

About Face:

Chinese and Japanese Students Compared

Neil Mulka, Fort Hays State University-Sias International University
Shigeo Uematsu, Doshisha University

Nov. 27th at 2016 JALT Conference, Nagoya, Aichi, Japan

Introduction

Part I

Introduction

- This research is based on *Get in Your Groups: The in-Class Communication Preferences of Chinese University Students* presented by Mulka, N. at 13th Asia TEFL Conference (2015). Uematsu was inspired by the presentation and gave Mulka a suggestion of making it as a joint comparative study, asking his students to participate in Japan.

Introduction: Context

China

- Students are all enrolled in a dual-degree program earning an American degree and a Chinese degree simultaneously.
- All of the students are earning a business-related degree.
- FHSU is a regional public university.
- Sias International University is a private university.

Japan

- Students are learning at 4 different liberal arts majors (schools).
- Doshisha University is one of the major Japanese Christian (private) universities. 26,000 undergraduate students.
- Students' English level of this class is "upper-intermediate"

Literature Review

Part II

Literature Review: Questions

- A common refrain among new Fort Hays State University Faculty and teachers of Chinese students in other Western or Western-style context is “ Why don’t students talk in class?”
- Native English speaker faculty and other teachers of Japanese students in Western or Western-style contexts in a Japanese university wonder “ Why don’t students talk in class?”
- What role does “face” play in this phenomenon?
- How can teachers spur more in-class communication?

Literature Review: Role of face is universal.

- Brown and Levinson (1987) claim the universality of their notion of face, as follows, “While the content of face will differ in different cultures (what the publicly relevant content of personality consists in), we are assuming that the mutual knowledge of members’ public self-image or face, and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction, are universal” (pp. 61-62).

Literature Review: Role of face depends on culture.

- However, non-Western researchers (Geyer, 2008; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1989; Pan, 1995) argue that the concept of self and its relation to society vary across cultures, and that the multiplicity of concepts of self in turn gives rise to culturally mediated interpretations of face.
- Translated from the Chinese phrase "tie lien", it was "originally used by the English community in China, with reference to the continual devices among the Chinese to avoid incurring or inflicting disgrace" (Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed, XIV:526).

Literature Review: Learning styles & culture

- Culture affects learning styles and communication styles (Pewewardy, 2002; Yi, Kai Tai Stephen, Hyuk Joo, & Eu Wing, 2013)
- Learners are not academically deficient because of the differences in learning and communication styles (Pewewardy, 2002)
- In fact, statistical analysis revealed that extraversion had a significant negative correlation with pronunciation, a subcomponent of the oral interview test. In addition, introverts tended to have higher scores on the reading and grammar components of the standardized English test for Japanese college students (Busch, 1982:109).

Literature Review: Face and Communication

- “Face represents an individual’s claimed sense of positive image in the context of social interaction” (Ting-Toomey, as cited in Oetzel et. al., 2001, p. 235).
- A person’s social standing, reputation, and achievements. In short, it’s a person’s image. (Oetzel, 2001; and Hwang, Ang, and Francesco, 2002)

Literature Review: Face and Communication

- Chinese students are described as reluctant to speak in class (Harfitt, 2012; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002; Xie, 2010).
- Researchers say face contributes to the silence and is a large part of Chinese culture. Also, maintaining face is paramount, which prevents students from speaking (Chang & Holt, 1994; Harfitt, 2012; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Hwang, Ang, & Francesco, 2002; Xie, 2010).

Literature Review: Face and Communication

- Maintaining and guarding face is important. It so important that saving face oftentimes takes precedent over the “primary” goal (Xie, 2010; and Oetzel, 2001)
- One of the ways to save face is avoiding opportunities lose it. One of these ways is keeping quiet (Morrison, 2006; Xie, 2010).

Literature Review: Face and Communication

- There are other possible reasons for Chinese student silence in the classroom.

Literature Review: Face and Communication from Politeness and Discernment Perspectives

- As a general principle, Brown & Levinson's (1978,1987) theory of face does apply to Japanese language and culture and forms the basic factor of linguistic politeness (Liu and Allen, 2014:651) .
- We see the uniqueness of the Japanese as that their discernment (*wakimae*) and recognition of the social position and relationship (*tachiba*) of the participants (Liu and Allen, 2014:662)
- Politeness as a social norm can include “discernment politeness,” the “almost automatic observation of socially-agreed-upon rules” (Hill et al, 1986:348).

Literature Review: Face and Communication from Politeness and Discernment Perspectives

- The Japanese make a clearer distinction between the in-group and the outside world. A thin boundary between self and in-group creates interdependence among insiders (Doi, 1971).
- The collective orientation of Japanese culture is manifested in its emphasis on empathy, belongingness, and dependency (Clancy, 1986).
- The use of non-polite forms (plain forms) reflects the power relationship between the speaker and hearer in speech settings where formal forms (*desu/masu* forms) are dominant (Usami, 2002)

Literature Review: Face and Communication

- Possible reasons aside from face for silence for Chinese students:
 - Unquestioning obedience to authority (Morrison, 2008; Xie, 2010)
 - Awestruck by their teachers (Mok, Kennedy, Moore, Shan, and Leung, 2006)
 - Passivity (Mok et al., 2006)
 - Not wanting to “disturb others” (Mok et al., 2006. p. 188)
 - Modesty and conformity (Morrison, 2008; Xie, 2010)
 - Avoiding conflict (Morrison, 2008)
 - Used to lecture-based classes (Morrison, 2008)

Participants & Procedures

Part III

Participants

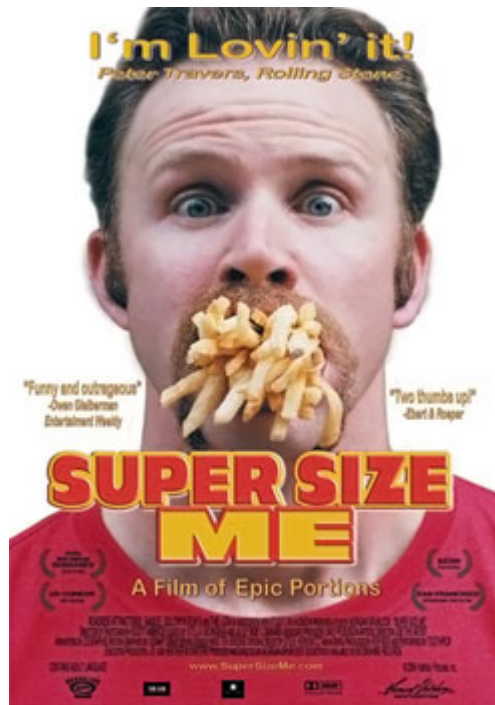
China

- Used 30 volunteer students from four sections of English 101.
 - 87% female

Japan

- Used 18 students from English Practicum 1
 - 77% female

Procedures



- **Materials used:**

- Horwitz, E.K., Horwitz, M.B., and Cope's, (1996) *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)*, adapted to include questions about face
- The documentary "Supersize Me"
- Extra-credit quizzes
- Multimedia classroom

- **Duration:**

- This project consisted of three 60-90 minute weekly evening sessions.
- During each session the students watched 30-45 minutes of "Supersize Me," had an opportunity to ask questions, and then take a quiz.

Results from the survey (con't)

“I don't worry about losing face in a language class.”

Chinese students

- 23% disagreed
- 47% neutral
- 20% agreed
- 4% strongly agreed

Japanese students

- 33% disagreed
- 28% neutral
- 33% agreed
- 6% Agreed

Results from the survey (con't)

“I’m too embarrassed to ask questions during class.”

Chinese students

- 10% strongly disagreed
- 43% disagreed
- 27% neutral
- 20% agreed

Japanese students

- 5% strongly disagreed
- 39% disagreed
- 17% neutral
- 34% agreed
- 5% strongly agreed

Results from the survey (con't)

“I think foreign teachers understand the concept of face.”

Chinese students

- 3% disagreed
- 30% neutral
- 57% agreed
- 10% strongly agreed

Japanese student

- 11 % strongly disagreed
- 5% disagreed
- 57% neutral
- 15% agreed
- 11% strongly agreed

Statistical difference slides

- We compared the the FLCAS post results and found the following.
- Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 16, 19, 22, 30, 33, 40, and 44 all showed differences at FHSU/Sias, and Questions 19 ($t = -2.26, p < .05$) and 23 ($t = -2.52, p < .05$) at Doshisha.
- Mean endorsements (Max:5 *Strongly agree*, Min:1 *Strongly disagree*) for Chinese students and Japanese students are shown respectively.

- Questions 4: I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class. 3.2 / 2.7
- Question 5: A foreign teacher has caused me to lose face in language class. 1.7 / 2.6
- Question 6: I have witnessed a foreign teacher cause a student to lose face in class. 1.7 / 2.4
- Question 7: I think foreign teachers understand the concept of face. 3.7 / 3.1

- Question 13: I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am. 2.5 / 3.5
- Question 16: I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class. 2.5 / 3.5
- Question 19: It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class. 2.4 / 3.1
- Question 22: I'm more comfortable asking questions in a small group instead of in front of the class. 3.8 / 4.2

- Question 30: I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class. 3.3 / 2.7
- Question 33: I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do. 2.7 / 3.5
- Question 40: I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language. 3.6 / 2.8
- Question 44: I'd rather the teacher lecture throughout the entire class than meet with students in small groups. 2.6 / 3.0

Interview Results: Common Themes

Similarities

- Like working in small groups
 - Prefer establishing rapport and sense of intimacy in a small group
 - Sharing ideas
- Don't like talking in front of class
 - Afraid of making mistakes
 - Afraid of stopping the class
 - Scared of being "odd one out"
- Traditional Education
 - Large teacher-centered classes encourage passive learners.

