

Face Perception in Chinese and Japanese

Lin TAO
Kanazawa University, Japan

Abstract: According to Brown and Levinson, politeness is based upon a notion of “face,” the self-image individuals present to others (Goffman, 1967). One of the main goals of social interaction is to maintain and even enhance face during conversation. This paper aims to collect data and evaluate the concepts of face (*mianzi/mentsu*) and politeness by Chinese and Japanese youth. It clarifies the factors used by these students in their conceptualization of face and politeness. The study focuses on the results of a questionnaire that sought opinions on face and politeness in conversations of university students. The study compares the results with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) perspectives on face and politeness. Responses suggest that face is a universal construct in Chinese and Japanese interaction. The outcome shows that more male Japanese responders agreed with using politeness or honorific expressions to save face than did Chinese males. In addition, more Chinese and Japanese female respondents agreed that it is essential to save face for personal relationships than did male respondents. Most considered saving face essential when associating with another person in Chinese and Japanese cultures. The findings offer insight into cultural and linguistic differences in emic conceptualizations of face and politeness.

Keywords: Emic conceptualizations of face, politeness, saving face, *mianzi/lian* (Chinese face), *mentsu/kao* (Japanese face)

1. Introduction

Research on politeness and the concept of “face” has increased dramatically in the past three decades. Brown and Levinson’s universal theory of politeness has had a significant impact on pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis since 1987. Many models of politeness appeared in the literature. For example, Haugh (2005, 2007) expands on the value of culture-specific notions of face. Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) offers another model of Brown and Levinson’s framework in the form of the Rapport Management Theory. Among various theories, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) framework is regarded as one of the most influential for investigating politeness phenomena in human interactions. It has generated a wealth of theoretical and empirical research in a wide variety of disciplines, such as anthropology, developmental psychology, education, and applied linguistics (Kasper, 1990). In addition, compared with other models of politeness, it is the one that most clearly maintains its pancultural validity and thus is applicable as a basis for cross-cultural comparison (O’Driscoll, 1996). According to Brown and Levinson, politeness is based upon a notion of face—the self-image individuals present to others (Goffman, 1967). One of the main goals of social interaction is to maintain and even enhance face during conversation.

Goffman (1955), who first introduced the notion of face to illuminate patterns of behavior, defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”(p. 5). To secure this image, subjects need to perform “facework” (p. 12), that is, action that appears to signal two points of view: a defensive orientation toward saving their own face and a protective orientation toward saving the face of others.

However, it is Brown and Levinson’s (1978) application of face in the context of politeness theory that has dominated much of the debate thus far (Haugh, 2010, p. 2073). Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) further developed Goffman’s notion of face and presented two additional foci. They characterize face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (p. 61), and they claim that it consists of two related aspects: positive face and negative face.

Positive face refers to the projected self-image that seeks the approval of others, while negative face refers to territories, personal reserves, and rights to non-distraction. Individuals seek to satisfy the face needs of others and to have their own face needs satisfied in return. As any social encounter is potentially face threatening, it is necessary that speakers mitigate interaction through “positive politeness” to build solidarity, and “negative politeness” to show restraint. Since the concepts of positive and negative face were introduced, research has often centered on the validity of Brown and Levinson’s notion of face for explaining politeness across various cultural contexts (Gu, 1990; Haugh & Hinze, 2003; Haugh, 2005, 2007; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988; Pizziconi, 2003; Tao, 1998).

The concept of face has attracted much scholarly attention, especially through Brown and Levinson’s (1978/1987) politeness theory. A case in point, according to Haugh (2010), is whether honorifics in Modern Standard Japanese represent a failure of this politeness theory. On the one hand, there is the often cited argument by Matsumoto (1988) that “what is of paramount importance to a Japanese is not his/her territory [negative face], but the position in relation to others in the group and his/her acceptance by others” (p. 405). On the other hand, scholars have argued that Brown and Levinson’s notion of face can, in fact, be applied to the study of honorifics, and thus politeness, in Modern Standard Japanese (Fukada & Asato, 2004; Fukushima, 2000; Ishiyama, 2009; Usami, 2002). In these latter approaches, however, the notions of positive and negative face are reduced to an undifferentiated idea that can be either “lost” or “saved” (Haugh, 2005, p. 44).

The notion of face and politeness behavior can vary across contexts, groups, and time in a cross-cultural perspective. It is essential to investigate face and politeness in different communities of practice and groups by means of the “discursive” analytical framework.

1. In recent years, face theory has been reexamined by many researchers and scholars. Despite debates such as the previously mentioned issue, there has been relatively little research on native speaker beliefs about face and politeness, and a number of important questions remain. The present study aims to address the following questions in this regard: Do young people use polite expressions for saving face in different cultural contexts?
2. Do young people think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with

- saving face?
3. Do young people think that saving face is very important when associating with another person?
 4. Do young people think that it is unnecessary to save face for personal relationships?

I believe that interviews and questionnaires focusing on native speakers' beliefs about face are highly valuable sources of insight into the emic conceptualization of the face and politeness perspective. This study focuses on questionnaires and provides useful insights into the thoughts and traditional moral values of Chinese and Japanese young people about face and politeness. The data are analyzed in terms of group and gender differences. The purpose of this study is to reexamine the notion of face and to increase understanding of the interaction between face and politeness in Chinese and Japanese cultures and verbal communications, in order to promote intercultural communication.

1.1. Chinese Concepts of Face and Politeness

The concept of face is Chinese in origin. Goffman acknowledged in a footnote that he had read Smith (1894), Hu (1944), Yang (1947), and he also discusses the Chinese face. According to Andre's research (2013), it is through the great success of Smith's book (Hayford, 1985, p. 153), that the term face became a more recognizable term for a notion that is particular to the Chinese culture. After that, MacGowan (1912), like Smith, devoted an entire chapter to the term (pp. 301-312), and used both the expressions "save face" and "lose face" in several other parts of the book.

MacGowan is perhaps the first person to divide face into two different aspects. One he identifies as "honor, reputation," bestowed by others on the self (1912, pp. 302-304); the other aspect of "face" is "self-respect, or dignity," which is more an inner feeling, but which in turn leads to an outward show (hence the theatricality of face) (1912, pp. 304-307). Hu (1944) incorporates the meaning of both terms within the English term "prestige"; a category that she claims is universal in human societies everywhere. She contends that two aspects of face exist in Chinese culture. One, 面子 *mianzi* refers to "prestige or reputation," which is either achieved through "getting on in life" (Mao, 1994, p. 457), or "ascribed (even imagined) by other members of one's own community." The other, 脸 *lian*, refers to "the respect of the group for a man with a good moral standard" (Hu, 1944, p. 45), and therefore indicates "the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character." Yu (2003) pointed out 面子 *mianzi* has to do with an individual's dignity or prestige, whereas 脸 *lian* has to do with recognition by community for an individual's socially acceptable, moral behavior or judgment. Nevertheless, both components involve respectable and reputable images that one can claim for oneself from the community in which one interacts or to which one belongs (Ho, 1975; Mao, 1994). Put another way, they both revolve around "a recognition by others of one's desire for social prestige, reputation, or sanction" (Hu, 1944, p. 47).

In contrast to Goffman, who delineates the term "face," Ho (1976) begins by drawing attention to the Chinese origin of the concept, citing etymological dictionaries of English that identify it as a loanword. He says that the terms are often interchangeable in Chinese, even if

there is a distinction in the way in which face is judged, either on character (*lian*) or on “a moral aspects of social performance” (*mianzi*) (p. 867).

Many Chinese researchers suggest that Brown and Levinson’s overall conceptualization of face is different from that of the Chinese. It seems obvious that Brown and Levinson centered their theses on the individual aspect of face: it is an image that intrinsically belongs to the “self.” (Mao, 1994; Yu, 1997, 1999b).

In contrast, the Chinese term face emphasizes the harmony of individual behavior with the judgment of the community, rather than the accommodation of individual desires (Mao, 1994; Yu, 1997, 1999b). To sum up, the notion of Chinese face includes two aspects, namely *lian* and *mianzi*. *Lian* represents the confidence of society in the integrity of the ego’s moral character, while *mianzi* represents a reputation achieved through success and ostentation.

As Yu (2003, p. 1686) pointed out “the Chinese and the Brown and Levinsonian conceptions of face-work appear to have very similar end-points; the differences between them discussed earlier seem to lie in their starting points. As we have seen, Brown and Levinson’s face is regarded as individualistic simply because they consider politeness to be something addressed to the desires/expectations of individual alters, whereas the Chinese, being communal, simply think of politeness as addressed to the expectations of society at large.”

