

A Comparison of Power Distance of Chinese English Teachers and Chinese Non-English Teachers in Classroom Communication

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to find out how second language learning and use affect learners' change of values by quantitatively measuring the power distance orientation of Chinese college English teachers and non-English teachers (i.e., teachers of other languages) in classroom communication. Fourteen English teachers and 12 Non-English teachers from a southern Chinese university were subjects of study; 1,172 questionnaires regarding students' perception of their teachers were collected, and 26 classes given by the subjects were observed to further compare their classroom communication. Results of ANOVA analysis showed that the power distance of English teachers was lower than that of non-English teachers, and the difference was caused by academic major, namely English or non-English. Teachers' gender and professional title displayed no significant influence on teachers' power distance score. Classroom observation results also showed that the classroom communication behaviors were different between English teachers and non-English teachers due to different power distance tendencies. It was concluded that Chinese college English teachers have been affected by Western culture contained in English due to continuous English learning and use.

Keywords: power distance, classroom communication, English teachers, non-English teachers

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Motivation

Language is an inseparable part of culture; it is "the carrier of cultural values" (Richard & Toffoli, 2009, p. 987). As such, the use of language is undoubtedly restrained and shaped by the cultural values. In fact, many studies can be found exploring how cultural values are reflected in language and influence language use (see Ting-Toomey, 2007). For example, the preference of addressing by first name reflects Americans' low power distance value, while addressing people with no kinship relations by kinship terms reflects Chinese collectivistic orientation.

If the inseparability of language and culture is universally accepted, then it follows that learning a language is learning the culture that language carries. Furthermore, it is reasonable to predict that if a person has learned a foreign language for a certain period of time and uses that language often (e.g. as a working language), his/her values should have been influenced to some extent by the target culture. To be more specific, a deviation from his/her original

cultural values is presumed to exist. Such an inference is interesting and deserves empirical investigation, since around 750 million EFL learners in the world are learning and using English (Crystal, 2003). Therefore, the present research attempts to evidence such a change.

1.2. Rationale

Considering the accessibility of the research subjects, an easy starting point is to investigate Chinese English learners' value deviation by comparing Chinese college English teachers' value with that of the non-English teachers. There are two reasons for choosing college English teachers as the subjects for study. First, college English teachers have learned English for at least 13 years¹. The length of time is an important factor causing change. Second, English is the working language of college English teachers. When people use a language, they carry the value of that language (Richard & Toffoli, 2009).

In his seminal work, Hofstede (1980) identified four dimensions, namely, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity to compare cultural values across nations. According to the studies of Bond and Hwang (1986), American culture (one of the representatives of English speaking culture) differs from Chinese culture most strongly on two dimensions, namely individualism and power distance. The individualism dimension "measures the extent to which the interests of the individual are considered to be more important than the interests of the group" (Davis, 2001, p. 230); while power distance is "an attempt to measure cultural attitudes about inequality in social relationships". It emphasizes "the emotional and social distance between people who occupy different places in a hierarchy" (Davis, 2001, p. 220). Since at school, the teacher-student relationship is a hierarchy, and power distance can easily be found in teacher-student interactions, the present study chose power distance as the value dimension to investigate. It is reasonable to predict that by exploring the teacher-student relationship and observing teacher-student classroom interactions, the values of teachers can be found and compared.

2. Literature Review

The term power distance was first introduced by the Dutch social psychologist Mauk Mulder who based his power distance theory on laboratory and field experiments with simple social structures (Mulder et al., 1971). Mulder (1977) defined *power* as "the potential to determine or direct (to a certain extent) the behavior of another person or other persons more so than the other way round," and power distance as "the degree of inequality in power between a less powerful Individual (I) and a more powerful Other (O), in which I and O belong to the same (loosely or tightly knit) social system" (p. 90). Borrowing from Mulder, Hofstede (1991) defined power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (p. 28).

¹ In China, a college English teacher's English learning experiences include at least 3 years in junior high, 3 years in senior high, 4 years in college, and 3 years for MA program (total 13 years at least). What's more, English has become a major subject in most primary schools in cities now.

Hofstede's (1980) creation is the use of Power Distance Index (PDI) to measure power distance quantitatively. His index showed that Hong Kong and Taiwan, with power index of 68 and 58 respectively, were ranked higher than English speaking countries such as the United States, Canada and Great Britain. Later, Chong, Cragin and Scherling (1983) administered the Hofstede survey in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and found a close correspondence among all Chinese samples on the power distance dimension. Therefore, it is commonly accepted that China belongs to "high-PDI" countries, while the English speaking countries belong to "low-PDI" countries.

