self-efficacy to improve the efficiency in major related activities. As the saying goes,

never too late to learn. It can be said that education accompanying our whole life. Therefore, this adds much meaning to our research of self-efficacy in education area.

In 1960s, Hofstede made a research on cultural dimensions through launching questionnaire in different IBM enterprises in 40 sub-companies located in over 50 countries. He made an analysis on more than 116 thousand pieces of questionnaires from 53 nationalities and 50 sorts of jobs. He proposed four cultural dimensions at that time: power of distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede [20] added a dimension which is long term orientation. Hofstede [21] incorporated indulgence and restraint into his cultural dimensions which now consists of six dimensions. Although the cultural dimensions are derived from work-related area, it has been explored in many extended fields. Soares et al., [43] studied cultural dimensions' impact on international marketing activities. De Mooij and Hofstede [12] applied the cultural dimensions into international branding and advertising. Cronjé [11] revealed that it is more significant to pay much more attention to commonalities in cross-cultural blending teaching and learning rather than on differences. Galariotis and Karagiannis [16] explored how culture and economic policy uncertainty have an impact on style investing, and more specifically on the popular momentum investing.

Based on previous research, studies on the relationship between self-efficacy and Hofstede' cultural dimensions are rare. At the moment, learners-centered education has been welcomed by many people. Besides, the inner quality has much influence on students' achievements than exterior elements. Chinese students may be impeded by many factors to be able to speak English fluently leading to their uneven capability in language learning. Many researches have been conducted about Hofstede's cultural dimensions whereas there still lack of the relation study between EFL learners' self-efficacy and their cultural settings. This article integrates the macroscopic cultural dimensions with the microscopic self-efficacy to explore their both effects on EFL learners speaking performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Framework of Theories

The concept of self-efficacy was coined by Bandura [3] as a key element of his Social Learning Theory and is defined as 'people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments' [5]. People acquire information about their self-efficacy via four channels according to Bandura: (a) performance accomplishment also called mastery experience; (b) vicarious experiences (or 'role modeling'); (c) forms of persuasion; and (d) emotional and other psychological factors. In essence, individuals who feel efficacious are more likely to perform at a higher level, try new behaviors, expand more effort on those behaviors, and persevere longer when they encounter challenges [58]. Oettingen [33] believes that the forming beliefs of personal efficacy is a complex process of self-appraisal which entails selecting, weighting, and integrating information from multiple sources. Culture may affect not only the type of information provided by the various sources, but also which information is selected and how it is weighted and integrated in people's self-efficacy judgements [33]. Culture has been defined in many ways; "Culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" [21]. It has been integrated with many microscopic sectors such as organization, consumption, and mass culture etc.

Hofstede firstly proposed four cultural dimensions based on analysis of questionnaires within work-related areas, which includes power of distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede [21] improve his cultural dimensions that are comprised of power of distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, and uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation, indulgence and restraint. Power Distance has been defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally [21]. Uncertainty Avoidance is not the same as risk avoidance; it deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Individualism on the one side versus its opposite, Collectivism, as a societal, not an individual characteristic, is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups. Masculinity versus its opposite, Femininity, again as a societal, not as an individual characteristic, refers to the distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society, to which a range of solutions can be found. The long-term pole corresponds to Bond's Confucian Work Dynamism. Values found at this pole were perseverance, thrift, ordering relationships by status, and having a sense of shame; values at the opposite, short term pole were reciprocating social obligations, respect for tradition, protecting one's 'face', and personal steadiness and stability. Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

