Politeness in Chinese and Japanese Verbal Communication

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This study attempts to clarify the features of politeness in Chinese and Japanese verbal communication from the standpoint of intercultural communication in modern Chinese society and Japanese society because they provide a fascinating look at differences in human relations in these neighboring cultures, which can be a cause of friction and irritation when the people of these cultures interact. This study used a questionnaire to survey Chinese and Japanese university students; and based on the results, it examined similarities and differences in polite verbal behavior between the two countries. Furthermore, the results were analyzed from the standpoint of gender. Although this study concerns only Chinese and Japanese university students, in a broader sphere, the results point to differences in the norms, conventions, and beliefs of the two cultures. For example, Japanese students place a very high regard on their relationships with superiors and older members of the same school or workplace, while Chinese students attach greater importance to relationships with those of greater age and with strangers. Moreover, Japanese seem less comfortable when they are not shown politeness in situations where they would expect it. The findings will help us understand cultural and linguistic differences in intercultural communication.

The past two decades have seen a dramatic increase in the extent of cultural exchanges and business cooperation between the Chinese and Japanese. It is important to clarify the similarities and differences between the cultures with regard to traditional ideas, values, beliefs, and behavior in order to prevent misunderstandings from arising. Politeness is an interesting research theme in the study of intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, psychology, and pragmatics. It is an important social lubricant that helps people create and maintain social harmony.

Fundamentally, politeness is an expression of concern for the feelings of others. It encompasses behavior that actively expresses concern for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behavior (Holmes, 1995). This broader definition derives from the work of Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987), who describe politeness as showing concern for people's dignity or self-respect. Politeness involves showing concern for two different kinds of needs: *negative self-respect needs* (the need to not be imposed upon) and *positive self-respect needs* (the need to be liked and admired). The attempt to avoid imposing oneself on others (that is, threatening their self-respect) is evidence of negative politeness, while sociable behavior that expresses warmth toward a person is positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). According to Ide, Hill, Carnes, Ogino, & Kawasaki (1992), "What is common to these varying definitions is the idea of appropriate language use associated with smooth communication" (p. 280).

Different cultural and linguistic groups express politeness in different ways. That is, the range of behaviors deemed polite in American or British society, for example, may be quite different from the behaviors described by the word *teinei* (politeness) in Japanese and the

expression *you limao* (有礼貌) in Chinese. Linguistic politeness, then, reflects cultural values. Correctly identifying polite behavior in a culture involves understanding the society's values (Holmes, 1995). Up to now, most characterizations of interactive social behavior have been conceptualized in terms of politeness. However, what is considered polite in American or British culture represents only some of the components of politeness. For example, *Hoflichkeit* (politeness) in German (Held, 1992) or *teinei* (politeness) in Japanese.

To get a more comprehensive understanding of the aspects involved, Hermanns (1993) uses a higher-order notion called concepts of communicative virtues. These are concepts that have been developed over a long period of time and undergo continual transformation in ongoing social interactions; they are concepts to which members of a society refer in evaluating the social behavior of others as well as themselves (Marui, Nishijima, Noro, Reinelt, & Yamashita, 1996). Many researchers are now studying this subject. For example, Hermanns (1993) and Yamashita (1993) have researched the evaluating concepts for communicative behavior in German, and Nishijima (1995, 2007) has done the same for Japanese. Ide, Hill, Carnes, Ogino, and Kawasaki (1992) wrote about the concept of politeness in an empirical study of American English and Japanese. Many researchers (Kuhlmann, 2005; Nam, Nishijima, & Saiki, 2006; Nishijima, 2007; Nishijima & Tao, 2009; Marui, Nishijima, Noro, Reinelt, & Yamashita, 1996; Tao, 2008, among others) have done comparative research in this field.

However, there has been little contrastive research on the evaluating concepts in Japanese and Chinese, even though these two peoples are closely related both geographically and culturally. There has also been little study on a number of important questions: how young people use politeness, how young people feel about politeness, the types of people to whom young people tend to be polite, and gender differences in the frequency of use of politeness. To elucidate the differences between the two cultures, a study employing a 28-question questionnaire was carried out on basic features of evaluating concepts for communication behavior. This paper reports some of the findings.

