

Power Distance and Individualism-Collectivism in EFL Learning Environment

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Abstract

The aim of this review was to critically evaluate the research works done on power distance and individualism-collectivism in English as a foreign language (EFL) and other types of English language learning. There is a more or less agreement on what happens to teaching and learning processes in high and low power distance (PD) classrooms. However, there are some findings suggesting the simultaneous existence of both individualism and collectivism (e.g. North Vietnam). In that case, individualism and collectivism have separate identities, rather than being mutually exclusive parts of a single dimension. There are some works in which Hofstede's (1983, 1986) cultural dimensions could not explain observed differences in the learning environment. There are possibilities of learning-specific new sets of cultural dimensions in classrooms due to the attitudinal changes of students compared to the average culture of the general population. In many works, a variety of approaches has been suggested for the teacher either to adapt to the culture of the classroom or to use methods of low PD and individualistic methods in high PD-collectivist classrooms in a cautious manner. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) seems an effective alternative to Grammar-Translation Method (GTM). Contradictory findings have been reported on Japanese classrooms. In one, the students desire to study independently, which the high PD and the collectivist culture of Japan does not allow. Two, for the Japanese learners, group working is more effective due to the collectivist culture. The contradictions involved in the two contentions need to be resolved through more research.

Keywords: classroom environment, EFL, English language learning, individualism-collectivism, power distance

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Introduction

Out of the six cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede, (1984, 2011), power distance (PD), individualism-collectivism (IC) and uncertainty avoidance and to a lesser extent, masculinity-femininity are apparently the most researched dimensions. In learning environments, especially in the EFL context, power distance and individualism-collectivism seem to be the only two dimensions, which have been studied by most researchers.

The aim of this review is to critically evaluate the published research works on power distance and individualism-collectivism of Hofstede cultural dimensions related to EFL and other types of English language studies.

Power distance (PD) - Power distance denotes the extent to which less powerful members of organisations and institutions like family accept and expect the uneven distribution of power. Cultures endorsing low power distance accept and expect power relations that are more consultative and more democratic. A low score indicates more egalitarian society and a high score indicates wide variations of the power structure and authority in the social systems. In general terms, power distance scores are very high for countries in Asia, Africa, the Arab region and Latin America. The scores are low for countries of Germanic and Anglo regions.

Individualism (IC) versus collectivism – This dimension refers to the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. When the society is more individualistic, the achievements and rights of individuals have primacy over the rights or achievements of the society as a whole. Collectivism only refers to groups, not a nation. A clear gap exists between developed Western countries and developing countries with respect to individualism-collectivism index. High scores indicate a high level of individualism and a low score indicates a high level of collectivism. Scores are high for North America and Europe, where rights of individuals are paramount (Hofstede, 1983). Countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa have low scores. The Arab world has middle values (Hofstede, 1983). Guatemala has 6 points out of 100 against 91 out of 100 for the USA (Hofstede, 1983).

The method of literature search used in this review is explained in the next section. This is followed by the section on the results and discussions of the selected literature. Conclusions are drawn from the review re given next. Limitations of this review are indicated in the final section.

Method of Literature Searches for this Review

Search terms were used in Google Scholar search engine and the relevant works from the first five pages for any time period and for the works published in 2015 and 2016 were selected and used in the following critical review. The method yielded 36 useable papers for this review. Only the works which reported PD and IC in EFL and other types of English language learning and containing detailed methodology and data were included.

Results and Discussions

There had been several studies on the effect of PD in EFL context. The more relevant ones are discussed here.

Hofstede, (1986) differentiates low and high PD cultures in general terms, as well as family and school contexts. Reproduced in Figure 1, the classroom differentiation points are

relevant here, although real life conditions are more nuanced. In low PD classrooms, small group works are common as against routine whole class teaching in high PD cultures. In relation to education, low PD scores indicate the possibility of student-centred education and high PD scores indicate a greater likelihood of teacher-centred education. Low PD scores may indicate unequal roles that have been established for convenience. In the case of high PD scores, there is existential inequality. Religions have the possibility of equality amongst believers for low scores. A hierarchy of priests exists when the score is high. In educational institutions with low PD, a number of teachers expect some initiative and interactions with students. In such classrooms, students are expected to express doubts, and they can even challenge the teachers. On the other hand, in educational institutions with high PD, teachers are regarded as parents and treated publicly with respect and honour, especially older teachers, regardless of what students privately feel. However, it is the private feeling which affects actual learning. Disobedient students are punished severely.

SMALL POWER DISTANCE	LARGE POWER DISTANCE
Inequalities among people should be minimized.	Inequalities among people are expected and desired.
Social relationships should be handled with care.	Status should be balanced with restraint.
There should be, and there is to some extent, interdependence between less and more powerful people.	Less powerful people should be dependent; they are polarized between dependence and counterdependence.
Parents treat children as equals.	Parents teach children obedience.
Children treat parents and older relatives as equals.	Respect for parents and older relatives is a basic and lifelong virtue.
Children play no role in old-age security of parents.	Children are a source of old-age security to parents.
Students treat teachers as equals.	Students give teachers respect, even outside of class.
Teachers expect initiative from students in class.	Teachers should take all initiative in class.
Teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths.	Teachers are gurus who transfer personal wisdom.
Quality of learning depends on two-way communication and excellence of students.	Quality of learning depends on excellence of teacher.
Less educated persons hold more authoritarian values than more educated persons.	Both more and less educated persons show equally authoritarian values.
Educational policy focuses on secondary schools.	Educational policy focuses on universities.

Figure 1. High and low PD in family and classroom contexts (Hofstede, 1986)

A few studies on single country contexts available are discussed here. The increasing intake of international students in the United Kingdom (UK) necessitated identification of differences in cultural perceptions and expectations of new entrants on one side and UK teaching and learning expectations on the other. This information was vital for the smooth cultural transition. McEwan, (2013) reports the results of a study on the comparison of the typical academic culture of new entrants with that of their teacher. International students were identified as collectivists with lower power distance. Their teachers expressed individual traits and valued power equality in the classroom. Thus, there were significant differences in PD and IC between teachers and students. In a study about the Chinese core cultural values on communication behaviour of overseas Chinese students in the UK learning English, Abubaker, (2008) found their

PD high in their relationship with staff. They scored a medium level of uncertainty avoidance and weak masculinity (affecting the only achievement with weak gender effect) from the survey response. This result demonstrated that the Chinese students carried the high PD from their culture to the classroom learning environment of UK. Although not directly discussed, elements of PD were found to influence questioning power of Indonesian students as reported by Mahmud, (2015). Out of 46 questions asked by undergraduate students of an Indonesian state university, 40 were referral types, requiring detailed answers. About 67% liked to ask questions. About 90% wanted to ask questions because they did not know the answers to these questions. However, only 20% of them wanted to ask questions to their teachers, but not in the classroom. They rather preferred a face to face discussion outside the classroom. This behaviour might be because they were afraid (72%), or shy or unable to express their questions properly (68%) in the classroom which could result in their loss of face. These problems of asking questions were reflected in a study on Japanese learners in another way, as was explained by Kasuya (n.d.). He pointed out that voluntary interactions are absent in Japanese classrooms due to its high PD. This practice prevented effective language teaching in Japan. It is not easy to change what is rooted in culture. Teachers, especially those teaching English, need to be aware of the cultural differences between Japan and the countries where the target language is spoken. The functions of culture are conducted through language. Teaching is an activity firmly fixed with culturally bound assumptions on students and teachers. Thus, culture affects teacher responsibility and classroom interaction. The communicative approach is critical for second language learning as it needs an interactive process, especially in small groups. Interaction modifications like meaning negotiation further accelerate the language learning process. The best language students in South-East Asian countries learn by interaction even if it is not practised in classrooms. Many Japanese teachers learned English through a traditional Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) and sometimes, they too have difficulty in communicating in English. In high PD cultures, deductive approaches like GTM are used. In low PD countries, inductive approaches (communicative approach) are used. Japanese teachers may not be comfortable using inductive approaches if they were trained by deductive methods. According to Fisher and Waldrup, (1999) the most consistent predictors of teacher-student interpersonal behaviour were: collaboration, deference, competition, teacher authority and modelling scales.

In country comparisons involving a high PD country (China) and a low PD country (Netherlands), the effect of PD on non-verbal cues of university students was investigated by Mui, Goudbeek, Swerts, and van der Wijst, (2013) using a gaming context. Chinese students showed greater submission than Dutch students in their non-verbal behaviour. The cultural difference was more pronounced when the opponent was a professor rather than a fellow student. Santilli and Miller, (2011) tested both symmetrical (immediacy of best friend) and asymmetrical (immediacy of a teacher) power conditions among student samples from Kenya, USA, and Brazil. There was effect for gender and PD on non-verbal communications. Under symmetrical power conditions, women used more non-verbal immediacy than men. There was no gender difference in the case of asymmetrical power distance. The authors do not explain any country difference in this regard. Observing that PD can cause misunderstanding in ESL classrooms, Nelson, (2000) discusses how the ESL classes in low and high PD cultures can be handled effectively. In the studies of Badri, Amani-Saribaglou, Ahrari, Jahadi, and Mahmoudi, (2014) using a causal model based on an Iranian sample, path analysis showed that basic psychological needs and intrinsic motivation had a positive effect on academic achievement. PD

and uncertainty avoidance negatively affected basic psychological needs, but femininity influenced psychological needs positively. As a fulfilment of basic psychological needs was positively related to academic performance, high PD could be regarded as negatively related to academic performance. There was no significant effect of collectivism.

Using a questionnaire survey administered by 14 high school EFL teachers on their 436 students in Turkey, Cetin and Dogan, (2014) note that students perceived experienced teachers as more cooperative than fresh teachers. The influence of behaviours by old and new teachers did not differ significantly. The way the students perceived their teachers influenced their attitude towards the course and the teacher. Out of the eight behaviour variables listed, the variables: leadership, helpful/friendly, understanding and student freedom can be linked to classrooms in lower PD situations or teachers using better teaching methodologies to handle EFL classes in high PD contexts. The absence of difference between new and experienced teachers in influencing students could be due to the high PD of Turkey, in which teachers are role models, whether old or new. All the characteristics of teacher-student relationships in high PD cultures affect the influential relationship. Close relationships, cooperation and care with influence and direction and ability to control the class with tolerant authority can promote the teacher-student relationship well. Even non-verbal communication like positioning in the centre of the class, standing and eye contact and other behaviours like a clear voice, and short verbal instructions are helpful. Proximity is promoted by trusting students, allowing them the freedom to express, willingness to explain when they do not understand, and patience are also favourable points in this regard. These qualities are more related to lower PD culture. It is interesting to note that in a high PD country like Turkey, the EFL teachers assessed their style to be low PD.

Experiences of an English Language Teacher (ELT) in Japan in terms of PD were reported in Hadley, (2001). The existence of hierarchical relationships among students was a major problem. A strictly stereotyped situation was non-existent. Global influences caused the shift in Japanese educational culture from a high PD type towards lower PD culture. This process resulted in the presence of elements of both cultures in classrooms. The susceptibility of Japanese classrooms to influences of low PD was higher compared to some other high PD Asian countries. On the other hand, the influence of high PD of native teachers, teaching methods and materials acted as bottlenecks. The author discussed the current tilt towards low PD structure in ELT classrooms with literature support. The author herself adapted her low PD practices to the high PD practices of Japan in a number of ways.

In another study on the interaction between students from a collectivist country, South Korea, and an EFL teacher from an individualistic culture, Yoo, (2014) notes that reflective teaching and a flexible approach with respect to the context was the best method. Here, the author narrated her sole experience of EFL teaching in the two different cultural contexts, and the authors' conclusions are based on their first-hand experiences. This study also lacked any attempt to quantify the relationship between a PD approach and EFL student learning outcomes.

Lagas, Heijkant, Printzipa, and Jørgensen, (2007) measured the relationship between students' individual beliefs on power distance and their perception of teachers by sampling students from schools in the US and Hungary. They found that there was no relationship between individual student beliefs about PD and their perception of teachers. This could mean that students (especially those without any international exposure) may be unaware of PD as an

influencing factor in their classrooms. They might not have given much thought to the high PD styles used by their teachers as it was the only approach they have ever seen.

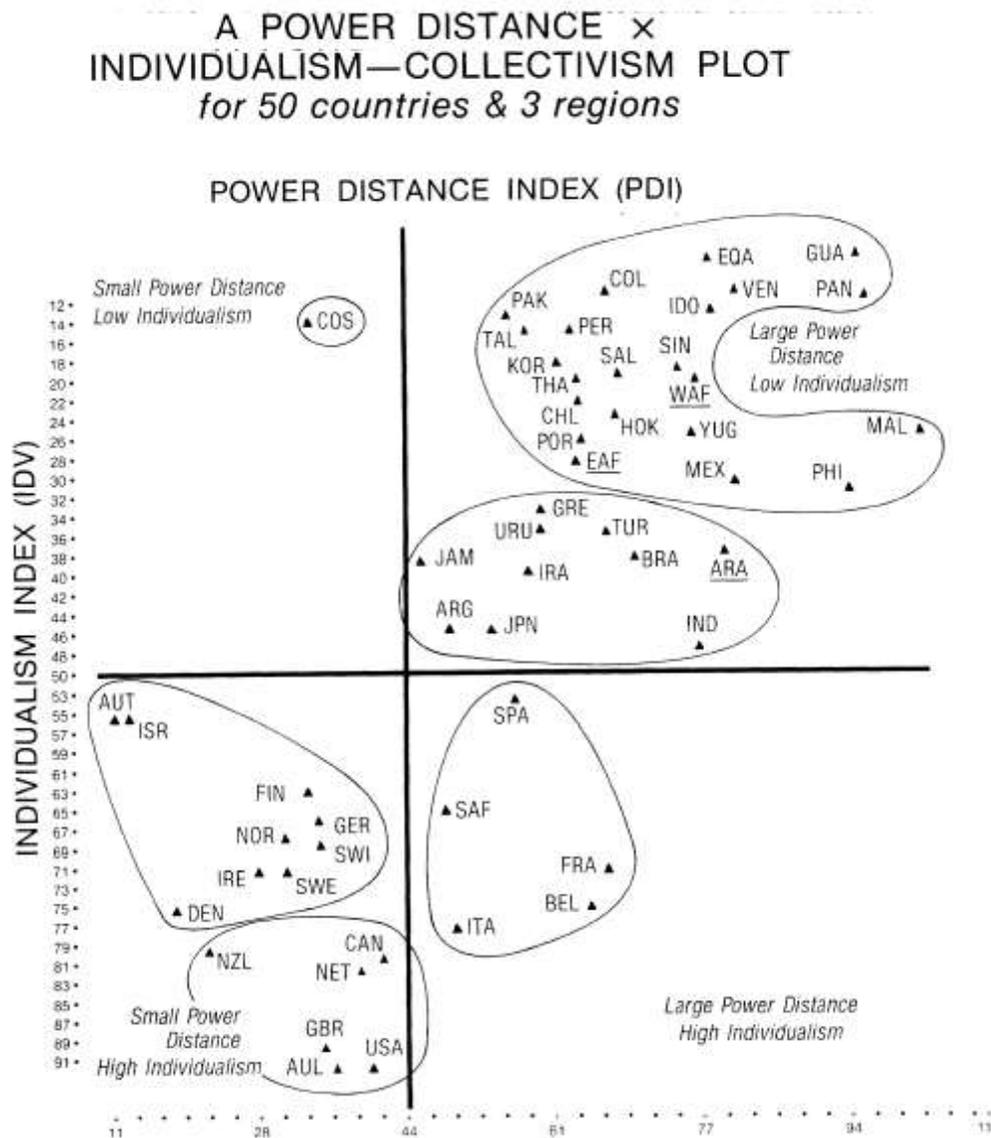
Based on the results of a survey on 1900 Indonesian school students of maths and English, and 55 teachers, Maulanaa, Opendakker, den Brok, and Bosker, (2011) reported a positive inter-personal relationship of students with their teachers in line with the high PD and collective culture of Indonesia. Conflicts between teachers and students do occur sometimes due to the unequal power relations between them. However, the ultimate control is with teachers due to high PD. Teacher-centred rather than the participative teaching of maths and English also indicated the same cultural pattern. The influence was more dominant than proximity with respect to student motivation. Thus the higher the cooperation and dominance by teachers, the higher is the student motivation for learning. However, the relatively higher rating for drudgery and repression in the survey response is indicative some problems in some Indonesian classrooms.

More formalised email communications were noticed by Bjørge, (2007) when students from high PD sent emails to their teachers. This implies that the high PD culture of the country and classrooms reflected in the use of technology by the stakeholders.

Zhang, (2005) studied on the apprehensions of Chinese college students on classroom communications. He obtained significant positive correlations for student-level PD and student perceptions of humour orientation of instructor with classroom communication apprehension. However, multiple regression analysis showed student level PD as the only predictor of classroom communication apprehension. Perceived tutor verbal and non-verbal immediacy had no effect. This implies that any changes in the PD between student and teacher have the potential to bring about a change in classroom communication apprehension. This can possibly lead to better student learning outcomes.

In the virtual classroom settings of distance education, the Arab teaching staff of English in a Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) university may feel lost as they are unable to get first-hand knowledge on whether the students are attending, understanding and whether they are recording. The absence of transparency in online tests is also viewed with suspicion by these teachers. These reactions can be related to the high PD cultural background of the country (Elyas & Basalamah, 2012).

Fewer studies are available on the sole effect of IC or the combined effect of both PD and IC. There is some relationship between PD and IC. Large PD with low individualism is observed in the case of Guatemala, Panama, Ecuador and Venezuela. On the other hand, although PD is large in the case of Belgium and France, they are also highly individualistic. Latin European countries of France, Italy and Belgium are large PD countries but with a high level of individualism. Collectivist countries are always large PD cultures, which especially applies to developing countries (Hofstede, 1983). This is explained in Figure 2 reproduced from Hofstede, (1983). From Figure 2, it would appear that changing PD without affecting IC or the other way is difficult.



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Figure2. Power distance versus individualism/collectivism of 50 countries and 3 regions (Hofstede, 1983)

The benefits of introducing a drama-based pedagogy observed by Donnery, (2009) seem to be primarily due to the increased communication and cooperation reducing the PD in the high PD Japanese traditional EFL classroom. This method was found to be compatible with the existing traditional and cultural educational systems of Japan. The results show that it is possible to integrate methods to reduce PD in EFL learning environment. This possibility was demonstrated, although in a sample of 69 students by Tananuraksakul, (2013), methods of PD reduction simultaneous with positive reinforcement can boost the confidence of EFL learners in oral communication and positive attitudes towards their own accents. These methods are also useful in developing and enhancing their confidence in their own abilities of speaking English.

Thus, teachers can reduce cultural power distance in a listening and speaking class, using methods like calling students by anickname instead of thefirst name and complimenting them when they make an effort to speak English. The implication can also extend to other EFL contexts with high cultural PD, such as Korean and Japanese in that PD reduction and positive reinforcement can gradually build up students' confidence in speaking English. Being an exploratory work, the low samples size is excusable.

In second and foreign language learning contexts, technology (mobile phones) was the most important factor shaping culture in the survey undertaken byViberg and Grönlund, (2013) on a total of 345 students in China and Sweden. Notably, Hofstede cultural dimensions could not explain the differences in mobile-assisted language learning attitudes. Sweden is a low PD, highly individualistic country and China is a high PD, highly collectivist country. It seems, the very use of mobile phones, a technology which connects people and enhances communication and collaboration, decreased PD and increased individualistic tendencies in the Chinese context and brought it nearer to Sweden with respect to PD and IC. Such a possibility may explain the absence of explaining the power of Hofstede factors for mobile-assisted learning attitudes. Thus, use of technologies like mobiles may be another method for reducing PD in high PD classes.

