

A RESEARCH IN CHINA REGARDING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.

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ABSTRACT

As a worldwide language, English has become firmly established in China's educational system. Yet there are still hindrances that secondary school students must overcome to learn it well as a foreign language. This research reviews the perspectives of Chinese secondary school students on learning English specifically exploring how their perspectives are influenced by peer feedback. The study employed a quantitative approach with stratified sampling to ensure that all schools and student backgrounds were accurately described. A total of 654 accurate replies were gathered from the location. Using SPSS version 25 with ANOVA, the researcher evaluated the data to find important patterns and correlations. The data demonstrate the beneficial effect of peer feedback on English language development. People who took part in group discussions and received peer feedback noticed improvements in their students' writing, vocabulary and confidence. Further, students were more motivated and felt more like a class when they communicated with one another. Additional issues were also uncovered at the same time. Peer feedback was not as successful as it might have been since not everyone participated, people were scared of being criticised and lessons were too focused on passing tests. The study offers a more systematic integration of peer feedback into the curriculum. With a suitable type of support from teachers and structured training, it may help students perform better and feel more confident. Chinese high schools may assist students in performing better in English by promoting collaboration instead of implementing tests as the main way to impart knowledge.

Keywords: Peer feedback, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), student perceptions, China, Secondary Students.

INTRODUCTION

As a worldwide language, English is spoken by more than 1.35 billion people and has official status in 67 countries. Many sectors including international trade, higher education, the tourism industry and scientists rely heavily on the English language. Even if English is used as a medium of education, students continue to find it difficult to master the language because of how complicated it is. Components of learning English include acquiring new vocabulary and grammatical rules and dealing with challenges related to motivation (Boudouaia et al., 2024). A key component of China's approach to generating future potential is the country's secondary education system. As a bridge between mandatory and higher education, English courses taken

in senior high school are crucial to the English education system. The majority of China's senior high schools require English language skills from their approximately 40 million student population. Due to the large population of high school students who are language learners and the importance associated with academic triumph in English classrooms, it is fundamental to analyse their methods and approaches. Grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary may be challenging for English language learners. Further areas where students stumble with English include listening, reading and generating content. It may be rather difficult for some students to acquire a new language, especially when their teachers use English even if they are really speaking Chinese. It is not straightforward to use Chinese to explain English either. Some English language teachers use a technique called "translanguaging" or "code-switching" to make sure that their students understand the material they are being taught. By using the first language, translanguaging helps define and explain foreign terms and expressions (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). The situation is contrasting in China compared to the rest of the world where arguments over English and LOTE mostly focus on English and the comparative decline of languages other than English. It has been claimed that English language teaching may be entering a "winter" period due to recently implemented legal changes. However, China mandates the teaching of English at all levels of schooling. Teaching foreign languages in China seems to be a multifaceted and complex problem.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Learning English became increasingly prevalent in China as the country's economy grew and more organisations noticed the advantages of communicating in a global language. Elementary schools in China were mandated to teach English as a foreign language in 2001. The national expansion of private language schools has significantly enhanced the impressive progress already achieved in English language proficiency. Learning English could be challenging even though it is spoken in multiple countries. Teachers and students alike often lack a cultural understanding of the language and its complexities which hinders the delivery of authentic, practical English education. Students spend at least six years learning English in middle school and high school but they become too preoccupied with preparing for tests to actually employ their recently acquired knowledge learnt in conversation. The language is studied and committed to memory but it never gets utilised in real-life situations. The assumption that the English language has a dominant influence on Chinese ideology and culture because of its economic favourability is still a source of conflict for certain Chinese leaders (Lu & Fang, 2025). Learning English also offers difficulty due to its unique grammar and spelling. The spellings of the words have not changed even when their pronunciations have. The distinctive grammatical patterns of English and Chinese make it challenging for Chinese students to distinguish between the two languages. Learners struggle to articulate themselves in English because their first language gets in the way of their foreign language acquisition (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020). A greater variety of resources would be available to help students whose first language is not English develop their proficiency in the language. A desire for communication is the second dimension and it is influenced by a number of things outside individual effort. The catalyst for