2.2. Studies on the Relationship between Self-efficacy and Culture in Educational Field Abroad

Oettingen and Zosuls [34] put forward that culturally-based differences in academic self-efficacy may have their origins in the respective cultural values stemming from historical, sociopolitical, and economic influences. These values are particularly salient in the developmental tasks in school. Differences of self-efficacy under cross-cultural circumstances may be a significant prediction of future achievement. Kim and Park [25] examined the reason that Korean students show higher performance than western countries', external pressure and parental expectation derived from Korean intrinsic customs posed active influence on their students' accomplishment. As surveyed by Zan et al., [58], high level of self-efficacy of American and Chinese students have positive effects on their performance, and the U.S. students are more task-oriented whereas our Chinese students are more ego-oriented. Aguayo et al., [1] this study investigated the relation of demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status) and cultural variables (e.g., acculturation, enculturation, generation status) on academic outcomes (e.g., college self-efficacy, college performance) among 408 Mexican-American college students. The result indicated that socioeconomic status, acculturation, enculturation had significant positive effects on college self-efficacy. Dorfman and Fortus [14] surveyed self-efficacy under a more specific sphere of different schools and summarized that different school systems and teacher-student relationships exert fundamental impact on self-efficacy. Cross-countries investigation of self-efficacy such as China, America, and Finland showed that high self-efficacy learners in America has positive relation with achievement, while high self-efficacy and low self-efficacy students in China gain good results than those of moderate self-efficacy, and low self-efficacy ones in Finland got good results

[30]. It revealed that sorts of cultures have kinds of influence on self-efficacy and those conclusions certified that high-level self-efficacy may not result in higher performance due to cultural discrepancy. Sevgi et al., [38] discussed self-efficacy of from the point of teachers and concluded that teachers' self-efficacies are similar irrespective of different countries and teachers reported high level of confidence in efficacy beliefs in classroom management and student support strategies.

2.3. Studies on the Relationship between Self-efficacy and Culture in Educational Field at Home

Tang [45] concluded that our Chinese traditional culture plays an important role in learning recourse which acts as an aid to elevate self-efficacy. Liu [28] examined the relationship of middle schools' students' self-efficacy and their family and school cultures. The writer showed that the power distance to parents and teachers plays a vital part in learners' self-efficacy. Collectivism culture also functions actively in influencing their belief about accomplishing tasks. As was conducted by Wang [49], the education style of parents has remarkable effects on children's belief of perform tasks. Chen & Wang [9] explored the relations between self-esteem and self-efficacy. The study showed that self-esteem is equivalent to success plus ambition. The author proposed that self-esteem as a benchmark of mental health lies with culture so the researches on the oriental collective self-esteem and western individual self-esteem's correlation with self-efficacy are valuable. Shi [41] has explored the influence of study attribution on students' self-efficacy and learning burnout. She raised four factors consisting of secondary school students' study attribution. They were internal controllable factors, internal uncontrollable factors, external controllable factors and external uncontrollable factors. Those factors under living environment are definitely impacted by culture which directly or indirectly shape our self-efficacy of particular fields. Zhu [60] examined the nonintellectual factors such as success motivation and self-efficacy's impact on academic achievement. Success motivation originates from surrounding environment influenced by a variety of cultural elements such as relationship with families and friends. Self-efficacy stems from primary four sources including mastery performance, vicarious experience, persuasion, and emotion and feeling which are in the umbrella of culture. For instance, counties which highly value the collectivism, from which learners will gain aspiration from model success equivalent to vicarious experience. It is assumed that evert aspect is linked with culture since it is invisible and leaves its mark on our cognition and behavior. Wang [5] found a great difference in students' self-efficacy from various family and local cultures which further affects their leaning performance. Besides, a more specific cultural aspects such as teachers' expectations for students also have remarkable effects on achievements. Therefore, because education workers exercise considerable influence over students, teachers should manifest high expectations to their students to identify their achievements or give feedback in time etc. Such a minor culture is often overlooked but always instill knowledge to students disregard their cognition and personality.

