

As a Global Language, how English Affects and Reflects Changes in Social Values in Cross-Cultural Education: a Comprehensive Analysis of Theory and Practice

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Abstract: Cross-cultural exchange and economic globalization have created a conducive environment for the integration of English into the Chinese language. Our study investigated the impact of English language learning on social values in a cross-cultural educational environment, focusing on participants from China. The findings, based on surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, reveal a complex interplay between English and social values. A notable theme emerged around the influence of English on individualism and collectivism. While some participants expressed concerns that English's emphasis on individual achievement might weaken collectivist values in China, others saw English as a tool for self-expression and personal growth. Regarding tolerance, the study identified English as a potential bridge to diverse cultures and perspectives. The analysis of gender roles highlighted the potential tension between traditional Chinese ideals and portrayals of gender in English media. However, the focus group discussions revealed that participants viewed English as empowering for both men and women through enhanced communication skills. The findings also point to the potential of English as a tool for cultural exchange, personal development, and fostering critical thinking skills that can contribute to a more tolerant and adaptable society.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Exchange, Chinese, Social Values, Individualism, Collectivism, Gender Roles, Communication Skills

1. INTRODUCTION

Language transcends its function as a communication tool. It serves as an intrinsic element of culture, simultaneously reflecting and shaping the values and practices of a society (Procel et al., 2023). In recent years, the global landscape of education has witnessed a surge in the prominence of English language teaching (ELT) for both second-language learners and those encountering it as a foreign language. The phenomenon of globalization has ushered in a wave of significant changes across the world, impacting spheres such as the global economy, political landscapes, cultural exchange, educational systems, and more (Zhong, 2024). Consequently, the content and objectives of English language education in our nation have undergone a gradual shift. The focus has moved from solely teaching

English and American native speaker varieties to fostering proficiency in an internationalized form of the language. This necessitates a re-evaluation of prevailing notions surrounding English language education. The incorporation of cross-cultural competence in middle school English language teaching promotes an equitable and mutually beneficial approach to cultural exchange (Niu & Liu, 2022). This approach fosters students' capacity for empathy, tolerance, and negotiation. Furthermore, it enhances their ability to express their own local culture accurately and fluently. Some researchers refer to this ability as "sociocultural competence," which they define as the ability to leverage existing knowledge and skills to effectively process social and cultural information. This ultimately facilitates the development of a more integrated and well-rounded personality. Holliday proposes that cultural context is a multifaceted construct, encompassing the interplay of social, historical, and geographical factors (Holliday, 1994). As English takes root as a global lingua franca, it is employed across a vast array of cultural backgrounds. This phenomenon fosters the emergence of multiple Englishes, reflecting the diverse contexts in which the language is used (Kachru, 1986). Consequently, a fundamental tenet of English language teaching (ELT) is its inextricable link to the specific cultural context in which it takes place. Yan suggests that China's engagement with the West during the 19th century Westernization Movement exemplifies the strategic adoption of foreign knowledge (Yan, 2021). Figures such as Li Hongzhang, representing the Westernization faction, championed the acquisition of Western expertise in areas like shipbuilding and artillery production. This approach involved government oversight and collaboration with private businesses to establish new industries. The resulting advancements in military technology during the 1860s and 1870s laid the foundation for a modern military industry. Furthermore, the Westernization faction emphasized sending students abroad to study a broad range of subjects, including foreign languages, natural sciences, military technology, and even social sciences. According to Niu and Liu the evolving landscape of globalization necessitates a re-evaluation of how middle school English education cultivates students' cross-cultural competence (Niu & Liu, 2022). Traditionally focused on mastering English language structures and abilities, contemporary approaches emphasize fostering a deeper understanding. This entails not just language proficiency but also exposure to diverse cultures, promoting a sense of multicultural awareness in students. By fostering this awareness, middle school English education can equip students with a sense of belonging in a globalized world while nurturing their ability to critically evaluate the complexities of

cultural integration. This shift from an "English-based doctrine" to an embrace of cultural diversity represents a crucial update in the understanding of middle school English education within our nation. The growing wave of English language learning in China presents a unique opportunity for the dissemination of Chinese culture on a global scale. As Chinese citizens gain fluency in English, they become ambassadors for their own culture during interactions abroad. Wu proposed that this intercultural exchange transcends conscious efforts; exposure to Chinese customs, traditions, and perspectives occurs naturally through daily life (Wu, 2022). In this way, individuals studying English become unintentional yet influential messengers, fostering a deeper understanding of Chinese culture in the West. Proficiency in English allows China to engage in a reciprocal exchange of cultural knowledge. China's approach to cultural exchange, as embodied by the philosophy of "taking the essence, getting rid of the dross, being eclectic, and integrating," actively seeks out positive aspects of Western culture. For decades, China has embraced advancements in Western science, technology, and political administration, demonstrating its commitment to continuous learning and improvement. This two-way flow of knowledge, facilitated by English language proficiency, strengthens cultural understanding and paves the way for a more harmonious global community. The rise of English language proficiency in China presents a valuable opportunity to bridge cultural divides and promote Chinese culture. These practices are not mutually exclusive; rather, fluency in English empowers Chinese citizens to become active participants in cultural exchange. A potential challenge lies in the inherent complexity of classical Chinese, which can hinder both domestic study and foreign translation. Youwei and He noted that this can lead to misunderstandings during intercultural communication (He, 2020; Youwei, 2020). However, as China's global influence continues to expand alongside its rapid development, the ability to effectively disseminate Chinese culture through English becomes increasingly important. Dafouz posits that cultivating a strong sense of cultural identity is crucial alongside developing students' English language proficiency (Dafouz, 2018). Globalization has ushered in a complex and diverse cultural landscape, where individuals are exposed to a multitude of values and perspectives. While all cultures offer valuable lessons, it's important to maintain a critical perspective and avoid succumbing to cultural homogenization. The undeniable advantages of English language learning, as the world's lingua franca, extend beyond simply understanding Western cultures. English fluency empowers individuals to articulate their own cultural heritage and research findings

effectively, fostering cross-cultural communication and collaboration with international scholars. In essence, everyone who acquires English proficiency becomes an ambassador for their own culture, subtly promoting its richness and fostering deeper global understanding. Examining the relationship between English and social values is crucial in cross-cultural education. Educators must be aware of the potential impact of English on students' identities and worldviews. By fostering critical thinking skills and promoting cultural sensitivity, educators can empower students to navigate this complex terrain. Understanding how English shapes and reflects social values allows educators to design inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that embrace diversity and celebrate the richness of different traditions. However, ensuring assessments accurately reflect these evolving goals remains a challenge

1.1 Rationale and Objective

The increasing dominance of English in today's globalized world necessitates a comprehensive analysis of its impact on social values within cross-cultural education. This study delves into the theoretical underpinnings of this relationship, examining how exposure to English shapes and reflects evolving social values. By exploring both theory and practice, we aim to examine the multifaceted ways in which English acts as a reflection of, social change in educational settings that embrace cultural diversity.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design and Participants

Our study adopted a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques at Shanghai Jiao Tong University to investigate the impact of English on social values within the context of cross-cultural education. The qualitative aspect employed semi-structured interviews and focus groups with educators and students from diverse cultural backgrounds within the university's cross-cultural education programs. These sessions explored their experiences with how English is used in the classroom, its perceived influence on social values, and personal encounters with cultural exchange. The quantitative component involved surveys distributed to a broader sample of educators and students, gathering data on attitudes and perceptions regarding the impact of English on social values in the learning environment. A purposive sampling strategy

was employed to recruit 25 participants, consisting of both educators and students, from the university's diverse cross-cultural education programs. All participants were at least 18 years old and participated voluntarily, with informed consent obtained beforehand. To ensure anonymity, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. No incentives were provided for participation.

2.2 Survey

In the first phase of our study, a standardized, structured survey consisting of 12 questions was administered online through a secure platform. Prior to survey completion, participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the study purpose and their rights, followed by informed consent procedures. The survey instrument utilized a combination of Likert scale questions to gauge attitudes towards the impact of English on social values in the learning environment, along with multiple-choice questions to gather demographic data. After completing the survey, participants were thanked for their time and provided with a debriefing document. On average, survey completion took approximately 20 minutes.

2.3 Interviews

We administered semi-structured interviews to examine the influence of English on social values within the cross-cultural educational setting. Interviews focused on participants' experiences with how English is used in the classroom, its perceived impact on social values such as individualism, collectivism, tolerance, gender roles, and communication styles, and personal encounters with cultural exchange during their studies. The interviews typically lasted between 30 and 35 minutes and included an average of 15 open-ended questions designed to elicit rich and detailed responses. Prior to participation, all interviewees provided informed consent, and anonymity was assured throughout the research process. We further complemented the data collection with focus group discussions. Five participants were included in each group, and the discussions lasted approximately 15 minutes. These sessions centered on exploring group dynamics within the cross-cultural educational environment and potential resistance to social changes potentially influenced by the use of English. The discussions aimed to shed light on how participants perceived the interplay between English language acquisition and evolving social values within the group setting.

2.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the survey instrument was analysed using GraphPad Prism statistical software at a two-tailed significance level of 5%. This analysis involved calculating descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, to summarize participant responses on the impact of English on social values in the learning environment. The qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions was analysed using thematic analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and both the transcripts and focus group notes were then coded for recurring themes. An iterative process was employed to identify, refine, and categorize these themes based on their relevance to the research questions.

3. RESULTS

The study participants ($n=25$) were diverse in terms of age, gender, role, and primary language. Among the age groups, 18–22-year-olds comprised 32% ($N = 8$), followed by 23–27-year-olds at 40% ($N = 10$) and those 28 or older at 28% ($N=7$). Gender distribution was nearly equal with 48% ($N=12$) male and 52% ($N=13$) female. In terms of roles, 60% ($N = 15$) were students and 40% ($N = 10$) were educators. The overwhelming majority (92%, $N = 23$) spoke Mandarin Chinese as their primary language, with only 8% ($f=2$) reporting another primary language (see Figure 1 and 2).

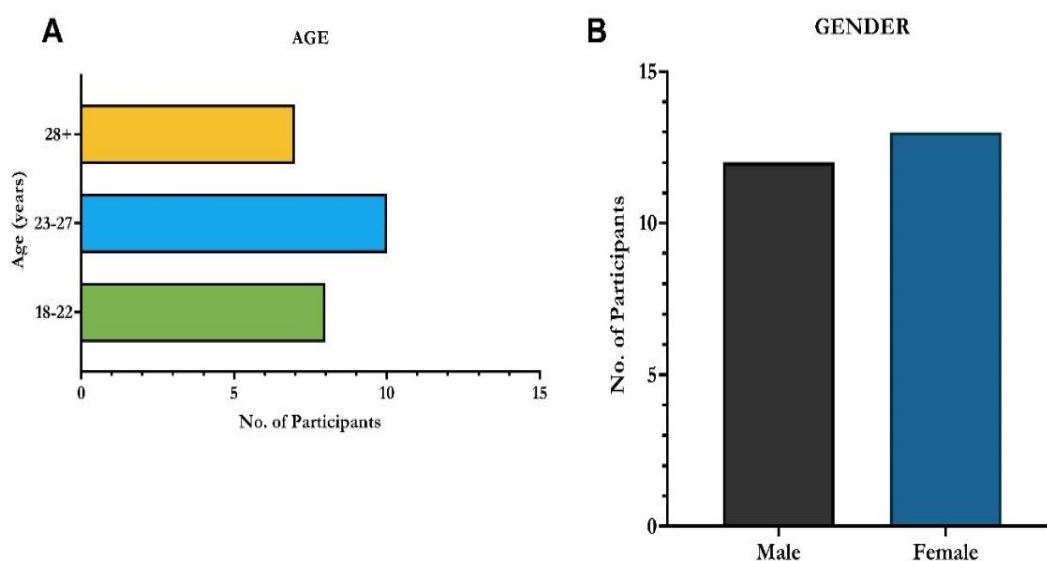


Figure 1: The Distribution of Participants Based on Age and Gender

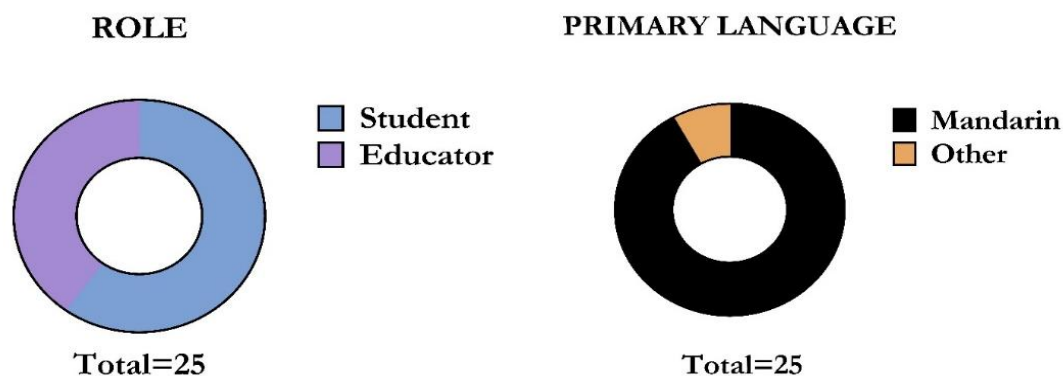


Figure 2: Analysis of Participant Demographics based on Role and Primary Language.

English Language Proficiency

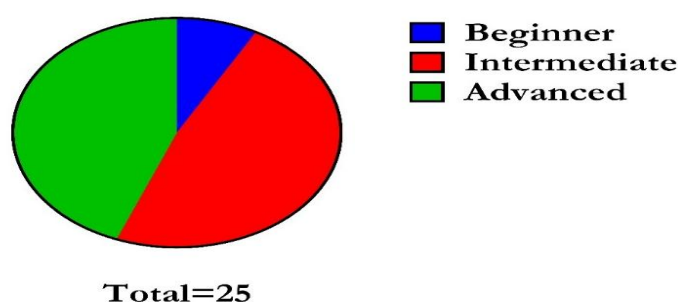


Figure 3: A Pie Chart Distribution of the Survey Responses on English Language Proficiency

In Figure 3, the survey revealed a range of English language proficiency levels among the participants ($n=25$). Approximately 8% ($f=2$) identified as beginners, 48% ($f=12$) reported intermediate proficiency, and the remaining 44% ($f=11$) considered themselves advanced English language users.

Survey Responses on Impact of English on Social Values

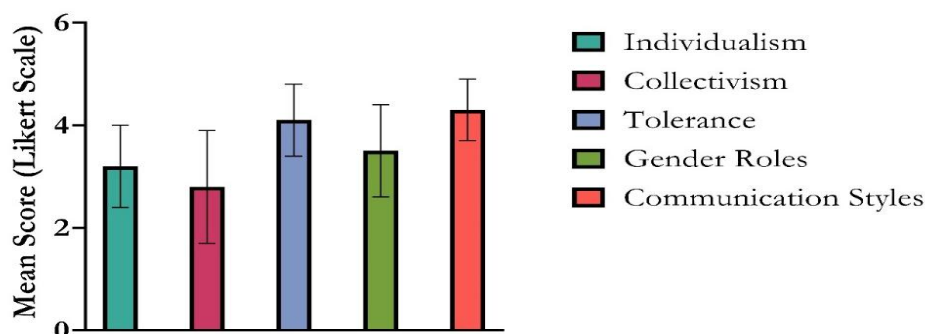


Figure 4: Survey Responses on Impact of English on Social Values

In Figure 4, the survey findings ($n=25$) indicated a moderate influence of English on various social values. On a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), participants reported the strongest impact on communication styles ($M = 4.3$, $SD = 0.6$), followed by tolerance ($M = 4.1$,

SD = 0.7). English's influence on individualism (M = 3.2, SD = 0.8) and gender roles (M = 3.5, SD = 0.9) was perceived as somewhat weaker, while collectivism (M = 2.8, SD = 1.1) seemed to be the least affected social value.

