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An investigation of students' preferences in Japanese teaching and learning

Junko Winch*, Sussex Centre for Language Studies, University of Sussex, BN1 9SH Brighton, UK

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Abstract

The teachers in the individualist country usually teach students using individualist approach while teachers in the collectivist countries teach students using collectivist approach. However, teachers and students do not usually share the same educational culture in language classrooms. The purpose of this study has two: first, to examine individualist and collectivist characteristics; second, to ascertain the students' teaching preference whether it is individualist or collectivist approach in a British university. Participants were 19 students who study Japanese language through institution wide language program at a British university in the South of England. The collected data consist of two: questionnaire and an informal interview, both of which were conducted at the end of spring term 2019. The data were analysed using mixed methods. The quantitative results showed that students preferred a mixture of both educational cultures. The ratio of individualist: collectivist:neutral position was 74:11:16 in spite of the fact that this study was conducted in an individualist education culture.

Keywords: Collectivist, educational culture, higher education, individualist, Japanese learning.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Junko Winch**, Sussex Centre for Language Studies, University of Sussex, BN1 9SH Brighton , UK.
E-mail address: dr.junko.winch@gmail.com / Tel: +0-127-387-7409

1. Introduction

Internationalisation and a multicultural learning environment have become the norm at British universities. The students, who study at the British universities from overseas, are committed to their own educational culture and they usually prefer the teaching and learning environment where came from and are familiar with. The problem that I have been encountered in my Japanese language teaching is that there are variety of students' teaching learning preferences and requirements which may be specific to the culture and I am not familiar with. Having educational cultural knowledge would help not only myself, but also other language teachers and students' learning. The purpose of this study is to identify if students who study Japanese language at a British university show any preferences to either individualist or collectivist educational culture. The researcher tries to answer the following specific research question: Do students in this study prefer individualist or collectivist teaching approaches?

This paper starts with a discussion of literature on individualist and collectivist, followed by Methods and the combined Result and Discussion section. Finally, the combined section for 'Conclusion, Recommendation, Limitation and Further study' concludes this paper.

2. Theoretical framework

This section starts with the characteristics of individualist cultural characteristics, which is followed by that of collectivist, which becomes a framework of this paper.

2.1. Individualist culture

Individualist is defined as 'the interests of the individual prevail over the interests of the group' (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, p. 91). There are two key words and philosophers which influence teaching and learning between the West and Confucian countries. In the West, the key word is 'independence' and key philosopher is Socrates. Where sensitivity to the individual is considered of paramount importance in society, one-to-one instruction and one-to-one interaction are ideal. An example of one-to-one instruction is dialogue. Dialogue between student and teacher encourages students' critical thinking. In the dialogue, Socrates plays a role of 'a midwife who helps give birth to a truth that lies within' (Hinkel, 1999, p. 19). Critical thinking is primarily derived from Anglo-European paradigms (Tan, 2017) and has become a practice developed and promoted by Western English-Speaking countries from the 1970 (Vandermensbrugghe, 2004). Therefore, critical thinking is a pedagogy associated with an individualist educational culture (Winch, 2019). Another pedagogy which is valued in an individualist culture is truth (Winch, 2019).

As CLT usually prefers one-to-one interaction, CLT represents one of individualist educational cultural pedagogies. For example, a typical CLT uses pair-work speaking practice, which provides students student-to-student interaction. With pair work, each student can have a one-to-one interaction with his/her partner at their own pace, which is tailored learning. Although the 'learning = being taught' is still promulgated as a dominant approach and by many voices including those of a government (Watkins, 2005), the learning concept of individual sense-making is encouraged in an individualist culture.

According to psychology studies, in an individualist culture, individuals aim to 'influence' (have an impact on, change, improve) their environment to fit their own needs (Morling, Kitayama & Miyamoto, 2002). To successfully 'influence' or change the physical or social environment, a person must act on others or one's environment (e.g., by expressing an opinion). The main task of a person in an individualist culture is to 'stand out' by becoming distinguished from others through self-sufficiency and personal accomplishment (Elliot, Chirkov, Kim & Sheldon, 2001, p. 505) so individuals need to promote themselves. The concept of 'influence' can also be observed consistently in a learning environment where students are expected to speak up in class.