With the different PDIs of countries and regions, Hofstede took a step back from the data and tried to describe the general societal norms that were behind the "low-PDI" and "high-PDI" syndromes. In "high-PDI" cultures, every social member expects to maintain suitable status in the society. The less powerful members have to absolutely obey the more powerful members, and the subordinates are also more satisfied with authoritative management methods. In contrast, in "low-PDI" cultures, the social members think that power inequality should be reduced to a minimum, and the subordinates try to reduce the importance of absolute obedience to the superiors. They regard people as equal in nature, and only the tasks assigned to them as different.

Hofstede (2008) further discussed the manifestation of power distance at school. In high power distance situations, teachers are treated with respect (and older teachers even more so than younger ones), and students may have to stand up when a teacher enters the room. The educational process is teacher-centered; teachers outline the intellectual paths to be followed. In the classroom, there is supposed to be a strict order, with the teacher initiating all communication. Students in class speak up only when invited to; teachers are never publicly contradicted or criticized and are treated with deference. In such a system the quality of an individual's learning is virtually exclusively dependent on the excellence of his or her teachers. In contrast, in low power distance situations, teachers are supposed to treat their students as basically equal and expect to be treated as equal by the students. The educational process is student-centered, with a premium on student initiative; students are expected to find their own intellectual paths. Students make uninvited interventions in class and are supposed to ask questions when they do not understand something. They argue with teachers and express disagreement and criticisms in front of teachers.

With regard to research studies on power distance, most of them focused on corporation and company context (Pavett & Morris, 1995; Wong & Birnbaum-More, 1994; Eylon & Au, 1999; Schramm-Nielsen, 1989; Peng, 2005; Kong, 2005; Fu, 2008). As to power distance between teachers and students, Spencer-Oatey reported on a comparative survey study of students and their tutors in Great Britain (low-PDI) and China (high-PDI) about their mutual relationships. Chinese respondents (students and tutors) described the relationship as both closer and more unequal than did the British respondents (Spencer-Oatey, 1997). Richardson & Smith (2007) investigated power distance's influence on students' media choice behavior. It was found that American students and Japanese students differ in choosing communication media to contact their professors. Specifically, American students rated e-mail significantly more likely for use than Japanese students, and Japanese rated face-to-face communication, telephone, fax, and letter as significantly more likely than did American students.

Most research on how L2/foreign language influences learners' values can be found in psychological studies. Quite a number of them investigate how bilinguals can answer differently according to the language of the questionnaire (Richard & Toffoli, 2009). For example, Botha (1968) attempted to determine whether each language used by bilinguals carries a certain set of cultural values in language in use. It was found that the value scores were significantly different when using questionnaires in different languages. For another example, Bond and Yang (1982) administered a questionnaire to bilingual Hong Kong Chinese in two language versions and found differential responses depending on the language of the questionnaire. Still another study by Zarei (2011) explored foreign language learning and its influence on learners' value orientation. The participants were two groups of English learners in Iran. Group 1 consisted of 22 male learners between 8-13 years old, who had just enrolled in an English language institute in Iran and were supposed to start an English series called *Interchange*. Group 2 involved 16 male learners between 11-15 years old, who had studied the *Interchange* series for two years. Questionnaires were distributed to the two groups who were asked to prioritize their perceptions of some cultural issues so as to rate their preference for Western items or Iranian items. The results confirmed that these two groups displayed significantly different cultural orientation, with group 1 being domestically inclined and group 2 sharply orienting toward the Western side. It was found in this research that culture as an inseparable part of language can penetrate into the language learner's modes of thinking and feeling, and eventually release as behavioral norms. However, one demerit with this research is that it only focused on language learners within the age of 8 to 15, and learners in this age are more prone to conceptualize realities through the lenses of a foreign language. More research with participants of different age range in different countries should be conducted.

The purpose of the present study is to evidence how foreign language learning influences learners' value orientation by comparing Chinese college English teachers and non-English teachers' power distance discrepancy and its manifestation in their classroom communication.

Two hypotheses are proposed for the present study.

H1: College English teachers and non-English teachers differ in their power distance value, with English teachers' power distance lower than that of the non-English teachers.

We assume that with longer time of learning and higher frequency of using English in their job assignment, college English teachers are strongly influenced by the low PDI English culture. This influence has caused deviation in power distance dimension to their native counterparts.

H2: The discrepancy in power distance value of English and non-English teachers are manifested in their classroom communication.

We assume that some low PDI characteristics in school situation described by Hofstede (2008) can be observed in English classes while High PDI features can be found in non-English classes.

