

Perceived Cultural Dimensions in Classroom Interaction: Implications for Learning at the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan

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Abstract: Findings from the studies conducted by Hofstede and other scholars have shown that the four cultural dimensions (power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity vs. femininity) of social interactions impact classroom interactions and teaching. This study tests the observance and influence of these cultural dimensions in classroom communication between lecturers and students of the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan. An adapted and validated instrument on cultural dimensions was administered online on undergraduate students of the Department; data were analyzed using inferential statistics and multi-layer perception network structure. A strong positive correlation was not found for gender, ethnicity and level as predictors of power distance ($r=.250$), individualism ($r=.248$), collectivism ($r=.186$), uncertainty avoidance ($r=.066$) and masculinity/femininity ($r=.194$), and the regression model predicted 6.3%, 6.2%, 3.5%, 0.4% and 3.8% of the variance respectively. The linear regression model did not explain power distance ($F=1.760$, $P>.05$), individualism ($F=1.730$, $P>.05$), collectivism ($F=.942$, $P>.05$), uncertainty avoidance ($F=.116$, $P>.05$) and masculinity/femininity ($F=1.034$, $P>.05$). Multi-layer Perception Network Structure indicated that students in 200 level are the most connected with cultural dimensions especially power distance. Management of the Department of Communication and Language Arts may need to empower lecturers on classroom cultural management strategy towards the reduction of high power distance and uncertainty situation during teaching and learning; lecturers need to also use more of collectivistic teaching strategies.

Keywords: Cultural dimensions; classroom communication; social interactions; teaching and learning

1. Introduction

In any learning situation, a lecturer and students are present. They exchange basic and advanced concepts or knowledge by means of different communication skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing in the process of their interactions which let someone be active at a certain period and the other stay receptive. However, many factors determine the extent to which both parties gain and lose from their interactions towards effective teaching and learning. Pal, Halder and Guha (2016) in their study found that students, curriculum, and the classroom environment are the main barriers to effective classroom engagement while

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teachers are not the barriers. Instead, teachers' self-perception was discovered to be a critical factor in effective classroom communication because what they believe affects what they do and say in the classroom, their judgment and interaction with the students.

However, Muzenda's (2013) study of the influence of lecturers' competences on students' academic performance recorded that subject knowledge, teaching skills, lecturer's attendance and lecturer's attitude significantly produce a positive influence on students' academic performance. Studies conducted by Liu, Liu, Lee and Magjuka (2010), Shattuck (2005) and Macfadyen and Chase (2004) have established the place of cultural differences on students' participation in online courses and increased miscommunication when different cultural patterns of communication are employed. Cetin, Ellidokuzoglu and Dogan (2014), in their examination of teacher-student relationships across teaching careers of Turkish's English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, collected data from 436 students and fourteen EFL teachers. Their findings showed that students perceived experienced teachers as more cooperative than new teachers. This perception significantly influenced their disposition to the course and the teacher.

Existing studies have also established a link between the interpersonal behaviours of teachers and students' attitudes to all areas of courses and students' readiness to engage in learning activities has also been established by different scholars (Wubbels & Levy, 1993; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 1998; Brekelmans, Slegers & Fraser, 2001; De Brok, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 2004; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005; Wubbels, De Brok, Veldman & van Tartwijk, 2006).

These empirical analyses have shown that culture and non-culture phenomena are capable of impacting classroom interaction or teaching. Hofstede (1986) has identified large scale versus small scale power distance, individualism versus collectivism, strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity as the cultural dimensions that influence social interactions. The scholar has extensively conducted sole national studies and comparative cross-national studies on how these dimensions affect classroom communication between teachers and students.

Studies on the influences of culture on teacher-student classroom interactions in Nigeria are negligible, and there exists no standard interrogation of Hofstede's (1986) conception of influences of Nigerian national culture on classroom interactions between teachers and students. If classroom interactions are laden with complexities and cultural influences, it is important to investigate the extent to which students in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, exhibit the cultural dimensions in their classroom interactions with lecturers and the cultural dimension that dominate their classroom communication with their lecturers. The choice of the Department is premised on the fact that both the lecturers and students have good understanding of Human and

Interpersonal Communication essential for elucidating national cultural values. Thus, the Department was selected due to its communicative orientation.

Given the fact that other demographic characteristics of a group of participants of this research can also super-impose one of the dimensions over others, the place of gender, ethnicity and level of education as the predominant characteristics that determine the occurrence of one or some of the dimensions over others had been empirically established. All of these constitute the empirical gap in research that this study tried to fill.

However, the emerging findings would be more appreciated within the context of ethnicity than gender and levels (year on the course of study) of the students because the Department of Communication and Language Arts and other departments in the University of Ibadan admit students from the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria Nigeria's –Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba. Some traditions and values of these ethnic groups could be situated within Hofstede's cultural dimensions. For example, typical Ibo children are taught how to respect family and community members and other people outside their clans from childhood and this aligns with the Hofstede's power distance. Furthermore, Ibo children are trained to prepare for manhood and womanhood, an indication of feminism versus masculine dimension. In Iboland, strong stories are usually narrated to male children and soft stories to female children. This is to toughen men and prepare them for future roles as the protectors, guardians and heads of their families. Whereas, mothers tell their daughters feminine stories for them (daughters) to exhibit good characters towards men, especially their husbands in order to win their hearts (Okoro, Eze & Ofoegbu, 2017).