Business studies find that individuals base their identity on their own accomplishments and experience (Merkin, Taras & Steel, 2014) in individual culture, as it places higher emphasis on reward responsiveness and goal striving in the possibility of reward (Elliot et al., 2001). In human behaviour, there are two approaches: approach goals and avoidance goals (Elliot et al., 2001). Approach goals are preferred in individualist culture (Elliot et al., 2001), which focuses on a positive outcome or state and regulation involves trying to move towards or maintain that outcome or state (e.g., do well in school' 'make friends' (Elliot et al., 2001).

Emphasis on goal striving in an individualist culture also influences human emotional reaction. Psychology studies also find differences in how people would like to feel depending on culture. Tsai, Knutson and Fung (2006) demonstrated that the cultural idea and practices may play a more prominent role in influencing how people would like to feel. Those from an individualist culture tend to experience enthusiasm, excited and energetic (Elliot et al., 2001; Kuppens, 2007; Tsai et al., 2006). Another study by Berzonsky (2011) finds that those who adopt whether individualist or collectivist view process identity style differently when they deal with identity conflicts. Soenens, Berzonsky and Papini (2016, p. 420) also claim that 'individuals with an information style engage in an open, systematic examination of identity options...when confronted with new and possibly self-discrepant information, they process it in a relatively flexible, unbiased fashion'. They rely on active problem-solving strategies and possess intrinsic goals such as self-development and community contribution (Berzonsky, Cierciuch, Duriez & Soenes, 2011; Berzonsky, Macek & Nurmi, 2003; Duriez, Luyckx, Soenens & Berzonsky, 2012; Soenens, Duriez & Goossens, 2005). Problem-solving is also one of the key words which relates to critical thinking.

Both business and linguistic studies also find the preferred rhetorical strategies that are used in individualist culture. Individuals in an individualist culture express directly and assertively in both communication and writing style (Charnock, 2010; Kim, 1994). In addition, clarity and reasoned argument (Hammer, 2005; Kaye, 2006) are also preferred. In communication, individualist is demonstrated by more use of 'I' (Hofstede et al., 2010) than 'we'. In writing, the writer is responsible for direct and explicit constructions of meaning (Charnock, 2010) with emphasis on originality or creativity. Originality is demonstrated in writing by the use of the writer's own words and preferred the 'thesis and argument' (Charnock, 2010) text structure where the writer's idea is expressed.

2.2. Collectivist culture

Collectivist is defined as 'the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual' (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 90). This definition extends to collectivist cultural preference in teaching and learning environment. In a collectivist culture, teacher-to-whole group instruction is common, where the teacher looks at a class as one group as a student. The preference for teacher-to-whole group instruction also makes sense why the concept of learning is 'being taught and transmission of knowledge from the teacher'. With this teacher-to-whole group instruction, the pedagogy 'teacher sanctions the students to speak up' works well. Another pedagogy used in a collectivist is turn-taking, which the teacher sanctions all students to equally speak up and participate in the class.

According to psychology study, in a collectivist culture, collectivists aim to 'adjust' (modify, alter, subvert) their environment to fit their own needs (Morling et al., 2002). To successfully adjust his or her own needs to the environment, a person must first assess the demands of the environment (by allowing others to act first, observing where objects are located). The main task of a person in collectivist culture is to 'fit in' by maintaining interpersonal relationship and group harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

A sense of belonging is also a collectivist characteristic. A collectivist society consists of collective units such as family, school, work place and nation. People usually belong to more than one unit and they experience a collective culture consistently throughout their lives. Therefore, collectivist cultures discourage independence (Tan, 2017) and prefer dependence and interdependence. To contrast Socrates in the West, Confucius is the influential philosopher: 'Confucius is asked questions by his

students and respond with wisdom' (Hinkel, 1999, p. 19). Confucius approach fosters a dependent relationship between the teacher and students and encourages passive and uncritical students.

Both business and linguistic studies find that a collectivist culture prefers to express indirectly (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin & Blue, 2003) and vaguely or ambiguously (Kaplan, 1966) in both communication and writing style. In communication, individualist is demonstrated by more use of 'we' (Hofstede et al., 2010) than 'I'. In writing, the writers show respect for their readers by presenting materials without spelling out its relevance (Charnock, 2010) and readers are responsible to understand the meaning by drawing inference from it. Vagueness and ambiguity may be often represented by incoherent writing (Winch, 2018). The writing of a collectivist culture is demonstrated by the use of relevant stories, proverbs and phrases without the need for the writer to explain the intended meanings specifically. The preferred text structure is descriptive, which is demonstrated by the 'background and topic' (Charnock, 2010).

According to Tsai et al. (2006) and Kuppen's (2007) psychology studies, those from collectivist cultures experience calm, relaxed and serene when they feel pleasant. Instead of individualists' active behaviour and goal-pursuit, those who have a collectivist culture feel relaxation, content or 'enjoy the moment' (Kuppen, 2007). Berzonsky's (2011) identity process study shows that individuals in a collectivist society 'do not engage in an intentional personal exploration of values and options, but instead internalise and rely primarily on the norms and prescriptions of significant others. When confronted with new identity-relevant information, they tend to assimilate it into already existing and rigidly held self-views. It is claimed that they define themselves mainly in terms of collective self-attribution, reflecting conformity and conservatism (Berzonsky et al., 2011; Duriez et al., 2012; Soenens et al., 2005). They easily experience discrepant information as potentially threatening and are likely to distort, ignore or simply dismiss self-discrepant information (Soenens et al., 2016). As it is claimed that 'with normative style scores high on need for closure, prejudice and right-wing social-political views: define themselves mainly in terms of collective self-attributes such as religion and nationality; and value goals reflecting conformity and conservatism (Berzonsky et al., 2003; Duriez et al., 2012; Soenens et al., 2005). Avoidance goals are preferred in collectivist culture. (Elliot et al., 2001), which focus on a negative outcome or state and regulation involves trying to move or stay away from that outcome or state (e.g., 'not do poorly in school' 'avoid losing friends') (Elliot et al., 2001).

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The total number of sample students was 19 who were learning Japanese in the institution wide language program context in 2018/19. These students consisted two levels of languages: 16 Ab initio students and 3 Advanced 3 students. The selection of the participants for both pilot and substantive study was based on convenience sampling.

The nationalities of the 19 students were: 6 British, 3 Hong Kong, 2 Chinese, 2 German, 1 French, 1 Danish, 1 Greek, 1 Vietnamese, 2 Romanians. Judging from the nationalities, British, German, French and Danish are assumed to be comfortable with individualist culture. Hong Kong, Chinese, Greek, Vietnamese and Romanians may be more comfortable with collectivist culture. However, judging students' culture by nationalities is misguiding to label students' cultures, as all students do not necessarily represent their nationalities. Where the students previously studied and what their parents' nationalities are also influential on how they behave and react in a certain way. For example, a student who has a British nationality, but assigned her ethnicity as Thai indicates that her culture may not be pure British individualist culture. In fact, both of her parents are from Thailand which may influence her somewhat collectivist view. For this reason, the table below is presented to summarise where they were previously educated, students' parents' nationalities and what language they speak as fluent as native speakers if they speak more than two.

German 1	Educated in Germany whose parents are Arabic and German. Speaks 3 languages: German, English and Arabic
German 2	Educated in Germany whose parents are Arabic and German. Speaks English and German
British 1	Educated in the UK whose parents are both Thai
British 2	Educated in the UK whose parents are British and African
British 3	Educated in the UK whose parents are British and African
British 4	Educated in the UK whose parents are British and Spanish
Romanian 1	Educated in Romania, went to Russian nursery whose parents are both Romanian. Speaks 5 languages: Romanian, Russian, Italian, English and French
Romanian 1	Educated in Greece, and the UK, whose parents are both Romanian. Speaks 3 languages: Romanian, English and Greek
Chinese 1	Educated in Chinese until junior high school. Went to an international high school in Singapore, whose parents are both Chinese. Speaks Chinese and English.
Danish	Educated in the UK whose parents are both Syrian. Speaks Arabic and English.
Vietnamese	Educated in an international school in Vietnam whose parents are both Vietnamese. Speaks 3 languages: Vietnamese, English, Spanish
Greek	Educated in an international school in Greece whose parents are both Greek. Speaks Greek and English.

3.2. Research design

This study uses questionnaires which provide quantitative and qualitative data. Since this study includes quantitative methods, details of a fixed design should be addressed. A fixed design incorporates two further designs: experimental and non-experimental (Robson, 2002, p. 87). Informal interview also provides qualitative data. This study should be classified as a mixed-method design and takes a non-experimental design as 'the researcher does not attempt to change the situation, circumstances or experience of the participants' (Robson, 2002, p. 88).

3.3. Validity and reliability

In relation to population external validity (Gliner, Morgan & Leech, 2009, p. 128), this study is rated low (Gliner et al., 2009, p. 129) as it uses convenience sampling. However, 'external replication' (Graziano and Raulin 2000, p. 201) could be considered as a threat to external validity. It is claimed that researchers are usually interested in either 'a specific finding on its own right', or in the generalisability of their study (Robson, 2002, p. 106). Evaluating replication, this study focuses on a specific finding, that is, a research of students' educational culture who learn Japanese in a British university with a mixture of different nationalities. Therefore, it is difficult to confer any generalised findings from this study.

3.4. Data collection: questionnaires and interviews

The questionnaires and informal interview were chosen as data collection tools and considered suitable to identify students' cultural perception. Below are the details of pilot and substantive study.

3.4.1. Pilot study

A pilot study questionnaire was conducted during the class on 02/05/2019 using the same participants prior to the present study. Looking at the preliminary results of the pilot study, the researcher discovered some issues in analysing the data, which resulted to changing the format of presenting the questionnaire.

3.4.2. Substantive study

The questionnaires in the present study were administered and collected data during the class on 09/05/2019. The questionnaires consisted of 18 questions to elicit students' preference for individualist or collectivist. Students were asked to tick only one statement either individualist or collectivist. They were also asked to provide their nationalities and any languages they speak as fluent as a native speaker.

Informal interviews were also conducted as a supplement to the questionnaire. The interview was conducted prior to the administration of questionnaire to obtain information on students' previous educational cultural background and students' parents' nationalities/ethnicity and educational culture.

3.5. Data analysis

As this study used mixed approaches, both quantitative and qualitative analysis is explained. As for quantitative analysis, the total number of students who agreed with either individualist or collectivist statement for the 18 questions in the questionnaire was counted. Then, the percentage to determine either individualist or collectivist was calculated consistently and systematically for 18 questions. If the number of students who support individualist and collectivist statements were very similar or close (for example, students who support individualist view is 53% and that of collectivist is 57%), this statement is considered as neutral and categorised into the 'neutral position'. Finally, the ratio of individualist: collectivist: neutral position was determined.

The qualitative techniques were also used to analyse the informal interview and students' comments to determine the themes which was discussed in the literature review: noting patterns and themes, seeing plausibility, counting and clustering for classes and categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Student's nationalities were also recorded to compare individualist and collectivist preference for each statement. In addition, students' previous educational cultural background, their current educational culture and their parents' educational culture were also taken into consideration.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

After the data analysis, following 13 themes had emerged related to the literature review: (1) learning environment; (2) communication strategy; (3) concept of learning; (4) writing style; (5) identity within the culture (6) originality and creativity; (7) teacher-to-whole group interaction versus one-to-one interaction; (8) influence versus adjustment; (9) decision-making; (10) independence versus dependence/interdependence; (11) critical thinking; (12) approach goals versus avoidance goals and (13) sense of belonging.

Learning environment

Q1	Individualist	Collectivist
They are familiar with the learning environment where students individually speak up in class and they do, too	74% (14 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	

<p>I express their opinions indirectly and vaguely. Others usually have to guess what I mean. I always think of other people and harmony and put their needs to be the second</p>	<p>26% (5 out of 19 students, nationalities: 1 German, 2 Chinese, 1 Hong Kongese, 1 British) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist</p>
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Communication strategy

Q3	Individualist	Collectivist
<p>I express myself directly and assertively. I use dominate communication even when I may hurt others</p>	<p>47% (9 out of 19 students, nationalities: 2 German, 1 French, 1 Greek, 2 Romanian, 1 Hong Kongese, 1 British, 1 Chinese) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist</p>	
<p>I express their opinions indirectly and vaguely. Others usually have to guess what I mean. I always think of other people and harmony and put their needs to be the second</p>		<p>47% (8 out of 19 students, nationalities: 1 Danish, 1 Vietnam, 4 British, 1 Hong Kongese, 1 Chinese) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist</p>

As two students (1 British and 1 Hong Kongese) ticked neither of A or B and the response of individualist and collectivist was close, this response was categorised into neutral position.

Q8	Individualist	Collectivist
<p>It is important that self-evident things must be said explicitly</p>	<p>63% (12 out of 19 students, nationalities: 4 British, 1 Chinese, 1 French, 1 Romanian, 2 German, 1 Vietnamese, 1 Hong Kongese, 1 Danish) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist</p>	
<p>It is unnecessary to say self-evident things explicitly</p>		<p>37% (7 out of 19 students, nationalities: 1 Romanian, 1 Greek, 2 Hong Kong, 1 Chinese, 2 British) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist</p>

Concept of learning

Q4	Individualist	Collectivist
<p>Learning is individual sense-making</p>	<p>63% (12 out of 19 students, nationalities: 5 British, 2 German, 1 French, 1 Danish, 2 Hong Kong, 1 Romanian) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist</p>	
<p>Learning is being taught and transmission of knowledge from the teacher</p>		<p>37% (7 out of 19 students, 1 Greek, 2 Chinese, 1 Romanian, 1 Vietnamese, 1 Hong Kong, 1 British) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist</p>

One Romanian student commented that learning takes places in two stages, the first goes through the transmission stage and then the second, individual sense-making stage.

Writing style

Q5	Individualist	Collectivist
Students think it is more important to express their opinions rather than describing background and topic in their written coursework	42% (8 out of 19 students, nationalities: 1 British, 1 German, 1 Hong Kong, 1 Romanian, 2 Chinese, 1 French, 1 Greek) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
Students prefer to describe background and topic rather than expressing their opinions in their written coursework		53% (10 out of 19 students, nationalities: 4 British, 1 Vietnamese, 1 German, 2 Hong Kong, 1 Danish, 1 Romanian) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

As one British student ticked neither A or B and the number of A and B are close response of individualist and collectivist was close, this response was categorised into a neutral position.

Q16	Individualist	Collectivist
Readers are responsible for understanding what the writer means and also should infer the writers' intention		42% (8 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist
Writers are responsible to make sure that readers understand what they have written	58% (11 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	

Identity within the culture

Q6	Individualist	Collectivist
I have confidence in my own abilities and that they think they need to promote myself to others	26% (5 out of 19 students, nationalities: 1 French, 2 British, 1 Hong Kong, 1 German) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
Even if I feel confident, I feel that I should not boast themselves and they tend to say the opposite		74% (14 out of 19 students, nationalities: 4 British, 1 Greek, 2 Chinese, 2 Romanian, 2 Hong Kongese, 1 Vietnamese, 1 German, 1 Danish) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

Originality and creativity

Q7	Individualist	Collectivist
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It is normal in their country to use someone's ideas, proverbs, stories and phrases without referencing to make a point and persuade readers		21% (4 out of 19 students, nationalities: 2 Hong Kongese, 1 Chinese, 1 Romanian) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist
The knowledge is never fixed and that they construct knowledge through individual contribution by questioning the received wisdom	79% (15 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	

One-to-whole group interaction versus one-to-one interaction

Q10	Individualist	Collectivist
I accept individual differences and they like class tasks which place emphasis on individuals	89% (17 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
I like classes where a teacher looks at all the student as one group		16% (3 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

One British student ticked both A and B. More students supported individualist than collectivist view on this topic.

Influence versus adjustment

Q13	Individualist	Collectivist
We should act on others and stand out others to be distinguished through personal accomplishment	53% (10 out of 19 students, nationalities: 2 British, 1 French, 1 Greek, 2 Romanian, 2 Hong Kongese, 1 Vietnamese, 1 German) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
I am happy to modify their aims and wishes to fit in to an institution or workplace		47% (9 out of 19 students, nationalities: 4 British, 1 German, 2 Chinese, 1 Hong Kongese, 1 Danish) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

As the total number of responses for individualist and collectivist statements was close, this response was categorised into a neutral position.

Decision making

Q12	Individualist	Collectivist
I make my decision based on their personal values, goals, self-development or community contribution	58% (11 out of 19 students, nationalities: 2 British, 2 Romanians, 1 Greek, 2 Hong Kong, 1 French, 1 German, 1 Vietnamese, 1 Chinese) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
when I make decision, I tend to rely primarily on norms and prescriptions of their family or		42% (8 out of 19 students, nationalities: 4 British, 1 Danish, 1 Chinese, 1 German, 1 Hong Kongese) agreed with this

people who are important to
them

statement, which indicate
preference for collectivist

Independence versus dependence/interdependence

Q15	Individualist	Collectivist
I am independent learners	74% (14 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
I am dependent on teachers in learning		21% (4 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

Q17	Individualist	Collectivist
In my culture, independence is emphasised	68% (13 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
In my culture, dependence and interdependence is encouraged		26% (5 out of 19 students, nationalities: 2 Chinese, 2 Hong Kong, 1 Romanian) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

Critical thinking

Q9	Individualist	Collectivist
I am a critical thinker.	84% (16 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
I do not know what critical thinking is and I have not been trained to think critically in their previous education		11% (2 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

One British student ticked neither individualist nor collectivist statement.

Approach goals versus Avoidance goals

Q18	Individualist	Collectivist
I hope that I do well in Japanese modules (Approach goals)	74% (14 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
I hope that I don't fail in Japanese modules (Avoidance goal)		26% (5 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

Q2	Individualist	Collectivist
I feel pleasant and happy, they get excited and enthusiastic	42% (8 out of 19 students) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
When I feel pleasant and happy, they feel relaxed, at ease, content or enjoy the moment		58% (11 out of 19 students, nationalities: 4 British (include 1 RA), 1 German, 1 Vietnamese, 1 French, 2 Hong Kongese, 1 Danish, 1 Romanian) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

Sense of belonging

	Individualist	Collectivist
I think that Japanese classes have family-like ties with classmates	47% (9 out of 19 students) did not agree with this statement, which indicate preference for individualist	
I think that Japanese classes have family-like ties with classmates		53% (10 out of 19 students, nationalities: 3 Hong Kongese, 2 Chinese, 1 German, 1 Vietnamese, 1 British, 1 Danish, 1 Romanian) agreed with this statement, which indicate preference for collectivist

As the response of individualist and collectivist was close, this response was categorised into neutral position.

4.2. Discussion

According to Winch's (2013) study, students' teaching and learning preferences were categorised into the following three types: Type 1 consisted of students who came from a collectivist educational cultural background and were now studying in an individualist educational culture. Type 2 covered students from an individualist educational cultural background continuing to study in an individualist educational culture. Type 3 comprised of students from an individualist educational cultural background but who were also subject to a degree of collectivist influences (this was often the case where their parents are from a collectivist educational cultural background) studying in an individualist educational culture. As the researcher was also a teacher of the class, the researcher also replicated Winch's (2013) previous study. However, the results of this study showed the following five types (one of them includes two sub-types) of students:

Type 1 consisted of students who came from a collectivist educational cultural background and were now studying in an individualist educational culture. In this study, further two sub-types were identified, that is, Type 1i) and Type 1ii). Type 1i) is those who have no previous experience in studying in an individualist educational culture until studying at this university and this is their first time they have studied in individualist educational culture. Four students were applicable to Type 1i) in this study; Type 1ii) is those who have experienced individualist educational culture at international high school prior to coming to this University, which gives students an individualist educational experience. Three students of this study were categorised as Type 1ii).

Type 2 covered students who come from an individualist educational cultural background and continue to study in an individualist educational culture. Type 2 is the only students who do not encounter cultural differences nor need to experience adjustment of culture. Three students were categorised as Type 2.

Type 3 comprised students from an individualist educational cultural background but who may be also under influence of collectivist influence (this is often the case where both of their parents are from a collectivist educational cultural background). Two students of this study were categorised as Type 3. In addition to above three types, two new types of students were identified in this study.

Type 4 is the students who are familiar with the individualist educational culture but were also subject to a degree of collectivist influence. This is often the case where one of their parents is from a collectivist cultural background (e.g., his/her father is from an individualist cultural background, whereas his/her mother is from a collectivist cultural background). Five students in this study were categorised as Type 4.

Type 5 is the students who are familiar with the individualist educational culture but had influences from studying and living in other collectivist and individualist countries and cultures where they have

lived and are able to speak those languages fluently. They are usually multilingual students. Two students were categorised as Type 5.

5. Conclusion, recommendation, limitations and further study

The results show that the ratio of individualist: collectivist: neutral was 74:11:16, despite that this study was conducted in a British individualist university. Among 19 statements in the questionnaire, 14 individualist statements (74% of the total statements) were agreed by the majority on: creativity, emphasis of clarity, critical thinking, 'learning as sense-making', 'emphasis on individuals', 'decision making', 'responsibility of reader and writer', 'writing style', independence and approach goals. Only two collectivist statements (11% of the total statements) on 'preference for vague communication strategy' and 'feeling pleasant is relaxed, at ease and enjoy the moment' were preferred by the majority. The results on 'influence versus adjustment', 'indirect and vague communication' and 'sense of belonging' were categorised into the neutral positions.

The recommendation is to disseminate the educational cultural knowledge to students in the teacher education program who will become teachers in the future. The findings in this study should also benefit the future teachers to understand students' diverse teaching and learning preferences and requirements.

The main limitation was the low number of participants. The total number of participants in this study was 19, which is a relatively small sample size. It was not feasible to increase the size of participants, as this was the maximum number of students in this study. This limits the generalisability of the conclusions drawn from the results. Nonetheless, it may be possible to find results on this specific sample population. The second limitation is on methodology. In developing the questionnaire, the researcher inferred and provided the potential answers as the participants' choices. However, a full understanding of students' perceptions and feelings may not necessarily be gained from the questionnaire because the options included by the researcher may have limited the responses. Furthermore, there is always a danger that the students might not provide their honest opinions in the questionnaire and also that the interpretation of the data may be culturally biased to obtain the unanimous interpretation compared to quantitative method.

As for the suggested further study, the opposite of this study, that is, to examine whether students from multicultural background studying in a collectivist country prefer collectivist teaching approach would be interesting to compare similarities or differences of students' between individualist and collectivist culture as this study concerned about a Japanese language class in a British university which examines whether students from multicultural background studying in an individualist country prefer an individualist teaching approach.

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