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RELATIONSHIP OF CROSS-CULTURAL
AWARENESS AND SELF-EFFICACY IN
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'
LEARNING PERFORMANCE ON
EFL READING IN CHINA



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SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine how cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy improve EFL learning in a senior high school in China. A mixed-methods approach was employed. Quantitative instruments included the Chinese and Western Cultural Awareness Scale, English Learning Self-Efficacy Scale, and English test scores, with analyses using independent sample t-test, ANOVA, correlation and regression analysis, and paired sample t-test. Qualitative instruments included reading comprehension worksheets and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was applied to data from both sources, with the worksheets containing students' paragraphs on their confidence in understanding reading texts and teachers' reflective essays. In the quantitative phase, convenience sampling was used, while in the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was employed. The quantitative findings from the independent sample t-test and ANOVA revealed significant differences in Chinese and Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy based on gender, age, and birthplace. Additionally, findings from correlation, regression analyses, and the paired sample t-test showed that Western cultural awareness positively influenced students' self-efficacy and academic performance, while self-efficacy strongly enhanced EFL performance. In contrast, Chinese cultural awareness had a limited impact. The qualitative findings from the thematic analysis indicated that Western cultural awareness significantly influenced students' learning confidence, motivation, and English performance. Key themes such as cultural identification, adaptation, and the impact of cultural values were explored, along with the role of emotional management, learning strategy adjustments, and cross-cultural integration in enhancing academic success and language performance. This study highlights the significant role of cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in enhancing EFL learning, particularly for senior high school students in China. The findings suggest the need to integrate diverse cultural content into EFL curricula, promote self-efficacy, and adopt teaching strategies that enhance cross-cultural awareness to improve language learning performance. These implications offer valuable guidance for both educational practice and future research.





HUBUNGAN KESEDARAN RENTAS BUDAYA DAN EFIKASI DIRI PADA PRESTASI PEMBELAJARAN PELAJAR SEKOLAH MENENGAH DALAM BACAAN EFL DI CHINA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kesedaran rentas budaya dan efikasi diri dalam meningkatkan prestasi pembelajaran pada kemahiran bacaan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) peringkat sekolah menengah atas di China. Pendekatan kaedah campuran digunakan. Instrumen kuantitatif terdiri daripada Skala Kesedaran Budaya Cina dan Barat, Skala Efikasi Diri Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, dan skor ujian Bahasa Inggeris, dianalisis melalui uji-T sampel independent, ANOVA, analisis korelasi, regresi, dan uji-T sampel berpasangan. Instrumen kualitatif meliputi lembaran kerja pemahaman bacaan dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Analisis tematik diterapkan pada data, termasuk tentang keyakinan memahami teks bacaan oleh pelajar dan esai reflektif guru. Persampelan mudah dilakukan dalam fasa kuantitatif dan persampelan bertujuan dalam fasa kualitatif. Hasil kajian kuantitatif daripada uji-T sampel independent dan ANOVA menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan dalam kesedaran budaya Cina dan Barat serta efikasi diri berdasarkan jantina, usia, dan tempat lahir. Selain itu, penemuan kualitatif melalui analisis korelasi, analisis regresi, dan uji-t sampel berpasangan menunjukkan bahawa kesedaran budaya Barat meningkatkan efikasi diri pelajar dan prestasi akademik, sementara efikasi diri mempunyai implikasi besar terhadap prestasi EFL. Sebaliknya, kesedaran budaya Cina mempamerkan pengaruh yang terhad. Penemuan kualitatif melalui analisis tematik menunjukkan kesedaran budaya Barat secara signifikan mempengaruhi keyakinan diri, motivasi, dan prestasi bahasa Inggeris pelajar. Tema-tema utama ditemui seperti identifikasi budaya, adaptasi, dan impak nilai-nilai budaya, peranan pengurusan emosi, penyesuaian strategi pembelajaran, dan integrasi rentas budaya dalam meningkatkan keberhasilan akademik dan prestasi pembelajaran bahasa. Kajian ini menekankan kepentingan untuk mengintegrasikan kesedaran rentas budaya dan efikasi diri dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran EFL terutamanya di kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah atas di China. Hasil kajian menunjukkan keperluan pengintegrasian konten kepelbagaian budaya pada kurikulum EFL, untuk peningkatan efikasi diri, dan pengamalan strategi pengajaran yang menerapkan kesedaran rentas budaya untuk meningkatkan prestasi pembelajaran bahasa. Implikasi kajian ini menyajikan satu panduan untuk kegunaan bidang pendidikan dan bidang kajian yang baru.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DC	Data collection
DA	Data analysis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
En	Expert n
FLT	Foreign Language Teaching
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MOE	Ministry of Education
RQn	Research Question n
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
Sn	Student n
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences



APPENDIX LIST

- A The Reading Comprehension Worksheet
- B Questionnaire on EFL Senior High School Students
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- M The English Post-test Paper





CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the groundwork for the study by presenting an overview of its context, significance, and objectives. This chapter commences with the study's background, emphasizing the increasing significance of incorporating cultural awareness and self-efficacy within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, especially in senior high school settings. The research identifies key issues, including the insufficient emphasis on cross-cultural awareness and its effects on students' self-efficacy and learning performances. This chapter outlines the research objectives and questions, focusing on the relationship among cross-cultural awareness, self-efficacy, and EFL learning performance. The conceptual framework is outlined to guide the study, accompanied by a thorough discussion of the scope, operational definitions, and key terms to ensure clarity and precision. The study's significance encompasses both theoretical and practical dimensions, highlighting its role in enhancing academic discourse and refining educational practices. Chapter 1 systematically establishes a foundation for the research, clarifying the study's purpose and direction for the reader.





1.2 Background of Study

In the 21st century, globalization has become an unstoppable trend of the times. Lui and Stack (2009) discussed globalization from economic, political, and cultural perspectives, arguing that globalization is a multi-causal and multi-channel process that brings changes to every country. Tsui and Tollefson (2007) described globalization as turning the world into an interconnected global village where technology and English were as two inseparable skills. Kumaravadivelu (2008) argued that globalization was more applicable to second language education that combines language and culture. Therefore, globalization will certainly have a significant impact on English teaching as a L2 in China. It is well known that English is playing an increasingly important role in enhancing China's soft power and core competitiveness. English teaching as a second language in China is facing unprecedented challenges (Yang, 2016). English is the main foreign language studied by Chinese students, and high school students are experiencing a strong clash of different cultures in their English learning. Their cross-cultural awareness in cross-cultural communication is bound to be influenced by multiculturalism. Therefore, to meet the requirements of language communication in modern society, students are required not only to become bilingual but also bicultural. Language is a carrier of culture, and an important aspect of language learning is the cultivation of cross-cultural awareness (Chen & Liu, 2015). Cross-cultural awareness significantly impacts intercultural communication and language learning (Zlomislić, Radoš Gverijeri, & Bugarić, 2016). Thus, enhancing cross-cultural awareness in high school English learning is essential. Cultivating students' cross-cultural awareness enables them to adopt an inclusive attitude towards different cultures, objectively accept the





differences and similarities between cultures, and respond flexibly when faced with diverse cultures. This ability allows them to master communication and interaction skills with people from different cultural backgrounds in international exchanges (Qi, 2016).

In December 2017, the Chinese Ministry of Education (the MOE) announced The Senior High School Curricular Plans and Standards (2017 ed.) for 20 subjects of senior higher schools, which states that the subject of English has important educational values in developing students' language ability, learning ability, cultural awareness, and thinking quality. The curriculum standards emphasize the importance of fostering students' cross-cultural awareness and practical language application abilities in basic education, as these are indispensable for students to use the language correctly. Cultural awareness, as described within the curricular standards, refers to students' comprehension of both Chinese and foreign cultures. It encompasses their capacity to acknowledge the merits of both Western and Chinese cultures, as well as their cross-cultural understanding, attitudes, and behaviors. Fostering students cultural awareness facilitates the development of their national identity, strengthens their cultural confidence, and empowers them to mature into persons with a robust sense of social responsibility. The curriculum standards also specify that the development of cross-cultural awareness can only be achieved by expanding students' horizons and enhancing their sensitivity and comprehension of Western cultures. This falls under the classification of cultural sensitivity and self-awareness (The MOE in China, 2017). In summary, the curriculum standards prioritize the English subject's function in enhancing students' language skills and cultural awareness. They also emphasize the significance of cross-cultural awareness, offering guidance and a framework for





nurturing well-rounded students.

In light of these requirements, it becomes extremely important to develop students' cross-cultural awareness in English teaching among high school students. However, in contemporary high school English instruction in China, educators predominantly emphasize exam-related knowledge and skills, often overlooking the wider role of English as a medium for communication and cultural exchange. Numerous educators and learners maintain a limited viewpoint, focusing primarily on grammatical knowledge and rote memorization, thereby constraining students' capacity to comprehend the cultural context of language use. The insufficient focus on cultural learning neglects the potential of culturally-based textual instruction to incorporate authentic cultural content into English lessons, which can enhance students' enthusiasm and motivation for learning the language (Wang, 2020).

Contemporary English lessons frequently lack contextual relevance, exhibiting minimal incorporation of genuine cultural content, including Western cultural knowledge (The MOE in China, 2017). Even if some teachers recognize the importance of cultivating cross-cultural awareness, due to the tight schedules and heavy workload in high school teaching, they can only briefly introduce some cultural knowledge in Chinese when it comes up during textbook explanations. This approach results in limited effectiveness of cultural teaching, making it difficult to efficiently convey Western cultural knowledge in the classroom. Additionally, they do not realize the positive impact that cultivating cross-cultural awareness can have on students' English performance.





Furthermore, a comprehensive understanding of the current challenges in English teaching in China indicates that many students lack motivation to engage deeply with the language, viewing it primarily as an exam requirement (National Education Examinations Authority, 2021). The issue is exacerbated by insufficient teaching practices that incorporate culturally rich textual materials. There is a limited focus on utilizing culturally embedded texts, which hinders the connection between English learning and significant cultural exchanges. Consequently, students struggle to view the language as a means for meaningful communication and cultural engagement beyond academic contexts (Mao, 2018).

Self-efficacy also plays a crucial role in the process of language learning. Self-efficacy is a motivational variable in the SLA and influence learners' motivation and learning process of a second language (Karnchanachari, 2020). Self-efficacy in English learning affects students' setting of English learning goals, as well as their emotions and psychology during English learning tasks (Du, 2014). Students with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to be more motivated and confident in achieving better English performance in their learning process (Bai et al., 2019; Torres & Alieto, 2019). However, in the context of English learning, many Chinese high school students often feel limited in their abilities and lack confidence, which can negatively impact their academic performance and learning motivation.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gaps in the existing literature by examining the relationship between cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in improving English learning performance among high school students from a high school in Zhejiang Province, China. By exploring the differences in cross-cultural





awareness and self-efficacy based on demographic variables, this study seeks to provide insights into the factors that influence students' language learning experiences and performance. Furthermore, understanding the correlation between cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy can offer valuable references for educational practices and interventions aimed at promoting effective English learning strategies among Chinese EFL students.

Through an in-depth investigation of these factors, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on language learning and provide practical implications for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers in promoting successful EFL learning experiences for senior high school students in China.



1.3 Problem Statement

Previous studies have consistently shown a positive correlation between students' achievement and self-efficacy in learning English (Teng, Wang, & Wu, 2023; Celik, 2022; Zorlu & Ünver, 2022; Chen, 2020; Bai et al., 2019; Sabti et al., 2019; Wang & Bai, 2017; Li, 2017; Li & Liu, 2013). Self-efficacy, defined as a student's belief in their ability to learn English well, plays a critical role in their English learning performance (Bandura, 1997; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). However, preliminary observations at a private high school in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, where the researcher teaches, indicate that students' English performance is generally low. The observed underperformance appears to correlate with low self-efficacy in English





learning, as numerous students exhibit a lack of confidence, experience anxiety regarding English examinations, and harbor doubts about their capacity to secure university admission due to inadequate English scores. These attitudes indicate a diminished belief in their ability to succeed in English learning, which significantly affects their motivation and performance. The deficiency in confidence and self-efficacy may be linked to the prevalent traditional English teaching methods in Chinese classrooms (Long, 2019), which fail to engage students effectively or promote a sense of accomplishment in learning English.

English has historically been a mandatory subject in Chinese high schools; however, traditional teaching methods, including the grammar-translation method and the audiolingual method, continue to prevail. These approaches emphasize grammatical analysis and procedural skills; however, they frequently do not engage students' interest in learning. Furthermore, these methods overlook the incorporation of cross-cultural knowledge, resulting in a limited comprehension of Western cultural contexts and insufficient cross-cultural communication skills. The cultural gap impedes students' capacity to effectively acquire English as a second language (L2) and cultivate cross-cultural awareness. Scholars have increasingly highlighted the necessity of incorporating cultural understanding into language instruction to address these limitations.

While researchers such as Gao (2020), Wang and Hemchua (2022), and Yurtsever and Özel (2021) acknowledge the significance of incorporating cultural understanding into foreign language education, the emphasis on culture instruction has largely been confined to university-level English programs, resulting in a lack of





cultural integration in secondary school English classrooms. In this thesis, cultural teaching within English language education is not regarded as a standalone subject. The approach prioritizes the integration of cultural elements in reading texts and instructional materials, allowing students to explore and engage with the target culture while concurrently enhancing their language skills. This method emphasizes the incorporation of cultural norms, values, traditions, and communication styles into instructional activities, enabling students to enhance their comprehension of English as utilized in genuine cultural contexts. Cultural teaching seeks to enhance students' intercultural communicative competence by promoting cultural awareness through the use of culturally enriched texts, thereby facilitating appropriate and effective language use in various cultural contexts. Acquisition of cultural knowledge fosters a more positive attitude and greater tolerance toward other cultures, while simultaneously enhancing understanding of one's own culture (Lado, 1964). Therefore, integrating cultural awareness into language instruction is essential (Crozet & Liddicoat, 1997). However, despite the acknowledged significance of cultural integration in language education, its application at the secondary school level encounters considerable obstacles, especially within the Chinese context.

Although China's 2003 General High School English Curriculum Standards officially integrated cultural awareness into foreign language instruction for the first time, cultural teaching continues to be marginalized in most secondary schools. This results in insufficient exposure to Western cultural knowledge among students (Yang, 2016). As a result, even after more than a decade of English education, numerous high school students continue to face challenges in verbal expression in English. The issue is partially due to insufficient cultural integration in English teaching, which restricts





students' capacity to utilize the language in meaningful and authentic contexts. Brown (2001) posits that learners exposed to the culture linked to a language demonstrate enhanced capability in its functional and practical application for authentic communication.

This issue is prevalent across the nation, but it is especially pronounced in specific schools where cultural integration is limited. At the researcher's school, the instruction of Western culture within English education is notably restricted, resulting in inadequate exposure for students to Western cultural content. The absence of cultural integration in English instruction may lead to diminished student interest and motivation, which could adversely affect their self-efficacy in learning the language. Fostering cross-cultural awareness is recognized as a crucial approach in foreign language education to address this issue.

Research indicates that cross-cultural awareness functions as a significant learning tool for improving learners' motivation (Youssef, 2009). Understanding one's own culture, specifically Chinese culture, is essential for developing cross-cultural awareness. Students who acknowledge and value their own culture are more capable of comprehending and appreciating other cultures (Wang & Liu, 2016). Incorporating cultural awareness and relevant curriculum into foreign language classrooms is essential. This integration fosters positive attitudes in students towards diverse cultures and speakers of various languages, concurrently increasing their motivation for language acquisition (Acheson, Nelson, & Luna, 2015). Additionally, research has examined the relationship between self-efficacy and motivation for learning English (Pan, 2021), revealing a consistent link between high self-efficacy in English learning





and academic performance (Celik, B., 2022; Bai et al., 2019; Sabti et al., 2019). Building on this, it can be inferred that cross-cultural awareness, including both Chinese and Western cultural perspectives, may play a significant role in shaping students' self-efficacy in English learning. However, while this relationship is theoretically promising, empirical studies integrating these two factors are currently scarce.

While numerous studies have explored cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English language acquisition within the realm of foreign language education (Acheson, Nelson & Luna, 2015; Wang & Liu, 2016; Wang & Bai, 2017; Sabti et al., 2019; Chen, 2019; Bai et al., 2020; Liu, 2023; Chen, 2023; Meng, 2023; Celik, B., 2022; Zorlu & Ünver, 2022; Feng, 2020; Gan, Z.D. et al., 2020; Zhou, 2021; Huang, 2021; Meng, 2021; Zhang, 2022), there is a notable lack of research examining the interplay between cross-cultural awareness (specifically between Chinese and Western cultures) and self-efficacy in English learning, especially among Chinese EFL high school students (Ge, 2020). Moreover, research examining the influence of demographic variables, including gender, age, ethnic groups, birthplace, and course selection on cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning is still scarce (Song, 2014; Huang, 2021; Chen, 2019).

Given the above gaps, this study seeks to examine the relationship between Chinese and Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning among senior high school students in EFL contexts. The study will examine the impact of demographic variables, including gender, age, ethnic groups, birthplace, and course selection, on these two factors. Demographic variables are essential as they





substantially influence students' learning experiences, motivation, and self-efficacy in English language acquisition. Gender differences can impact attitudes and confidence, with female students frequently exhibiting greater motivation and self-efficacy compared to males (Song, 2014; Becirovic, 2017). This underscores the necessity for strategies that are specifically designed to address the distinct needs of each gender. Age significantly influences cognitive development, which in turn affects students' capacity to acquire language and cultural knowledge (Piaget, 1952). Ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds significantly influence access to educational resources and cultural exposure, with minority students frequently encountering increased difficulties in English learning (Norton, 1997; Ahât, 2013). Course selection, such as between science and humanities, influences students' engagement with language learning, with humanities students typically receiving greater exposure to language and cultural content compared to their counterparts in the science track (Han, 2013). Examining these variables reveals disparities and facilitates the creation of targeted strategies to address the varied needs of students, thereby promoting a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. Based on this, the study will further investigate the relationship between cross-cultural awareness (both Chinese and Western) and self-efficacy in improving students' English learning performance. Ultimately, this study aims to propose strategies for enhancing students' self-efficacy in English learning through the integration of cultural awareness into EFL pedagogy, curriculum design, and teacher education. Focusing on these areas will enable frontline English teachers in China to effectively integrate cultural content into their instruction, thereby improving students' motivation, cross-cultural awareness, and performance in English learning.





1.4 Research Objectives

This study will be guided by the following research objectives:

1.4.1 To determine the differences between Chinese and Western cultural awareness among EFL senior high school students in terms of demographic variables.

1.4.2 To determine the differences of self-efficacy in English learning among EFL senior high school students in terms of demographic variables.

1.4.3 To discover whether there is a correlation between the degree of cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning among EFL senior high school students.

1.4.4 To examine whether the relationships of cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning contribute to improving senior high school students' performances in learning English as a Foreign Language.



The first objective is to identify these differences in Chinese and Western cultural awareness in demographic variables, which can help teachers properly guide students to understand their own cultural awareness by teaching English to make some suggestions for students to build a good Chinese and Western cultural awareness. The second objective will identify the root causes of these differences in self-efficacy in demographic variables, which can help teachers properly guide students to improve their self-efficacy by teaching English. The third objective will provide suggestions to improve students' self-efficacy in English learning from a cultural perspective. Lastly, the fourth objective will look at the relationship between cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning to explore how to improve students' English performance.





1.5 Research Questions

Following the research objectives, this study will be answering the four research questions:

1.5.1 How does Chinese and Western cultural awareness of EFL senior high school students differ in terms of demographic variables: gender, age, ethnic groups, birthplace, and students' different course selection?

1.5.2 How does self-efficacy in English learning of EFL senior high school students differ in terms of demographic variables: gender, age, ethnic groups, birthplace, and students' different course selection?

1.5.3 Is there a correlation between the degree of cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning among EFL senior high school students?

1.5.4 How does the relationship of cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning improve senior high school students' performances in learning English as a Foreign Language?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research question 3 and research question 4, the hypotheses for the study are:

H1: Relationship between Chinese cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning

Theoretical Basis: According to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory(1980) , cultural factors (such as collectivism, long-term orientation, etc.) shape individuals'





cognitive patterns, behavioral tendencies, and psychological states. These cultural characteristics may influence students' self-efficacy in learning. Combined with Bandura's theory(1997), cultural awareness (such as understanding Chinese cultural norms, behaviors, language, and values) may enhance students' confidence in learning English.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant correlation between Chinese cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): There is a significant positive correlation between Chinese cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning.

Sub-hypotheses for H1:

H1a: Chinese social norms and self-efficacy

H_0 1a: There is no significant correlation between Chinese social norms and self-efficacy in English learning.

H_a 1a: There is a significant positive correlation between Chinese social norms and self-efficacy in English learning.

H1b: Chinese cultural behaviors and self-efficacy

H_0 1b: There is no significant correlation between Chinese cultural behaviors and self-efficacy in English learning.

H_a 1b: There is a significant positive correlation between Chinese cultural behaviors and self-efficacy in English learning.





H1c: Chinese language and self-efficacy

H01c: There is no significant correlation between Chinese language and self-efficacy in English learning.

Ha1c: There is a significant positive correlation between Chinese language and self-efficacy in English learning.

H1d: Chinese values and self-efficacy

H01d: There is no significant correlation between Chinese values and self-efficacy in English learning.

Ha1d: There is a significant positive correlation between Chinese values and self-efficacy in English learning.



H2: Relationship between Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning

Theoretical Basis: According to Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory(1980), Western culture is typically characterized by individualism, low power distance, and a short-term orientation. Understanding these cultural characteristics may provide students with stronger cultural adaptability in English learning, thereby enhancing their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Null Hypothesis (*H02*): There is no significant correlation between Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning.



Alternative Hypothesis (H_{a2}): There is a significant positive correlation between Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning.

Sub-hypotheses for H2:

H2a: Western social norms and self-efficacy

H02a: There is no significant correlation between Western social norms and self-efficacy in English learning.

H_{a2a}: There is a significant positive correlation between Western social norms and self-efficacy in English learning.

H2b: Western cultural behaviors and self-efficacy

H02b: There is no significant correlation between Western cultural behaviors and self-efficacy in English learning.

H_{a2b}: There is a significant positive correlation between Western cultural behaviors and self-efficacy in English learning.

H2c: Western language and self-efficacy

H02c: There is no significant correlation between Western language and self-efficacy in English learning.

H_{a2c}: There is a significant positive correlation between Western language and self-efficacy in English learning.

H2d: Western values and self-efficacy



H02d: There is no significant correlation between Western values and self-efficacy in English learning.

Ha2d: There is a significant positive correlation between Western values and self-efficacy in English learning.

H3: Relationship between Chinese cultural awareness and English learning performance

Theoretical Basis: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory (1980) emphasizes the profound impact of cultural characteristics on individual behavior and outcomes, while Bandura's theory (1997) suggests that positive elements within the cultural environment can enhance self-efficacy, thereby improving learning performance.



Null Hypothesis (*H03*): There is no significant relationship between Chinese cultural awareness and English learning performance.

Alternative Hypothesis (*Ha3*): There is a significant positive relationship between Chinese cultural awareness and English learning performance.

H4: Relationship between Western cultural awareness and English learning performance

Theoretical Basis: Western cultural awareness, rooted in Hofstede's dimensions such as individualism, is likely to enhance students' ability to integrate into English-speaking contexts, improving their academic performance (Bandura, 1997).





Null Hypothesis ($H04$): There is no significant relationship between Western cultural awareness and English learning performance.

Alternative Hypothesis ($Ha4$): There is a significant positive relationship between Western cultural awareness and English learning performance.

H5: Relationship between self-efficacy in English learning and English learning performance

Theoretical Basis: Bandura's self-efficacy theory clearly states that self-efficacy is an important predictor of learning outcomes. A high level of self-efficacy can enhance motivation, effort, and persistence in learning, thereby improving learning performance.



Null Hypothesis ($H05$): There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy in English learning and English learning performance.

Alternative Hypothesis ($Ha5$): There is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy in English learning and English learning performance.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

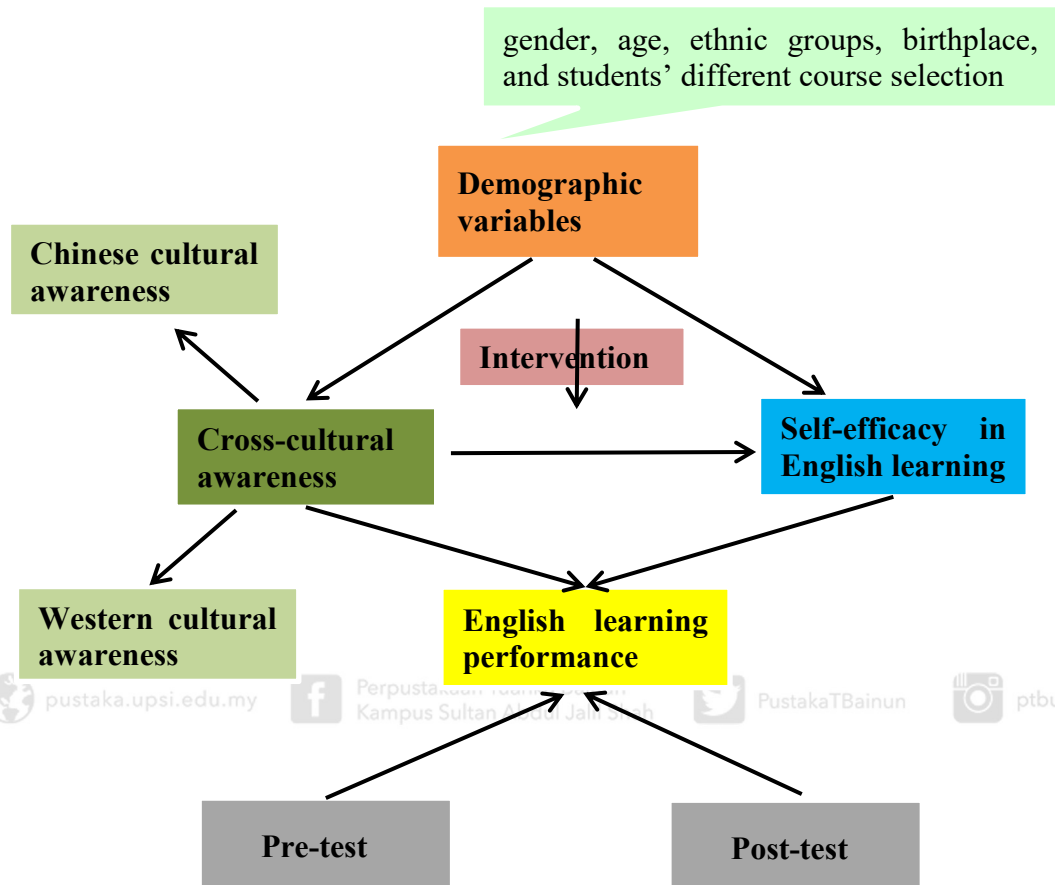
The conceptual framework of the present study, as depicted in Figure 1.1, explores the relationships between crucial variables to examine the correlation between cross-cultural awareness (specifically Chinese and Western cultures) and self-efficacy in English learning in improving English learning performance among EFL senior high school students. Cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning among





EFL senior high school students may be influenced by aspects of demographic variables, such as gender, age, ethnic groups, birthplace and students' different course selection. These two fundamental constructs are related, with cross-cultural awareness enhancing self-efficacy in English learning. An intervention, involving the teaching of English reading comprehension texts that encompass Western cultural knowledge, is introduced to enhance both constructs. The primary goal is to improve students' English performance, with both cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning playing a vital role in achieving this goal. To assess the effectiveness of the intervention, students' English learning performance and their scores in the reading comprehension section were measured through pre-test and post-test evaluations conducted before and after the implementation of the intervention. This framework emphasizes the significance of demographic variables, cross-cultural awareness, self-efficacy in English learning, and a targeted intervention in improving the English learning performance of senior high school students studying English as a foreign language (EFL), with pre-test and post-test ensuring the study can effectively evaluate the influence of these factors on students' learning performance.



Figure 1.1*Conceptual Framework***1.8 Scope of the Study**

This study is conducted in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. The city is chosen because the researcher teaches at a senior high school in Hangzhou, and the subjects of the study are the students of this school. This study primarily focuses on the issues related to Chinese EFL senior high school students' cross-cultural awareness and their self-efficacy in English learning. Specifically, the differences between Chinese and



Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning among EFL senior high school students in terms of demographic variables are explored in this study. Then whether there is a correlation between the degree of Chinese and Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning among EFL senior high school students in improving their performances in learning English as a Foreign Language is discovered. In addition, from the perspective of cultural awareness, this study extends its scope to include some proposed suggestions on how to improve students' self-efficacy in English learning from the aspects of EFL classroom pedagogy, curriculum design, and teacher education.

1.9 Operational Definition



1.9.1 Western Culture

In the process of communicating English as a lingua franca, the communicative partners may come from the target language English-speaking countries or from non-English-speaking countries. Therefore, a widely accepted culture in ELT is categorized as native language culture, target language culture represented by English-speaking countries and cultures from around the world outside of English-speaking countries (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). However, in English language education in China, the target language culture refers to the culture of Western mainstream English-speaking countries. English-speaking countries are concentrated in the Western hemisphere, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, and English originated in the United Kingdom. Therefore, in the thesis, Western culture refers to the culture of the mainstream English-speaking countries in the Western hemisphere.





Cultures of other English-speaking countries, such as New Zealand culture, are considered as other cultures. In this study, there are two reasons why the researcher defines the culture of the dominant English-speaking countries in the west as Western culture. The first reason is that the culture of mainstream western English-speaking countries is consistent with most parts of Western culture. When talking about Western culture, it is easy to habitually think of it as the culture of mainstream Western English-speaking countries. The second reason is that, as an important medium of learning and teaching, high school English textbooks in China contain much of the culture of mainstream Western English-speaking countries.

Therefore, Western culture in this study refers to cultures dominated by British-American countries.



1.9.2 Chinese Culture

In the Chinese context, for Chinese people who use English as a lingua franca for cross-cultural communication, Chinese culture is the native culture in that classification. Native language culture is a concept that is the opposite of the target language culture. This study is concerned with English language teaching and learning; therefore, native language culture refers to Chinese culture. Chinese culture is a concept that is the opposite of "foreign culture". It is the sum of the cultures created by the Chinese nation and its ancestors in China and spread around the world. In order to focus the study on English teaching in senior high school, Chinese culture in this study is based on the analysis and organization of the content of the New Curriculum on Chinese culture, combined with the cultural sextet of Zhang and Fang





(Wang, 2004).

According to the broad concept of culture, Chinese culture in this study refers to the culture in terms of material, social institutions and organizations, science and art, customs and behavior patterns, and value systems related to China mentioned in the cultural knowledge section of the New Curriculum.

1.9.3 Cultural Awareness

Temalin and Stempleski (1993) defined cultural awareness as encompassing three key aspects: recognizing and understanding one's own behavior influenced by culture, recognizing and understanding the behavior of others influenced by culture, and being able to articulate one's own cultural standpoint. Cultural awareness referred to students' comprehension of both Chinese and foreign cultures. It encompassed their capacity to acknowledge the merits of both Western and Chinese cultures, as well as their cross-cultural cognition, attitudes, and behaviors (The MOE in China, 2017). Knutson (2006) asserted that fostering students' cultural awareness involved prompting them to acknowledge their own cultural identity in comparison to other cultures (Kuuston, 2006, cited in Beaudrie, et al (2009), p. 167-169).

Considering definitions of cultural awareness by the above scholars, cultural awareness in this thesis refers to students' understanding of both Chinese and Western cultures, their ability to recognize the excellence in both Western and Chinese cultures, as well as their cross-cultural cognition, attitudes, and behaviors, which is gradually formed in a series of learning of cultural knowledge embedded in classroom





practices between individuals and groups that affect one's language learning and communication.

1.9.4 Cross-cultural Awareness

Hu and Gao (1997) defined cross-cultural awareness as the capacity of individuals to comprehend and appreciate a different culture. A student with a profound level of cultural understanding will possess both cognitive insight into other cultures and emotional empathy. Gao (2002) provided a definition of cross-cultural awareness as the state of being conscious of cultural diversity and demonstrating tolerance towards differences. It also involved showing empathy towards individuals from different cultures, as well as being aware of and reflecting about one's own cultural values and behaviors. According to Kong (2017), cross-cultural awareness referred to the capacity to comprehend foreign cultures and exhibit tolerance and sensitivity towards different cultures when engaging with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural awareness referred to the sensitivity to the differences and similarities between native culture and western culture, the awareness of adjusting one's own language comprehension and language output on the basis of using the target language culture. It emphasized that the senior students' integral language application ability included language, culture, affect, learning and language skills (The MOE in China, 2017).

In this study, cross-cultural awareness refers to the awareness of one's own cultural values and beliefs (in this case, Chinese culture) as well as the sensitivity, tolerance, and acceptance of the knowledge of other's culture (target: Western culture,





including British and American contexts) in language learning and communication. The researcher's purpose here is to examine the relationship between cross-cultural awareness, specifically whether students are aware of and feel comfortable with the cross-cultural values embedded in the EFL lesson and classroom practices. This exploration aims to comprehend how students perceive and assimilate these cultural elements, which is essential for enhancing their capacity to interact effectively across cultural boundaries. To illustrate this, opera serves as a useful example. By comparing the operas found in both Chinese and Western cultures (such as Chinese Peking Opera and Western opera), EFL learners can enhance their understanding of their own culture while also cultivating sensitivity and acceptance towards Western artistic expressions. This process fosters a more extensive cross-cultural awareness, essential for language acquisition and communication. Similarly, by examining the disparities in values, such as collectivism in Chinese culture, which prioritizes group harmony and familial ties, and individualism in Western culture, which emphasizes personal autonomy and self-expression, learners can attain a more profound comprehension of how cultural values shape behavior and decision-making. Furthermore, analyzing diverse perspectives on time might yield significant insights. Chinese culture frequently embraces a more adaptable perspective on time in casual contexts, while Western society emphasizes the value of punctuality. Similarly, variations in dining etiquette provide a further viewpoint, exemplified by the communal sharing of dishes prevalent in Chinese cuisine, in contrast to the individually plated meals characteristic of Western dining customs. Through these comparisons, EFL learners can attain a deeper comprehension of cultural norms. This approach cultivates heightened sensitivity, tolerance, and respect for cultural differences, thereby augmenting cross-cultural awareness in language acquisition and communication.





1.9.5 Self-efficacy

The idea is shared by Bandura (1997) in which self-efficacy is defined as “Beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments”. (p.3). Self-efficacy is a motivational variable in the SLA and influence learners’ motivation and learning process of a second language (Karnchanachari, 2020). Wang (2007) defined academic self-efficacy as the evaluation of learners’ confidence in using the abilities or skills to complete a learning task. Meng (2021) regarded self-efficacy in English learning as an individual's subjective judgment of one’s English learning ability, which can determine the magnitude of English learning ability. Eventually, it will form an individual's self-belief in English learning through continuous accumulation.



In this study, self-efficacy refers to academic self-efficacy in English, which involves the assessment of the confidence of senior high school students' self-efficacy in terms of whether they can use their abilities or skills to complete English learning tasks. Moreover, it is also a subjective judgment of high school students to control their own behaviors and abilities in English language learning.

1.9.6 Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the process by which a learner learns a second language (L2) additionally to their first language (L1) (Hoque, 2017). The field of second language acquisition (SLA) studies is featured with two different traditions. One is linguistic and focuses on the process by which learners build up





their linguistic knowledge of the second language (L2) and the other is psychological and focuses on the different ways in which learners cope with the task of learning and using an L2 (Sharpe, 2021). In China, Second Language Acquisition, also known as SLA, usually refers to the learning of any other language after a person has acquired his mother tongue. People generally study second language acquisition from the perspectives of society, psychology, and linguistics. SLA describes the learners' second language characteristics and their development and changes, as well as the common characteristics and individual differences that learners have when learning a second foreign language. At the same time, it also analyzes the internal and external factors that affect second language acquisition (Su & Ma,2021).

According to above definitions, second language acquisition in this study



refers to the learning of English by senior high school students in China.

1.9.7 English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

David Nunan, the current president of the World Congress of Teachers of English (TESOL), defined EFL. He believes that EFL is used in contexts where English is neither widely used for communication nor used as the medium of instruction. In this study, EFL is defined as "English as a foreign language" by Hornby (2009), and EFL education in China refers to the teaching of English as a foreign language in an environment where Chinese is the first language.





1.9.8 Language Learning

Language learning as by Ding (2009) believes that language learning and verbal learning have the same connotation, referring to the learning of language, but with different extensions. Language learning has a larger extension, while verbal learning has a smaller extension. Verbal learning refers to language learning that takes place in the school setting or is organized by the school. In this study, language learning refers to the learning of English as a foreign language organized by senior high schools in China.

1.9.9 EFL Reading

EFL reading in this thesis refers to the process by which Chinese senior high school students interact with and analyze written English texts in order to comprehend, evaluate, and create meaning within a linguistic and cultural context. Students must negotiate cultural quirks and context-specific allusions woven throughout the text in addition to decoding and understanding the English language (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Students' sense of self-efficacy—the conviction that they can successfully complete reading assignments in English—and cross-cultural awareness—the knowledge of cultural differences between the target language and their home culture—have an impact on how well they develop their reading skills in this setting (Bandura, 1997).

Thus, EFL reading is viewed as a dynamic interplay between self-perception, cultural awareness, and language proficiency. Beyond simple comprehension, it encompasses cultural interpretation, critical reading, and strategic reading techniques





influenced by each student's unique self-efficacy beliefs (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). Khoulood (2024) highlighted how crucial cultural awareness is to EFL learners' reading comprehension. Students are likely to gain a more sophisticated comprehension of the text as they grow more conscious of cultural components including context, references, and reading strategies. This will improve their academic performance and reading comprehension.

1.9.10 EFL Learning Performance

In this thesis, "EFL learning performance" refers to the accomplishments and progress of senior high school students in acquiring English as a foreign language, assessed by a mixed-methods approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative data. This concept includes two essential dimensions: result and process (Ellis, 2021; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015).

The result dimension emphasizes quantifiable outcomes, including students' pre- and post-test scores in reading comprehension. This study utilizes reading comprehension as a key indicator of students' English learning performances, reflecting their capacity to decode, interpret, and engage with texts containing cross-cultural knowledge (Grabe, 2009). This emphasis illustrates the manner in which students utilize their cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy to comprehend and engage with culturally diverse texts, which are essential for English language proficiency (Byram, 1997; Bandura, 1997). These results correspond with language assessment frameworks such as the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) and highlight





the importance of functional language use (Purpura, 2016). The process dimension encompasses techniques, strategies, and efforts employed in learning, which include engagement, utilization of materials, practice habits, and the attitudes exhibited by students during language acquisition. In this study, the process dimension is explored through qualitative data, which encompasses students' paragraphs, teachers' reflective essays, and students' interviews. The data elucidate the impact of students' cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy on their engagement with learning materials, learning processes, and attitudes toward mastering English. This dynamic and evolving aspect is identified in research as essential for sustained progress (Ellis, 2021; Oxford, 2017).

This thesis evaluates EFL learning performance using both quantitative data, specifically pre- and post-test analyses of reading comprehension scores, and qualitative data, including students' paragraphs, teachers' reflective essays, and interviews. This mixed-methods approach provides a thorough understanding of the contributions of cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy to students' progress in EFL learning (Dörnyei, 2007). This study offers a comprehensive view by examining both measurable outcomes and learning processes, highlighting the role of cultural and psychological factors in improving students' English learning performance over time (Ellis, 2021; Bandura, 1997).





1.9.11 Senior High School

High school education in China is divided into junior and senior high schools: The junior high school consists of grades 7-9, the senior high school of grades 10-12. Students entering a junior or a senior high school in the same year are called a grade; thus, there are three grades in senior high schools. Literally, general high school is composed of two parts: "general" which means general education and "high school" refers to the type of education and is distinguished from vocational technical education and professional education. It is distinguished from vocational and technical education and professional education; high school is short for senior high school. By combining the definitions of general education and senior high school, we can understand that senior high school is a higher level of basic education institution after the completion of nine-year compulsory education in China (Liang, 2017).



In this study, the term "senior high school" refers to "private general high school". Article 2 of the Law on the Promotion of Private Education, which came into effect on September 1, 2003, defines the scope of application of private schools: The activities of social organizations or individuals other than state institutions that use non-state financial resources to organize schools and other educational institutions for the society shall be governed by this law. Private high school is a type of private basic education, according to which private high school is defined as a kind of general senior middle school level education funded by social organizations or individuals who are not state and government departments, and authorized to be managed by the operator (Zhang, 2015).





1.10 Significance of Study

Language and culture are inextricably linked. The objective of this study is to investigate the correlation between cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning, and subsequently examine the influence of this relationship on the English learning performance of high school students. Through this study, it can not only enhance and enrich the current theories at the theoretical level, but also provide practical suggestions and strategies for the implementation of English instruction at the practical application level. The following are the theoretical and practical implications of this study.

1.10.1 Theoretical Significance



First, the study of cultural dimensions theory is expanded to high school students, which enriches the study of high school students' self-efficacy and cultural awareness in learning English and deepens the practical significance of the theory. It is also necessary to present and deepen the existing knowledge systems in education, linguistics and intercultural communication.

Second, this study improves the theory of cross-cultural awareness. Examining the relationship between cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in learning English provides a more effective explanation for improving students' self-efficacy.

Finally, this study provides a new perspective for studying the self-efficacy of English learning in high schools in terms of cultural factors to address the





shortcomings of previous studies on cultural awareness in language learning.

1.10.2 Practical Significance

First of all, based on the analysis of the questionnaire data and the results of the interview, the importance of cultural awareness can be seen from the perspective of English language learning, and it provides suggestions for achieving a balance between the culture of the native language and the culture of the target language in daily English teaching.

Second, by examining the correlation between cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning, it can improve students' language attitudes, cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning, which can enhance students' cultural confidence in intercultural communication and seek some effective measures to improve EFL learners' English learning performance.

Finally, by examining the relationship between cross-cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning on improving senior high school students' performances in EFL language learning, it can provide English teachers with new ways to consider the relationship between their Chinese and Western cultural awareness and self-efficacy in English learning in terms of improving senior high school students' English performances. It also provides effective suggestions for English teachers in terms of course content selection and curriculum design.





1.11 Summary

Chapter 1 presents the essential elements of the study, encompassing its background, problem statement, research objectives, and research questions. The study established a conceptual framework that underpinned its focus and elucidated the operational definitions of key terms, including cultural awareness, cross-cultural awareness, and self-efficacy. This study delineates its focus on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning performance of senior high school students. The study's significance was emphasized, underscoring its theoretical and practical contributions to enhancing cross-cultural education and promoting self-efficacy in language learning. This chapter introduces the framework for the following chapters, which explore the literature, methodology, findings, and implications of the research in greater detail.