In addition to respect for elders within and outside their families common among Ibo and Yoruba children, Hausa emphasizes seniority by birth-order. In this group, only men are expected to lead in any situation; even when women are in attendance, men are mostly favoured (Smith, 1959). In the Ibo, Hausa and Yoruba larger societies, the rulers exercise maximum authority over the ruled. They have higher a status which calls for the kind of the respect followers give them. Yoruba culture is laden with a lot of taboo, values and traditions that connect with the cultural dimensions. Yoruba believe in working together and this is more pronounced when there is a need to execute community services or help each other on the farms (Oti & Ayeni, 2013). Also, hierarchical order manifests in most communicative situation among the Yoruba ethnic group. For instance, children must not look elders in the face when elders are talking. At the same time, when elders are talking, it is improper for children to talk because such a behaviour does not portray good family training and it is a sign of disrespect for elders (Odejobi, 2013).

2. Classroom Engagement and Communication

Education is not effective unless the educational objectives set by schools are successfully achieved. Among the factors that determine effective education, scholars have identified the role of teachers as a significant variable of interest. This conclusion was the basis of the findings of various studies (Marzano, 2003; Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk & Doolaard, 2014) conducted on the subject, which trace difference in achievement among students to the effectiveness of their teachers. Good classroom management strategies, of which teacher-student classroom communication is a subset, trigger effective teaching and learning. This means that when a teacher is able to create a positive classroom environment based on effective teacher-student relationships, teaching and learning become rewarding for both parties (Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk & Doolaard, 2014). These classroom management strategies that produce social and emotional learning among students are a caring and supportive relationships with and among students, planned and implemented instructions that promote access to learning by students, favourable teacher-student relationships, improved involvement of students in the academic tasks (e.g. giving group assignment), conscious development of social skills and self-regulation among students, and interventions aimed at helping students struggling with social problems (Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk & Doolaard, 2014, citing Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Marzano, 2003).

Particularly, Frymier and Houser (2000) found in their study that teacher-student relationship should be an interpersonal relationship for motivation and learning to be produced among students. Such interpersonal communication skills as referential skill, ego support and conflict management are considered most important for effective teaching, while referential skill, ego support and immediacy are reported as significant for students' learning and motivation. However, human and environmental interactions are facilitated by culture which shows that learned and shared cultural values in a society influence teacher-student interaction. Therefore, cultural assumptions about teachers, students and relationships are established factors that influence classroom interactions, the responsibility of teachers and ultimately, learning (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Brown, 1994). For instance, McClowry, Rodriguez, Tamis-LeMonda, Spellmann, Carlson, and Snow (2013) found that temperament mediated the relationship between students' gender and disruptive classroom behaviours. The scholars also discovered that temperament also mediated the association between gender and teachers' difficulty in managing students' covert disruptive behaviour. The study also revealed that irrespective of gender, students with high maintenance and intermediate temperaments were more likely than industrious students to receive negative teacher feedback. Furthermore, empirical findings have also established that irrespective of students' temperament, teachers provide more positive feedback to boys than to girls. In another example, a significant association has been found between students' perception of their teachers' interpersonal behaviour and their

(students) perceptions of the cultural aspect of the classroom environment (Fisher, Waldrip & den Brok, 2006). Fisher and his colleagues concluded that within the interpersonal relationship between students and teachers using Tolerant-Authoritative and Uncertain-Tolerant as criteria, teachers are perceived as establishing most equity, collaboration and congruence, whereas repressive teachers are perceived as establishing the least of these elements.

Theoretically, Hofstede (1986) has made us understand that in any social setting and country by extension, interactions take place as large scale versus small scale power distance, individualism versus collectivism, strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, short versus long time orientation. The complexity becomes more difficult when “these archetypal roles are played in different ways in different societies and it can lead to clashes when the cultural perceptions of what appropriate classroom interactions are differ between students and teachers” (Reisinger, 2009; Rinuastuti, Hadiwidjojo, Rohman & Khusniyah, 2014; Yoo, 2014, p. 172). His assumptions on each dimension are presented below:

Table 1. Cultural Dimensions and their Assumptions from Hofstede’s 1993 “Cultural Constraints...” paper)

Dimension	Assumption
Power Distance	The extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally
Individualism	Degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups
Collectivism	A society in which tightly-integrated relationships tie extended families and others into in-groups
Uncertainty Avoidance	A society’s tolerance for ambiguity, in which people embrace or avert an event of something unexpected, unknown, or away from the status quo
Masculinity	A preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success.
Femininity	A preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life.
Long Term Orientation	A society view of adaptation and circumstantial, pragmatic problem-solving as a necessity
Short Term Orientation	Traditions are honoured and kept, while steadfastness is valued

These assumptions are relevant to this study. For instance, students would recognise that their lecturers have power over them which needs no further justification because in a typical Nigerian society, young people are expected to respect and obey elders. This acceptance has the likelihood of making students reserve their comments or not contribute to discussion in the classroom which will make “in-groups” activities difficult. Being silent in the classroom is also likely to be permanent considering the fear of unknown actions or inactions of the lecturers. However, the two interlocutors –lecturer and students cannot have a tense teaching and learning situation for long. There would be a need to ensure balance of strict rules with compassion towards effective teaching, learning and academic

performance. This becomes imperative because of the need to avert failure on the part of both interlocutors.