In their study,Rafieyan, Sharafi-Nejad, Khavari, Damavand, and Eng, (2014) conducted a pragmatic comprehension test on 30 EFL students each at a university in South Korea and in Germany. Baseline data was obtained by doing the same procedure on two British natives an ensuring consistency through inter-rater reliability test. It was found that the EFL students in a culturally distant country like South Korea experienced greater difficulties in pragmatic comprehension than those coming from a culturally nearer country like Germany. The authors recommended the provision of opportunities for the students of English as a Foreign Language to be exposed to the culture of the target language community through cultural instruction, educational sojourn, or tele-collaborative partnership. In-classroom methods of reducing PD was not considered by the authors. Although the procedure and the validity tests justified the small sample sizes, there is need to validate the findings by other independent works.

The need for culturally appropriate pedagogy was expressed byNguyen, Terlouw, and Pilot, (2006). Learners from Confucian heritage culture (CHC) countries like China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia are known to excel in studies where group settings have been used in the pedagogy. This has been explained in terms of the collectivist culture and the Confucian emphasis on interpersonal relationships and group orientation. However, Western models of group learning have been found to be inappropriate for CHC contexts. From a Western perspective, group learning means working within a social constructivist environment. The students, use their collective knowledge and thus, may exceed the knowledge of their teacher. This brings the teacher's knowledge into question. This change of status also means non-existence of a quiet, orderly class and its replacement by various social complex situations. With respect to teacher-student relationships in high PD learning contexts, it will be difficult for a teacher to play the role of a know-it-all, above anyone else image of a teacher if mistakes are pointed out by students. Equally, it will be impossible to degrade from a superior role of a teacher to an inferior role of a facilitator.Competition rather than cooperation, resistance to group learning, Educational selection and jobs also encourage competition between students.

With respect to individualism-collectivism, the common notion that the two components are opposite to each other is questioned by the findings of Ralston, Van Thang, and Napier, (1999). They showed that North Vietnam was more individualistic than South Vietnam and South China. At the same time, North Vietnam was also most collectivist of all the five countries compared in their study. The question arising here is: if collectivism is not the opposite of individualism, what is the scope of using collectivism for group learning in high PD and highly collectivist classrooms. In that case, why CHC learners prefer to work alone, meaning more individualistic traits. Fear of losing face prevents CHC learners from volunteering ideas in their classes. Allowing a person to save face is more important than telling the truth. Thus, all those involved keep their mouths shut to save face, give face or assert face. Keeping away from controversial topics and adopting an obliging style to protect the interest of others than that of own are two indirect tactics used by highly collectivist learners. The virtue of harmony is held high in a collectivist classroom by avoiding confrontations and conflicts. Students obey the orders of the teacher to be quiet. In group learning situation, such students can only suppress their feelings, desires or claim of any authority. They tend to avoid criticising peers. These tendencies affect group interactions. Therefore, the Western approach of group learning (consisting of challenging each other's conclusions and reasoning, advocating the exertion of effort, influencing each other's efforts, striving for mutual benefit, and maintaining a moderate level of arousal) is inappropriate for high collectivist learners. The introduction of constructivist and cooperative learning approach in highly collectivist learning needs to be done carefully. These factors related to losing face may negatively influence the effectiveness of group learning. The authors cite the culturally appropriate models of pedagogy for different cultures of international students proposed by Munro-Smith, (2003- as cited by Nguyen et al, 2006), reproduced in Table 1.

Table 1. *Culturally appropriate pedagogy for students from culturally different countries in Australia (Munro-Smith, 2003)*

STRUCTURED	SELF-DIRECTED
A. Collective, high PD, high uncertainty avoidance (CHC students)	B. Collective, low PD, low uncertainty avoidance (Indian students)
C. individualistic, high PD, high uncertainty avoidance (German students)	D. Individualistic, low PD, low uncertainty avoidance (Australian students)

From a comparative study on PD of Chinese-English and non-English teachers in classroom communications, Li and Guo, (2012) found that the PD of English teachers was shorter than that of non-English teachers. The most important reason for this was their different length and depth of learning and using the English language. Thus, English became a vehicle for directing the cultural values of its users. The original cultural value was affected by the new cultural values of the language. These two types of teachers used different strategies for teaching and managing their students.