starting this investigation is concerns about a negative shift in students' perspectives. Experienced language instructors know extremely well how a student's mindset affects their language acquisition.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This research aims to investigate the perspectives and conduct of Chinese secondary school students with regard to their efforts to acquire English language proficiency. This study seeks to shed light on the immediate challenges encountered by organisations and students in the highly competitive and demanding field of secondary education. These barriers include factors like exam pressure, learning motivation, teaching methods, resource accessibility and cultural attitudes. The research investigated students' language learning practices, teacher competency, peer influence and levels of self-confidence regarding their use of English to discover connections among these factors. To make language acquisition more prosperous, delightful, and applicable to students' future requirements, the research also looked into the unstructured parts of English learning. This study aims to better prepare secondary school students for opportunities in further education and worldwide communication. The significance of this work is underscored by many factors. First, the study shows that the socioeconomic status of rural Chinese students significantly affects their English learning skills and the amount of cultural and other capital they may associate with English. Since they typically encounter challenging circumstances that prevent them from advancing to higher education, students from remote regions must put forth a greater effort than those in urban areas throughout the course of their education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers studying first and foreign languages have lately begun to place a greater emphasis on perspectives. When it comes to flourishing pedagogies for second or foreign language acquisition, the majority of research on the subject believes that the student's viewpoint is vital (Xie & Curle, 2022). Studying how students perceive language acquisition is crucial for several reasons "English fever" represents the general adoption of English as a second language in countries where it is not the de jure language of communication. A further indication of the "English fever" is the large percentage of students in secondary schools who speak languages other than English. A law for the Gaokao (National College Entrance Examination) and the 'double reduction,' two new rules legislated by China in 2021 significantly impacted the landscape of languages other than English and English language instruction respectively. In addition, despite the increasing number of language programs, English remains the most desired foreign language. Out of the five Chinese languages offered on the 2019 Gaokao, only 0.47% picked one other than English, while 99.53% picked English (Butler et al., 2022). However, due to the "double reduction" strategies, the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission decided to cancel the final English exams for elementary school students. The reasoning behind this change was to reduce test anxiety among students. Beijing then severely restricted the use

of foreign teaching materials in high schools and outright banned their use in elementary and middle schools. The books have to be approved by the government and based on the national curriculum (Lin, 2022). Implications for teacher education resulting from the study's results include a requirement for further integration of peer and instructor comments into EFL writing courses. Teachers can achieve timely feedback, an inviting classroom environment, optimised writing feedback and increased student motivation and enthusiasm by effectively fulfilling their roles as organisers, helpers, observers and mentors. Even though English language education in China has come a long way and many Chinese people's English language competence has greatly enhanced over the last several decades, this sector regardless faces some challenges. An ineffective foundational training in English as a second or foreign language may be due to a cultural misunderstanding of Chinese students' comprehension and knowledge retention, since the foreign teachers still fail to demonstrate the necessary exam-passing skills even though they are using a more interactive approach (Lan et al., 2021).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the impact of peer feedback in learning English as a foreign language?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

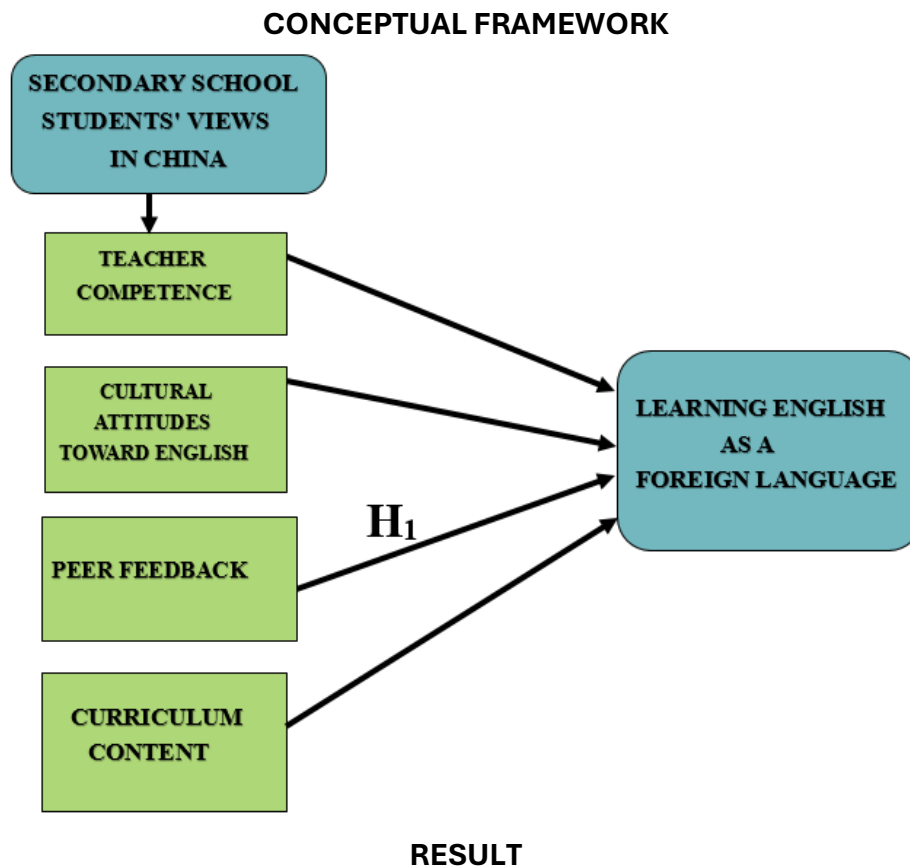
Research Design: This study utilised a quantitative research methodology to assess secondary school students' responses to EFL learning. The researcher used SPSS version 25 to analyse the data. The researcher used descriptive statistics to include demographic and project-related data. Researchers used inferential statistics including probability ratios with 95% confidence intervals, to determine the connections and their magnitude. A p-value below 0.05 seemed statistically significant. The integration of component analysis and analysis of variance enabled the researcher to validate the data and identify statistically distinct groupings.

Sampling: Stratified sampling was used by the researcher to gather data for the study. The study requires 623 participants according to Raosoft's sample size estimations. For the purpose of reducing the response rate, the researcher randomly distributed 750 questionnaires to different strata. After that, 702 questionnaires were returned to the researcher. With 48 respondents giving incomplete or insufficient answers, the total number of valid replies was 654.

Data and Measurement: The primary approach of data collection was the use of scheduled questionnaire surveys. Part one included the researcher asking participants about their demographics and the employment opportunities they had. The researcher asked for their thoughts on several topics related to project management using a five-point Likert scale in the second part of the survey. All sorts of projects and tasks were included thanks to stratified sampling. The secondary data included in the research was mostly culled from academic publications, organisational documents and internet sources.

Statistical Software: For statistical analysis, the researcher relied on SPSS 25 and Microsoft Excel.

Statistical Tools: Numerous demographic and project-related characteristics that are strata-specific have been highlighted via the use of descriptive analysis. Included in the category of inductive statistical approaches are tools such as 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios, ANOVA for group comparison and factor analysis for theoretical validation and measurement reliability.



Factor Analysis: The objective of Factor Analysis (FA) is to discover formerly unseen relationships among publicly available data. When straightforward visual or psychological indicators are not accessible, regression results are often used for assessments. Finding potential weak spots, breaches, and obvious linkages is the main objective of simulation. Data gathered from multiple regression analyses are evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test. Both the mathematical model and the variables used to estimate it are trustworthy. The data may show that there are clones. The data becomes more legible when the proportions are reduced. Assigning a number between zero and one, KMO aids the investigator. A sufficiently big sample population is indicated by a KMO value between 0.8 and 1. Here are the certification requirements given by Kaiser: Unlike the usual range of 0.60 to 0.69, the absurd numbers fall between 0.050 and 0.059. In middle grade, a range of 0.70 to 0.79 is common. A score between 0.80 and 0.89 on a quality scale. The range of 0.90 to 1.00 yielded excellent outcomes.

Testing for KMO and Bartlett's Sampling Adequacy Measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin 0.917

The results of Bartlett's test of Sphericity are as follows:

Approx. chi-square = 3252.968

df = 190

sig = .000

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test.

| KMO and Bartlett's Test | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .917 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 3252.968 |
| | df | 190 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Claims regarding sampling are fundamentally allowed by this. The significance of the correlation matrices was determined using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The sample size is considered adequate at 0.917 according to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistic. When using Bartlett's Sphericity test, a p-value of 0.00 is noted. It is acceptable to assume that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix since Bartlett's Sphericity test was affirmative.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Secondary School Students' Views in China: The entirety of China's third-level secondary schools are collectively referred to as "high school" or "secondary school" in Chinese. In this stage, Chinese students who are enrolled in vocational programs are not included. Participants typically range in age from fifteen to eighteen and are enrolled in grades ten through twelve. More people are enrolling in high school in China according to a new initiative. Among Chinese high schools, 56% had overall enrolment in 2020 (Zare et al., 2022). There have been a lot of important changes in Chinese secondary English teaching over the last 30 years bringing it in line with what seems to be a worldwide movement in language learning theory and practice. Teaching strategies, student capabilities and motivation, textbooks and examinations have all contributed to the development of English language training. Lack of desire to communicate in a different language, especially while learning a foreign language is a dominant problem in most learning situations. Students are opposed to it or do not acknowledge that it is significant enough to want to communicate. If they are worried about their classmates' responses or if their thoughts will be accepted, many students do not speak up in class. Much of the student population remains quiet out of fear of being judged. A student's reading pace defines the first

dimension, the development of more concentrated linguistic abilities with time (Derakhshan et al., 2022).

FACTOR

Peer Feedback: It is a common misconception that young language learners simply participate in conventional wisdom about language learning from their environment. However, research has shown that while they are still developing their sense of self, they have the ability to actively position themselves as subjects. Peer feedback is a writing and editing process where students read and comment on each other's drafts of essays and provide suggestions for improvement. It goes by a lot of names: student assessment, peer review, responses, revisions and peer editing. The theory and practice of the writing method form its foundation. Peer feedback is crucial to EFL writing since it may help students compose better in terms of organisation, correctness, intricacy, word choice, arrangement, vocabulary and syntax (Hou, 2020). Social support, educator support and peer feedback are some of the external contexts that have been the subject of considerable research on the results of student involvement. They found that students are more likely to take part in learning activities when they have amazing connections with both their classmates and their teachers (Xu et al., 2023). Peer feedback is essential in the classroom among other forms of social support. Essential for keeping students engaged and motivated are positive peer relationships that foster collaborative learning, provide chances for real language usage while contributing to a feeling of community.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Learning English as a Foreign Language: EFL is the term used to explain the method of learning English for those whose native tongue is not English. For individuals whose native countries do not officially acknowledge English, this is especially the case. Learning a new language is a pleasant and challenging adventure. For example, while learning English, students experience comparable obstacles irrespective of their first language. Although EFL is most often associated with instructing students from countries where English is not the official language, it may also refer to native English speakers acquiring better control of the English language. Many schools in the United States offer EFL courses for students whose native tongue is not English. Grammar is an essential component of any language. A wide variety of grammar rules including those related to nouns, adjectives, verb tenses and adjective phrases, are addressed extensively in the EFL class. The other skill that students memorise is how to organise words and sentences together correctly (Meng, 2020). Mastering the grammar of a foreign language is necessary for efficient communication. A growing part of China's social and economic landscape, English has appeared as the official language of business, politics and culture in today's interconnected globe. For emerging nations like China whose importance is only extending, the English language takes on further significance. Being able to communicate effectively in English expands China's opportunities and strengthens its global competitiveness (Wang & Guan, 2020).

Relationship between Peer Feedback and Learning EFL: Peer feedback has a favourable effect on EFL students' writing, according to many Chinese studies that aim to improve this skill. Students' writing scores were found to have improved after three months of experimentation with a first-grade class consisting of 30 males and 22 girls (Pan, 2021). The results of a 10-week study with 42 ninth graders in secondary school showed that students' writing improved after receiving peer feedback. Additionally, the students assumed their writing could be enhanced in three areas: content (61.9%), organisation (57.1%) and vocabulary (61.9%) (Yu, 2021). While both teacher and peer feedback enhance students' writing performance and confidence, the positive effect of peer feedback on students' writing skills in specific areas is notably more significant than that of individual teacher feedback demonstrating the effectiveness of peer feedback. Moreover, a majority of students possess a more favourable view of the influence of peer feedback on enhancing motivation and self-efficacy. This perspective is often much more optimistic than students' perceptions of instructor feedback, thus reinforcing the concept that peer feedback is useful in this context (Ding, 2021). Students gain from peer feedback in two ways such as it helps them improve their writing and their self-confidence. By building on earlier understanding and providing productive criticism of one another's work, students are able to reshape their cognitive processes which strengthens their confidence and propels them to succeed. Additionally, the process writing method is crucial in boosting students' confidence and enthusiasm to write since it emphasises the need to take things slowly at each step. The process writing approach reinforces students' drive and confidence in their writing by emphasising modifications and conversations to improve their cognitive, considering and writing abilities. Based on the preceding discussion, the researcher developed the following hypothesis to examine the impact of peer feedback on learning EFL:

“H01: There is no significant relationship between peer feedback and learning EFL.”

“H1: There is a significant relationship between peer feedback and learning EFL.”

Table 2. H1 ANOVA Test.

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|----------|------|
| Sum | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 58289.225 | 211 | 2531.426 | 1134.659 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 996.259 | 442 | 2.231 | | |
| Total | 59285.484 | 653 | | | |

The results of the study are significant. There is statistical significance with an F-value of 1134.659 and a p-value of .000 which is less than the .05 alpha level. This signifies that the “H₁: There is a significant relationship between peer feedback and learning EFL” is accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this research underscore the value of peer feedback in influencing Chinese secondary school students' English language learning experiences. Collaborative proofreading and peer reviews assisted students in enhancing their writing, expanding their vocabulary, and gaining self-assurance while using English. Peer feedback presented students the chance to discuss ideas, fix mistakes and reflect on their respective work which boosted motivation and comprehension. The results confirm those of previous research showing that learning a foreign language via group projects with classmates may boost interest and proficiency in oral communication. Despite these benefits, several problems were identified. Peer review was less effective when students were not equally involved. For various reasons including a shortage of language proficiency and a fear of unfavourable judgement some students were reluctant to provide or receive criticism. Classes were often centred on examination preparation rather than communicative practice due to the majority of exam-oriented schooling which in turn hindered chances for genuine peer feedback. In general, the results show that there is a substantial connection between the feedback received from peers and the outcomes of English language learning that were achieved. It suggests that methodical integration of peer review into the curriculum supported by teacher leadership and training may be able to increase students' language abilities as well as their sense of self-confidence.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the research emphasise the value of peer criticism in classrooms especially in impacting the views of Chinese high school students. Participation in group discussions, collaborative editing and peer feedback helps students become more invested in the material which constructs their confidence in their English language skills. Peer feedback aids in mistake detection, a method for learning and language usage comprehension. According to the results, having meaningful interactions with one's peers is a critical component of effective English language acquisition. Additionally, the study emphasises that certain obstacles prevent peer input from having its full effect. Some students were less comfortable speaking out during group exercises due to insecurity or other factors. Promotion of peer feedback is nevertheless important for enhancing students' education experiences despite these barriers. Achieving enhanced outcomes is possible when instructors provide information on how to do it to encourage equitable participation. If this is the case, students might learn that teamwork is equally significant as individual success. There is expectancy in compound education strategies that combine traditional classroom instruction with peer communication. Students benefit from the framework of formal classes and the likelihood for real-life dialogue that these activities provide.

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