2.1. Research Questions

1. Which of the cultural dimensions do the students demonstrate most while interacting with their lecturers?
2. Which of the students' characteristics determines the dominant cultural dimensions at play?

3. Materials and Methods

The study adopted a mixed method design for data collection. Two Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions were conducted among second-year (eight participants) and fourth-year (seven participants) students of the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; two lecturers from the Department also participated in a semi-structured interview. The transcripts of these FGD and interview sessions were read, re-read, edited, analysed and grouped under themes that emerged from the process. For the survey aspect of the study, an online questionnaire was used in collecting the required data while a pool sampling procedure was adopted for the selection of the studied sample. The link to the questionnaire was shared on the students' WhatsApp group pages and the students were asked to respond to the survey. As at the time the survey was closed, 83 (out of about 200) students responded to it. The researchers employed the procedure due to their inability to access the sample during holiday and their intention to obtain enough data from 100 to 400 levels. A total of 27 measurement items were formulated (from previous validated instrument) on the questionnaire considering existing studies and propositions of the theory which underpinned the study. These items were structured into the subsequent indexes –Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Long Term Orientation and Short Term Orientation. Data management and analysis were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS); specifically, the theme building, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Measurement items were converted into measurement scales before one sample t-test was carried out to form the needed mean scores for the cultural dimensions and a simple linear regression was also performed. These scores helped in determining the lowest and highest dimensions of cultural constraints. With the inferential analysis, the researchers were specifically concerned with how cultural dimensions (Y) could be predicted from gender, ethnicity and level (year spent on the course) (X). In addition to our understanding of the relationship that exists among the key variables of the study, we conducted a Multi-Layer Perception Network Structure on the gathered data using a 3-input and 1-output feed-forward neural network.

3.1. Results

Qualitative Results

This section focuses on the presentation and interpretation of themes that emerged from the qualitative data gathered through the Semi-Structured Interview and Focus Group Discussion aspects of the study. The views of the students and lecturers were specifically integrated.

1. Obedience and Family Upbringing

According to the students who participated in the FGD sessions, respect is the predominant cultural element serving as a barrier to classroom interactions between the lecturers and their students. Participants submitted that their cultural upbringing and values demand that they remain quiet when elders are talking. The opinion of participant 2 in the first FGD presents a representative position of the participants who spoke on the influence of respect. She said:

Culture also reflects in our non-verbal cues. For example, the way we are brought up and our values. Whenever our lecturer is talking, there is respect and nodding we give the lecturer to show respect in terms of non-verbal cues.

Participant 4 in the second FGD also said that:

Culture affects interaction within the classroom. Some lecturers take this culture seriously because they believe as an elder, you should be obedient to them and see them as more knowledgeable in whatever you are being taught. Some even think you should bend down while greeting them.

They were of the opinion that culture prevents them from challenging the *status quo*. Although, they might know the right thing but respect borne out of culture will not let them contribute or ask questions. Thus, culture in a way hinders their readiness to contribute or ask questions in the classroom.

2. Strict Personality

Participants also opined that some strict cultural rules and personal beliefs prevent students from contributing during classroom interactions. Participant 6 in the second FGD said:

Some lecturers due to their culture see you as being rude when you pick them up on an issue and argue with them. You start to hear stuff such as you are just an undergraduate. How many researches have you carried out or how many papers have you written?

Participants said the perceptions they hold about the lecturers determine the preparation they make before lectures. This indicates that when they are relating with lecturers, their cultures and their understanding of the cultural demands of the lecturers govern their relationships with the lecturers.

3. Convergence and Divergence between Obedience and Teaching

While one of the participants in the second FGD could not see respect for a lecturer's age preventing him from contributing in class and pointing things out to a lecturer, others believed that culturally determined respect with prior relationship and competence seriously determine whether they would contribute during lectures or not. The two positions are presented below:

Well, I think respect is one thing and teaching is another thing. There are however, occasions when both will meet. When we are talking about a subject, course or a topic, my question or contribution does not affect my respect for you. It is just my quest for knowledge that is making me ask questions or wanting to contribute to a topic of discussion. It is only when you both have an issue or a score to settle with each other that you should be wary of contributing or asking questions in his/her class. Respect has little or no connection with learning *per se*.