Moderately high collectivism (low individualism) and moderately high PD are characteristics of Japanese culture. However, the learners prefer individual learning style,

although they need to work in groups formed by teachers in their classrooms. Japanese learners do not have the autonomy required for distant learning. However, independent learning style is unknown to them. In collectivist societies, students learn only to pass examinations and not to acquire knowledge. Apart from student-teacher relationships, in-group relationships of students are also affected by PD (Aoki & Bray, 2007).

In the observations of Govea, (2007) student-student interaction is determined by the pedagogical opportunities allowed by the teachers within their curriculum. The Mexican-American, with a blend of individualistic and collectivistic characteristics as an assistant English teacher in Japan (ATE) working under a Japanese English teacher (JTE) with collectivist character, was emboldened to introduce highly communicative low structured classroom methods to teach English.

There is always scope for potential differences in inter-cultural communications as cultural differences are not always respected. Inter-cultural communication dynamics, often leading to conflicts, can happen between foreign English language teachers and native English language teachers and native learners. Based on Hofstede concepts, anxiety, feelings and misunderstandings can contribute to such conflicts. However, some studies have not shown significant in PD perception between foreign EFL teachers and Japanese students. As an extension to this finding Kajiura, (2009) used questionnaire survey on 13 foreign EFL teachers and nine Japanese English teachers based on Hofstede, (1983). The results showed no significant difference between them regarding PD. Most Japanese teachers had some experience of living in foreign countries of small PD. The foreign teachers also had more than 13 years of living and teaching experience in Japan. Thus, in both cases, some cultural adjustments might have taken place. Looking from this angle, choice of population and samples were not appropriate to the aim of this study. Both groups of teachers favoured combinations of student-centred and teacher-centred teaching. Thus, the original intention of evaluating conflicts and their sources between the two groups of teachers was not fulfilled by this study.

Looking at the findings on Japanese classrooms, it appears, there are two contradictory contentions. One, the students desire to study independently, which the high PD and the collectivist culture of Japan does not allow. Two, for the Japanese learners, group working is more effective due to the collectivist culture. The contradictions involved in the two contentions need to be resolved.

The success achieved by establishing a self-access centre (Japan) in terms of student autonomy was evaluated through teacher surveys by Lander, (2010). Notably, all teachers agreed on the usefulness of SAC. However, they pointed out that SAC helps only those students who are already autonomous. The teachers should understand the need for SAC and encourage students to use it. The author noted that the same students repeatedly used the SAC and no new student came to use it, proving what the teachers said. In this manner, the experiment was a failure. There should have been a pulling component to attract students to SAC and the indicator of success will be an increasing number of students till it reaches a maximum. This is proved by the author's data that 98% were willing to SAC if there was one. It also means that many students were unaware of SAC.

Categorising South Korea as a Confucian, large PD collectivist country undergoing change, Jambor, (2005) dealt with the effect of these dimensions on student-student and teacher-student relations in an second language or L2 (language different from that of the person or

country) environment. In teacher-centred class, the authority of the teacher determines the manner and extent of student-student interactions. Although students interact and help each other, there is very little dialogue. The Grammar Translation Method (GTM) used in South Korean L2 classes do not allow dialogue to encourage acquisition of oral skills. Older or senior students, especially male, dominate over other students. They are respected and determine the interactions between students. Gender separation in South Korea restricts interactions within the same gender only. If the gender of the teacher is different from that of the student, the already formal teacher-student interaction is less. It is difficult to stress on content than structure in the currently used GTM. The task of converting introvert students into extroverts is very heavy. GTM heavily stresses on grammar rules and writing styles and there is little importance on how to speak the language. The need for teachers to encourage more student-student interactions while themselves interacting more with students is stressed. However, in the current cultural setting, it is difficult to practice. The most popular Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method needs to replace GTM. The didactic approach of the teacher is vital, but may be limited by the inadequate cognitive abilities of the teacher for this purpose. The audiolingual method followed by Situational Language Teaching (SLT) before introducing CLT is suggested for L2 learning in South Korea. Hong Kong and Thailand are two countries, where CLT can be directly introduced as the two countries are exposed to English and western culture for a long time.

In a master thesis, Whalen, (2016) compared university students of USA, Turkey, Russia, China, South Africa, Vietnam, France and Finland on whether Hofstede findings on IBM can be extended to the classroom behaviours of students and teachers. A total of 625 students participated in all. National means of each item failed to support the contention of Hofstede. On the other hand, provisional support was obtained for the development of a new set of classroom cultural dimensions specifically for learning. Principal component analysis identified three such components. The author admits to the non-generalisability of the findings to a global level as the number of countries was limited. Additionally, the sample size was too low (48-64) for six out of the eight countries compared and for the remaining two countries, it was less than 200. The additional three dimensions were identified from high significant correlations of certain inter-related items in the survey questionnaire and large variations in national means and the author called them intellectual autonomy, achievement motivation, and behavioural autonomy. Student autonomy is an important aspect discussed in relation to effective language learning in many works. This has been pointed out to be very low in high PD collectivist cultures/classrooms. The author has effectively split it into two: behavioural and intellectual autonomies. Achievement motivation is an altogether a different dimension, which acts as a pull factor for language learning and learning in different ways. Achievement motivation can either promote individual learning due to the desire to be above all in competition or collaborative learning when language learning becomes a challenge for an individual approach.

Noting that Grice's theory of conversation is influenced by culture, Cutrone, (2015) applied it to the L2 English speaking ability of the Japanese in cross-cultural communications. In the context of Japanese EFL pedagogy, Grice's theory can be used as a framework for inter-cultural analysis. The author identified some issues regarding cross-cultural misunderstandings between Japanese and native English speakers. The author suggests incorporation of targeted awareness enhancing strategies in such contexts with followed up with providing opportunities to develop better conversation management techniques. There is a very little focused discussion in this article and one has to search important points.

Using a qualitative study on 19 expatriate English teachers at a Saudi university, Etri, (2015) found that these teachers applied varied contextual frames for their ELT in their individual classrooms. Their pre-existing biographical frames were useful to reduce inter-cultural sensitivity. When context and the biographical frame converge in the ELT, a circumstance of discordance was created. This work also has many vague statements and hence it is difficult to precisely decipher what the author wished to convey.

Conclusions

This review critically evaluated the research works done on power distance and individualism-collectivism in EFL and other types of English language learning.

There is more or less good agreement on what happens to teaching and learning processes and outcomes in high and low PD classrooms. However, there are some findings suggesting the simultaneous existence of both individualism and collectivism in one country like North Vietnam. In that case, individualism and collectivism have separate identities, rather than being mutually exclusive parts of a single dimension. There are some works in which Hofstede cultural dimensions could not explain observed differences in the learning environment. There are possibilities of learning-specific new sets of cultural dimensions in classrooms due to the attitudinal changes of students compared to the average culture of the general population.

In many works, a variety of approaches has been suggested for the teacher either to adapt to the culture of the classroom or to use methods of low PD and individualistic methods in high PD-collectivist classrooms in a cautious manner. CLT seems an effective alternative to GTM.

Contradictory findings have been reported on Japanese classrooms. In one, the Japanese students desire to study independently, which the high PD and the collectivist culture of Japan does not allow. In the other, group working has been found more effective for Japanese learners due to the collectivist culture. The contradictions involved in the two contentions need to be resolved through more research.

Limitations

Research works on the specific topic of PD and IC in EFL alone are very few, although these two dimensions are the most researched ones among the six dimensions of Hofstede.

Not enough details were available in many works. A few of them were very descriptive and thus it became very difficult to find out what was the real message of the paper. These problems have been pointed out in the discussions.

Methodological or interpretive problems found in some papers have been pointed out in the text.

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Dr. Abdulaziz Alshahrani is an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics, graduated from the University of Newcastle, Australia. He was admitted to the degree of MA with distinction in Applied Linguistics from the same institution. His works are related to the fields of language acquisition and the roles of the social variables. At the moment, he works as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Albaha University, in Saudi Arabia.

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