

Perceptions Of Secondary School Students Towards English As A Foreign Language Learning: A Study In China

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ABSTRACT

It was oversimplified in Chinese job ads for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. In the process of applying for teaching posts in China, applicants who come from English-speaking core countries may have an edge over those who have more teaching experience but fail to possess a travel document from the English-speaking core country. Because they are the instructors who will be teaching the students, the views of the students about the English as a Second Language teachers are a significant influence in choosing who is recruited. What further qualifications are required to become an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in China, except from the fact that one must be a native speaker and possess a certain nationality? It was the intention of this study to evaluate the perceptions that Chinese students have about English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers based on factors such as their ethnic background, nationality, and the number of years they spent instructing English, the frequency of TESL qualifications they have earned, and the frequency of months they have instructed English. As per the findings of the research, it is possible that the biased employment requirements are the result of the prejudice that students have towards prospective instructors. The findings of the research, on the opposing hand, indicate that the perceptions that students have based on the survey do not correspond with the qualifications for English as a Second Language teaching employment in China.

KEYWORDS: *Student Perception, Foreign Language Learning, Secondary School, Chinese Students.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

As a consequence of international trade and investment, several countries are looking to hire more English language instructors. Regarding China, the same is true. Improving English teaching has become a top priority in China's educational reform plan, driven by the government's long-term aim of the country's economic development. Officially pushed as a gateway to "western" technological know-how, English in China is now seen more as a driving force behind the construction of the nation's "narrative of self-identity" than that. Both official and informal English language education have been affected by this shift. Recently, Chinese government has been trying to formalise and institutionalise this influence, the use of the English language is promoted as a sort of "soft power" to connect with the rest of China. Teachers and students of English in China are bound together as they take part in and witness these unprecedented changes in cultural, educational, and economic power. Chinese students of English are beginning to see the language's power to improve their own lives, the lives of others, and to create connections across linguistic, geographical, and temporal boundaries as a consequence of globalization's increased usage of the English language. In various settings and across time periods, their research mainly focuses on how learner identities interact with their investments in English language acquisition. Based on my experience teaching English at the secondary level in a rural area of China say with confidence that a great deal of my students struggle to know where to start when it comes to improving their English skills and many more lack clear objectives for their academic careers. Also, if other classes don't

need it, why should they bother to learn English? There is a common belief that students who take the time to study English will be better equipped to engage with people from all walks of life and contribute to a more interconnected world. When put into action, however, do these fundamental goals really materialise? set out to learn more about why certain students were becoming more dissatisfied with the English curriculum, so they could better tailor my teaching to their needs. What interests me most is getting to know the students' thoughts and feelings about English class. What impact does studying English have on their current and future plans? Educators need to engage in reflective practice in order to have a better grasp of how students learn and to develop their own professional competence. Being a former student and current teacher in a tiny town in China's countryside has given me first-hand knowledge of the English language and its study. They didn't start studying English until sixth grade since my family is so impoverished. Their English teacher on their very first day of high school drilled into us the value of studying hard for standardised tests so that they might transform their lives and leave behind the struggles of rural peasant life; she also drilled into us the importance of mastering the language (Fang, 2020).

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

In China, studies on language education are few and far between. There is also a lack of comprehensive surveys that examine the perspectives of different groups about language in education, such as students, parents, educators, administrators, and policymakers. In most cases, only certain areas are covered by the surveys and studies. Evaluation in ESL classrooms is essential for a variety of reasons. If they want to change the way EFL classes are run, they need to update their material understanding and their pedagogical approaches. When it comes to language policy, Pakistan has been all over the map. The role of English in education has remained a mystery. Politicians in charge after independence believed that the country's many different ethnicities could only be better brought together via the medium of Urdu. Thus, they pushed for the uni-national theory, which states that Pakistanis constitute a single country. That is why they settled on Urdu as their official language. In order to swap out English with Urdu an official Language Committee was founded in 1949 premised on the uni-national theory. Due to its status as both a universal language and a reliable source of knowledge about cutting-edge scientific and technological discoveries, the English language is expected to maintain its dominance, according to the 1959 Report of the Commission on National Education. English should not be maintained as the medium of communication in the nation, according to a commission that was established in 1969 to reform the education system. The change should be finished by 1975 and instead Bengali and Urdu shall be utilised. The purpose of establishing the status of Urdu was the 1979 establishment of Muqtadira Qaumi Zuban, also known as the National Language Authority. While this was happening, however, many schools began to accept English as a medium of teaching. In 2001, a plan known as the Educational Sector Improvements (ESR) was launched. For pupils with a vernacular education, Mansoor claims that the inaccessibility of higher education and powerful jobs is mostly due to the language barrier. This is due to the fact that, in comparison to kids at more prestigious schools, they are subjected to a less rigorous English language curriculum (Matsuda, 2019).

3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

Several reasons highlight the importance of this study: In the first place, this research shows that rural Chinese students' socioeconomic position is a big deal when it comes to their English acquisition abilities and how much cultural and other capital they may see in English. It is necessary for students from rural regions to put in more effort throughout their educational journeys compared to their urban counterparts since they often face mitigating circumstances that limit their advancement to higher education. It may be helpful for teachers in rural areas to look back on their careers through the lens of "investment" as it will show them where the current system is lacking and how they may improve it. Individuals' motivation and engagement with English language learning are explained by their class-based social capital. Furthermore, this research gives students a platform to share their own experiences of triumph, setback, and terror while they study English. Lastly, this research offers an opportunity to learn about students' social and financial assets in rural China and how they think about learning English. This research might provide teachers in rural locations with the tools they need to assist their students in overcoming the challenges of learning English in such an environment. It is reasonable to infer that students' self-perceptions (respect, values, and standards) and academic achievement are affected by social and economical assets when these resources are insufficient. It elucidates the process of educational context reproduction as well. Everyone who thinks that schools are places where inequality and classism are fostered.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW:

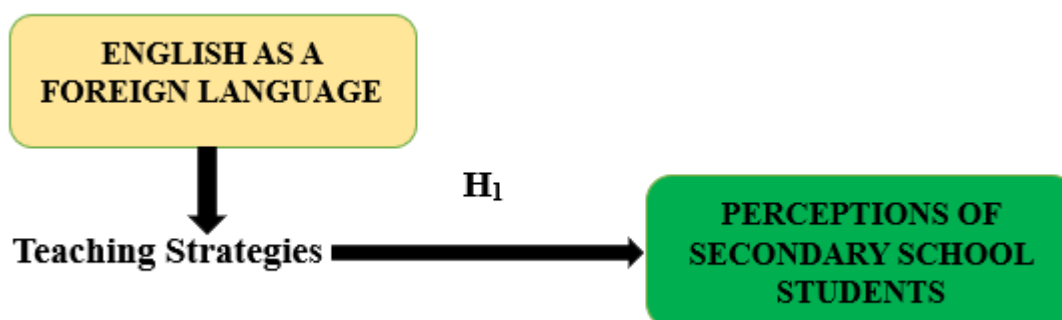
Researchers in the fields of first and second languages have lately paid a lot of attention to attitude. An important component of second or foreign language learning pedagogies should be the student's attitude, according to the majority of studies on the subject. Research on students' perspectives on language acquisition is crucial for

several reasons. First, according to Weinburgh, Kaballa, and Crowley all think that one's attitude towards learning affects one's behaviour, including book selection and reading, as well as one's ability to speak a foreign language. There is evidence that links one's attitude to their level of success or performance, which brings us to their second point. According to research by Schibeci and Riley, referenced in Weinburgh there is evidence to suggest that attitudes impact performance, not the other way around. The rationale for this is that one's attitude impacts their actions, emotions, and, by extension, their capacity to learn. Therefore, it is evident that the student's upbringing has an effect on their language acquisition. Attitudes, both good and bad, significantly affect how well one learns a new language. A person's attitude is highly responsive to many factors. According to Stern, "The emotional component contributes as much, if not more, to language acquisition than the cognitive abilities," and this is backed up by contemporary research. Emotional factors significantly impact language proficiency, according to all research. Finding out how students feel about language may benefit the learning process for both the instructor and the student. Thus, they must take into account the vital function of the emotional realm. Most of their attitudes are shaped by the traits that make up the emotional domain, which include interest, values, and propensity. Characteristics that are associated with emotions include valuing, believing, interested, and expecting. She also notes in the same piece that these emotional traits significantly influence one's capacity to learn. The research of Alexander and Strain, referenced by Saracaloglu, demonstrates that students' expectations and actions impact their self-perception and academic achievement. According to Saracaloglu's research, investigations on students' perceptions are often limited. Contrary to popular belief, defining attitude is more difficult than measuring it. Particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, student attitudes that can be reliably monitored impact lesson plans (Si, 2019).

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1) What extent is English perceived as a valuable form of cultural capital by a group of students at a secondary school in rural China and by former students who have gone to college?
- 2) How do young people from a school in rural China construct their relationships with learning the English language in relation to their perceived current and future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital?
- 3) How can the social capital that these students possess now help to explain their motivation and/or investment in English learning?
- 4) How do their changing identities across time and space affect their motivation/ investment in English learning?"