The closest Chinese equivalent to the English word “politeness” is “*Limao*”. Mao (1994, p. 462) stated the relationship between Chinese face and politeness (*Limao*): “More specifically, to be polite, that is, *you Limao* (有禮貌) in Chinese discourse is, in many respects, to know how to attend to each other’s *mianzi* and *lian* and to enact speech acts appropriate to and worthy of such an image. Otherwise stated, mainland Chinese speakers can be seen as being polite if they demonstrate with words their knowledge of *mianzi* and *lian*, such a demonstration tends to epitomize politeness in the eyes of their discourse partners”.

In Chinese politeness, findings of many studies (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994; Chen, 1996) have been viewed as evidence that Chinese politeness is different from Western politeness per Brown and Levinson. For example, Gu (1990) finds Brown and Levinson inadequate, for their individual-based approach does not address the normative constraints society imposes on its individuals. Gu (1990, p. 239) then proposes four maxims to account for Chinese politeness: respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth, and refinement. I quite agree with Mao’s argument (1994, p.462) that “to understand Chinese politeness, it is necessary to study face (*mianzi* and *lian*) from an ‘emic’ perspective.”

Sueda’s (1995) research, historical analyses of the Chinese concept of *mianzi*, explains how it differs from the honor of the Japanese samurai/warrior or the Western European knight. This will be discussed below.

1.2. Japanese Concepts of Face and Politeness

In Japan and Western Europe, honor is not centered around social fame but around an individual’s level of dignity under feudal systems. However, Chinese society has been governed by civilians rather than by soldiers since 200 B.C., and its sense of honor is traditionally different from that of Japan and Western Europe. Chinese society places less value on a warrior’s honor than does Japanese society, rather placing value on the reputation of the individual and family. With the

increase of interaction between China and Japan, the word *mianzi* was introduced to Japan and came to be realized as *mentsu*. According to Sueda (1995), *mentsu* was not regarded as seriously as a warriors' honor, for which a warrior could die. Because *mentsu* is but one factor contributing to an individual's reputation in the community in daily life, Sueda describes it as "little honor" as opposed to warriors' honor, which is described as "big honor." With the decline of the warrior class over time, *mentsu* or "little honor" became the more prevalent notion. Japanese *mentsu* encompasses an evaluation of not only the individual but also the entire group or community to which the individual belongs (Inoue, 1977).

Haugh (2007, p. 662) argues that, "in discussions of 'face' in Japanese thus far, the focus has been primarily on how Japanese 'face' differs in nature from that proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), but little has been said about the actual constituents of 'face' in Japanese. The lack of explanation about the nature of Japanese 'face' is due in part to the lack of clarity as to the status of folk or emic notions of 'face.'" It is true that in discussions of Japanese face, it is not enough to know about how Japanese face differs in nature from that proposed by Brown and Levinson. More importantly, the actual constituents of face, the nature of Chinese and Japanese face, and the status of folk or emic notions of face should be clarified.

Japan is a shame-sensitive society. According to Japanese dictionaries, the emic notion of face in Japanese is represented through a number of related lexemes; the terms *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen*, and *sekentei* play important roles in the emic notion of face in Japanese. For example, the term *kao* has the widest semantic field, encompassing face as representative of a person, both literally as an individual, and figuratively as one's social image. The latter may involve the social image of individuals, groups, or family.

The term *mentsu* in Japanese is used to reflect one's social image. In Tao's (1998) investigation, it was also pointed out that *mentsu* has a more narrow conceptual field than *kao* and *menboku*.

The notion of *taimen*, in contrast, is defined in the Kojien dictionary as "an individual's or group's appearance in public." Nevertheless, while the notions of *menboku* and *taimen* initially appear to encompass different aspects of face, they are arguably both related to the core notion of place, both in the sense of the place one belongs (*uchi*) and the place one stands (*tachiba*). The difference between the two appears to lie in the way they vary in their orientation to place. Many researchers point out that the notion of place underlying face in Japanese is also closely related to external evaluations by particular "imagined communities" (*seken*) that are perceived as constantly having the potential to judge one's actions, as (in) appearance (Abe, 1995; Haugh, 2007; Inoue, 1977; Shiba, 1999). In sum, as many scholars have pointed out, particular definitions of face are culture-specific.

According to Haugh (2007, pp. 660-663), the emic notion of politeness in Japanese can be approached, in the first instance, from the perspective of two key lexemes: *teinei* and *reigi* (*tadashii*). *teinei* involves being warm-hearted (*teatsuku*) and attentive (*chui-bukaku*) (Shinmura, 1998, p. 1818), while *reigi tadashii* involves showing upward-looking respect (*kei'i*) towards others (Shinmura, 1998, p. 2827). Language usage plays a large role in Japanese politeness. The use of *keigo* (honorific forms) is a major strategy in demonstrating politeness in Japan (Ogawa & Gudykunst, 1999-2000).

Akasu and Asao (1993) explain that "*keigo* typically is used to show deference to the

listener, to some third party, or to some referent related to him/her. That means that the person to whom the *keigo* is directed must be someone worthy in some way of that deference.” The more recent conceptualization of politeness in Japanese shifts the focus away from a concern for social position (*mibun*) or status (*chi'i*) to potentially less hierarchical dimensions, such as the dignity and character of other (*jinkaku*).

Obana (1994) reported that her respondents associated politeness with knowing where one stands in social interactions (*wakimae*, discernment), showing upward respect (*kei'i*) towards others and modesty about oneself, as well as horizontal distance.

To summarize, as many researchers pointed out, Japanese politeness includes the use of formulaic expressions (e.g. Ide, 1998), honorifics (e.g. Ide, 2005; Okamoto, 1999), and pragmatic particles (e.g. Cook, 1992), as well as repetition and prosodic features, such as high pitch for women (Loveday, 1981).

2. Research Procedures

2.1. The Questionnaire

Data was gathered by means of respondents completing a written questionnaire. The questions aimed at gathering information on current concepts of what constitutes Chinese *mianzi*, Japanese *mentsu*, and politeness. The data allowed a comparison to be drawn between the concepts of communicative behavior concerning face (*mentsu*) by Chinese and Japanese young people, and other English concepts that assess human behavior. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 54 questions, including both multiple-choice and free-response questions. This paper focuses on the data drawn from the answers to the following four questions:

1. Do you use polite expressions for saving face?
2. Do you think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face?
3. Do you think that the influence of face is very important when associating with another person?
4. Do you think that it is unnecessary to save face for personal relationships?

The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and Japanese by the researcher, and the uniformity between the Chinese and Japanese versions was ensured through careful checking by three bilingual helpers.

2.2. Data Collection

A total of five hundred and thirty-three students in China and Japan participated in the study. The Chinese questionnaires were distributed at two universities in China. One hundred copies were given to one university in Shanghai; fifty copies were distributed at a university in Zhengzhou; 140 were returned, and of these, 135 had been fully completed and were included in the study. Thirty copies were distributed to Chinese university students studying overseas

at universities in Japan; twenty-two were returned and fully completed and were included in the study. Thus 157 (68 males, 89 females) completed Chinese questionnaires were obtained overall, with participants ranging in age from 19 to 30 years.

The Japanese questionnaires were distributed at four universities in Japan: 150 copies were given to universities in Tokyo and Yokohama; 145 were returned, fully completed, and were included in the study. Further, 240 copies were distributed at universities in Toyama and Kanazawa; 231 were returned, fully completed, and were included in the study. Thus, 376 (217 males and 159 females) Japanese participants completed questionnaires, with participants ranging in age from 19 to 23 years.

3. Results

As mentioned above, the data obtained from the questionnaires were separated according to the gender of the respondent. Following this, qualitative differences among the answers to each question were determined by grouping the responses into specific categories. Data were collected through an open-end question. Participants were asked to respond with what they thought. The data below indicate the percentage of respondents selecting each option, and the similarities and differences described by Chinese and Japanese students were examined.

Table 1. Responses of Chinese Male and Female Respondents to Questions 1 and 2

Questions	Answers	Male	Female	Total
Q1. Do you use polite expressions for saving face?	Yes	19 (46.3%)	58 (55.2%)	77 (52.7%)
	No	22 (53.7%)	47 (44.8%)	69 (47.3%)
Q2. Do you think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face?	Yes	22 (53.7%)	62 (59.0%)	84 (57.5%)
	No	19 (46.3%)	43 (41.0%)	62 (42.5%)

As can be seen from Table 1, Question 1, 52.7% of the Chinese respondents showed that they use polite expressions for saving face, specifically 46.3% of the male respondents and 55.2% of the female respondents. In response to Question 2, 57.5% of the respondents indicated that they think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face, specifically 53.7% of the male respondents and 59.0% of the female respondents.

Table 1, therefore, shows that about 10% more females than male respondents indicated that they use polite expressions for saving face. It also shows that there are different opinions between the male respondents and the female respondents. But Question 2 shows there is no remarkable difference between males and females. Furthermore, more male respondents of Q2 than male respondents of Q1 indicated that they think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face.

Table 2. Responses of Japanese Male and Female Respondents to Questions 1 and 2

Questions	Answers	Male	Female	Total
Q1. Do you use polite expressions for saving face?	Yes	138 (63.6%)	92 (57.9%)	230 (61.2%)
	No	79 (36.4%)	67 (42.1%)	146 (38.8%)
Q2. Do you think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face?	Yes	139 (64.1%)	98 (61.6%)	237 (63.0%)
	No	76 (35.0%)	61 (38.4%)	137 (36.4%)
	No answer	2(0.9%)		2(0.6%)

As is clear from Table 2, 61.2% of respondents showed that they use polite expressions for saving face. This included 63.6% of the male respondents and 57.9% of the female respondents. In response to Question 2, 63.0% of respondents indicated that they think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face, specifically 64.1% of the male respondents and 61.6% of the female respondents. Table 2 therefore shows that slightly more male than female respondents indicated that they use polite expressions for saving face. But there is no remarkable difference between males and females about using politeness or honorific expressions having to do with saving face. Furthermore, the table shows that responses to Question 1 and Question 2 were about equal.

Table 3. Responses of Chinese Male and Female Respondents to Questions 3 and 4

Questions	Answers	Male	Female	Total
Q3. Do you think that the influence of face is very important when associating with another person?	Very important	31 (75.6%)	84 (80.0%)	115 (78.8%)
	Not important	10 (24.4%)	21 (20.0%)	31 (21.2%)
Q4. Do you think that it is unnecessary to save face in personal relationships?	Yes	9 (22.0%)	11 (10.5%)	20 (13.7%)
	No	32 (78.0%)	94 (89.5%)	126 (86.3%)

Table 3 presents data based on the Chinese respondents' answers to Questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaire. In response to Question 3, 78.8% of the respondents indicated that they think the influence of face is very important when associating with another person, specifically 75.6% of the male respondents and 80.0% of the female respondents. It should be noted that 21.2% of the respondents did not agree with this. In response to Question 4, 86.3% of the respondents indicated that they did not agree that it is unnecessary to save face in personal relationships. Among them, 78.0% of the male respondents and 89.5% of the female respondents did not agree with the statement in Question 4, while only 13.7% of the respondents indicated that they

agreed with this idea.

Table 3 separates the responses to Question 3 and Question 4 on the basis of gender. Question 3 shows there is no remarkable difference between male and female responses. However, it does indicate that more female respondents thought that it was essential to save face in personal relationships in Chinese culture than did male respondents. In addition, more Chinese students thought that it was essential to save face in personal relationships than thought that the influence of face was very important when associating with another person.

In sum, results surveyed in the present study show most Chinese students thought that aspects of face are important in Chinese culture, and that they are likely to save face in personal relationships.

Table 4. Responses of Japanese Male and Female Respondents to Questions 3 and 4

Questions	Answers	Male	Female	Total
Q3. Do you think that the influence of face is very important when associating with another person?	Very important	161 (74.2%)	1 1 0 (69.2%)	271 (72.1%)
	Not important	56 (25.8%)	49 (30.8%)	105 (27.9%)
Q4. Do you think that it is unnecessary to save face in personal relationships?	Yes	45 (20.7%)	22 (13.8%)	67 (17.8%)
	No	172 (79.3%)	137 (86.2%)	309 (82.2%)

Table 4 presents data based on the Japanese respondents' answers to Questions 3 and 4 of the questionnaire. In response to Question 3, 72.1% of respondents indicated that they think the influence of face is very important when associating with another person in Japanese culture, specifically 74.2% of the male respondents and 69.2% of the female respondents. However, 27.9% of the respondents did not agree. The responses to Question 4 demonstrated that 82.2% of respondents indicated that it was necessary to save face in personal relationships, specifically 79.3% of the male respondents and 86.2% of the female respondents. In contrast, only 17.8% of the respondents agreed with that it is unnecessary to save face in personal relationships.

Table 4 separates the responses to Questions 3 and 4 on the basis of gender. There is no remarkable difference between male and female respondents, although slightly more female respondents thought that it is necessary to save face in personal relationships than did male respondents.

To summarize, the data presented above suggest that, based upon the answer rate of the Japanese students, they thought that it was more necessary to save face for personal relationships than during a relationship with others.

4. Discussion

Research on politeness has shown an immense expansion over the past several decades (e.g., Lakoff, 1973; Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987; Leech, 1983; Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Mills,

2003). Many researchers on face and politeness have witnessed the intricate and multifaceted relationship between these two concepts.

To provide useful insights into ideas and traditional moral values based on the face and politeness behavior of young people in China and Japan, it is necessary to clarify the similarities and the differences in these concepts.

The present study yielded valuable information on the emic conceptualization of face and politeness; in addition, the results objectively verified the awareness of face and politeness among younger Chinese and Japanese respondents.

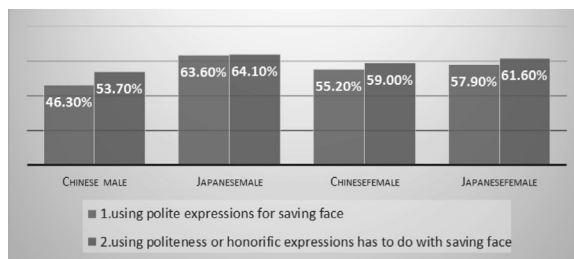


Figure 1. Responses of Chinese and Japanese Respondents to Questions 1 and 2

The data from Figure 1 shows that in particular, more male Japanese responders thought they used polite expressions for saving face in communicative behavior than did both male and female Chinese participants. The data also suggest that almost sixty percent of Chinese and Japanese young people thought using politeness or honorific expressions had to do with saving face in their communicative behavior. The result of Q2 shows that slightly more male Japanese responders agreed that using politeness or honorific expressions had to do with saving face than did Chinese male respondents. However, Q1 and Q2 did not show a significant difference between female Chinese and Japanese respondents.

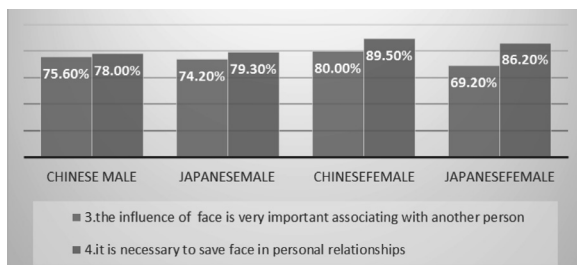


Figure 2. Responses of Chinese and Japanese Respondents to Questions 3 and 4

As a result of Q3, the data in Figure 2 reveals that over 72% of Chinese and Japanese students thought that the influence of face was very important when associating with others. More female Chinese respondents thought that the influence of face was very important when associating with another person than did female Japanese respondents.

The responses to Question 4 indicate that overall, more than 82% of Chinese and Japanese university students thought that it was essential to save face for personal relationships in their communicative behavior. In addition, more female Chinese and Japanese respondents thought that it was essential to save face for personal relationships than did male Chinese and Japanese respondents. Generally speaking, most Chinese and Japanese respondents thought that the influence of face is an important and indispensable factor in Chinese and Japanese cultures when associating with another person.

The study aimed to answer a set of four research questions in order to clarify the conceptualization of face by Japanese and Chinese university students. The results show that the conceptualizations of face and politeness are complex and multi-faceted in both Japanese and Chinese interactions. Face does exist in Japanese and Chinese culture. Most Chinese and Japanese university students appear to consider the influence of face more important when associating with another person. However, they have a different sense of values and recognition on what constitutes face.

Mao (1994) argues that *mianzi* and *lian* are distinct categories, as Hu (1944) and Ho (1976) have claimed, while, at the same time, arguing that Brown and Levinson's negative face does not really apply to China. In my study, 47.3% of Chinese respondents thought that using polite expressions is not considered for saving face in Chinese culture. 42.5 % of Chinese respondents indicated that they do not think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face. The findings are indeed evidence that Brown and Levinson's notion of face does not really apply to the Chinese. In Chinese traditional culture, harmony is to be valued. Chinese people emphasize that using polite expressions is not only for saving one's face, but also to demonstrate respect for other people, respect for the fundamentals of person, to show discipline, to maintain good relationships with other people, to express self-possession, and to be respectful of character. In a word, politeness is related to a social morals issue in Chinese traditional culture.

On the other hand, as noted, China has undergone drastic changes in the past almost 40 years of reform, and an equally profound change is occurring today — the individualization of the Chinese people, especially the educated youth. “The Chinese youth in this study have discovered their ‘self,’ with a strong sense of independence, autonomy, self-responsibility, and self-realization, expressing a strong orientation towards individualism” (Liu & Wang, 2009, p. 54). My study has supported this point. The educated youth who cherish Chinese traditional culture is now declining. They are greatly influenced by Western culture. The Chinese youth who have a strong orientation towards individualism is now increasing. In addition, there is another important cause. They are not perfectly disciplined by politeness or honorific expressions. In fact, there are only a few honorific expressions left in Chinese modern language. Moreover, there was a policy of “one child” by Chinese government and other complex circumstances behind it. The Chinese youth is suffering from a shortage of a well-mannered education. That's why some Chinese students do not think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face in their communicative behavior. Especially, the younger generation is losing interest in saving face in relationships with others these days. It shows that the individualization of Chinese-educated youth is growing. They like to show off their own face to others. In a word, they have much to do with the loss, gain, or maintenance of one's own face.

Like the Chinese respondents, 38.8% of Japanese respondents indicated that using polite expressions is not for saving face in Japanese culture. 36.4 % of Japanese respondents indicated that they do not think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face. On this point, the data differ from Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Namely, the data supports that in Japanese society, “the perceived evaluation of one’s place by particular ‘imagined communities’ (*seken*) has much to do with the loss, gain, or maintenance of one’s own face, or that of one’s group. The kind of face that arises through interactions is thus dependent on what one thinks others in a wider ‘imagined communities’ (*seken*) show they think of one’s conduct relative to the place one stands or belongs” (Haugh, 2007, p. 663).

This group psychology is why some female Japanese students do not think the influence of face is important when associating with others.

In the present investigation, I also found that Brown and Levinson’s face concept does not fully incorporate other cultural notions of face. Japanese have an honorific culture. In my study (2010), many Japanese students emphasized that using politeness or honorific expressions is not only for saving face, but also is for expressing respect for superiors and older members of the same school or workplace; expressing common courtesy; and maintaining good relationships with other people in order to avoid an unpleasant experience. That study (Tao, 2010) found that social relations (social distance, relative power, group membership) had a greater effect on the polite behavior of Japanese than Chinese. That is because the norms of proper honorific speech are based mainly on three parameters: (1) relative status (superior vs. inferior), (2) group membership (ingroup vs. outgroup), and (3) gender (male vs. female). More Japanese than Chinese students felt that a failure to use polite expressions would make the other person feel uncomfortable or make the other person angry, from which we can conclude that honorific speech has a greater impact on the minds of Japanese students.

This shows that Japanese politeness is different from Brown and Levinson’s face concept and politeness, which is seen as a means to avoid imposition (Ide, 1989; Matusumoto, 1988).

On the other hand, Takita (2012) analyzes the Japanese notion of *enryo* as face, and provides evidence for a common phenomenon observed in negative face, as suggested by Brown and Levinson. Takita (2012) argues as follows:

However, people nowadays, particularly the younger generations, are using *enryo* more conveniently and more as a means to show their refusal to an invitation. This might indicate that the younger generations in Japan are becoming more individualistic and less sensitive to empathic orientation toward others (p. 194).

This may explain why over one-third of the Japanese university students surveyed in this study also do not agree with using politeness or honorific expressions that have to do with saving face. The results of the present study leads me to agree with Takita’s idea that the younger generations in Japan are becoming more individualistic and less sensitive to empathic orientation toward others.