Research in this field is needed to break down communication barriers between Chinese and Japanese when they come into daily contact. Although politeness may be expressed both verbally and non-verbally, this study focused on polite verbal communication or, in other words, on the use of words to express politeness. It employed an opinion poll taken by Chinese and Japanese university students to collect data for a comparative study of politeness in Chinese and Japanese verbal communication. Based on the results, the similarities and differences between polite Chinese and Japanese verbal communication are examined. This study also provides insights into the traditional moral values on which polite behavior is based in both countries and also analyzes the results from the standpoint of gender. The specific purpose of this study was to answer five research questions.

Politeness

Politeness has been a major concern in pragmatics since the late 1970s. Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, first published in 1978, generated a wealth of conceptual and empirical research, undertaken in the theoretical and methodological traditions of a number of

social sciences, such as anthropology, developmental psychology and psycholinguistics, linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, applied linguistics, and communication.

Kasper (1990) summarized the work of Lakoff (1973, 1975), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and Leech (1983) as follows: Politeness is viewed as a rational, rule-governed, pragmatic aspect of speech that is rooted in the human need to maintain relationships and avoid conflicts. Polite speakers are assumed to modulate (mainly dilute, tone down) the specificity, assertiveness, value-ladenness, and so forth, of their utterances (Held, 1989), to signal respect for, and/or acceptance of, each others' feelings, needs, and desires. By being mutually supportive and avoiding threats to face, according to the standard argument, speakers maintain smooth relations and sustain successful communication. The underlying rational, motivation, and functional foundations of politeness are assumed to be, to some extent, universal, and are assumed to influence, and be reflected in, various modes of speech in many different languages and cultures (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

However, Brown and Levinson's theory of the universals of linguistic politeness—the main theory-problem-method-apparatus-framework in cross-cultural studies—has been increasingly criticized for its strong orientation toward British analytical logic and North American social psychology (Held, 1989; Ide, 1989). In many non-Western cultures, the underlying focus of interaction is centered not on the individual, but on the group (Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988, 1989); their politeness behavior departs considerably from the assumptions of Western social psychology about agnostic relationships between speakers and speech strategies (Held, 1989). By putting Brown and Levinson's politeness theory in the context of the ongoing debate between universalists and relativists in the Western linguistic tradition, Jenney and Arndt (1993) suggest that, like other theories of universal language, Brown and Levinson's theory lacks a culturally unbiased conceptual framework for objectively and empirically evaluating their politeness universals. They propose a methodological shift away from investigating universals of politeness to studying cultural identity in its various linguistic and other manifestations, a shift that helps to account for cultural variations in politeness from a more flexible point of view.

The phenomenon of linguistic politeness exists in almost all cultures and languages. Politeness is an important method of making communication smooth. It is the common desire of most human beings to respect others, make friends, and speak politely; but polite language and its use are indeed different in different cultures, and cultural variations in politeness are generally related to notions of linguistic and cultural relativity.

Politeness in Chinese

There is a growing awareness that the term *politeness* needs to be defined more precisely and consistently if more fruitful cross-cultural research on politeness is to be pursed (Watts, Ide, & Ehlich, 1992). Mao (1992) stated the relationship between Chinese face and politeness (limao):

More specifically, to be polite, that is, *you Limao* (有礼貌) 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." (p. 85)

The closest Chinese equivalent to the English word politeness is *Limao*. Gu (1990) investigated Limao and pointed out that the word *Limao* is derived from the old Chinese word, *Li* (礼). He reviewed the classical notion of Li formulated by Confucius (551-479 B.C.), whose influence remains strong to this day. *Li* does not mean politeness; it refers to the social hierarchy and order of the slavery system of the Zhou Dynasty (dating back to 1100 B.C.), which Confucius regarded as an ideal model for any society. It held an important place in the philosophical thought of old China. Not until two or three hundred years after Confucius did *Li* become established as a word meaning politeness. This usage is found in the book, *Li Ji* (礼記 *On Li*), compiled (reputedly) by Dai Sheng sometime during the East Han Dynasty. The volume opens with: "Deference cannot not be shown by others as well as the self," "Speaking of Li (i.e., politeness), humble yourself but show respect to others." Denigrating self and respecting others remain at the core of the modern concept of Limao (as cited in Gu, 1990, p. 238).