Well for me, I will disagree with him. You might ask some questions or make some contribution in class and the lecturer (likely to happen among Yoruba lecturers) and they might tag such actions as being offensive. I don't want to mention names. Therefore, if I think the lecturer is likely to see my contribution as an offence, I will keep it to myself and if it is a question, I will be left with no choice other than using *Google* to provide answers. In other words, trying not to offend someone due to my contribution or question hinders me from going ahead with such in class. One of the lecturers who responded to the semi-structured interview said the lecturers and students must interact for any meaningful learning to take place. But in a situation where students do not respect the lecturers the atmosphere of learning will not be conducive and the listeners (who are the students) will find it difficult to assimilate the course. There must be mutual respect between lecturers and students for any learning to take place.

4. Fear of Dwindling CGPA

Information from the two FGD sessions show that students also find it difficult to speak their minds, participate in classroom interactions and freely relate with lecturers outside the classroom because they are afraid that doing so might endanger their CGPA. They therefore show official respect and are silent in class so as not to get into trouble. Participant 3, FGD 1 said: "I think people don't really have a relationship with some lecturers like that because they are very serious persons. We still show respect because we don't want to mess with our CGPA and so, we just try to listen". Participant 4 in the second FGD also observed that:

If you fear the lecturer, you will be reluctant to ask questions or contribute in class. The classroom is an intellectual gathering where contributions are expected to be made and questions expected to be asked but then, in another breadth, when culture sets in, it limits one.

5. Imperative of Lecturers' Actions and Inactions

Participants noted that non-verbal cues of some lecturers determine the extent to which students are ready to relate with them. They thought if they could walk up to a lecturer anywhere outside of the classroom and nothing negative resulted from that encounter, it would not be difficult to freely relate with such a lecturer in and out of the classroom. They are usually in a dilemma as to how lecturers would see issues, whether or not such encounters would be counted as disrespect or a burden. One of them had witnessed an incident whereby a simple encounter was interpreted as crossing the boundary. Participant 1 FGD 1 said: "Well, you can't trust people much. But there are some lecturers that I feel when I talk to this man, he does not objectify me in his mind. He is a proper man; He is a father. But there are some lecturers that are danger zones for me". The opinion of participant 4 in the first FGD is very important here:

The way some people behave does not give students freedom. For instance, if you're not a jovial person, if you're always frowning, if you're not a happy person, you're always "jagbemoyan, jagbemoyan" (shout at you). They've not asked you one question and you say I've talked to you before, don't ask me anything. It could affect a student's freedom to talk to you. Your behaviours in general, the way you act, the way you respond to people around you not even in class because I could see you outside and see the way you're talking to someone, the way you relate with the person would give me courage, an open hand or a closed hand to come and talk to you.

The observation of students agrees with the position of a lecturer who responded to the semi-structured interview. He said that for any good interaction, there must be synergy in the behaviours of lecturers and students. When you are open, people are open with you. But, when you are unnecessarily strict people move away from you.

6. Friendliness, Learning and Academic Achievements

Friendly lecturers have a way of motivating students to pass. Participants observed that they could not really deal with lecturers that are strict and everything they do is about protocol. They knew some lecturers who related like mothers or fathers with students. Students feel more comfortable talking to lecturers that have that attribute within them; students learn more and get feedback that they want from such unlike lecturers that are strict. Participants also noted that the way some lecturers behave and carry themselves makes students to form impression, which influences what students do with the courses such lecturers teach. Participant 5 in FGD 1 observed that this issue affected her class in a course they took last session. "We didn't really give much respect to the lecturer and it affected us and because he could even see it, so he was like: you guys are joking with me: and because of that, we couldn't really get what we wanted."

To show further that behaviours of lecturers influence students' academic achievements, participants have noted a way some lecturers talk, the way they give facts, the way they give figures, their intelligence, and the way they infuse their experiences into lectures. If they tell students anything, they tend to believe such lecturers more and prepare very well to do well in their examinations. Here is participant 6, FGD 1 on this issue:

The personal behaviours of the lecturer go a long way in making the students to pass or to fail. Personally, for me, when I was in secondary school, I hated Mathematics. Maybe because the person taking it was very strict, always flogging, maybe where you miss like two, the strokes will be doubled. For me I felt like "this is horror!". Now, I'm in the university, it still applies to it. Dr..... for example, she is a good person. She really bonds with everybody. I don't think there's anyone that would say he does not like her. And for that, this exam that we're about to write, even though we've not read anything, before the exam, we'll have no choice but to read well for it because we won't want her to feel bad. We'd really want to read to come out in flying colours.

During the semi-structured interview, a lecturer said "You must have a good understanding of the course content, ability to given scholarly example, a good command of English Language, ability to communicate fluently, be jovial, humility to accept mistake and understanding of students' knowledge inadequacies and frivolities" are the attributes and behaviours of lecturers that can help students to achieve positively in their studies. He also observed that a lecturer's good culture of passing knowledge coupled with relatable behaviour will draw students' attention to him/her, which will eventually contribute to their overall academic achievements.

7. Balance Strict Rules and Cultural Expectations with Openness

On suggestions for improvement among students and lecturers, one of the lecturers said both students and lecturers must understand that they need each other. Hence, nobody will exist without the other and nobody knows all things. While the lecturer passes the knowledge with humility, the student must also receive it like a child for the purpose of scholarship. Students on their own part would want lecturers to be open to ideas and come down to the level of students while still maintaining their respect and integrity. They would prefer lecturers and students who see themselves as learners, people ready to learn from one another. Furthermore, they expect lecturers to imbibe the rites of each setting, saying that a classroom setting does not survive and succeed on strict observance of cultural rules.