3. Methods

According to Hofstede (1980), power distance can be quantitatively measured by asking questions regarding the less powerful part's perception toward the relationship with the more powerful part. Therefore, the teacher's power distance value can be quantitatively measured by asking students' (the less powerful) perception toward the teacher-student relationship. Thus, a questionnaire that can well reflect students' perception of power distance toward their teachers should be designed first.

Moreover, since personal values are mirrored in communication behaviors, a teacher's power distance value is believed to manifest in classroom communication. That is to say, if discrepancy exists in power distance value between English and non-English teachers, differences in classroom communication behaviors are detectable. Hence, to capture the cases of value deviation in actual communication, a classroom observation scale which can be used to record the teachers' classroom communication must be created.

In the following part of this section, the rationales for the design of the above two data collection tools are presented and the data collection process and data analysis method are explained in detail.

3.1. Questionnaire Design

According to Hofstede (2008), power distance is the degree of acceptability of the less powerful social members toward power inequality in one social group or organization. This means that the best way to measure power distance is to ask the less powerful ones' perception toward the more powerful ones. This further implies that teachers' power distance tendencies should better be measured through students' perception toward their teachers.

Among all the questionnaire items asked in the IBM surveys of the employees' personal values related to work, which covered 72 national subsidiaries at two points in time around 1968 and 1972, Hofstede chose three questionnaire items for exploring power distance differences between countries. The first questionnaire item is "How frequently, in your experience, does the following problem occur: Employees being afraid to express disagreement with their managers?", and the other two items were all about superiors' decision-making styles. One was a description of four types of decision-making behavior by managers that employees perceived from their boss's actual type. Another one was a description of four types of decision-making behavior by managers which employees preferred in their boss. These three questionnaire items illustrate two perspectives, namely subordinates' fear and superiors' decision-making styles.

Borrowing from Hofstede's three power distance questionnaire items, the questionnaire of the present study included: students' fear and teachers' decision-making styles. Besides, based on Hofstede's (2008) descriptions about the differences at school, the study added three other perspectives which can help identify teachers' power distance in the classroom, i.e. teacher-student relation, teachers' classroom language and teacher-centeredness or student-centeredness. Eventually, 14 questions were included in the questionnaire and the distribution of them is shown in Table 1. The questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

Table 1. The Overall Structure of the Questionnaire

Question Item Number	Perspectives	Culture Dimension
1.2.3.4	(1) Teacher-student relation	Power Distance
6.7.8	(2) Whether students are afraid to propose different opinions, ask for explanations and keep their own opinions.	
10.11.14	(3) Teachers' decision-making styles	
12.13	(4) Teachers' classroom language	
5. 9	(5) Teacher-centeredness or student-centeredness	

3.2. Observation Scale Design

In class, the teacher-student relationship can be observed through the teacher's rapport management strategies. According to Spencer-Oatey (2007), five interrelated domains play important roles in the management of rapport, namely, illocutionary domain, discourse domain, participation domain, stylistic domain and non-verbal domain. Inspired by Spencer-Oatey, the observation scale for the present study was designed to cover these five parts. The observation scale is included in Appendix B.

Observation scales should include enough information and be easy to use. Thus conceived, not all strategies in Spencer-Oatey's five domains are observed. In other words, only those observable ones that are able to reflect teachers' power distance tendencies are recorded. The following explains contents of the scale in detail.

In the illocutionary domain, attention is paid to speech acts. Among many kinds of speech acts, the observation scale only records requests made by the teachers because it is observed that most teachers often use questions to guide and connect their teaching process, and questions are a subclass of request (Searle, 2003). Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) divided request strategies into three directness levels: (a) direct strategies, such as "Clean up that mess"; (b) conventionally indirect strategies, such as "Could you clean up the kitchen, please?" and (c) non-conventionally indirect strategies, such as "You have left the kitchen in a right mess". These three levels of indirectness may indicate the degree of teachers' power distance in the classroom. That is, the more direct the request strategy, the higher the power distance.

In the discourse domain, the focus is on the opening speeches of teachers. With opening speeches, it can be found whether a teacher sets paths for students and controls learning strictly or guides students to the path of learning. During our pilot observation, the openings of the classes showed some differences between English classes and non-English classes.

In the participation domain, the amount of talk given by the teachers and students respectively within a class hour is measured. Moreover, the quantity of questions, question types (wh-question or yes/no-question) and targets (questions to the whole class or to individual students) are recorded since they can show how much students participate in classroom communication and how much teachers control or lead during the teaching process.