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, a new social structure has arisen with new social relationships. This certainly has had some effect on politeness and its role in people's lives. Gu (1990) pointed out that there are basically four notions underlying the Chinese conception of Limao: (a) respectfulness, (b) modesty, (c) attitudinal warmth, and (d) refinement. Respectfulness is self's positive appreciation or admiration of others concerning the latter *face*, social status, and so on. Modesty can be seen as another way of saying self-denigration. Attitudinal warmth is consideration, and hospitality to other. Finally, refinement refers to self's behavior to other which meets certain standards. In the last three decades or so, the "Beautification of Speech" campaign has tried to revive the four elements, which are part of Chinese heritage, and has explicitly appealed to the nation to abide by them. Deference is an important element of modern 礼貌 (Limao, politeness). Its social function is to maintain harmony, eliminate conflict, and promote cooperation between people.

I quite agree with Mao's argument (1992) that "to understand Chinese politeness, it is necessary to study face (mianzi and lian)" (p. 83). Chinese face includes *mianzi* and *lian*. Mainzi pursues public acknowledgment of one's prestige or reputation. That is to say, Chinese face emphasizes not individual want or desires but the harmony of individual action with social norms and the community judgments of action. Chinese politeness (limao) makes much of the ethics of courtesy and uses li to treat the people and things. That is, being polite in Chinese discourse makes a good impression on the person one is speaking to and on those nearby; and it will increase one's reputation (lian and mianzi) in society because polite behavior is praised by society. Thus, one earns a good reputation, thereby increasing one's self-respect.

Politeness in Japanese

According to Haugh (2007), 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*). 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). Japanese scholars speculate that it developed from terms used to praise God, terms used to avoid taboos, and other types of expressions. The use of beautiful language toward God was thought to bring happiness to people through the magical power of language, thus functioning as a positive strategy. Honorific forms also originated from expressions referring to something or someone high in status. As these expressions were used repeatedly over time, they became conventional grammatical forms and fossilized into a system of honorific forms.

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" (p. 98). 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 others (*jinkaku*).

Several Japanese philosophers developed a philosophy of moral standards intended to make it possible for the Japanese to live together peacefully. This philosophy has been handed down to modern times. It sets the moral standards for how people should behave according to their designated roles in society. According to Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, and Ogino (1986), one of the key terms used by Oguu Sorai, one of the founders of this philosophy, is *wakimae*. This philosophy forms one of the major habitual thought patterns of contemporary Japanese culture. In Japanese, it is crucial for a speaker to perceive the social context, such as the kind of situation or setting, he or she is in. It is also called *discernment*; that is, in contact between Japanese people, the speaker should pay attention to addressing certain factors of the situation, and then select an appropriate linguistic form and appropriate behavior.

The reason why Japanese tend to be formal and wakimae in non-intimate ingroups and outgroups, and informal in intimate ingroups can be explained by *amae* (dependence) (Ogawa & Gudykunst, 1999-2000). *Amae* is "the noun form of *amaeru,* an intransitive verb which means 'to depend and presume upon another's benevolence' . . . . [It involves] helplessness and the desire to be loved" (Doi, 1973, p. 22). Doi (1973) points out that *amae* involves a "trustful dependence" that nothing bad will happen if one person is dependent on other people who have good feelings for him or her. Obana (1994) reported her respondents associated politeness with knowing where one stands in social interactions (wakimae or discernment), showing upward respect (*kei'i*) towards others and modesty about oneself, as well as horizontal distance. Interesting additions to the notions of politeness that emerge from ordinary speakers of Japanese, which are not encompassed by dictionary definitions, include showing kind consideration towards others as well as relational distance and modesty towards oneself. Moreover, politeness in Japanese can also involve showing one's social standing (*shitsuke*, good-breeding), although this is restricted to certain individuals who use

beautification honorifics to show good-breeding (Ide, 2005; Obana, 2000). Politeness thus involves not only showing what one thinks of others, but also what one thinks of oneself (Chen, 2002: Haugh, 2007: Haugh & Hinze, 2003; Ruhi, 2006).

To summarize, politeness in Japanese verbal communication is somewhat similar to that in Chinese. According to Ogawa and Gudykunst (1999-2000), politeness rules in collectivistic cultures like Japan are based on other-oriented attitudes and high-context communication. It appears that, in China, they are also based on other-oriented attitudes and high-context communication.

Method

This study employed written questionnaires. The Japanese questionnaire surveyed current conceptualizations of what constitutes teinei, according to university students, and was taken from Marui, Nishijima, Noro, Reinelt, & Yamashita (1996). Since their observations reveal points of interest not only regarding teinei in Japanese, but also politeness in English and Hoflichkeit in German, the Japanese questionnaire was translated into Chinese. The survey allowed the plotting of the concepts of communicative behavior concerning politeness, teinei, and limao against other concepts in English, Japanese, and Chinese that assess human behavior. Thus, Chinese and Japanese versions of the questionnaire were prepared. In order to avoid the distortions of direct translation, bilingual and bicultural speakers discussed the translation and verified the accuracy of the final form.