They would like lecturers to strike a balance between demand for strict observance of cultural rules and openness to relate with students. Participant 2 FGD 1 said: "Our lecturers should be more empathic. They should put themselves in our shoes.

Sometimes, they tell us to do “unrealistic things”. It’s not like we don’t do them, we do. But, it is not good on our part. No matter how much we have come to school about academics, it can be really choking.”

Quantitative Results

In this section, data sourced through quantitative approach of the study and analysed were presented. Themes developed from the research questions were employed to guide discussion of the results. In addition, specific items for each cultural dimension were used as basis of discussing the generated data from the participants.

Demographics of the Students

Over 26% of students from 200 and 300 levels participated in the study. Twenty-four students, representing 28.9%, were also involved from 400 level and 19.1% was the percentage of participants from 100 level. More than 81.0% of the participants indicated Yoruba as their ethnic-nationality followed by 13.3% who reported Ibo as their ethnicity. Female students participated more (54=65.1%) than male students (29=34.9%).

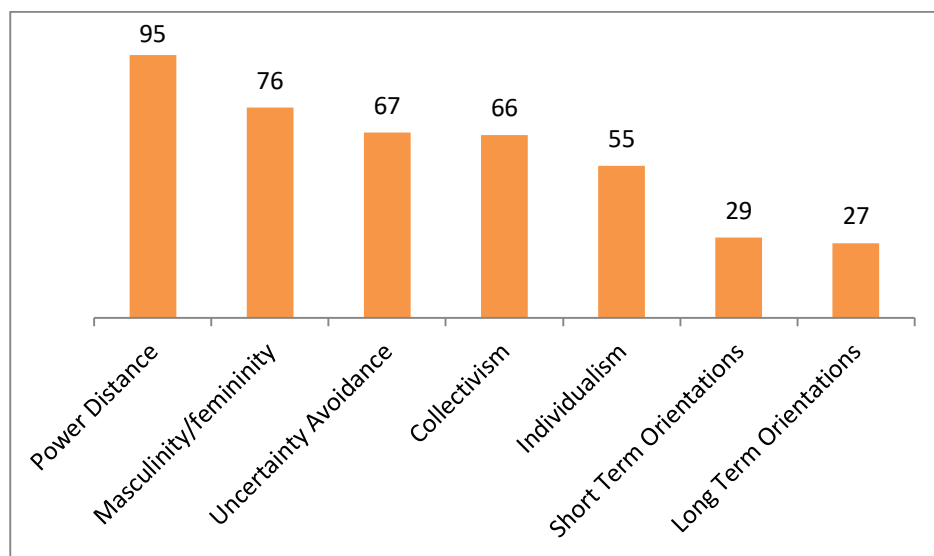


Figure 1. Perceived Dominant Cultural Dimensions

Figure 1 above contains cumulative Mean Scores generated for the cultural dimensions’ indexes. The Figure has established that sampled students mostly demonstrated power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and individualism dimensions. A total of 95 score put power distance ahead of other dimensions. With 76, 67, 66 and 55 scores, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism and individualism dimensions were in second,

third, fourth and fifth positions respectively. Based on further analysis, five of seven items measured to determine power distance between the students and lecturers substantiate its presence. Majority of the students want lecturers to initiate communication during lectures (91.6%) and show them what to learn (48.1%). Students' eagerness to learn from their lecturers is as a result of 67.5% who believed that lecturers expect them to find their own paths to learning. Over 57% of the students could not contradict and criticize lecturers in class. This is in relation with 41% who maintained neutral position when they were asked to indicate whether lecturers allow them to express contrary views in class. However, more than 54% of the students believed that learning would be much better when there is a good exchange of ideas between them and lecturers. Majority (75.9%) also considered this as a function of the excellence of lecturers.

For the masculinity/femininity dimension, the students only agreed that they choose courses for career reasons (78.3%) and out of mere interest (50.5%), while 41% submitted that the university properly rewards academic performance. Students were slightly divided along other items measured to determine the existence of the dimensions. For instance, over 38% and 33% agreed and disagreed respectively that lecturers use best students as a standard for others in class. They also maintained neutral position (41%) when they were asked to indicate whether they make themselves visible in class. Surprisingly, a lot of the students (65%) did not agree that the way lecturers talk to some students diminish their self-image. Within the uncertainty avoidance dimension which indicates the state of unknown in a society or an institution, over 91% of the students feel comfortable in a free learning situation and prefer a formal or serious learning situation (48.2%). Despite preferring a formal setting for learning, 50.6% of the sampled students do not want strict timetables and 53% do not want lecturers to always expect them to write long and full answers. On a slight note, participants had divergent views on whether lecturers should give general and not detailed assignments. Over 34% and 36% disagreed and maintained neutral position respectively.