In the stylistic domain, teachers' humor is counted. We assume that in low power distance classes, the style of teachers' talk is more relaxed, whereas in high power distance classes, it sounds more serious and strict, because "in high power distance culture, there is strict order in the classroom" (Hofstede, 2008, p. 100).

In the non-verbal domain, the present study adopted Hall's Proxemics Theory (Hall, 1959), which divides people's physical distance into intimate distance, personal distance, social distance, and public distance. According to Cooper, teachers' non-verbal communication behaviors have great influence on the relationship between teachers and students. Furthermore, non-verbal communication could coordinate with verbal communication to have special accessorial effect at school (Cooper, 1988). It is predicted in this study that if a teacher always keeps in public distance with the students, the teacher's power distance tendency is more likely high; while in a low power distance class, a teacher will reduce his/her physical distance with the students to create a warm atmosphere.

3.3. Sampling and Respondents

The university chosen for the present study is a comprehensive university with 16 different colleges. It has a College of Foreign Studies, and other colleges of both liberal arts and sciences; the College of Foreign Studies is the source for English teachers who are responsible for offering English courses to both English majors and non-English majors. Non-English teachers were chosen from College of Chinese Language and Literature, College of Politics and Administration, College of Mathematics and College of Chemistry & Chemical Engineering. These four colleges are typical and traditional colleges in both liberal arts and sciences, and teachers in these colleges hold typical Chinese cultural and educational values. When choosing teachers from colleges, we followed the Stratified Random Sampling method to have a complete teacher sample with different gender and different professional titles. Besides the major differences in academic majors, gender and professional title were also taken into consideration to see whether these factors have significant influence on teachers' power distance. In total, 26 teachers were selected and their distribution is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' Sampling (N=26)

Title/Gender \ Major	English Teacher		Non-English Teacher	
	male	female	male	female
Professor		1	4	
Associate Professor	1	3	2	2
Lecturer	2	7	1	3

The classes taught by the selected teachers were randomly chosen. For each selected teacher, we chose one class to observe. In other words, observation was made in 26 classes, each lasting 40 minutes. Finally, questionnaires were distributed to students in the observed 26 classes.

Totally 1,190 questionnaires were distributed and 1,172 were returned. The return rate was 98.49%². Table 3 illustrates the distribution of the questionnaires.

² In order to avoid language influence on responding effect (as mentioned in the literature review of this article), the questionnaire was written in Chinese. The English version provided is only for the presentation of this article.

Table 3. Questionnaire Distribution

	College of Foreign Studies	College of Politics and Administration		College of Chinese Language and Literature		College of Chemistry & Chemical Engineering		College of Mathematics	
	EC	EC	NEC	EC	NEC	EC	NEC	EC	NEC
Questionnaire Distributed (1190)	113	72	148	52	138	120	175	162	210
Questionnaire Returned (1172)	113	70	144	52	135	118	171	160	209

(EC = English Class; NEC=Non-English Class)

3.4. Data Treatment

The data collected from the questionnaire were first tested through homogeneity reliability analysis to prove the reliability of the questionnaire. The reliability index Cronbach *alpha* was 0.6915, indicating that the questionnaire item consistency is acceptable. Then the data were processed through Univariate Analysis of Variance to determine the effects of three independent variables (major, gender and professional title) to the dependent variable — teachers' power distance.

The observation scales were analyzed by classification and computation of the data manually.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Findings from Questionnaire and Discussion

The results of Univariate Analysis of Variance show that the mean score of non-English teachers' power distance is 44.752, and that of the English teachers is 41.361. This proves that non-English teachers' power distance tends to be higher than that of English teachers, as shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4. Power Distance Mean Scores of Non-English Teachers and English Teachers

Major	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non-English Teachers	44.752	.302	44.112	45.392
English Teachers	41.361	.324	40.674	42.048

Table 5. Summary of Results of ANOVA on Data from Questionnaire

	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta. Squared
Major	55.474	62.880	.000*	.797
Professional Title	1.900	2.154	.149	.212
Gender	1.855	2.103	.166	.116
Major*Professional Title	.140	.159	.854	.020
Major*Gender	.663	.752	.399	.045
Gender*Professional Title	.809	.917	.353	.054
Major*Gender*Professional Title	2.290	2.596	.127	.140
a. R Squared = .877 (Adjusted R Squared= .807)				

Table 5 shows that English teachers' power distance is significantly lower than that of non-English teachers'. English or non-English major has significant influence on teachers' power distance ($F=62.880$, Mean Square= 55.474 , Sig. =.000). As a result, the hypothesis that English teachers' power distance is significantly lower than that of the non-English teachers' power distance is accepted, and the effect size *Eta Square*=.797 (>0.5) indicates that the influence of major has a strong effect on the power distance of teachers in the classroom communication. Additionally, the a. R Squared = .877 (Adjusted R Squared= .807) indicates that the model has explained 80.7% of the total variation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the different power distance is mainly caused by major difference, i.e. whether the teacher majors in English or non-English.

Results show both teachers' professional title ($F=2.154$, Mean Square= 1.900 , Sig.=.149) and gender ($F=2.103$, Mean Square= 1.855 , Sig.=.166) have no significant influence on the teachers' power distance. What's more, the teachers' gender and professional title together have no mutual effect on the difference of teachers' power distance ($F=.159$, Mean Square=.140, Sig. =.854). The teachers' major and gender together also have no significant mutual effect on the teachers' power distance ($F=.752$, Mean Square=.663, Sig.=.399), and the teachers' major and professional title together have no mutual effect on the teachers' power distance ($F=.917$, Mean Square=.809, Sig. =.353). Finally, teachers' major, gender and professional titles have no mutual effect ($F=2.596$, Mean Square= 2.290 , Sig. =.127) either.

To conclude, the results support the first hypothesis (H1). Language is the only factor here which causes the value deviation. Gender and professional title have no influence on power distance score difference. However, we should be cautious to generalize this conclusion to future studies. The special sample formation of the present study should be taken into consideration. It is a common phenomenon in China that female English teachers largely outnumber male English teachers. Therefore, when selecting the English teacher sample for the present study from the College of Foreign Studies, due to limited time and effort and other constraints such as the fixed teaching schedule, we were able to reach 11 female English teachers and 3 male English teachers; when choosing non-English teachers we selected 7 men and 5 women. A report from Lam et al. (2010) showed that male teachers are more authoritarian, and prefer to control pupils' learning; while female teachers prefer to set tasks according to pupils learning stage, and encourage pupils to discover for themselves the meaning of new vocabulary. Lam et al.'s study indicates male teachers have more High-PDI features while female teachers possess more Low-PDI characteristics. Therefore, the imbalance in distribution of gender in the English

teacher sample (11 female to 3 male) may contribute partly to the lower power distance value result.

Another point that needs to be mentioned here is the age factor. In China, normally professional title has positive correlation with age. Although the present study illustrates that professional title bears no significant influence on power distance deviation, future research design should be cautious on this aspect. According to Hofstede (2008), younger teachers are more equal to students and have lower power distance value than the older ones. Since the present study focused on language influence, gender and age had been treated as minor variables when designing the research. Further research on the relationship of gender, age and power distance is recommended.

4.2. Findings from Observation and Discussion

4.2.1 Illocutionary Domain: Request Strategies

We totally collected 74 requests from English teachers and non-English teachers, in which 37 requests were in English and the other 37 requests were in Chinese. They were categorized into three different levels of directness/indirectness strategies according to Blum-Kulka's classification (1989) and the percentages of each strategy are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Teachers' Request Strategies in Classroom Communication

Request Strategies	Percentage in the Data	
	English Teachers' Requests (N=37)	Non-English Teachers' Requests (N=37)
Direct strategies	24.3% (N=9)	56.8% (N=21)
Conventionally indirect strategies	75.6% (N=28)	43.2% (N=16)
Non- conventionally indirect strategies	0	0

Table 6 shows that the English teachers tended to use more conventionally indirect strategies to conduct requests as this kind of strategies accounts for 75.6% of overall English requests. They used questions like "Would you please explain the main idea of this paragraph?" and "Can you give me the reason?" to express their requests. Meanwhile, the direct requests used account for only 24.3%. On the other hand, non-English teachers used more direct strategies than the conventionally indirect strategies. The direct strategies used account for 56.8% of the total 37 Chinese requests, and the conventionally indirect strategies used account for 43.2%.

Blum-Kulka and House (1989) found that one of the most important factors influencing a request's level of directness was the speaker's relative dominance. Baxter (1984) found that "persons with power used less politeness than less powerful persons" (p. 427). A recent study done by Ho (2010) reported that an authoritative leader tends to use imperative (direct way) mitigated by a politeness marker "please" to express request (2010). Earlier Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) also reported that English native speakers tended to acknowledge the addressee's autonomy by inviting them to comply with the request and minimize impositions typically through the use of conventional indirectness and internal mitigating devices. In the

present study, it was observed that English teachers tended to use more conventionally indirect strategies than non-English teachers. Hence it can be concluded that English teachers have possessed some English cultural characteristics.

4.2.2. Discourse Domain

From all the opening speeches collected by the observation scale, two features of non-English teachers' high power distance tendency in discourse domain were noted and one feature of English teachers' low power distance tendency was generalized.

Firstly non-English teachers usually began lessons with the words like “*shang ge xing qi, wo men tao lun le* (In the last period, we discussed)...” “*jin tian wo men yao xue xi* (Today we will learn)...” and “*qing ba shu fan dao* (Please turn to page)...*wo men jin tian yao shang wan di er ding li* (we will finish Theorem 2 today).” These expressions were very common ways for non-English teachers to begin lessons. Their openings came into the content of the lessons directly at the very beginning of the class, and they had certain rules to start the teaching process or set an order for students to learn. According to Hofstede (2008), in high power distance classes, “teachers outline the intellectual paths to be followed” (p. 100). The educational process is teacher-centered. The direct instructions in the opening speeches of non-English teachers show very clearly the path that students should follow.

Secondly, in the high power distance classroom, teachers are treated with respect; students may have to stand up when a teacher enters the room. Three cases of this kind were found in the non-English classes.

Monitor: *qi li* (Stand up)!

Teacher: *tong xue men hao* (Good morning, students)!

Students (bow): *lao shi hao* (Good morning, teacher)!

While in English classes, teachers began lessons by proposing some questions for students to think or discuss like “Have you ever thought of the most important five things in you life? Please think about and list them on a piece of paper and discuss with your classmates.” According to observations, most English teachers did not go to the text learning directly but began with some background knowledge, related questions and/or activities with the help of multimedia tools such as pictures, audio or video episodes and so on. Although it may be the requirement of language learning, it also strongly shows that English teachers are more likely to guide instead of set students to the path of learning, which is an indicator of low power distance value.

4.2.3. Participation Domain

4.2.3.1. The Teachers' Talk and Quantity of Questions

On average, in a non-English class, the teacher's talk occupied around 2/3 of the class hour, and most of the communication was initiated by the teacher, which is in accordance with high power distance features that “teachers initiate all communication in class” (Hofstede, 2008, p. 107), and they are the communicative center of the class. In an English class, the average

teacher's talk was around 1/2, and the interaction between the teacher and students was more obvious. English teachers mainly used questions and discussion to make the teaching processes smooth.

The average quantity of questions asked by an English teacher within a class hour was about 7, whereas the average quantity of questions asked by a non-English teacher within a class hour was about 4.9. The non-English teachers said more but asked fewer questions, so they were the communication center and the main speakers in the classroom. In comparison, in English classes, students had much more chances to speak than in the non-English classes. As in low power distance classes, they were expected to ask questions and express their opinions.

4.2.3.2. Question Types and Targets

The observation scale divides questions into two types: wh- questions and yes/no questions. The non-English teachers asked about 1.7 wh- questions and 3.25 yes/no questions during a class hour. Both the wh-questions and yes/no questions were directed to the whole class, and sometimes the non-English teachers would answer the questions by themselves.

The English teachers asked about 4.6 wh-questions and 2.4 yes/no questions within a class hour. They encouraged students to answer the questions voluntarily and prompted group discussions among students. They did not directly give right or wrong judgment to the students' answers, and the students could reserve their own opinions and would propose different opinions to their classmates or even sometimes to the teachers.

Wh-questions require more responses from students than the yes/no questions, therefore can elicit more interactions between the teacher and students. If a teacher asks more wh-questions, it shows that he/she expects more involvement from the students, and the class is more student-centered.

The findings indicate that English teachers' power distance is lower than that of non-English teachers, as in English classes, students are asked more wh-questions, and they are given chances to argue with teachers, and to express disagreement and criticisms in front of teachers. Non-English teachers' power distance is relatively high because the non-English teachers initiate all communication, and students in class speak up only when invited to.

4.2.4. Stylistic Domain

The observation results show that humor was used by both English teachers and non-English teachers to smooth the classroom atmosphere and to reduce the distance between teachers and students. But English teachers were more likely to do so. Among the 12 non-English teachers, only 3 of them used humor or jokes during a class hour, and the total use frequency was only 5; while among the 14 English teachers, 6 of them used humor or jokes, and the total frequency of use was 16. It has been observed that in non-English classes, the teachers' talk was plain and formal, while in English classes, the teachers' talk was more casual and informal. It is commonly accepted that casual and informal style indicates a more equal teacher-student relationship.