Data were collected from 320 respondents: 165 Chinese students (55 males, 110 females) attending universities in Beijing (2009) and 165 Japanese students (55 males, 110 females) attending universities in Tokyo (2008), Toyama, and Kanazawa (2009). Since the students were generally not provided with a set of multiple-choice answers, they responded freely. This paper concerns findings based on 5 of the 28 questions on the questionnaire:

Question 1: With whom do you usually use polite expressions?
Question 2: How would you feel if you did not use polite expressions with those
                 people?
Question 3: What types of people use polite expressions when talking to you?
Question 4: What types of people generally use polite expressions?
Question 5: Who uses polite expressions more often: males or females?
( ) Males   ( ) Females   ( ) Same for both

Results

The analysis of the data obtained from the written questionnaire involved first separating the responses into those of males and those of females. Then, qualitative differences among the answers to a question were obtained by grouping the responses into specific categories. This analysis revealed great variety in the types of responses. Here, the similarities and differences in the polite behavior exhibited by Chinese and Japanese students are examined.

Table 1 classifies the types of responses to Question 1 by nationality and gender. Chinese students gave 13 types of answers. They mainly use polite expressions with older people (62.5%), teachers (35.2%), strangers (32.8%), and people they do not know very well (22.8%). The Chinese males gave 11 types of answers. Most of them use polite expressions with older people (27.4%), teachers (19.2%), and strangers (15.1%). The Chinese females gave 12 types of answers. Most of them use polite expressions with older people (35.1%), strangers (17.8%), people they do not know very well (17.3%), and teachers (16.0%); but they tend to use polite expressions with people they do not know very well more than Chinese males do.

The Japanese students gave 13 types of answers. Most of them use polite expressions when talking to superiors (44.6%), older people (43.6%), teachers (32.5%), and older members of the same school or workplace (26.8%). The Japanese males gave 13 types of answers. They use polite expressions with older people (22.3%), superiors (19.1%), teachers (14.9%), and older members of the same school or workplace (10.6%). The Japanese females gave 12 types of answers. They tend to use polite expressions with superiors (25.5%), older people (21.3%), teachers (17.6%), and older members of the same school or workplace (16.2%). An important finding of this study is the cultural differences regarding strangers, superiors, and older members of the same school or workplace. In particular, Chinese use polite expressions with strangers (32.8%) more than Japanese do; but Japanese use polite expressions with superiors (44.6%) and older members of the same school or workplace (26.8%) more than Chinese do.

The results show that Japanese students place the highest regard on relationships with superiors and older members of the same school or workplace. This reflects the strict hierarchy and ingroup culture prevalent in Japan. Chinese students attach greater importance to older people, strangers, and people they do not know very well. This reflects the high regard for kinship relationships and the respect for older people in China.

A chi square analysis revealed no significant difference between the male Chinese and the female Chinese with respect to the use of the various types of responses to Question 1 (χ^2 = 20.115534, df 12, p = 0.0649). For Japanese students, a chi-square analysis revealed no significant difference between the male Japanese and the female Japanese either (χ^2 = 12.848315, df 12, p = 0.3802). A significant difference was found when the male Chinese and the male Japanese were compared (χ^2 = 26.219956, df 12, p = 0.0100). The chi square tests comparing the female Chinese and the female Japanese for response to Question 1 reveal that there is a significant difference (χ^2 = 63.817008, df 13, p = 0.0001).

To summarize, the types of behavior covered by the Japanese term *teinei* show that traditional aspects of politeness in Japan (upward respect, modesty, social position, rank, etc.) still remain. The Chinese concept of Limao (politeness, including respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth, and refinement) is also still meaningful to Chinese students.

A wide variety of answers was obtained in response to Question 2 (Table 2). Male and female Chinese gave 12 types of answers. If they did not use polite expressions when they normally would, 50.7% of males and 34.1% of females thought it would be impolite. Neglecting to be polite would seem uneducated or ill-bred to 13.5% of males and 11.5% of

Table 1
Types of Responses to Question 1 Classified by Nationality and Gender

Types of Responses to Question 1: With whom do you usually use polite expressions?	Male Chinese	Female Chinese	Male Japanese	Female Japanese
People who are older than me	27.4%	35.1%	22.3%	21.3%
Teachers	19.2%	16.0%	14.9%	17.6%
Strangers	15.1%	17.8%	6.4%	10.0%
Superiors	8.2%	4.0%	19.1%	25.5%
People whom I do not know very well	6.9%	17.3%	5.3%	1.9%
Older members of the same school or workplace	1.3%	0.9%	10.6%	16.2%
People I meet for the first time	0.0%	0.0%	9.6%	4.6%
People with whom I am not intimate	4.1%	0.0%	1.1%	0.5%
People I respect	2.7%	1.8%	2.1%	0.5%
Classmates and friends	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Family members and relatives	5.5%	0.9%	4.3%	0.5%
Customers	0.0%	0.9%	1.1%	0.0%
Everyone or most people	6.9%	2.2%	1.1%	0.5%
Others	2.7%	0.9%	2.1%	0.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

females. Impoliteness was seen as disrespectful to the other person in the eyes of 11.8% of males and 12.2% of females. Failure to be polite increased the fears of creating a bad impression to 12.2% of females and 1.7% of males. Impoliteness would make 13.2% of females and 3.4% of males feel bad. Finally, only 5.1% of males and 3.6% of females thought that it would be normal and would not really care if they failed to show politeness in a conversation.

On the other hand, Japanese males gave 12, and Japanese females gave 13, types of answers. If they did not use polite expressions when they normally would, 21.7% of males and 35.2% of females thought that it would be impolite. Both males (21.7%) and females (24.2%) thought that it would make the other person feel uncomfortable. Failure to use polite speech might make the other person angry, according to 11.7% of males and 8.3% of females. Moreover, 10% of males and 9.2% of females thought that disregarding politeness protocols would create a bad impression. Finally, only 6.6% of males and 1.7 % of females thought that it would be normal to be unconcerned with politeness and would not really care if they came across as impolite to others, or if others spoke to them without regard for politeness.

For the Chinese students, chi square analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in the response to Question 2 between male and female Chinese (χ^2 = 14.211491, *df* 11, *p* = 0.2215). The differences between Japanese males and females were found not to be

Table 2

Types of Responses to Question 2 Classified by Nationality and Gender

Types of Responses to Question 2: How would you feel if you did not use polite expressions with those people (i.e., people in Question 1)?	Male Chinese	Female Chinese	Male Japanese	Female Japanese
It would be impolite.	50.7%	34.1%	21.7%	32.5%
It would be disrespectful.	11.8%	12.2%	0.0%	0.0%
It would show a lack of common sense.	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	5.0%
I would appear to be uneducated or ill-bred.	13.5%	11.5%	0.0%	3.3%
It would make the other person feel uncomfortable.	3.4%	7.0%	21.7%	24.2%
The other person would get angry.	3.4%	1.8%	11.7%	8.3%
I would hurt the other person.	1.7%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
It would create a bad impression.	1.7%	12.2%	10.0%	9.2%
It would have an impact on the image I want to present.	1.7%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
It would impair our relationship.	1.7%	0.9%	3.3%	3.3%
It would show that I do not know my place.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%
It would create a bad relationship.	1.7%	0.9%	5.0%	5.0%
I would show that I am not to be relied on.	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	0.8%
It would create a bad atmosphere.	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	1.7%
I would feel bad.	3.4%	13.2%	5.0%	4.0%
The other person would have a lower opinion of me.	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
It would be normal; I would not really care.	5.1%	3.6%	6.6%	1.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

significant (χ^2 = 14.342975, *df* 13, *p* = 0.3501). A chi square analysis was performed comparing male Chinese and male Japanese; the differences between them were found to be significant (χ^2 = 45.792123, *df* 15, *p* = 0.0001). The chi square tests comparing female Chinese and female Japanese responses to Question 2 reveal that there is a significant difference (χ^2 = 64.366008, *df* 15, *p* = 0.0001).

The many differences in the opinions of the Chinese and Japanese students reveal cultural differences between the two groups. For example, both male and female Chinese thought that if they did not use polite expressions when they normally would, it would be disrespectful of the other person; but no Japanese responded in that way. Of Japanese, 21.7% of male and 24.2% of females thought that it would make the other person uncomfortable; few Chinese felt that way. I also found that the responses of males sometimes differ from those of females. For example, a greater number of male than female Chinese thought it was impolite; but it was the reverse for Japanese students.

Generally speaking, a large variety of opinions were expressed in response to Question 2. The most common answers given by Chinese students were that if they did not use polite expressions when they normally would, it would be impolite, disrespectful, make one seem uneducated or ill-bred, or create a bad impression (females). On the other hand, most Japanese felt it would be impolite, it would make the other person feel uncomfortable, or it would create a bad impression.

Now, we turn to Question 3: What types of people use polite expressions when talking to you? Table 3 shows the responses, classified by nationality and gender. Both Chinese and Japanese students gave a great variety of responses. Chinese males gave 15 types of answers, with the most common being people younger than them (29.2%), people they do not know very well (16.7%), and strangers (15.3%). Of the 16 types of answers given by Chinese females, the most common are strangers (21.4%), people they do not know very well (19.3%), and people younger than them (13.8%).

On the other hand, the most common of the 10 types of answers given by Japanese males are people younger than them (31.5%), younger members of the same school or workplace (17.9%), people they do not know very well (16.4%), strangers (12.3%), and people they meet for the first time (12.3%). The most common of the 10 types of answers given by Japanese females are people younger than them (34.6%), younger members of the same school or workplace (28.0%), and strangers (11.3%).

For the Japanese students, chi square analysis reveals that, there is no significant difference in the response to Question 3 between Japanese males and females ($\chi2 = 22.401970$, df 14, $p = 0.0707$). But the differences between Chinese males and female were found to be significant ($\chi2 = 27.747606$, df 17, $p = 0.0480$). A chi square analysis was performed comparing Chinese and Japanese males; the differences between them were found to be significant ($\chi2 = 29.268738$, df 15, $p = 0.0148$). The chi square tests comparing Chinese and Japanese females for response to Question 3 reveal that there is a significant difference ($\chi2 = 73.571385$, df 15, $p = 0.0001$).

Table 3 reveals cultural differences between Chinese and Japanese. For example, more Japanese females than Chinese females think that younger people and younger members of the same school or workplace should use polite expressions with them. In contrast, more Chinese females than Japanese think strangers should use polite expressions with them. In the answers to Question 3, we can see that Japanese culture emphasizes hierarchy, while Chinese culture emphasizes kinship and relationships.

The responses to Question 4 (What types of people generally use polite expressions?) are also categorized (see Table 4). Both Chinese and Japanese students express a great variety of views. Chinese males gave 16 types of answers. They thought that the main types of people who use polite expressions are well-educated or well-mannered people (26.2%), polite people (14.8%), and everyone (8.2%). For Chinese females, of the 20 types of answers, the main ones are well-educated or well-mannered people (26.8%), polite people (14.2%), and well-bred people (12.6%).

On the other hand, of the 15 types of answers given by Japanese males, the main ones are people with common sense (13.5%), well-educated or well-mannered people (10.2%), and clerks and attendants (8.5%). Of the 20 types of answers given by Japanese females, the main

Table 3
Types of Responses to Question 3 Classified by Nationality and Gender

Types of Responses to Question 3: What types of people use polite expressions when talking to you?	Male Chinese	Female Chinese	Male Japanese	Female Japanese
People younger than me	29.2%	13.8%	31.5%	34.6%
Strangers	15.3%	21.4%	12.3%	11.3%
People I do not know very well	16.7%	19.3%	16.4%	8.7%
Clerks and attendants	8.3%	4.1%	2.7%	4.0%
Younger members of the same school or workplace	4.2%	7.5%	17.9%	28.0%
People I meet for the first time	1.4%	2.1%	12.3%	3.3%
Everyone or most people	4.2%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
People older than me	2.7%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%
People who respect me	2.7%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Classmates and friends	4.2%	6.9%	1.4%	0.0%
Polite people	2.7%	2.1%	0.0%	0.7%
People who like me	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
People who ask me for help	1.4%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Teachers	0.0%	3.4%	1.4%	3.3%
People with whom I am not intimate	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	1.4%
Subordinates	4.2%	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Emotional people	0.0%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Others	1.4%	4.1%	2.7%	4.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

ones are polite people (16.6%), clerks and attendants (11.8%), and people younger than them (10.3%).

Here, findings also show cultural differences between Chinese and Japanese. The wide variety of responses to this question is highly representative of the broad range of polite forms employed by each group. Their opinions differ a great deal. The responses varied to such an extent, from well-educated or well-mannered people and polite people to people with common sense and inferiors, that few could be considered typical.

For the Chinese students, chi square analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in the response to Question 4 between Chinese males and females (χ^2 = 18.924554, *df* 16, *p* = 0.2726). The differences between males and females were found to be significant (χ^2 = 46.713070, *df* 20, *p* = 0.0006). A chi square analysis was performed comparing male Chinese males and Japanesemales; the differences between them were found to be significant (χ^2 = 45.354240, *df* 20, *p* = 0.0010). The chi square tests comparing Chinese and Japanese

Table 4
Types of Responses to Question 4 Classified by Nationality and Gender.

Types of Responses to Question 4: What types of people generally use polite expressions?	Male Chinese	Female Chinese	Male Japanese	Female Japanese
Well-educated or well-mannered people	26.2%	26.8%	10.2%	6.3%
Polite people	14.8%	14.2%	6.7%	16.6%
Strangers	1.6.%	6.3.%	3.5.%	0.8%
Superiors	3.3%	1.6%	0.0%	7.9%
People one does not know very well	4.9%	5.5%	6.7%	1.6%
Everyone	8.2%	3.9%	1.7%	0.8%
Well-bred people	3.3%	12.6%	6.7%	0.0%
Learned people	4.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Respectful people	4.9%	3.1%	6.7%	0.8%
People with common sense	0.0%	0.0%	13.5%	7.9%
People who understand that manners are necessary in social contacts	4.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
People older than oneself	4.9%	2.3%	0.0%	1.6%
People younger than oneself	3.3%	1.6%	6.7%	10.3%
Clerks and attendants	6.6%	8.7%	8.5%	11.8%
Teachers	0.0%	2.3%	3.5%	3.1%
Sensible and modest people	3.3%	3.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Members of a social group or office workers	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	7.9%
Reliable people	0.0%	0.0%	8.5%	0.8%
People who want to make a good impression	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%
People who know their place	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%
Inferiors	1.6%	0.8%	0.0%	3.1%
Considerate people	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.5%
People one meets for the first time	0.0%	0.0%	1.7%	1.6%
People who care about other people's views	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Shy people	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I do not know	3.3%	1.6%	5.1%	3.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5
Types of Responses to Question 5 Classified by Nationality and Gender

Types of Responses to Question 5: Who uses polite expressions more often, males or females?	Male Chinese	Female Chinese	Male Japanese	Female Japanese
Females	74.1%	82.0%	67.3%	88. 1 %
Males	25.9%	17.0%	27.2%	5.5%
Same for both	0.0%	1.0%	5.5%	6.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

females' responses to Question 4 reveal that there is a significant difference (χ^2 = 108.503591, *df* 25, *p* = 0.0001).

For example, among Chinese students, 26.2% of males and 26.8% of females answered "well-educated or well-mannered people," but for Japanese students the percentages were only 10.2% for males and 6.3% for females. Generally speaking, there are many differences in the opinions of Chinese and Japanese students. Of particular note is the striking contrast between Japanese males and females. In the Chinese data, there were no answers such as "members of a social group or office workers," "people with common sense," "reliable people," "people who know their place," or "people they meet for the first time." On the other hand, the Japanese data did not include such answers as "learned people," "people who understand that manners are necessary in social contacts," or "sensible and modest people."

Table 5 shows the results for Question 5: Who uses polite expressions more: males or females? A study by the National Language Research Institute (Kokuritu kokugokenkyuusho, 1957) concluded that females in Japanese society are generally more *teinei* (polite). Also see Smith (1992) for a more recent report on this persistent attitude. In a study by Marui, Nishijima, Noro, Reinelt, & Yamashita (1996), 69.7% of the informants had the same opinion, while 23% had the opposite opinion—namely, that males are more teinei than females. Only 7.2% answered that there was no difference between the sexes with regard to degree of politeness. That study, however, did not compare the responses of males with the responses of females.

In this study, 67.3% of male Japanese and 88.1% of female Japanese answered to the same effect. However, 27.2% of males and 5.5% of females had the opposite opinion that males are more teinei than females. Only 5.5% of males and 6.4% of females thought that there was no difference between the sexes with regard to degree of politeness. Although the differences are not large, Table 5 does reveal some small differences between the attitudes of male and female Japanese. More males than females thought that males are more teinei than females.

Regarding Chinese students, 74.1% of males and 82.0% of females thought that females used polite expressions more frequently. However, 25.9% of males and 17.0% of females had the opposite opinion. Only 1.0% of females thought that there was no gender difference with respect to degree of politeness. There does not seem to be any difference between the

attitudes of male and female Chinese, or between the responses of Chinese and Japanese students. However, more Chinese than Japanese females thought that males are more limao than females. This research shows that both Chinese and Japanese respondents believe that women tend to be more verbally polite than men.

For the Chinese students, chi square analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in the response to Question 5 between male and female Chinese ($\chi^2 = 1.971548$, *df* 2, *p* = 0.3732). But a chi-square analysis shows significant differences between the responses of male and female Japanese ($\chi^2 = 15.738166$, *df* 2, *p* = 0.0004). The chi square tests comparing male Chinese and male Japanese for response to Question 5 reveal that there is no significant difference ($\chi^2 = 3.239611$, *df* 2, *p* = 0.1979). In the data collected from female Chinese and female Japanese, the chi square test reveals a significant difference with respect to the responses to the question that males are more limao⁄teinei than females ($\chi^2 = 11.522032$, *df* 2, *p* = 0.0031).

Discussion

This study used a questionnaire to compare the use of politeness in Japanese and Chinese verbal communication, and clarified some similarities and differences between the two cultures. The use of polite ways of speaking by Chinese and Japanese students was analyzed with regard to the personal relationship between the speaker and the person spoken to, ingroup or outgroup status, and gender. The results not only reflect the characteristics of Chinese and Japanese cultural and linguistic differences in communicative behavior, but also objectively compare the manner of speaking in the two languages. It is natural to expect great differences in degree of politeness related to differences in politeness demands based on social distance or difference in social status, familiarity between the speaker and the person spoken to, ingroup or outgroup status, and gender.

The results show that most of the Chinese students thought that a failure to use polite expressions would be impolite, would be disrespectful to the other person, would show one to be uneducated or ill-bred, or would create a bad impression, while most of the Japanese students thought that it would be impolite, would make the other person uncomfortable, or would create a bad impression. This shows that both Chinese and Japanese students are aware that the use of politeness in verbal communication is very important in maintaining good human relations.

According to Konrad (1992), we might begin to understand how politeness is actually constituted and used not only in terms of purportedly universal principles, but also in both universal and specific terms, thus finally taking into account social realities, be they traditional or modern. This study found that social relations (social distance, relative power, group membership) had a greater effect on the polite behavior of Japanese than of Chinese. This 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. That is, they feel that it is common sense to use politeness expressions and that a failure to do so would make them feel uncomfortable. According to Florian (1992), "Addressee-related expressions are used irrespective of the subject matter and allow speakers to differentiate their speech on a scale of formality and familiarity, that is, to indicate the kind of relationship they wish to maintain with their interlocutors" (p. 313).

Both China and Japan have long been known as lands of ceremony and propriety. This study showed that the concept of politeness in communicative behavior is specific to a particular culture, sense of values, and standard. For example, based on four notions underlying the Chinese concept of Limao (respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth, and refinement), more Chinese than Japanese students use polite expressions with older people, strangers, and people they do not know very well. This is because being polite in Chinese discourse makes a good impression on the person to whom one is speaking and on the people nearby, and it increases one's reputation (lian and mianzi); that is, polite behavior is praised by society. Thus, one earns a good reputation and self-respect. On the other hand, the use of polite expressions with one's superiors and older members of the same school or workplace in Japan may relate to the Japanese concepts of *uchi* (ingroup) and *soto* (outgroup). The traditional aspects of politeness in Japanese society, including upward respect, modesty, social position, and rank, still remain. Further, women in both China and Japan tend to be more verbally polite than men, as was also shown in Meng, Li, and Wang's research (2007).

Conclusion

A questionnaire was used to collect data for a comparative study of politeness in Chinese and Japanese verbal communication. This research investigated the opinions of Chinese and Japanese students regarding cultural awareness and evaluating concepts of self and other concerning politeness. It provides insight into the traditional moral values embodied in polite behavior in both countries and also analyzes the results from the standpoint of gender. It explores cultural similarities and differences in politeness in verbal communication between Chinese and Japanese. There is clearly a need for much more empirical research in this area. It is also useful to try to understand the polite expressions of two cultural groups to promote intercultural communication. It will be necessary to do a similar analysis of the politeness-evaluating concepts of other societies in the future to examine how to improve cooperation through an understanding of communicative behavior. Further research on politeness in Chinese and Japanese verbal communication should more fully explore gender differences, cultural and linguistic differences, and other issues, perhaps by using a different methodology or a different group of informants (that is, non-students) to confirm the findings of this study.

Acknowledgements

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