Collectivism pervaded when the students are in small learning groups and when they are called on by lecturers in class. The two items measured to determine these revealed that majority of the students (84.3%) and 51.9% speak up in small groups and when called on by lecturers respectively. To truly see a learning setting as a collective platform, 65.1% of the participants believed that there should be confrontation and challenge in learning situations. In line with this, over 92% were of the view that neither students nor lecturers should ever be made to feel ashamed or lose face in a classroom situation. Based on ethnic or religious affiliation, more than 74% of the students reported that lecturers do not give preferential treatment to students. Individualism as a dimension which specify the extent of personalized activities permeated when 48.2% and 40.9% of the students speak up in response to general invitation by lecturers and when they are in large groups respectively. However, over 43% were of the opinion that they would not openly challenge and

confront anybody in any learning situations. More than 90% want lecturers to be strictly impartial while dealing with them.

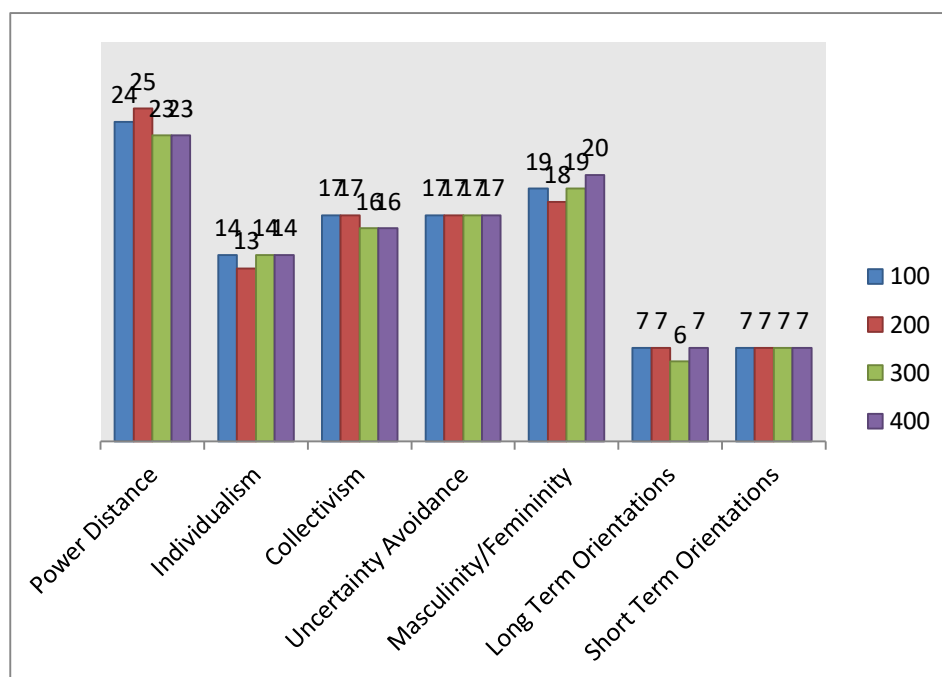


Figure 2. Perceived Cultural Dimensions across Level

Having understood emerging cultural dimensions among the students, Figure 2 above entails cumulative mean values of tested measurement items for each dimension. From the Figure, it is clear that all students in all the levels demonstrate power distance than other dimensions. Nevertheless, there is a slight variation among them. For instance, with 25 mean values, power distance is more pronounced among 200 level students than 300 and 400 levels. From the data, it could be deduced that the difference between 100 level students and 200 level students is 1 mean value on the dimension. Students in 100 and 300 levels tie on masculinity/femininity dimension having pooled a total 19 mean values, while 400 level students lead with 20 mean value. Examination of uncertainty avoidance dimension showed that the same mean value of 17 was recorded across the levels while there was a split between 100 to 400 levels within collectivism dimension. Specifically, 100 and 200 levels had same mean value of 17, while 16 mean value was also found for 200 and 400 levels. These findings suggest that the extent to which the students feel each dimension is different. It could be reported that there is high power distance in 100 and 200 levels, while 300 and 400 levels are having

low power distance. Masculinity/femininity dimension is high among 100, 300 and 400 levels than 200 level.

Table 2. Gender, Ethnicity and Level as Predictors of each Dimension

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
Power Distance	.250 ^a	.063	.027	3.27847	.063	1.760	3	79	.162
Individualism	.248 ^a	.062	.026	2.26749	.062	1.730	3	79	.168
Collectivism	.186 ^a	.035	-.002	2.74052	.035	.942	3	79	.424
Uncertainty Avoidance	.066 ^a	.004	-.033	2.39936	.004	.116	3	79	.951
Masculinity/Femininity	.194 ^a	.038	.001	2.94687	.038	1.034	3	79	.382

Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Ethnicity, Level

Table 2 above shows the outcomes of a simple linear regression carried out to ascertain the extent to which gender, ethnicity, and level can predict cultural dimensions. According to the data, a strong positive correlation was not found for gender, ethnicity and level as predictors of power distance ($r=.250$), individualism ($r=.248$), collectivism ($r=.186$), uncertainty avoidance ($r=.066$) and masculinity/femininity ($r=.194$); and the regression model predicted 6.3%, 6.2%, 3.5%, 0.4% and 3.8% of the variance respectively. Thus, the linear regression model did not explain power distance ($F=1.760$, $P>.05$), individualism ($F=1.730$, $P>.05$), collectivism ($F=.942$, $P>.05$), uncertainty avoidance ($F=.116$, $P>.05$) and masculinity/femininity ($F=1.034$, $P>.05$).

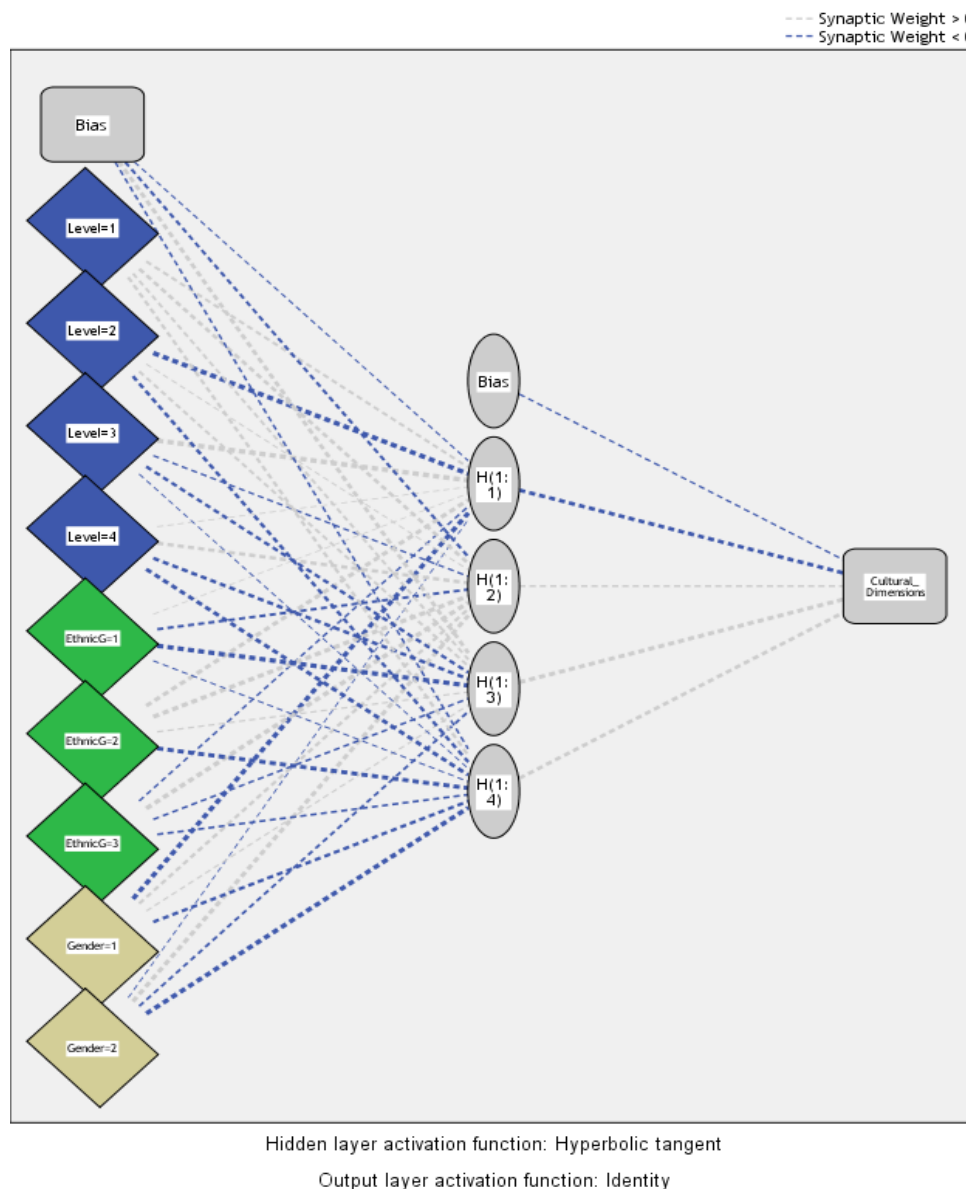


Figure 3. Multi-layer Perceptron Network Structure

To understand the relationship among level, gender and ethnicity of the students with the dominant cultural dimensions, the researchers used Figure 3 above to show the network structure of the variables. According to this figure, the input layers refer to the tested dependent variables –level, ethnicity and gender, while the hidden layer has power distance, individualism, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity/femininity as neurons. The combination of the cultural

dimensions constituted neurons within the output layer. Thus, the network has a simple interpretation as a form of input-output model, with the weights and thresholds (biases) as the free parameters of the model. The level within the input layer entails 100, 200, 300 and 400, representing level=1, level=2, level=3 and level=4 correspondingly. For the ethnicity, ethnicity=1, ethnicity=2 and ethnicity=3 indicate Hausa=1, Ibo=2 and Yoruba=3 accordingly. On the gender, gender=1 and gender=2 signify male=1 and female=2 respectively. Neurons in the hidden layer are represented by H(1:1)=power distance, H(1:2)=individualism, H(1:3)=collectivism and H(1:4)=uncertainty avoidance.

According to the structure, with the synaptic weights ($<.05$), students in 200 level have a strong connection with cultural dimensions, especially power distance and uncertainty avoidance. Students in 300 and 400 levels also have a strong connection with the collectivism dimension. Students in 400 level, however, disconnect with those in 300 level when their connection with uncertainty avoidance becomes stronger and they align with those in 200 level. On the other hand, students in 300 level disconnect with those in 200 and 400 level by establishing a moderate connection with the individualism dimension. Within the ethnicity variable, students from the Ibo ethnic group (one of the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria) have significant connection with uncertainty avoidance while those from Yoruba ethnic group have moderate connection with the dimension. Yoruba students in the Department also have moderate connections with power distance and collectivism. The only Hausa student joined those from the Yoruba ethnic group in connecting with collectivism on a stronger weight ($<.05$), but the participant is moderate on individualism dimension.

The network structure has indicated that the students connect with the cultural dimensions differently when gender is considered. Male students have a strong connection with power distance and are moderate on uncertainty avoidance, whereas female students are connected with uncertainty avoidance on a stronger level.

3.2. Discussion

The study has established that the sampled students demonstrated power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and individualism cultural dimensions most. In terms of ranking, power distance is ahead of other dimensions. Masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism and individualism dimensions are in second, third, fourth and fifth positions respectively. The exposition of power distance is linked to the need to respect lecturers, family upbringing, strict personality of some lecturers while uncertainty avoidance is mostly driven by fear of having poor grades and unpredictable actions of the lecturers. Masculinity/femininity dimension occurred between the students and lectures due to the need to balance strict rules and cultural expectations with openness, reach mutual agreement on obedience and teaching, and create friendly

learning environment towards academic achievements. These findings have shown that national cultural traits are easily translated into classroom culture.

These findings are congruent with the view that the usual parent/child interaction can be extended into a classroom interaction that is ordinarily expected to produce a teacher-student relationship or interaction. A variation was also found across levels. There is high power distance among students in 100 and 200 levels, while students in 300 and 400 levels have low power distance. Masculinity/femininity dimension is high among students in 100, 300 and 400 levels than among 200 level students. These align with a number of existing findings and cultural dimension theoretical propositions, especially on the view that differences in the social positions of teachers and students in the two societies, relevance of the curriculum within each of the societies, profiles of cognitive abilities between the populations of the two societies and expected teacher-student and student-student interactions are factors that influence students' performance and connection during classroom interactions (Liu, Liu, Lee & Magjuka, 2010). The variation aligns with Hofstede's theorization that in the societies, social interactions take place as large scale versus small scale power distance, individualism versus collectivism, strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity versus femininity.

The study has also indicated that a simple linear regression model did not establish any predictive relationship among level, ethnicity, gender and cultural dimensions. This is not in concordance with a previous study which indicates that temperament also mediated the association between gender and teachers' difficulty managing students' covert disruptive behaviours. Irrespective of gender, students with high maintenance and intermediate temperaments were more likely than industrious students to receive negative teacher's feedback. Moreover, irrespective of students' temperament, teachers were observed to provide more positive feedback to male than to female students (McClowry, Rodriguez, Tamis-LeMonda, Spellmann, Carlson & Snow, 2013). The result of another study that established an association between students' perception of their teachers' interpersonal behaviour and perceptions of the cultural aspect of the classroom environment (Fisher, Waldrup & den Brok, 2006) specifically supports the current finding.

Multi-layer Perception Network Structure indicates that students in 200 level were the most connected with cultural dimensions, especially power distance. This is in line with the strong versus weak cultural dimension as theorised by Hofstede.

This paper concludes that consciously or unconsciously, the over-riding cultural obligation in the Nigerian state which mandates respect for elders is being rigidly observed in the Department of Communication and Language Arts as students overly lean towards respect for lecturers, making it difficult for students to see the classroom as a collaborative teaching and learning situation. It also emerged that the strict learning situation with openness needs to be observed by students in order to improve their academic achievements. These conclusions align with the national

culture reported by Hofstede. The paper has also shown that students' demonstration of the dominant cultural dimensions was not effected by gender, ethnicity and level in the Department. Specifically, students lean towards the power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions while lecturers favour the masculinity/femininity dimension.

4. Recommendations

It would be better some training courses be held for the lecturers and the students to get acquainted with the classroom cultural management strategy. Lecturers could be encouraged to use more collectivistic teaching strategies such as small group and discussion during teaching and when giving assignment to students. Lecturers may also need to be equipped with skills and knowledge capable of reducing strict personality observance during teaching. Students should always be duly informed and included when lecturers are scheduling lectures and examinations. Further research could be directed at probing the sufficiency of other predicting variables such as students' or guardians' and or parents' demographics and psychographics in predicting cultural dimensions or otherwise. Such a study should deem it fit to use hierarchical regression analysis to indicate the prediction of each dimension using gender, ethnicity and level individually. A new institution-wide investigation is also needed in the University to establish the existence or otherwise of the same cultural dimensions across faculties and departments.

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