4.2.5. Non-verbal Domain

When observing teachers' non-verbal behaviors, we found that in high power distance non-English classes, the teachers stood in front of the class or behind the platform during most of a class hour. The distance between teachers and students was kept within the public distance/zone. While in an English class, the English teacher tried to approach the students 2-3 times within a 40-minute period from public distance to social distance/ zone or even personal distance (according to the proxemics categories introduced by Hall, 1959).

Although till now, we have not come across studies reporting positive correlations between space and power distance, knowledge about the Chinese culture tells us that the more powerful usually enjoy more space. For example, general managers usually occupy larger offices and the emperor in ancient China used the distance between him and the ministers to indicate power. Therefore, in the Chinese context, it is reasonable to say that a teacher who tries to approach the students in class treats students as more equal than those who always stand or sit on the platform to oversee students.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to prove that continuous English language learning and use can change the learners' value orientation.

Two hypotheses were raised. Hypothesis 1 that English teachers' power distance is lower than that of non-English teachers is supported by the research data. Observation results also show that English teachers and non-English teachers chose different strategies to manage their relations with students. English teachers used more indirect requests, more wh-questions, more humor or jokes and gave more support to students, whereas non-English teachers used more direct requests, more yes/no questions, less humor or jokes and gave less support to students. The results are in accordance with Hypothesis 2, i.e., the discrepancy in power distance value between English teachers and non-English teachers has been manifested in their classroom communication.

A major cause behind the different power distance value between English teachers and non-English teachers is the different length and depth of learning and using the English language. The reasons are given as follows:

1) The 26 subjects were all chosen from the same university, therefore, they share the same cultural environment. The major difference between the English teacher group and the non-English teacher group is the different length and depth of learning and using English. Language hence plays a large and significant role in the totality of culture. Far from being a technique of communication, it is itself a way of directing the cultural values of its speakers. To study a language is also to study the culture of a language. By studying and using a language, the learners' original cultural values are affected by the new cultural values of a language. Yang and Bond (1980, cited in Richard & Toffoli, 2009) reported that "as people master a second language they adopt some of the cultural values related to it, meaning they develop a form of acculturation. When they use this second language, they develop a thought pattern, which is strongly influenced by the values associated with the culture of this language and

accommodation could ensue” (p. 989).

2) Analysis of the data has shown that gender and professional title (largely reflecting age in China) have no significant influence on a person’s power distance value.

3) Although contents of teaching may influence a teacher’s communication behavior, for example, language teaching itself requires more interaction between the teacher and students, and science teaching relies more on the teacher’s presentation, the teaching design actually mainly depends on the teacher’s belief of teaching and learning. In other words, a teacher’s classroom communication behaviors are largely determined by his/her value. A science teacher with low power distance value will pass more decision-making rights to the students, and the students will feel free to express different opinions.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Chinese college English teachers’ power distance is lower than that of non-English teachers due to their continuous learning and use of English. Such a divergence is well mirrored in their classroom communication behaviors.

6. Future Research

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study investigating the relationship between foreign language learning and power distance value change. In China, English has become one of the three key compulsory subjects (Chinese, Math and English) from the first year at urban primary schools. The influence of English culture on Chinese English learners through English learning is a significant issue in intercultural communication. The study reported here is exploratory in nature. Nonetheless, follow-up studies are necessary to verify this conclusion by employing larger samples from different universities in China. Moreover, the study can also be extended to high school teachers and primary school teachers to see whether the same conclusion can be drawn. The meaning of these possible extended investigations lies in discovering the influence of the length of time of learning English on value change. Other possible research can be the investigation of the influence of other foreign languages, such as Japanese, on the value change of the learners. Besides quantitative methods, qualitative approaches such as interview and narrative inquiry could be used to compare and record the value change. All in all, the purpose here to highlight the nature of this research is to interest other scholars in probing deeper into the study of the influence of foreign language learning and use on cultural value change.