Generally speaking, on the basis of the data from Chinese and Japanese young people, face is still important in Chinese and Japanese society. As times have changed, the individualistic thought of Chinese-educated and Japanese-educated youth is growing. This study showed that

the concepts of face and politeness in communicative behavior are specific to a particular culture, sense of values, and standard. This may have an important impact on international relations in the future. It is said that discourse practices are at the heart of globalization, which requires mobility and an increasing number of personal interactions, both traditional and new. This is especially true, given the development of technologically mediated means of communication.

5. Concluding Remarks

The study of perceived face and politeness in Chinese and Japanese verbal communication is a very interesting theme. First, this study gives an overview of research on the status of face and politeness in Chinese and Japanese culture. Second, this research investigates Chinese and Japanese students' own conceptualizations concerning face and politeness. Third, it discusses and analyzes the nature or emic notion of Chinese and Japanese students' conceptualizations of face and politeness, as well as considering the data in terms of respondents' gender. The results suggest that face is a universal construct in Chinese and Japanese interaction. Generally speaking, both Chinese and Japanese students thought that the influence of face while associating with another person was important, and that saving face for personal relationships was an essential factor in Chinese and Japanese verbal communication. While there are a few differences between the two groups, more Japanese male responders thought they used polite expressions for saving face in communicative behavior than did Chinese males and females. On the other hand, more female Chinese than female Japanese students appeared to consider the influence of face as very important when associating with others. In particular, both Chinese and Japanese students thought that it was essential to save face in personal relationships.

This result shows that younger Chinese and Japanese generations are changing their cultural norms. For example, Western culture has had a major influence on their lifestyles. This study contributes to research on the concept of face and politeness among Chinese and Japanese younger generations. It not only examines how Chinese and Japanese face differs in nature from that proposed by Brown and Levinson, but also finds the actual constituents of face in Chinese and Japanese young people. Generally speaking, saving face is very important and essential in personal relationships, but there are diverse ideas on using polite expressions for saving face and what using politeness or honorific expressions has to do with saving face. As Tao's study (2010), Chinese people place emphasis on respect for each other, showing discipline, expressing self-possession, and social morals in Chinese personal relationships. On the other hand, Japanese people stress expressing respect for superiors and older member of the same school or workplace, expressing common courtesy, and avoiding an unpleasant experience. However, it is an undeniable fact that some younger students in China and Japan are becoming more individualistic and less sensitive to empathic orientation toward others.

My study shows face is a complex and an interesting phenomenon. It would be useful and important to analyze how face emerges through communication with neighboring nations, since it offers an emic perspective that explicates cultural notions of face and politeness and produces new evidence of the diversity of the concept of face.

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Author Note

Dr. Tao Lin (Ph.D.) is a guest researcher at National Kanazawa University in Japan. Her primary research interests are in sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, cross-cultural psychology and second language education. She has published widely in the area of pragmatics, intercultural communication, and politeness with reference to English, Chinese and Japanese. Her publications include “A Study on the Evaluating Concept of ‘Politeness’ in Chinese and Korean Verbal Communication” (*Inquiries into Korean Linguistics V*, 2015), “Evaluating Concept of ‘Face’” (*Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, V.5, 2015), “Statistics and Analysis of the Chirping of Birds between Chinese and Japanese Onomatopoeia” (*Contrastive Studies: Japanese and Chinese*, 2016).

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Appendix

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is to be used in my research on the cross-cultural comparison of polite language. I will investigate the politeness phenomena in English, Chinese and Japanese. I am collecting data about the characteristics of *face*. I want to compare the characteristics of *face* in Chinese and Japanese with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) conceptualization of *face*, identifying their major difference. Here, I would like to know how you think face and polite language.

Sex: F / M Age: _____ Nationality: _____
Major: _____ Profession: _____

- Q1. Do you use polite expressions for saving face?
A. Yes B. No
- Q2. Do you think using politeness or honorific expressions have to do with saving face?
A. Yes B. No
- Q3. Do you think that the influence of face is very important when associating with another person?
A. Very important B. Not important
- Q4. Do you think that it is unnecessary to save face for personal relationships?
A. Yes B. No