

# How Does Culture Influence Student's Assessments

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## **Abstract:**

Many studies focused on variables affecting assessment such as different assessors and proper use of scales, few research focused on cultural factors. This study aims to explore how Chinese culture affects assessment results. Taking a writing assignment as a case study, it collected 100 students' self-assessment and peer assessment scores, using a quantitative method to analyze their reliability. The result shows the inconsistency between different assessors. Face-to-face interviews are conducted, the findings indicate that some raters mark themselves higher to keep a high rank, for staying at the bottom is shameful. Peer assessments are mainly based on friendship, admiration, or maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships. The results show that Chinese testing culture, face issues, relationship issues, the concept of harmonious coexistence, respect for labor, and worship of power have impacts on assessment behavior. Thus, assessments should take assessors' social bonds and culture into consideration.

**Keywords:** *Self-assessment, Peer assessment, Assessment results, Chinese culture.*

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## I. BACKGROUNDS

Educational assessment is an indispensable part of talent cultivation. With the in-depth study of student-centered education, great changes and innovations have taken place in educational assessment. The purpose of assessment shifted from "Assessment of Learning (Ao L)" to "Assessment for Learning" (A f L) and "Assessment as Learning" (Aa L), and assessment methods are shifting from teacher-centered assessment to students' assessment which aligns with student-centered education concept.

Mehrens (1992) defines students' assessment as a value judgment by using certain techniques and methods according to certain criteria, with students as the assessing object [1]. Different from grading, assessment is not only a part of the learning process but also strong evidence for judging the learning results, style as well as a learning strategy. So, its main function is reflected in diagnostic, summative, or formative assessment. As a systematic collection and analysis of information to improve student learning, it can identify, monitor, guide, or improve students' learning achievements or goals, and alleviate students' anxiety about assessment [2].



















③ students are inclined to rate slackers and uncooperative students lower.

These assessment characteristics are largely influenced by the cultural environment in which they live. One of them is the long-standing testing culture in China, in which students are forced to rank at the top for college admission. The norm-referenced testing culture still exerts great influence on college students.

The second one is the profound impact of Confucian culture, which stresses the top priority of harmony. It is a state of congenial co-existence based on due respect for differences and diversity, also an important moral concept of the Confucian school in managing interpersonal relations. So, students mark their peers in a way that would not offend them.

The third one, facing issues. When taking others' feelings into account, Chinese people also try to maintain their faces, for losing face is a shameful thing. Therefore, in terms of self-assessment, no classmate is willing to give himself a low score because he is afraid of failing the exam and losing face.

The Fourth one is the Chinese philosophy of collectivism. Unlike western individualism, Chinese people pay attention to the power of the collective. Anyone who impairs or undermines the interests of the collective is despised, and whoever does not contribute his or her efforts for the well-being of a team is considered selfish and probably will be isolated and ostracized by other members. So, in peer assessment, those uncooperative students were given low marks, while cooperative and suggestive ones won more grades.

Last but not least, the worship of authority and appreciation for the spirit of hardworking. Chinese enjoys a long history of 5000 years in the process of which emperor dominates the society, people are deeply influenced by this authority dominant culture, even in modern society, Awe of authority inhibits people from challenging them. Furthermore, the hardworking spirit of the authority makes her work Unquestionable.

#### 4.2 Limitations

However, there are some limitations to this study. Owing to the small sum of samples, there are only 11 exceptional cases to study. Besides cultural factors what are other weighing elements? For example, are there any gender differences in students' assessments? For this study is conducted in foreign language departments where 84% of the participants are female, the male makes up only 16%. The insufficient number of male students keeps this research from exploring gender differences, which assumes a critical part in Chinese culture.

From the analysis above, it is clear that assessments should be multi-dimensional, taking students' motivation, progress, social bond, and cultures into consideration. To help Chinese instructors achieve fairer students' assessments, more work should be done to achieve higher reliability, quantitative assessment

and qualitative assessment should both be applied in formative assessment. But to what extent, should teachers carry out to complement these diversified assessments to improve students learning, it is the journey ahead to be explored.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funded by the school project of Guangzhou College of technology and business: Development and Validation of Business English Proficiency Scale. Fund NO.: ZL20211145

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