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Appendices

Appendix A

教师权力距离调查问卷

院系： 班级： 课程名称： 任课教师：

本调查仅作研究之用，不构成任何实质性的评估，请同学们根据本门课的任课教师与本课程课堂实际情况作答，谢谢合作。

1. 你的老师很平易近人。
A. 非常同意 B. 同意 C. 不确定 D. 不同意 E. 非常不同意
2. 你是如何称呼老师的？
A. 老师 B. 以（姓+老师）称呼 C. 英文名字/只以名相称 D. 以（姓）哥/（姓）姐
此类的称呼相称 E. 昵称
3. 你的老师如何称呼你？
A. 座位号或其他 B. 全名 C. 以（小+X）称呼 D. 英文名字/只以名相称 E. 昵称
4. 你觉得你的老师是严肃的，权威的。
A. 非常同意 B. 同意 C. 不确定 D. 不同意 E. 非常不同意
5. 你会主动回答老师的问题。
A. 几乎没有 B. 偶尔 C. 有时 D. 经常如此 E. 非常普遍
6. 你会对老师的观点提出不同意见。
A. 从不 B. 偶尔如此 C. 有时如此 D. 经常如此 E. 总是如此
7. 在课堂上，你会主动向老师提问，要求进一步讲解你自己不太清楚的知识。
A. 几乎没有 B. 偶尔 C. 有时 D. 经常如此 E. 非常普遍
8. 当老师不同意你的意见时，老师允许你保留自己的意见。
A. 几乎没有 B. 偶尔 C. 有时 D. 经常如此 E. 非常普遍
9. 在课堂上，老师大部分时间或者几乎一个人从头讲到尾。
A. 几乎没有 B. 偶尔 C. 有时 D. 经常如此 E. 非常普遍
10. 老师直接对你的回答给予“对”、“错”或“是”、“否”的评价。
A. 几乎没有 B. 偶尔 C. 有时 D. 经常如此 E. 非常普遍
11. 老师对你的答案不马上进行评论，而是邀请其他同学发表观点。
A. 从不 B. 偶尔如此 C. 有时如此 D. 经常如此 E. 总是如此
12. 老师在考察学生的反馈时会说“你们明白了吗？懂了吗？”(Do you understand?)
A. 几乎没有 B. 偶尔 C. 有时 D. 经常如此 E. 非常普遍
13. 老师在考察学生的反馈时会说“我讲清楚了吗？”(Am I clear?)
A. 从不 B. 偶尔如此 C. 有时如此 D. 经常如此 E. 总是如此
14. 老师在做决定之前，会征求同学们的意见
A. 从不 B. 偶尔如此 C. 有时如此 D. 经常如此 E. 总是如此

（说明：统计时按Likert 量表对ABCDE 五个选项分别赋予1-5的分值。比如第13题，A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, E=1；有些题项在统计时会根据内容重新赋值，比如第9题，A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5）

English Version**Teachers' Power Distance in Classroom**

College: Class: Course Name: Teacher's Name:

The following questions are designed for research only. The answers have nothing to do with any teacher or student assessment. Please feel free to answer all the questions according to your own perception.

1. Your teacher is approachable.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Uncertain D. Disagree E. Strongly disagree
2. How do you address your teacher in the classroom?
A. Sir./ Madam B. Ms. X/Mr. X C. English name/Given name D. Family name +brother/sister E. Nickname
3. How does your teacher address you in class?
A. Student number B. Full name C. Xiao X D. English name/Given name E. Nickname
4. You think that your teacher is authoritative.
A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Uncertain D. Disagree E. Strongly disagree
5. You want to answer the teacher's questions voluntarily.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
6. You will give different opinions to your teacher in class
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
7. You will ask for further explanation if you do not understand.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
8. Your teacher allows you to keep your own opinion.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
9. The teacher may speak most of the time or all the time during the class.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
10. Your teacher makes direct judgments to your answer with "Right" or "Wrong".
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
11. Your teacher does not make right or wrong judgment to your answer and asks for other students' opinion.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
12. Your teacher asks you "Do you understand?" when he/she wants to get feedback from the students.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
13. Your teacher asks you "Am I clear?" when he/she wants to get feedback from the students.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always
14. Your teacher will ask for your advice before he/she makes decisions.
A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always

(Note 1: Ratings are based on a 5-point Likert-type scale. For example, Item 13, A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, E=1; while some items will be recoded when analyzing. For example, Item 9, A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5. Note 2: For accurate understanding of all the questions, we use the Chinese version only when doing the survey because all the respondents are Chinese college students.)

Appendix B**Observation Scale****Part 1 (In discourse domain)**

The opening speech of English teachers/ non-English teachers:

Part 2 (In participation domain)

The quantity of questions / question types & targets

Question target, Quantity & Type	Times within 40 minutes (a class hour)																	
	To the whole class									To individual students								
Yes/ no question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Wh-question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Teachers' talk in 40 minutes:

A. 90%---80% B. 80%---70% C. 60%---50% D. less than 50%

Part 3 (In stylistic domain)

Humor	Times in 40 minutes (a class hour)									
English Class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Non-English Class	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Part 4 (In non-verbal domain) Proxemics

Distance	Times in 40 minutes (a class hour)									
Public distance	A. Never B. Occasionally C. Sometimes D. Often E. Always									
Social distance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Personal distance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Intimate distance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Part 5 (In illocutionary domain)

The request made by English teachers/ non-English teachers:
