

Exploring the Correlation between Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Culture Intelligence (CQ)

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Abstract: Cultural intelligence (CQ) enhances a person's ability to communicate and engage with people from different cultural backgrounds. As the carrier and container for culture, language is in turn influenced and shaped by culture. In this study, we collected a sample of 182 EFL learners (N = 182) from an ordinary university in Fujian Province in order to explore the correlation between foreign language learning enjoyment and CQ. Statistical analyses revealed that CQ was positively correlated with foreign language enjoyment and positive emotional state. Open-ended questions and qualitative analysis reconfirmed our quantitative results and the important role of CQ in enhancing foreign language enjoyment. The findings suggest that CQ plays a significant role in improving learner's overall confidence, interest and psychological state in language learning. As learners engage with a foreign language, they often subconsciously enhance their intercultural awareness and CQ, which can positively affect their emotional state and contribute to a more favorable attitude toward language learning. This, in turn, can cultivate their interest in language learning by reducing stress and increasing motivation. CQ and foreign language enjoyment are interrelated and can mutually reinforce each other, creating a positive feedback loop in the language learning process. This positive feedback loop can positively affect learners' emotional state and contribute to a more favorable psychological well-being.

Keywords: EFL Learners; Cultural Intelligence (CQ); Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE); Intercultural Awareness

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction of CQ and Intercultural Awareness

Cultural Quotient (CQ), also called Cultural Intelligence, is the ability of an individual to communicate, understand, adapt, and operate effectively in diverse cultural settings. It is a measurable capability that goes beyond emotional intelligence (EQ) by focusing on intercultural interactions. CQ is particularly important in multicultural workplaces, international business, and cross-border collaborations. CQ comprises four dimensions (also, facets or components): meta-cognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational [1]. Intercultural Awareness refers to the understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities. It involves recognizing how culture shapes people's values, beliefs, behaviors, and communication styles. Both CQ and intercultural awareness are essential for enhancing cultural knowledge and language learning. By developing these skills, individuals can create more inclusive, harmonious, and effective attitude towards language learning.

1.2 Positive Education Psychology and Foreign Language Enjoyment

Positive psychology focuses on the study of positive emotions, strengths, and mental states and psychological factors. By contrast, foreign language enjoyment examines the benefit of positive emotions in language learning. Foreign Language enjoyment highlights and examines the joy and satisfaction learners experience while studying a foreign language. It focuses on the role of positive emotions in the language learning process and overall success.

Many researches have also proved the positive correlation between FLE and foreign language competence [2,3]. However, the correlations between CQ and the psychological and

emotional aspects of students, such as FLE have never been explored before.

One's ability in leaning a foreign language is directly related to his/her understanding of the culture of that language. Also, during the process of learning a language, we also learn the culture and develop cognitive abilities. It is necessary for us to explore the related link between foreign language enjoyment and CQ.

1.3 Correlation between FLE and CQ

Previous research has found that positive psychological mental states, i.e. enjoyment, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience, have a positive relationship with CQ and motivational CQ, which in turn relates to meta-cognitive CQ [4]. A similar factor is psychological capital, which positively correlates with meta-cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ [5].

Admittedly, language has long been recognized as an essential part of a given culture, and the impact of culture upon a given language is intrinsic and indispensable. Intercultural knowledge helps learners understand the cultural context behind the language, making the learning process more meaningful and engaging. This deeper understanding of interesting cultural facts behind languages can lead to greater appreciation and interest in language [6].

Since culture and language are overwhelmingly regarded as closely related, what about cultural intelligence (CQ) and foreign language enjoyment? We suppose that as learners become more culturally competent, they often find the language learning process more enjoyable, creating a reinforcing cycle where enjoyment and competence boost each other.

However, there is less theoretical or empirical clarity on how CQ correlate with foreign language learning emotion, such as foreign language enjoyment. In addition, the existing studies on the relationship between CQ, foreign language enjoyment lack a mixed-methods design, a research gap that we aim to fill in this study.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants in this study were undergraduates from an ordinary university in China. Students

participating in this study all spoke and learned Chinese as their first language, and English as their second language. All student participants verbally agreed to participate in this study.

2.2 Instruments

In the quantitative part, we adopted the 20-item cultural intelligence scale (table 1-CQS) developed by Ang et al. [1]. The 20 items were used to assess learners' CQ levels on the 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The items fell into four dimensions: four items for CQ strategy (meta-cognitive CQ), six items for CQ knowledge, five items for CQ drive and and five items for CQ behavior. In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the CQ scale was 0.932 and KMO for the scale was 0.789. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the validity of CQS.

Table 1. Representative Items of Cultural Intelligence Scale

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| CQ Strategy (Metacognitive CQ) | Metacognitive CQ measures your ability to plan, remain aware, and monitor your interactions in cross-cultural settings. Example question: "I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures." |
| CQ Knowledge (Cognitive CQ) | Cognitive CQ assesses your understanding of cultural norms, practices, and conventions in different cultural settings. Example question: "I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures." |
| CQ Drive (Motivational CQ) | Motivational CQ measures your interest, confidence, and motivation to adapt to multicultural situations. Example question: "I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures." |
| CQ Action (Behavioral CQ) | This dimension evaluates your ability to adapt your behavior when interacting with people from different cultures. Example question: "I change my verbal and nonverbal behavior when interacting with people from different cultures." |

The second scale was the 21-item FLE (table 2). The internal items of FLE were adapted based on Dewaele and MacIntyre's CFLES,

similarly with five-point scales. In this study, Cronbach's alpha for the FLE scale was 0.703 and KMO for the FLE scale was 0.851.

Table 2. Example items of Foreign Language Enjoyment Scale

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| FLE-Teacher | The teacher is supportive. The teacher has a good sense of humor. The teacher is. The teacher is encouraging. |
| FLE-Personal | I enjoy the atmosphere of the foreign language class. I feel proud of my academic accomplishments in the foreign language. I feel that I am making progress in the foreign language. I enjoy it when the teacher uses the foreign language in class. I enjoy the challenge of learning the foreign language. I enjoy practicing the foreign language. I enjoy making mistakes as part of the learning process. I enjoy the sense of achievement I feel in the foreign language class |
| FLE-Peer | I enjoy working with my peers in the foreign language class. I enjoy speaking the foreign language with other people. My peers are encouraging. My peers are friendly. |

The qualitative part included was an open-ended question about how and why CQ can contribute to foreign language enjoyment, one that required responding with at least 30 Chinese characters.

2.3 Data Collection, Validation, and Analysis

The quantitative questionnaire and data were collected through a professional online questionnaire survey platform. "Wenjuanxing" (<https://www.wjx.cn>). In total, we collected 186 responses from students. Then, we deleted 4 suspiciously invalid ones because they contained identical answers for (almost) all questions. Finally, SPSS Statistics version 22 was used for data analysis.

The qualitative questionnaire was distributed and collected via the same channels. Only those with valid quantitative responses and standardized English scores filled out this questionnaire. NVivo12 was used for qualitative analysis.

3. Results

3.1 Correlation between CQ and English language Enjoyment

As regards the correlation between CQ and English language enjoyment, our Pearson correlation analyses (Tables 3) with a Bonferroni correction ($p < 0.01$) showed that the four variables (scores of four facets of CQ) and total cultural intelligence scores as a whole were significantly positively linked to English language enjoyment. By further analysis, we found that meta-cognitive facet was most associated with foreign language enjoyment ($\beta = 0.554$, $p < 0.01$), followed by cognitive ($\beta = 0.418$, $p < 0.01$), motivational ($\beta = 0.406$, $p < 0.05$) and behavioral facet ($\beta = 0.331$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Pearson Correlation between CQ and FLE

| | FLE |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Meta-cognitive CQ | .544** |
| Cognitive CQ | .418** |
| Motivational CQ | .406** |
| Behavioral CQ | .331** |
| Total CQ | .503** |

Note: **means $P < 0.01$

FLE had the strongest correlation with the metacognitive dimension, which indicate integrating intercultural awareness and CQ into language learning can make the language learning experience more enjoyable, enriching, and effective.

Learners with high meta-cognitive CQ are more inclined to appreciate the cultural nuances of the language, set meaningful goals, and adapt to intercultural interactions, all of which contribute to greater enjoyment in language learning. This relationship highlights the importance of integrating cultural awareness and reflective practices into foreign language education to foster both emotional and cognitive growth.

Besides, cognitive CQ, or cultural knowledge, is positively correlated with Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) because it deepens learners' understanding of the cultural context behind the target language. By fostering curiosity, meaningful engagement, and successful social interactions, cognitive CQ enhances learners' motivation and enjoyment in the language learning process.

Finally, motivational CQ, which refers to the

intrinsic interest and confidence in culturally diverse environments, can positively influence Foreign Language Enjoyment by fostering a learner's enthusiasm, persistence, and emotional connection to the language learning process. Therefore, fostering motivation and cultural engagement in foreign language education to create a more fulfilling and enjoyable learning experience.

The result of this study highlights the importance of integrating cultural learning into language education to create a more engaging and fulfilling experience for learners.

3.2 Qualitative Analysis

The open-ended question “how and why CQ can contribute to foreign language enjoyment”, received ample responses, with which we used NVivo12 for coding and node counting.

Based on the coding and node counting results, we find the most frequently mentioned factor was favorable attitude toward foreign culture and language learning, followed positive emotional state and interest in learning foreign culture and language and intrinsic relation between language and culture.

The followings are some representative excerpts from language learners' responses.

Extract 1. There are endless cultural treasures (knowledge) hidden behind a language. Only an in-depth understanding of a language enables us to enjoy learning a language.

Extract 2. Enlarge vocabulary of foreign language, particularly the etymologies from which we can understand the origin and interesting cultural knowledge of many words. We have so much fun learning them.

Extract 3. Intercultural awareness helps learners understand the cultural context of the language, making the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable.

Extract 4. Learning about different cultures can spark curiosity and interest, making the language learning process more enjoyable and less of a chore.

Extract 5. Watch foreign-language movies and social-platform videos, and read foreign-language novels and newspapers. The interest-provoking contents can boost positive emotion in language learning.

Extract 6. The newly emerging AI applications show us a world of diverse cultures and bring us so much enjoyment in language learning.

Overall, CQ which covers intercultural

awareness, knowledge and motivation helps learners understand the cultural context behind the language and leads to greater enjoyment and motivation in language learning, thus boosting learners' confidence and benefit their psychological and mental state as a result, this positive emotional state can improve the efficiency and pleasure of language learning.

4. Conclusion

The study takes the lead in exploring in the Chinese context whether foreign language enjoyment is directly associated with the overall CQ and the four dimensions.

Interestingly, the findings suggest that cultural intelligence (CQ) is not only linked to intercultural awareness and ability but also foreign language enjoyment (FLE), which plays a significant role in improving learner' overall mood and psychological well-being. These three factors are interconnected. High CQ can lead to better intercultural awareness and ability, which in turn can enhance FLE. Similarly, enjoyment in learning a language can motivate learners to further develop their CQ. These factors are interrelated and can mutually reinforce each other, creating a positive feedback loop in the language learning process. This positive feedback loop can positively affect learners' emotional state and contribute to a more favorable attitude toward language learning.

The qualitative research question centers around how and why CQ can enhance learners' foreign language enjoyment (FLE). The most frequently mentioned factor was favorable attitude toward foreign culture and language learning, followed positive emotional state and interest in learning foreign culture and language and intrinsic relation between language and culture.

Given the importance of CQ in both language learning and FLE, it is crucial for teachers to create a classroom environment that supports the development of cultural intelligence. Such an environment not only helps improve learners' intercultural ability but also fosters a positive emotional experience, thereby enhancing their mood and mental health.

Interactive tasks, cultural discussions, and a brand new teaching approach that integrates English learning with interesting facts and knowledge of different cultures may serve as effective strategies to a more enjoyable and

mentally rewarding language learning experience. Teachers and educators should incorporate cultural elements into language lessons, such as traditions, values, and social norms, to enhance both CQ and FLE. This integration makes the learning process more engaging and relatable.

In summary, the relationship between Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is a significant and mutually reinforcing connection that highlights the interplay of emotional, cognitive, and motivational factors in foreign language learning. Both FLE and CQ are rooted in the learner's ability to navigate, understand, and engage with cultural and linguistic diversity, making them essential components of successful and enjoyable language acquisition. Integrating intercultural awareness and CQ into language learning can make the language learning experience more enjoyable, enriching, and effective, which as a result enhance learners' learning efficiency and interest in foreign culture and language. This research has implications for integrating future psychological research into language teaching.

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