

A comparison of uk and china in terms of hofstede's dimensions of culture

[Parts of the World](#), [Asia](#)



Advancement in telecommunication and transportation technology has deeply changed the mode and frequency of intercultural communication. In modern society intercultural communication does not only take place in formal international cooperation, but also in variable informal activities, such as online chatting, oversea studying and traveling, etc. Especially between UK and China, there is a remarkable amount of intercultural communication due to the increasingly tight cooperation and contacts in various industries, which causes countless culture clashes. As a consequence, training and educating amongst cultural adaption is also being considered critical these days. In this essay, I will use the conception of cultural dimension brought by Hofstede to analyse the outstanding cultural differences between China and Britain, Then, I will present some accessible methods for a Chinese to adjust to the very distinct society of Britain.

As can be seen in Figure 1, Cultural Dimension is a widely used model based on six different dimensions on values (Hofstede, G. et al. 2010). By analysing the score in different dimensions, we can briefly assess an overall value orientation of a particular aspect in one culture. This essay will focus on Power Distance and Individualism, which China and the UK has the most different index.

To start with, Hofstede (2010) indicates that Power Distance represents to what extent the society members expect a hierarchical order. Obviously there is a considerable gap in between UK (35) and China (80), where the relevantly low PDI index can show that British are convinced the inequality among people should be minimized. This feature is reflected both in daily

routine and in lengthy conversation, that the majority of British people are more likely to give out inclusive and supportive speech and to avoid bringing up unpleasant conversations on inequality among people (Merkina, R. et al, 2014, cited in Hickey et al, 2005; Samovar et al, 2009). Secondly, Hofstede (2010) also demonstrated, it is widely accepted in the UK that one's birth rank should not limit how far he/she can reach in the life. Take British government as an example, the Prime Minister Theresa May (2016) has made a statement in her first inaugural speech, that the new government she lead will aim to help anybody, regardless of their background, to go as far as their talents are capable of. Since government values its society members reaching their full potential so much that they chose to make a promise at the very beginning, it is possible to conclude from the above that Britain has a culture which values equality and fair play.

In contrast to the UK, China (80) has a very high PDI index. This means Chinese culture is used to class differentiation and consider inequality as an inborn part of society (Trenholm s., 2016). The adaptation to inequality is indeed a successive consequence for China has a 5, 000 -year history of a well-established class system with strict, clear distinction. Historical impact still have universal influence on Chinese behaviour pattern nowadays. As for firm work, people are used not only to show respects to their superiors through honorific languages and obedience behaviour, but also to expect, even require their subordinators to show respect to themselves. Two different types of etiquette from both upper and lower parts helps people to position themselves more accurately in this society as the Chinese did in the

past. In addition, the self-motivated spirit might be another appearance of the high PDI score because the pyramidal social structure is consistently urging its members to improve.

In terms of Individualism, Trenholm (2016) pointed out this dimension decides whether the constitutional element of one society is singular or plural (Family, Neighbourhoods, Society, etc.). The difference comes out even more dramatic. At the score of 89, Britain (20) is more than four times higher than China. This fact determined that China and the UK have different selection on the individualism/ collectivism. As a country with high index on this dimension, United Kingdom has a well-established conception of contemporary individualism. The unit society concerns about is individual instead of collective. According to Hofstede (2010), the core of being individualist is focusing on personal fulfilments and personal preference. That is to say, it is unlikely for British to sacrifice their enjoyment of life, or career prospects to support some collective interests.

As for China, typical collectivism culture decides that the Chinese endorse the relationship harmony and would withdraw their inappropriate opinions that might affect the harmony (Trenholm S., 2016, cited in Holmes, 2008). Hofstede (2010) also implied that, when dealing with groups, it is commonly in China, even the majority area of Asian, to put in-group considerations on the privileged seat and repress personal thoughts. This is likely to cause some negative effect. Specifically, the eagerness of self-fulfilment also exist among Chinese young generation, who may get devalued when they refuse to repress the ambitious for family benefit, thus would probably blame the

conservative tradition and admire that under the Britain society, self-fulfilment seems to be a natural human right.

After comparing and contrasting the most different dimension of the UK and China, we will talk about how someone from China can adapt to the UK culture. Initially, an optimistic attitude is critical, for adapting a new culture which has large difference like Britain and China can be disturbing and pressuring indeed. Secondly, as UNESCO (2013) suggests, theoretical cognition can decrease the cultural bias and support intercultural communication in various aspects. As to Chinese, learning the spirit of equality and independence in advance can fundamentally help adapt Britain culture. Secondly, to practice intercultural communication skills, choosing to live in a host family can be beneficial. Staying with the natives also may help during the buffer period, because original social environment assume that as natural collectivist, Chinese are more relaxed to group living. Another interesting situation of the same Masculinity index (66) may be supportive to the adaptation as well. Knowing the British are competitive to the same extend can enable the Chinese quickly realize how much to invest to demand themselves. In general, with an open and optimistic attitude, some communication strategies and cultural awareness of both society, cultural adaptation can be as smoothly as a natural process (UNESCO and Mckinnon, 2013).

After a brief discussion about the differences between the two mentioned countries and the suggestions on the relevant cultural adaptation, we can sum up that to some extends, China and the UK have widely distinct

perceptions upon Power Distance and Individualism. Diversity on the cognition of inequality and individual value mainly composes the distinguishability of China and the UK. However, we do have enough similarities that can combined them to intercultural. As to the adaptation of the UK culture, no matter what cultural identity you are, seeking common ground while reserving differences can often be a good choice.