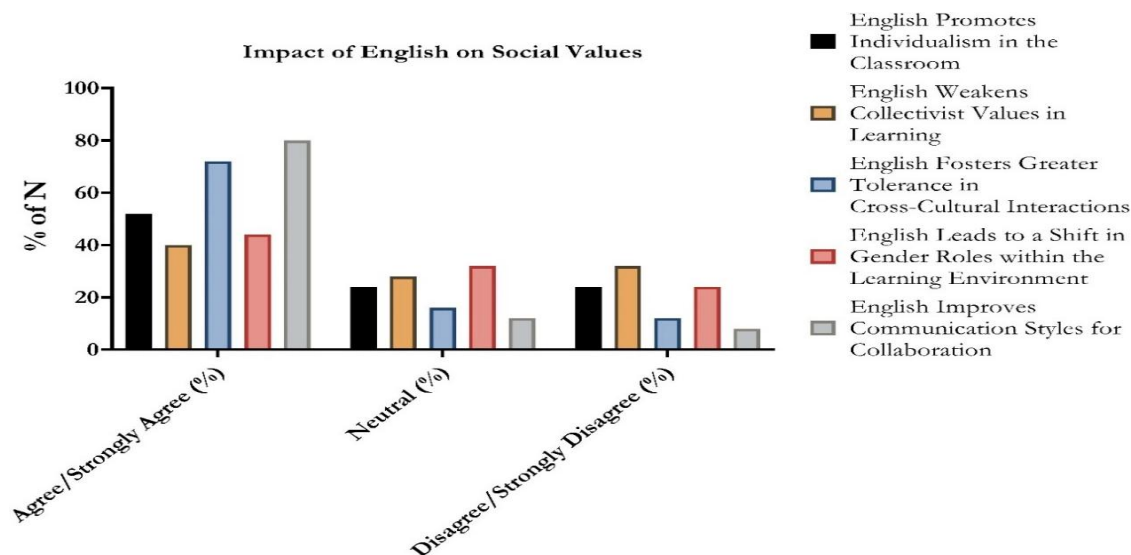


Figure 5: Analysis of Participant Agreement on Impact of English

In Figure 5, over half (52%) agreed or strongly agreed English promotes individualism, while a similar proportion (40%) felt it weakens collectivism. A strong majority (72%) endorsed English fostering tolerance in cross-cultural interactions. Opinions were more divided regarding gender roles, with 44% agreeing English leads to a shift and 24% disagreeing. The impact on communication garnered the strongest consensus, with 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing that English improves communication styles for collaboration.

Table 1:(a) Thematic Analysis on Individualism as a Major Social Value

Theme	Description	Participant Quote
Increased Focus on Individual Achievement	Participants expressed a sense that English language learning emphasizes individual performance and competition, potentially influencing traditional collectivistic values in China.	"Since learning English often involves individual presentations and tests, I worry it might make us less focused on teamwork, which is important in Chinese culture." (Student)
Greater Emphasis on Self-Expression	Some participants noted that English communication encourages expressing personal opinions, which could lead to a shift towards a more individualistic mindset.	"Learning English has made me feel more comfortable speaking up for myself in class, something I wouldn't have done before." (Educator)

Table 1:(b) Thematic Analysis on Individualism as a Major Social Value

Theme	Description	Participant Quote
Balancing Individuality with Collectivism	Several participants highlighted the importance of maintaining a balance between embracing individual expression and retaining the value of social harmony.	"English can be a tool for individual growth, but we should never forget the importance of contributing to the collective good, which is a core value in China." (Educator)

In Table 1, analysing individualism in China, the study found English language learning emphasizes individual achievement and self-expression, potentially impacting collectivism. Participants expressed concerns about reduced teamwork but also acknowledged the value of personal voice. Finding a balance between individual growth and social harmony emerged as a key theme

Table 2: Thematic Analysis of Tolerance as Social Value

Theme	Description	Participant Quote
Exposure to Diverse Cultures	Participants discussed how English facilitates exposure to different cultures and perspectives, potentially fostering greater tolerance and understanding.	"Learning English has opened my eyes to the way people from other countries think and live. It's made me more tolerant of different viewpoints." (Student)
Challenges to Traditional Values	Some participants expressed concerns that English media and cultural influences might challenge traditional Chinese values related to social norms and behaviours.	"I worry that exposure to Western media through English might lead to disrespect for authority figures, which is important in Chinese society." (Educator)
Importance of Critical Thinking	A few participants mentioned that English language learning encourages critical thinking skills, which can contribute to a more tolerant and open-minded approach to social issues.	"Learning English has taught me to analyse information from different sources and form my own opinions. This helps me be more tolerant of others' beliefs." (Student)

In Table 2, the study revealed English exposure fosters intercultural understanding but may challenge traditional values. Participants expressed concerns about respecting authority figures, yet some saw English as promoting critical thinking, leading to greater tolerance for diverse viewpoints.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis of Gender Roles as Social Values

Theme	Description	Participant Quote
Shifting Perceptions of Gender Roles	Some participants discussed the possibility of English media and communication styles influencing traditional gender roles in China.	"I've noticed that English movies often portray women in more independent roles. This is different from the traditional Chinese ideal of feminine behavior." (Student)
Maintaining Cultural Values	Several participants stressed the importance of upholding traditional gender roles while acknowledging the potential benefits of learning English.	"English is important for career opportunities, but we should not lose sight of respecting traditional gender roles that value family and community." (Educator)
Focus on Communication Skills	A few participants emphasized that English language learning can empower both men and women through improved communication skills.	"Learning English has given me the confidence to express myself clearly and participate in discussions, regardless of gender." (Student)

In Table 3, the study found English media may influence traditional ideals. Participants worried about Western portrayals of women conflicting with cultural norms, yet some saw English as empowering both genders through improved communication skills. Balancing the benefits of English with upholding traditional values emerged as a key tension.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of Communication Styles as Social Values

Theme	Description	Participant Quote
Direct vs. Indirect Communication	Some participants discussed the potential conflict between direct communication styles in English and the more implicit communication styles prevalent in Chinese culture.	"Learning English can sometimes make me feel like I need to be more direct, which can be seen as rude in Chinese culture." (Student)
Adapting Communication Styles	Several participants highlighted the importance of adapting communication styles based on the context and audience.	"English can be a tool for learning to communicate effectively in different situations, both formal and informal." (Educator)
Enhancing Communication Skills	A few participants focused on the positive aspects of English language learning for improving overall communication skills, regardless of cultural context.	"Learning English has made me a better listener and more articulate speaker, which helps me communicate more effectively with everyone, not just English speakers." (Student)

In Table 4, the study revealed a tension between direct English communication and the indirect Chinese style. Participants felt pressure to adapt their communication based on audience and context. However, some emphasized the overall improvement in communication skills, highlighting English as a tool for effective interaction across cultures.

Table 5: Group Discussions on Social Change and Resistance in Cross-Cultural Education

Theme	Description	Participant Quote
Value of Cultural Exchange	Focus group discussions highlighted the positive aspects of cultural exchange facilitated by English, acknowledging the potential for personal and societal growth.	"Learning English allows us to learn from others and broaden our perspectives. This can be a positive force for change in Chinese society." (Student, Group A)
Preserving Cultural Identity	Some participants expressed concerns about potential pressure to conform to Western ideals due to the dominance of English.	"We need to be careful not to lose sight of our own cultural identity and traditions just because we are learning English." (Educator, Group B)
Negotiating Change	The discussions acknowledged the inevitability of some social change but emphasized the importance of critical engagement and adaptation.	"English can be a tool for progress, but we should be selective about what aspects of Western culture we adopt and how we integrate them into our own society." (Student, Group B)
Group Dynamics and Resistance	The focus groups explored how group discussions can foster critical thinking and challenge potential resistance to social changes perceived as negative.	"Talking about these issues openly in a group setting helps us to understand each other's perspectives and develop a more nuanced approach to change." (Educator, Group A)

In Table 5, examining social change and resistance in focus groups, participants highlighted the value of cultural exchange through English for societal growth. However, concerns arose about losing cultural identity due to Western influence. The discussions acknowledged inevitable change but emphasized critical engagement and adaptation. Group dynamics were seen as fostering critical thinking and challenging resistance to potentially negative social changes.

4. DISCUSSION

Our findings revealed a range of perspectives on how English interacts

with core social values like individualism, collectivism, tolerance, gender roles, and communication styles. The findings suggest that English instruction can promote a focus on individual achievement and self-expression, potentially influencing traditional collectivistic values in China. However, participants also highlighted the importance of maintaining a balance between embracing individual growth and retaining the value of social harmony. According to Niu and Liu in today's globalized world, cultivating cross-cultural competence in secondary school English education serves a multifaceted purpose (Niu & Liu, 2022). Firstly, it fosters respect and understanding for the rich diversity of cultures that define the contemporary global landscape. Students are exposed to a variety of perspectives and values, promoting appreciation for the world's rich cultural heritage. Secondly, this approach strengthens their recognition and appreciation of their own native culture, fostering a sense of identity within a global context. Finally, by emphasizing both cultural understanding and self-awareness, it equips students with the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of an increasingly interconnected world. As fluency in English rises, China's rich history, ancient civilization, and diverse cultural offerings can be more effectively disseminated on a global scale, fostering deeper understanding and appreciation (Hu, 2002; Pan, 2015). China's cultural footprint is expanding on multiple fronts. Giant pandas serve as endearing diplomatic ambassadors, fostering goodwill with foreign leaders who choose to collaborate on panda conservation programs. Literary works, translated and accompanied by explanatory materials like bilingual comparison tables and Wikipedia interpretations, are becoming more accessible to international audiences. Additionally, the genres of martial arts, fantasy, romance, and espionage within Chinese novels are gaining traction overseas. Similarly, critically acclaimed films and television dramas like "Wandering The Earth" and "War Wolf" are captivating viewers around the world. Undoubtedly, widespread English proficiency among China's youth is a key factor in facilitating these cross-cultural connections. Our analysis regarding tolerance, exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives through English was seen as fostering greater understanding. However, concerns were raised about potential challenges to traditional values due to English media and cultural influences. Interestingly, some participants viewed English language learning as promoting critical thinking skills, which could contribute to a more tolerant and open-minded approach to social issues. Su found that cross-cultural exchange and economic globalization have created a conducive environment for the integration of English into the Chinese language (Su,

2022). This exchange has demonstrably enriched Chinese by introducing a significant volume of English vocabulary across various fields, including economics, politics, science, and technology. The influx of foreign words not only facilitates China's global engagement but also promotes a more open and active mode of thinking, fostering intellectual dynamism. Zhao found that the study of the English language plays a critical role in promoting cross-cultural exchange and disseminating Chinese culture on a global scale (Zhao, 2023). Fluency in English facilitates communication and debate with international scholars, fostering collaboration and potentially leading to more impactful research outcomes. Furthermore, as China's global influence grows, a rising number of foreign scholars are actively engaging with Chinese culture. Their diverse ethnic backgrounds bring unique perspectives that enrich the understanding and interpretation of Chinese culture. Individuals with strong English language skills are well-positioned to bridge this cultural gap, fostering effective dialogue and promoting a wider appreciation of Chinese culture around the world. English serves as a gateway to global interconnectedness. Proficiency in English opens doors to educational opportunities, international careers, and participation in a vast online world. Exposure to English-language media, from Hollywood movies to social media platforms, introduces individuals to different ways of life, challenging and sometimes reshaping their own cultural perspectives. This exposure can lead to a shift in social values, particularly among younger generations, who may find themselves adopting aspects of individualism, consumerism, or gender roles portrayed in popular media. Languages are not merely tools for communication; they embody the cultural values and traditions of the communities that speak them. As the use of English expands, it inevitably interacts with existing social values in different cultural contexts. This can lead to a process of hybridization, where individuals incorporate aspects of English-speaking cultures while simultaneously holding onto their own traditions. This resistance and adaptation highlight the agency individuals possess in navigating the influence of a global language. We found that the impact of English on gender roles emerged as another complex theme. While some participants felt English media portrays women in ways that differ from traditional Chinese ideals, others viewed English as an empowering tool for improved communication skills regardless of gender. The study also revealed a tension between direct communication styles in English and the more indirect styles prevalent in Chinese culture. Participants emphasized the importance of adapting communication styles based on context and audience, while acknowledging the overall benefits of English for

enhancing communication across cultures. In a globalized world, cultural preservation remains a concern for many nations. The rapid pace of economic globalization, with its emphasis on capitalist values, has coincided with the rise of English language dominance. Some scholars argue that this phenomenon represents a form of "capitalist colonization," where cultural and informational outputs are disseminated through the perspective of English hegemony (Scheuerman, 2020). Indeed, Liu et al. (Liu et al., 2023) suggest that exposure to prominent British and American cultures can lead some within China to question their own cultural identity, potentially favouring foreign influences over their native heritage. This trend highlights the importance of fostering balanced two-way cultural exchange in the era of globalization. Darmon proposed that in the process of socialization, children acquire fundamental principles, or social values, from the society they inhabit (Darmon, 2023). These values shape their integral personality and inform their evolving conceptions of life. Unlike individual beliefs, social values possess an objective basis, existing independently of any one person. Their formation hinges on a child's constant immersion in social interaction. Understanding how social values influence children's lives necessitates exploring the concept of moral reasoning (Killen & Dahl, 2021). Moral reasoning complements the social values framework. Children's capacity for moral reflection allows them to internalize social values. Children initially exhibit heteronomous morality. They judge actions based on material consequences and external rules imposed by authority figures, typically parents or caregivers. This limited ability to differentiate between physical and psychological aspects hinders their understanding of the underlying principles behind social values. Our focus group discussions explored social change and resistance in cross-cultural education. The value of cultural exchange facilitated by English for personal and societal growth was acknowledged. However, concerns arose about potential pressure to conform to Western ideals due to the dominance of English. The discussions highlighted the importance of critical engagement and adaptation in navigating social change, with group dynamics seen as fostering critical thinking and challenging resistance to potentially negative social transformations. A significant factor influencing the dynamic interplay between cultural context and English language teaching (ELT) is the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) (Earley & Ang, 2003). Kiraz posit that CQ plays a critical role in ELT by facilitating educators' understanding, adaptation to, and effective response within diverse cultural contexts (Kiraz, 2021). Furthermore, CQ equips teachers with the necessary sensitivity to navigate the classroom's cultural diversity,

ultimately enhancing the learning experience. The influence of teacher beliefs within the cultural context of ELT has also garnered significant research attention. The inclusion of cultural content within the English language teaching (ELT) curriculum is recognized as essential. However, while the integration of cultural content offers clear benefits, acknowledging and addressing the associated challenges is equally crucial. Previous studies (Gay, 2013; Pardo et al., 2009) highlight the difficulty in selecting culturally appropriate materials that can effectively engage learners from diverse backgrounds. Similarly, the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary training to manage potential intercultural conflicts that may arise within the classroom environment. Previous studies (Al-khresheh, 2024; Combariza et al., 2013; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020) suggest that the role of technology in bridging cultural gaps within English language teaching (ELT) represents another significant aspect. The rise of digital technologies has facilitated the transcendence of physical boundaries in ELT. These advancements allow online language learning platforms to expose learners to diverse cultures. Assessment within a culturally diverse ELT environment presents another key area of consideration. Previous studies (Gatt & Attard, 2023; Melesse & Mekonnen, 2020) highlight the potential shortcomings of traditional assessment methods when applied to a multicultural student cohort. They advocate for the incorporation of culturally responsive assessment techniques that demonstrably take into account the learners' cultural backgrounds. The current era of globalization demands not only a paradigm shift in our established ways of thinking but also the application of this global context as a framework for understanding and explaining social transformations and theoretical advancements in sociology. Only through a comprehensive grasp of globalization can we achieve a deeper understanding of how English language education is evolving within middle schools in our country. English language proficiency has become a sought-after skill in today's society, often viewed as a benchmark for personal ability. Many parents prioritize early English language learning for their children, believing it will provide a stronger foundation for their future success. However, this emphasis should not come at the expense of developing essential social skills. Striking a balance is crucial. While English proficiency offers undeniable advantages, neglecting the importance of China's rich traditional culture could lead to a gradual erosion of its unique heritage. According to Ou and Gu and Fang and Baker, by fostering a deeper understanding of Western culture through English language study, China can achieve a more holistic cultural identity (Fang & Baker, 2018; Ou & Gu, 2021). This approach, grounded in

learning from the past to inform the present, allows China to identify areas for cultural enrichment. By doing so, China can bridge the gap between Eastern and Western cultures, highlighting shared values while promoting its own rich cultural heritage to a global audience.

5. CONCLUSION

Our study explored the multifaceted relationship between English language learning and social values in a Chinese educational context. The findings revealed a complex interplay, with English potentially influencing individualism, tolerance, and communication styles. While concerns arose about individualism weakening collectivism and Western media challenging traditional values, the study also identified English as a tool for personal growth, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding. Future research could benefit from a longitudinal design to track the long-term impact of English on social values. Additionally, exploring these themes across different age groups and educational settings could provide a more nuanced understanding. It is important to acknowledge limitations such as the potential for self-selection bias in survey participation and the subjective nature of interview and focus group data. Nonetheless, this study offers valuable insights into the social dimensions of English language learning in a cross-cultural environment.

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