Although a large quantity of studies have been conducted by sophisticated scholars, researches on the relationship between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and leaners' self-efficacy still lack attention. As is known to all, Hofstede firstly proposed four dimensions of culture including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and collectivism, and masculinity and femininity. He added two dimensions embracing long-term orientation and short-term orientation, and indulgence and

restraint. The long-term pole derives from our Chinese Confucianism, values found at this pole were perseverance, thrift, ordering relationships by status, and having a sense of shame. Indulgence and restraint pole is borrowed from Minkov who is also a coauthor for the third edition of Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. Bandura (1977) firstly put forward self-efficacy which means people' beliefs about performing tasks. The article aims to connect cultural dimensions and self-efficacy, and explore the relation of self-efficacy and academic achievements of China's EFL students. Taking Chinese traditional culture into consideration, the author will just focus on three apparent dimensions such as long-term orientation, power distance and collectivism. The self-efficacy as well, only academic performance will be examined. The survey will provide applicable suggestions for instructional workers and family members and all people under the same social surroundings to create a conducive cultural atmosphere to better cultivate youth and enhance their self-efficacy. The paper is extended from the following two questions:

a. What's the relationship among power distance, long-term or short-term orientation, collectivism or individualism and EFL learners' self-efficacy?

b. What's the relationship between EFL learners' self-efficacy and their academic performance?

3. Literature Analysis of Cultural Dimensions of China

3.1. Long-term Orientation or Short-term Orientation, Individualism or Collectivism, and Power Distance in China

Long-term and short-term orientation refers to the acceptance level of delayed happiness of material, emotion, and social needs. Individualism means that people put emphasis on their own needs instead of the group's while collectivism refers to people view the group's interests more importantly. Power distance is that humans' tolerance degree of inequality but it is not a derogatory phenomenon in some circumstances. It becomes harmful when this situation has been aggravated. Due to the culture of Confucianism, "more haste, less speed" is a well-known paradox to our Chinese people. As we can see, Chinese people intend to outlook future based on the present influenced by some invisible traditional customs. Chinese pay more attention to thrift, perseverance, and savings in order to make reactions for unexpected future emergency. Such a culture will leave its heavy mark on generations thinking pattern and behaviors. While short-term oriented culture countries such as America and Britain and the like, they lay emphasis on the present interests and enjoy life in time regardless of future unexpectedness. As illustrated in the following graph, relating to the saving for future, China is higher than the United States.

Table 1. Hofstede's cultural dimensions- selected country scores (source: Hofstede 2001).

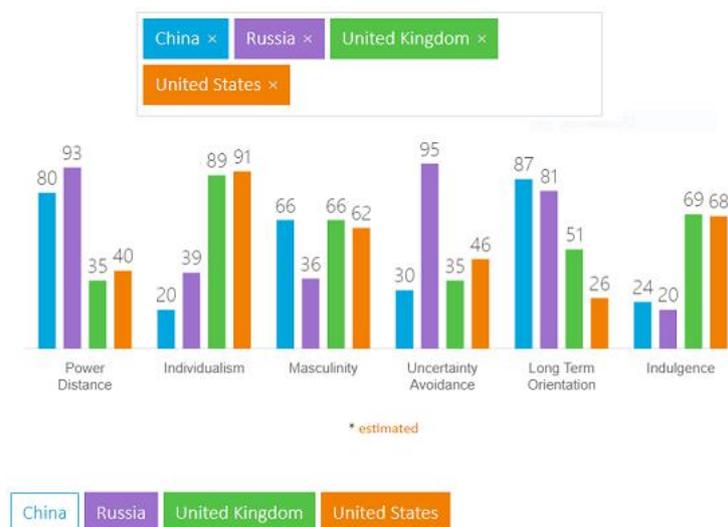|	Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Individualism/ collectivism	Masculinity/ femininity	Long-term orientation
Mean	51	64	51	51	46
Canada	39	48	80	52	23
USA	40	46	91	62	29
Taiwan	58	69	17	45	87

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Figure 1. *Cultural dimensions' comparison among China, Russia, America, and Britain.*

Deng [13] compared the cultural differences between China and America manifested in a documentation American Factories in which our Chinese workers persevere at their boring and laborious work contrasted to enjoying life in time for American workers. Hu [22] also put different cultural dimensions of China and America in comparison from analyzing its reflection in The Farewell. The author observed that China is a country of long-term orientation from the perspective of mother and daughter consume style. Wang [50] analyzed leaders' speeches between the United Kingdom and China from 2016-2020 from the perspective of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Wang revealed that China's state leaders pay more attention to collectivism, long-term orientation, and high power distance while the United Kingdom is opposite. Keller et al., [24] surveyed cultural dimensions between China and the U.S., the survey showed that China's aviation students tend to apply collective traits whereas American ones more individual traits. The power distance in China is high as the country put priority on the leader-member relation. In ancient times, people must obey the principle of feudal moral conduct. Despite those rules are discarded, the Chinese still employ many respectful titles to address leaders. Self-efficacy is defined as the belief in one's capabilities to perform a particular behavior and successfully execute certain actions to attain goals [17]. Cultures which are highly individualistic tend to nurture individuals for independent thinking and foster behaviors which promote questioning the status quo. Such individuals believe in their own abilities and their own ways of thinking [27]. Their study also revealed that high power distance in a culture tends to stifle the independent thinking and creative spirit of an individual by enforcing natural work patterns which routinize operations and thinking. This would therefore lead to a negative impact on the self-efficacy. Although self-efficacy was proposed by Bandura in a setting of individualism, self-efficacy, Bandura argues (1997), is as important for collectivists who carry out collectively oriented tasks, as it is for individualists who focus on individually based tasks. The principal finding from this review is that people from collectivist cultural backgrounds typically rate their efficacy beliefs lower than do their more individualist counterparts, even when performance levels are equivalent or higher [26]. China is listed as a country with high power distance, long-term orientation, and high collectivism. From our review of previous researches, high power distance and collectivism function negatively in shaping self-efficacy while long-term orientation aims to invigorate people to gain happiness through self-struggle. In addition, students

will preserve a high self-efficacy since they hold beliefs that ideal results will come in the end. Students in China, impacted by multiple expectations from families and schools which push them to foster similar qualities and strive hard to enhance academic scores. Kim & Park [25] examined the reason why Korean students perform better in their academic achievements compared to western ones. They reviewed the role of self-efficacy at the individual level, social support at the relational level, and Confucian values at the cultural level. China, as well, is home to hard-working Chinese people who believe education as the most important goal. People hold beliefs that effort, discipline, and perseverance will lead to success. Therefore, it is necessary to foster a wholesome atmosphere in order to raise leaners' self-efficacy which have positive effects on learning performance.

3.2. The Relationship between Self-efficacy and Learning Performance of EFL Learners

We have reviewed cultural dimensions of China which is in the setting of high power distance, high collectivism, and long-term orientation. Self-efficacy has been transferred from individual self-efficacy to collective self-efficacy which will hamper individualized development because only when their behaviors and thinking patterns are consistent with groups' can they feel sense of belonging. Self-efficacy is also thwarted by high power distance (HPD) which will separate children and parents, students and teacher. HPD leads to unequal status which form relationships such as superior and subordinate, discipline and obedience, etc. However, Chinese people take education as a life-long career. As the traditional Chinese saying goes: live and learn. China is a country with enough long traditional culture including Confucianism, Kongfu and so on. Confucianism, in particular, although formed in ancient times, still has large impact on our life today. Culture, despite has been defined in mountainous forms, is a too abstract noun to be covered by a simple definition. Everyone, in the world, has been placed in distinct cultural settings which exert influence invisibly on our physical and mental activities. In briefly, self-efficacy is said to have a measure of control over individual's thoughts, feelings and actions. In other words, the beliefs that individuals hold about their abilities and outcome of their efforts influence in great ways how they will behave [31,36]. Pajares & Miller [36] tested the predictive and mediational role of self-efficacy beliefs in mathematical problem solving using path analysis. Results revealed that math self-efficacy was more predictive of problem solving than was math self-concept, perceived usefulness of mathematics. According to Bandura [4], how people behave can often be better predicted by their beliefs about their capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing, for these beliefs help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have. Recently, online learning has become an irrevocable trend especially under the repercussion of COVID-19. Yokoyama [57] specified research on academic self-efficacy and its positive effects on learning performance in online learning environment. Yokoyama proposed that only when online learning software are properly made use of can the positive correlation functions. Nonetheless, though self-efficacy generally presents active relation with learning performance, its negative influences are sometimes studied [48]. This corresponds to our traditional custom as 'too much water drowned the miller'. Self-efficacy works as mediating role in reacting to various capabilities such as in academic, interpersonal, and other fields. Wang [52] probed into the academic record and self-efficacy in the middle school. The survey reached a decision that academic self-efficacy correlate with other factors such as target goal, self-motivation, and attribution beliefs coming into play in

enhancing academic accomplishments. Wu & Zhang [55] explored the link among self-efficacy, study strategies, autonomous learning ability and learning performance of EFL learners. They came to a conclusion that self-efficacy shows significantly correlation with achievements while strategies are not. Self-efficacy acting as mediating part has been investigated between the teachers' care and students learning achievements. Self-efficacy is divided into two sub-aspects: learning ability self-efficacy and learning behavior self-efficacy and the former shows more significance to learning proficiency.

4. Conclusions

English, as a global langue franca, has been studied in a number of countries. China is no exception where English is a compulsory course leading to many scholars explore ways to improve Chinese students' learning ability in English. Cultural elements play important roles in affecting learners learning behavior and cognition. Hofstede [19] proposed four cultural dimensions based on plenty of questionnaires which aroused widespread discussion in the world. Cultural dimensions have been investigated in numerous fields such as international marketing [44], foreign language learning [47], and cross cultural blended teaching and learning [11], etc. However, a small number of researches have been conducted on the relation between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and learners' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy put forward by Bandura [3] which refers to "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" [5]. Human functioning is facilitated by a personal sense of control. If people believe that they can take action to solve a problem instrumentally, they become more inclined to do so and feel more committed to this decision. The paper aims to bridge the gap to explore the relationship between three dimensions of Hofstede and Chinese EFL learners' self-efficacy and the correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance. The article discussed those ties through literature analysis and theoretical analysis leading to the results that collectivism and high power distance have negative influence on students' self-efficacy while long-term orientation leaves positive impact on self-efficacy. Generally speaking, learners with high self-efficacy exert a positive influence on their achievements. As we discussed, students in China are impacted by various cultural factors. We would like to argue that it is theoretically, methodologically, and pedagogically crucial for future explorations on cultural dimensions' influence on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy's generally positive impacts have been reviewed in our study. However, there are still limitations in our paper which future studies may remedy our gap. Firstly, the article only focused on three dimensions including long-term orientation, collectivism, and power distance based on China's characteristics, scholars can pay attentions to broader aspects of culture to investigate their effects on students' self-efficacy. Secondly, the article mainly investigates those relationships in terms of literature and theories analysis, future investigators can make more empirical analysis to add more evidence to our hypothesis.

In summary, the paper still has given important insights into how cultural dimensions affect learners' self-efficacy and what is the relationship between self-efficacy and following performance. We should nurture a wholesome cultural environment in order to cultivate students' learning capability and subtly enhance their beliefs in accomplishing tasks. As the youth are the future of our country, the research on promoting their learning cognition aspect is meaningful for education-related people. Education is the cornerstone of countries' futuristic growth, so it is of

great significance to elevate education quality irrespective of from subjective or objective factors which exert an influence on learners' achievement.

Conflicts of Interest

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