6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:



7. METHODOLOGY:

In research, narratives are used to derive findings on the relevance of the connections between individual experiences and the progression of real-life events. Narratives are useful for educational researchers because they provide context for the data and allow them to see how people's experiences relate to the theories and practices that have been created to deal with similar situations. It is also a first step in understanding the study's participants' perspectives on their "niche" in the ever-changing "ecology" and the opportunities and challenges they face while learning and using a language in various settings, such as the classroom, the real world, and the workplace. An individual's life story is a mosaic of their societal context and their experiencing world, according to the theory underpinning narrative inquiry. All individuals go through in life is shaped by the stories they tell themselves. One's own and other people's stories form the foundation of one's view of time past, present, and future. The narrative inquiry approach to research is based on the premise that every person's life is a story and that stories are the key to comprehending that story. At its core, the narrative inquiry method requires researchers to take a stance on experience as an object of study. To summarise, the following procedures are involved in this process: Here are five things that the researcher does: 5) "re-creates the stories"

by narrating them while maintaining the participant's "voice"; 6) "reads each tale with the investigation's concerns in mind" (which can have notes during the revision); 7) "transcribes the tales." This may need describing the plot, scenes, characters, etc. from a certain perspective, using specific tenses, providing a chronological order, etc.; 6) if this is possible.

8. RESULT:

The stories of the 10 participants were recorded using a mix of online discussions and in-person focus groups, the details of which are explained below. Both Spain and China contributed to the data set. Both surveys ask respondents to recall specific instances from their past while they were learning English via the use of a narrative interview approach. At the outset of this semi-structured interview, Researcher asked when researcher began studying English and, more specifically, what motivated to do so. The interviewees were encouraged to provide personal details about their lives. Since Chinese is the native language of the participants, it is the language used exclusively in the interviews. The way researchers gained entry to the study area is called informal access. Suitable volunteers for researchers might be approached from several social circles, including teachers, students, friends, and family members. Researchers are able to immerse themselves in the local community and school right away using this strategy, and they may undertake an extensive and detailed investigation. People are able to relax and open up, which greatly aids the investigation. Researchers felt comfortable contacting participants for permission in this way since they had already taught them English, therefore they opted to adopt this strategy. In order to track the pupils' development over time, researchers have been in contact with them by phone and QQ (a Chinese instant messaging app developed by Tencent Holdings Limited) since March 2013. Ten Chinese volunteers were interviewed online by a researcher based in Spain. They began in the beginning of the year of 2013 and concluded in the fall of 2015, when five of the participants had graduated from high school and five had begun their job search while still in college. Whenever possible, interviews were held online, and a friendly environment was preserved. In order to encourage open-ended responses, the online interviews used an unstructured interview format. Fontana and Frey's definition of an unstructured interview stresses the need of not forcing a preconceived classification on interviewees in order to broaden the scope of the study.

9. DISCUSSION:

Student prejudice towards potential teachers was theorised by the researcher as a possible cause of the skewed job qualifications. But the study's results show that students' views don't line up with the requirements for ESL teaching positions in China. College students in China base their evaluations of potential teachers heavily on the applicants' home languages, as expected from the survey findings. Put another way, the research proved that students' opinions of an English teacher's pedagogical abilities are influenced by the teacher's native language. When comparing NESTs and NNESTs on the questionnaire, NESTs performed better, especially on Questions 3 and 5, which dealt with conversational skills and help speaking English when overseas, respectively. The study's author hypothesised that, based on participants' reported preferences, the majority of the class would have White instructors. On the other hand, the researcher could not say with absolute confidence whether or not the individuals had racial preferences based on the survey responses. Participants are cognizant of the fact that a TESL degree and sufficient teaching experience are crucial requirements for success in the English teaching industry. Contrarily, they are not given much weight by school officials when making employment decisions. When it comes to teaching students how to conduct meaningful conversations, students believe that instructors from core nations have the upper hand. Outside of that, researchers favour instructors from nations that aren't key competencies. Regardless of their home language, all ESL teachers should have a strong command of the English language, according to the study's conclusions. It is crucial to provide NNESTs in China with more resources for professional growth, particularly those that help them improve their English skills. In order to comprehend the goals of English language instruction in China, NESTs would also need professional development opportunities. Equal weight should be given to language competency, classroom management abilities, professional preparation, and teaching experience.

10. CONCLUSION:

Tenth graders' attitudes towards English language acquisition are inversely related to their levels of worry about learning a foreign language. There is a strong correlation between one's attitude and their ability to learn a new language. According to the statistics, students experience communication anxiety due to their lack of self-assurance in English language classes. They worry that they won't do well enough on the English exam, which causes them to suffer from test anxiety throughout English class as a whole. The results were corroborated by Naiman, who postulated that students' enthusiasm for learning their second language was the only causal variable linking attitude characteristics to second language acquisition. There is a robust relationship between attitude and the process of learning a language, according to Stark and Paltridge the inner classroom atmosphere is linked to the students' sentiments, experiences, and perceptions, according to Dunn

and Harris. According to Twenge, when there is a chance that the classroom setting may be threatened, language anxiety increases. Students would begin to love studying a foreign language if they approached it with a positive mindset. A lack of enthusiasm for learning a new language may contribute to a heightened state of anxiety while taking a foreign language class, according to a negative correlation between the two variables.

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