Differences

- Points for talking
 - Chinese students say they will talk if you give them extra points. Japanese students did not mention this.
- "Communicate via machines"
 - Chinese student suggested communicating in class via QQ or WeChat. Japanese students are less keen about the idea.
- Face and importance
 - Although Japanese students are afraid of making mistakes in front of others, it isn't as serious a matter as "losing face" is to Chinese students

Returnee's perspectives

- One student Japanese student who studied in both the U.S. and Japan noticed some differences between Japanese and U.S. contexts.
 - “Some *kikokushijo* (returnee students from English speaking countries) like me might be a problem to Japanese English teachers (to lose their face).”
 - “I don’t know how they may feel. But when I was in the States, there were some kids who never ever be able to get out of ESL. Staying at ESL for a long time, people start to feel stupid, unlucky. After several years, they finally transferred to Japanese school nearby.”
 - “Yeah, I did many times. Because it’s the most important thing in learning something. When I came back to Japan, I was really shocked in the class. Nobody asked no questions. Teacher talked all the time. Students took nap. Since then, I started to ask questions after the class (laugh).”

Conclusions

- A small group presumably provides its members with opportunities to engage more deeply and actively in the learning process which may allow students a socially and emotionally safer climate with a small number of members (Could be across cultures).
- Chinese students care more about their face, while Japanese students care about their discernment (*wakimae*) and recognition of the social position and relationship (*tachiba*).
- Chinese students tend to speak up if they can get extra points, while Japanese students don't because they think it rude.

References

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S.C. (1978, 1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Busch, D. (1982). Introversion-Etroversion and the EFL Proficiency of Japanese Students, *Language Learning*, 32(1), 109-132.
- Chang, H. C., & Holt, G. R. (1994). *A Chinese perspective on face as inter-relational concern, the challenge of facework: cross-cultural and interpersonal issues* (S. Ting-Toomey, Ed.). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Clancy, B.M. (1986). The acquisition of communicative style in Japanese. In Schieffelin, B.B., & Ochs, E. (Eds). (1986). *Language socialization across cultures* (pp. 213-250). New York: CUP.
- Doi, K. (1971). *Amae no kozo (The anatomy of Dependence)*. Tokyo: Kobundo.
- Geyer, N. (2008). *Discourse and Politeness: Ambivalent face in Japanese*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Harfitt, G. J. (2012). Class size and language learning in Hong Kong: the students' perspective. *Educational Research*, 54 (3), 331-342.
- Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness. *Multilingual Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*. 8, 2-3, 223-248.
- Hill, B., Ide, S., Ikuta, S., Kawasaki, A., & Ogino, T. (1986). Universals of linguistic politeness: Quantitative evidence from Japanese and American English. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 10(3), 347-371.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.

References

- Hwang, A., Ang, S., & Francesco A. M. (2002). The silent Chinese: The influence of face and kiasuism on student feedback-seeking behaviors. *Journal of Management Education*, 26(1), 70-98.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1989). Politeness and conversational universals, observations from Japanese. *Multilingual Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*. 8, 2-3, 207-222.
- Mok, M. M. C., Kennedy, J.K., Moore, P.J., Shan, P. W. J., & Leung, S.O. (2008). The use of help-seeking by Chinese secondary school students: Challenging the myth of 'the Chinese Learner'. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 21(3), 188-213 doi: 10.1007/978-15747-2_45
- Morrison, K. (2006). Paradox lost: Toward a robust test of the Chinese learner. *Education Journal*, 34(1), 1-29
- Oetzel, J., Ting-Toomey, S., Masumoto, T., Yokochi, Y., Pan, X., Takai, J., Wilcox, R. (2001). Face and facework in conflict: A cross-cultural comparison of China, Germany, Japan, and the United States. *Communication Monographs*, 68(3), 235-258
- Pan, Y. (1995). Power behind Linguistic Behavior. Analysis of Politeness Phenomena in Chinese Official Setting. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. 14(4), 462-481.

References

- Pewewardy, C. (2002). Learning styles of American Indian/Alaska Native students: A review of the literature and implications for practice. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 41.
- Tsuda, S. (1993). Indirectness in Discourse: What Does It Do in Conversation? *Intercultural Communication Studies* III:1 , 63-74.
- Usami, M (2002). *Discourse Politeness in Japanese Conversation: Some Implications for a Universal Theory of Politeness*. Tokyo: Hituji Shobo
- Xie, X. (2010). Why are Chinese students quiet? Looking at the Chinese context and beyond. *ELT Journal*, 64(1), 10-21. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccp060