

Cultural Expectations and Perceptions of Politeness: The “Rude Chinese”?

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Abstract

As globalization steams ahead, China continues to open its borders and interact with the rest of the world. Along with the obvious industrial and economical exchange in ideas, the cultural impact of this phenomenon is also becoming apparent. Unfortunately, Chinese are often seen as impolite or even rude by individuals of other cultures. This paper studies cultural and linguistic expectations, along with how perceptions of politeness are formed, and attempts to find the source of these “cultural clashes”. Participants in this study are also asked to explain, from their own point of view, what they perceive as the root of the problem. Lastly, a remedy to this problem is suggested.

Keywords: Cross-culture, Politeness, Pragmatics, Socio-cultural input

1. Introduction

As is widely apparent in the quickly developing and internationalizing China of today, cross-cultural communication skills are of utmost importance. The topic of politeness, and more specifically, verbal politeness, is one in which every language learner (or the language learner’s parents and teachers) should be concerned with. Due to some unfortunate circumstances, many Chinese learners of English have been labeled “impolite” by many native speakers of English. While the author’s earlier work has shown that the problem is not in that one culture is more or less “polite” than the other, it was also shown that which politeness strategies are found to be appropriate for the same situations do in fact differ between cultures.

To quickly sum up the results of the author’s previous studies, it was found that Chinese learners and native English speakers do not differ overly much, if at all, in their basic frames of the phenomenon of politeness. The same requirements were expected to be filled in order to show politeness. The same considerations (weight factors) were weighed when determining whom to show politeness (or greater politeness) to. More specifically and perhaps more importantly, it was shown that the factors which contributed to determination of social status and power (an important weight factor) were extremely similar between Chinese learners and native speakers as well. Additionally, it was shown that Chinese learners and native speakers rated potential interlocutors similarly for social status, further reinforcing the validity of the aforementioned finding. Lastly, it was found that different politeness strategies were hierarchally ranked the same in the degree of politeness that each showed. It could basically be said that Chinese learners and native English speakers shared very similar cognitive frames of what “politeness” is. The greatest and most important difference lied in the degree of perceived acceptability for each individual politeness strategy. The Chinese learners consistently identified politeness strategies of a “lower rung” as appropriate when compared to native speakers. This is presumably the main reason that many native speakers of English identify their Chinese counterparts as less “polite”.

Because the differences in politeness judgments between the two subject groups were found to be consistent, it can be hypothesized that the discrepancy is cultural in nature. The purpose of this study is to examine which factors contribute to an individual’s beliefs about verbal politeness and usage of politeness strategies. The participants of this study were eight Chinese learners of English, and two native English speakers (American and British).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Chinese and native English speakers' judgments of politeness

The first question addressed by the author's previous studies, and the basis on which further studies have branched out from, is whether Chinese students and native English speakers possess the same basic cognitive perceptions of what politeness is, and how politeness is shown (through politeness strategies). A previous study by the author found that in terms of conceptualization at least (if not production), Chinese learners and native English speakers seem to hold very similar ideals of politeness. When asked about whom it is required to show politeness to for example, Chinese learners gave answers no different from those of native English speakers (age, occupation, knowledge, etc. of interlocutor). When asked about how Brown and Levinson's weight factors would affect the degree of politeness needed, again Chinese learners and native English speakers concurred, replying that when faced with an interlocutor of high social status/power, high social distance, or when degrees of imposition are high, greater degrees of politeness are required.

Along the same line of inquiry, the author attempted to identify what factors attributed to Chinese learners' perceptions of social status/power. Again, it was found that there was little difference between the respondents and native English speakers (as expected, money, knowledge, title, occupation, and social acquaintances were all important factors contributing to perceived social status/power). Later, an activity which asked respondents to rank the social status/power of a series of hypothetical individuals further strengthened this conclusion, with Chinese learners and native English speakers once again giving highly similar responses.

In addition, the author also investigated whether Chinese learners held the same beliefs about the hierarchy of politeness strategies. When asked to rank different strategies according to their degree of politeness, Chinese learners gave responses that once again agreed with Brown and Levinson's model.

From the results of previous studies reported above, we can conclude that in judgments of politeness, Chinese learners and native English speakers do not differ greatly. These findings concur with similar earlier studies conducted by Carrel and Konneker (1981) and Walters (1980), both of which found that there were high degrees of correlation between native and nonnative perceptions of politeness in request strategies. It is apparent that English learners (of a certain proficiency level) have little problem identifying and understanding politeness strategies. Their use (or non-use) of these strategies however, is a totally different story.

At this point, we see that beliefs about how social factors affect politeness required are highly congruent, and that perceptions of politeness strategies are also highly similar between Chinese learners and native English speakers. The aim of this study is to discern and discover why there lies such a large gap between supposed perceptions and actual production of politeness strategies in Chinese learners of English.

2.2 Does having the same ideas mean doing things the same way?

While it has been shown that Chinese learners of English and native English speakers have similar requirements and ways to show politeness, and judge politeness strategies similarly, it is apparent that actual language production differs quite markedly when it comes to verbal and linguistic politeness. We can see that simply having the same understanding about a certain phenomenon does not guarantee that actual *expression* of these values will be the same. As Morand (2003) states, "Cross cultural communication involves more than comprehension of global, overarching value dimensions." Rather, what is vital is that "one must understand how cultures differ relative to the patterning of face-to-face discourse—the actual behaviors, gestures, and nuances of expression exchanged by individuals as they interact."

As Morand (1999) and Meziar (1999) have discovered in their respective research, overarching values do not always translate into similar styles of interaction. While Chinese learners of English showed that they possess cognitively similar ideas of what politeness is when compared to native speakers of English, their actual speech and behavior show discrepancies when compared to the latter. (as shown by actual responses from the author's previous studies)

Bald on record requests are seemingly the strategy that is favored by Chinese learners of English. The author has on occasion observed a forty-five minute intermediate level English class in which a total of twenty-three (English) verbal requests occurred among students. An overwhelming one hundred percent of these requests were of the bald on record variety. An additional ten requests were made in Chinese. Nine of these also took the form of bald on record requests. It is important to note that all these requests involved low imposition actions, such as the borrowing of a pen or change of a seat, and were among interlocutors of equal social status. Still, this small instance of observation shows that there is great difference between Chinese English learners native speakers of English, as on record requests with redressive action would be by far the most commonly utilized strategy by the latter group.

2.3 How are concepts of politeness formed?

Gleason (1987) found that there is a strong link between a child's language and the language of this child's same sex parent. The importance of parental influence, as stated by the respondents themselves cannot be ignored, and is quite possibly the most important and strongest influence that an individual will receive in his or her life. Quoting Ladegaard (2004), who advocates Gleason and Perlman's (1985) views, "violations of the sociolinguistic conventions that have to do with politeness are likely to be judged most severely and therefore... parents do not leave it to their children to construct their own rules. Rather, they take an active part in explicitly instructing their children in the use of appropriate politeness devices". Additionally, Gleason (1987) and Ely et al. (1996) also argue that children's linguistic behavior can be accounted for if we look at the verbal behavior of their caregivers, most notably their parents. It seems a likely conclusion that parents are the main influence on children's linguistic politeness (or lack thereof), at least early in life.

As age progresses, the environment of an individual, most importantly peers and those around the individual, presents yet another strong source of influence on the linguistic behavior of youngsters. As Ladegaard (2004) found from the results of his study in child language, children "will apply the linguistic system which, in the particular context and circumstances they find themselves in, is likely to give them most success in terms of being heard, getting their message across, and getting their way". Nakamura (2001) adds, "In times where the family structure is under change and where young children spend an increasing amount of time outside their homes, we will need to focus more attention on the significance of peer group influence on children's early socialization and linguistic development". This statement would pertain to Shanghai (in which the subjects under study reside), as instances of double income families are increasingly the norm.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study included two native speakers of English, and eleven Chinese learners of English. It was hoped that the two native speakers' responses could provide a basis for which to more effectively direct an in-depth study of the Chinese learners. Additionally, the Chinese learner responses could then be compared to those of the native speakers to uncover the reasons and origins of differences between the two groups. All eleven Chinese learners of English had an English proficiency level of intermediate to high intermediate, as identified by the IELTS test of English proficiency. These eleven participants were aged twelve to seventeen, and were enrolled in middle school (eight) or high school (three). All were enrolled in extracurricular English courses outside of normal school. The native speakers of English were aged eighteen and nineteen, and were enrolled in high school and college.

3.2 Data collection

After reviewing numerous articles on the topic of politeness and second language acquisition, it was found that few studies in this area have asked the learners themselves to give feedback on their beliefs and opinions, and it was deemed possibly beneficial to illicit responses and explanations from the subjects themselves, as opposed to the researcher administering tests and tasks, and then attempting to explain the phenomenon after the fact.

Firstly, the two English native speakers and two Chinese learners of English were asked to explain their choices in answering a questionnaire (from the author's earlier research) which inquired about the politeness and acceptability of different politeness strategies. It was hoped that this would give a clearer picture as to what goes on inside the individuals' heads when choosing to utilize a certain politeness strategy in a certain situation.

The second part of this article's data collection involved a more in-depth interview of the two native speakers and also eight Chinese learners of English, attempting to elicit information about how ideals of politeness are formed, and where input of this knowledge comes from. The responses were compared in order to discover where discrepancies in linguistic production of politeness (in requests) arise.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Linguistic competence or pragmatic competence?

Could it be that this apparent lack of politeness (in the eyes of native English speakers) is due to linguistic inability to produce appropriate utterances? As Kioke (1989) puts it, "Learner's pragmatic rules for politeness do not coincide with their limited ability on a grammatical and lexical level, to communicate". It is worth considering the possibility that the interlanguage of Chinese learners of English does not provide them with the necessary tools to express "proper" politeness.

Interlanguage, as explained by Canale and Swain (1983), contains four components, that of grammatical,

sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Grammatical and sociolinguistic competence would be the two most closely linked with politeness in speaking.

Let us first examine the area of grammatical competence. Scarcella's (1979) study comparing advanced and beginning ESL learners found that while the advanced learners could vary the syntactic form of requests in accordance to the social situation, beginners invariably used imperatives.

This factor however, presumably has no bearing on the current study, as all participating subjects qualify as intermediate to high intermediate learners in accordance to the IELTS test of English proficiency.

The subjects of this study are not lacking in grammatical competence, as is shown by their IELTS test results, and also their in class performance. Additionally, the results of a prior study by the author reinforce the fact that lack grammatical competence and understanding is not the cause of production of less than polite speech. Subjects were able to identify and rank in order, degrees of politeness displayed by different politeness strategies, with results coinciding nearly identically to native speakers of English. It seems that the apparent lack of verbal politeness among Chinese learners of English is not due to grammatical inability to show politeness, but rather is due to some inadequacy in sociolinguistic or pragmatic knowledge.

The next logical question is perhaps, "Do the subjects of this study actually understand the nuances and requirements of polite register?" In other words, do the subjects know when to be polite, and how to be polite? Eliciting research conducted by Axia and Baroni (1984) in the field of child development, when children have reached the age of nine, they have fully mastered polite register. According to Ervin-Tripp (1977), that is to say that they possess knowledge of both the linguistic form of polite speech, and also the knowledge of pragmatic rules within a given social context. As all participants of the present study were at least twelve years of age, it is unlikely that polite register was a concept that eludes them, and as a result, causes the appearance of impolite language (in the eyes of native English speakers).

We must remember however, that this knowledge pertains only to the rules and conventions of the students' L1s, and not necessarily of the target L2.

4.2 Are English linguistic politeness strategies possible in the Chinese language?

Another important point to consider is the possibility that perhaps the linguistic forms of one language are not possible or simply do not appear in another, leading language learners to underutilize some forms of the target language. As Kasper (1990) has observed, "linguistic encoding of politeness strategies is contingent on the properties of any linguistic system and the conventionalized norms of usage". It is a known fact that different languages do not always have the same syntactic forms. If this is the case between Chinese and English, a possibility has been identified as to why Chinese learners of English might be reluctant to produce certain utterances necessary to show verbal politeness in the English language.

The author however, has doubts that this is the root of the problem under examination, as numerous Chinese native speakers interviewed on the topic have stated that all the English politeness strategies (under study in this article at least) are possible in the Chinese language, with the exception of perhaps "I would like you to", which a few respondents likened to "I would appreciate it if".

The author did not make it a point to determine whether all Chinese politeness strategies are possible in English, but the subjects under study did not provide any instance of such utterances in the naturally occurring speech observed.

4.3 Is cultural difference the culprit?

Both groups of respondents stated that they believed western and Chinese ideas about politeness are not overly different. If it is true as found earlier that Chinese learners of English share similar ideas as native English speakers about the content of what verbal politeness is, why then is there such a seemingly large disparity between the two groups in terms of actual language production? As many a researcher has stated in the past, cultural differences might be the main reason for these discrepancies. As Pan (2008) has stated, "clashes over politeness are inevitable if people with different cultures think their politeness concepts are the same". The author has suggested in an earlier study that the term C1 transfer (first culture transfer) might fit to describe this phenomenon. "Despite an excellent command of the L2 grammar and lexicon, learners may fail to convey pragmatically appropriate expressions, in part because they transfer L1 pragmatic rules in their L2 production." (Koike 1989)

Trosberg (1987) compared native and non-native speakers and concluded that pragmatic strategies are in fact transferred from the L1 to the L2. Blum-Kulka's (1982) study found that L1 concepts of politeness and

variations of linguistic strategy to convey differences in illocutionary force are transferred to the L2. Additionally, Morand (2003) states, “cultural clashes... involve violations of, or threats to, the interaction order- patterns of social intercourse that are basic to individuals’ very sense of self-identity”. Differences in cultural norms are certainly not to be taken lightly.

It would seem that Chinese cultural norms of politeness are at least partly responsible for why Chinese learners of English appear rude in the eyes of native English speakers, as the utterances produced by the former are often pragmatically unacceptable (in the eyes of native English speakers), although grammatically and lexically correct. What has to now been socially acceptable speech in the Chinese culture may not fit western ideals of politeness. Eelen (2001) states that politeness is subject to cultural expectations that arise from cultural norms. These norms are not individual; rather they are shared by all in a culture. He further adds that the driving force behind the system of politeness is the socioculturally shared norms. Responses from the two native English speaker respondents seem to reinforce this statement. Both of the subjects stated that they believed Chinese rules about politeness are similar to those in the west, but actual expectations about behavior are different.

In accordance to the scholars mentioned above, the author of this article also believes that L1 notions of politeness and acceptability influence the production of utterances in the L2. Koike explains, “Since the range of options on L1 request forms is already familiar to the learner, pragmatic competence in interlanguage does not have to develop conceptually.” Rather, it is more likely that the pragmatic component of interlanguage is “restructured” as explained by Selinker (1974), and that L2 grammatical structures are over time linked to pragmatic notions from the L1 culture. In other words, the utterances produced by learners employ use of the L2’s grammar and lexicon, but still reflect the L1 culture’s pragmatics.

4.4 How do Chinese children learn about (im)politeness?

As parental guidance seems to be the most important source of politeness knowledge (in a child’s early life), it only makes sense to compare differences in instruction of politeness between Chinese and western parents.

It seems apparent that Chinese parents (at least those who feel fit to send their children to extra English classes outside of school) place a great emphasis on politeness, as shown by responses given by the Chinese learners themselves. Politeness and polite behavior is taught mainly verbally, through direct lecturing, and also by setting of examples by parents themselves. It is also not uncommon for parents to correct impolite behavior verbally, as this was stated by quite a few respondents. It was also stated that negative examples were also often observed and served as a guide as to how *not* to behave. It would seem these responses would not differ greatly with western methods of teaching children politeness.

One apparent difference between Chinese parents and western parents would appear to be their attitudes towards punishment. While both western respondents stated that punishment (in some cases severe) was an important factor in their learning of polite behavior, few Chinese learners responded that their parents ever used punishment as an educational tool. When punishment was present, only the slightest of measures was administered. In only one response was anything resembling physical punishment present. Quite a few Chinese learners stated that self control was expected to guide their behavior in the “polite” direction (as opposed to punishment). Whether or not western parents believe children have self control would be an interesting topic for a related study.

School would intuitively be the second most important source of education about politeness and polite behavior. Both western respondents agreed that school was an important source of information as to how an individual is expected to behave and speak. The American respondent stated that polite speech and language were important parts of the curriculum, while the British respondent stated that *linguistic* politeness was not emphasized, but polite behavior in general was still of great importance. Again, both respondents stated that punishment and negative reinforcement were important tools in the education of politeness.

The Chinese learner respondents also often stated that school was an important source of information about politeness, but none chose to elaborate on the subject, focusing mostly on parental and environmental factors. It was stated that teachers rarely discussed linguistic and verbal politeness in class. A synopsis of the above findings on differences appears in table 1.

4.5 Social norms

Both respondent groups stated that the environment was a large influence on politeness education, although in differing ways. The two native English speaker respondents spoke about how impolite behavior and speech was likely to be frowned upon by society in general, cause problems in interactions, and possibly be the cause of disputes, thereby “forcing” individuals to conform to norms and expectations, displaying polite behavior and

speech. The Chinese learner respondents however, focused on how a “bad” politeness environment (in this case Shanghai) perpetuates rude speech and actions, and can actually worsen some individuals’ behavior. Many examples of rude behavior were stated by different respondents to make the point. Examples given include many that western expatriates living in Shanghai often speak of, such as spitting on the road, defecating in public, speaking loudly or cursing excessively, etc.

When we look at the topic of “righting wrongs” with feedback about politeness, it would seem that western children receive more than their Chinese counterparts. Both groups stated that parents would provide feedback and perhaps chastisement about behavior and speech that was polite or impolite. This extended to school and the general environment for the western respondents, but the Chinese learner group did not give any signs that school was a place where one could receive feedback about behavior which was polite or not. In addition, the general environment was stated to be a place where politeness was not always expected, and quite possibly would provide negative examples of behavior and speech .

From the responses of the native English speakers, we can conclude that politeness is not a choice, but rather an obligation that responsible members of society are expected to show. To show politeness is the norm, and lack of politeness will likely cause problems in society and breakdowns in interactions. On the other hand, the Chinese learner group saw politeness as “good”, but seem to have resigned themselves to the fact that some people are just not polite. It is recognized that there are many members of society who do not share the same rules of politeness, and that there are those who feel impoliteness (from the western perspective) is acceptable. In other words, politeness is welcome, but not always expected.

According to Nwoye (1992), the “western-centric” Brown and Levinson model of politeness states that politeness “is an expected, socially required norm of behavior, and participants in conversation are generally aware that they are required to act within the dictates of this expected code of behavior”. This seems to concur with our two native speaker respondents who made it clear that politeness is expected and required when interacting with others. We conclude here that a major factor leading to differences in language production between Chinese learners and native English speakers are the norms and expectations of their respective cultures.

Interestingly, both western respondents talked about the ideal of respect to great lengths in their discussions of politeness, while respect was not mentioned even once by any of the Chinese learner respondents. This is of course not to say that the Chinese learner group has no concept of respect, only that western ideals of politeness seem to be more tightly tied in with the phenomenon.

4.6 Implications for English teaching in China

From the results of this study and many others, it goes without saying the importance of introducing the pragmatic and social aspects of language in any ESL classroom. Bou-Franch and Garces-Conejos (2003), quoting Blum-Kulka and Sheffer (1993), state that pragmatic competence is “the most difficult aspect of language to master in learning a second language”. Kasper (1997) has said that “without some form of instruction, many aspects of pragmatic competences do not develop sufficiently”.

Koike suggests, “Textbook authors and classroom teachers need to make corresponding changes in approaches to L2 teaching, since the limitations imposed by the textbook and the classroom on pragmatically appropriate input hinder the learner from becoming truly proficient in communicating in the target language”.

As many respondents to this study have stated, showing politeness with English is not a greatly emphasized part of the language learning curriculum here in China (Shanghai). It is an unfortunate fact that too many students (and teachers as well) view the English language as simply a test to be passed, a score to be achieved. As Kasper (1990) has stated, “where the instructional goal is to enable students to use a foreign language for the purpose of ordinary conversation outside the classroom, the institutionally determined transaction bias of classroom communication conflicts with the specific objectives of language teaching”.

Of course it is up to every individual to decide for themselves what their actual goals are when attempting to learn a second language. In the author’s personal opinion, second language learning should be for the purpose of enabling oneself to effectively communicate with interlocutors of another linguistic background, whether it be for formal relations or simply personal pleasure. However, in order for communication to be *effective*, one must understand and observe the cultural norms of said interlocutor. We cannot after all, expect members of culture B to observe culture A’s norms when they are in fact communicating in *culture B’s* language. The author would therefore humbly suggest that the teaching of cultural knowledge and cultural norms be included in any foreign language curriculum.

4.7 Limitations of present study

It was unfortunate that only two native speakers of English were able to take part in this study. Various factors such as age, availability, and difficulty in finding suitable subjects in Shanghai resulted in the inclusion of only two native English speaker participants. Perhaps with a larger sample, we could have uncovered more information and findings. However, the amount of information gained from interviewing these two has already proven to be invaluable as many points of discussion were identified for the study (from their responses).

Another possible shortcoming of this study was the choice to consider Chinese learners of English as one homogeneous group. The respondents were aged twelve to seventeen, and it might have provided us with more insight if we were to separate the subjects based on their age or degree of schooling. This was not done in the present study, as the subject group was not very large. Also, the purpose of this study was to identify *cultural* differences, and not differences in various age groups or amount of schooling.

Finally, the author feels that it might be beneficial to observe more instances of naturally occurring Chinese speech of Chinese learners of English, and to compare it with their English production. This would help us better identify which instances of “impoliteness” are due to cultural differences, and which are due to linguistic differences. Although this was done on a small scale in this study, further expansion might provide an even clearer picture of the politeness phenomenon in Chinese learners of English.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Why is it that Chinese learners appear rude in the eyes of native English speakers?

Lakoff (1989) made the distinction of three levels of politeness. The first, called “polite behavior”, is described as when interlocutors adhere to politeness rules, both when it is expected and not expected. The second level, dubbed “non-polite behavior”, is when there is non-conformity to politeness rules in cases when it is not expected. Lastly, there was “rude behavior”, which was characterized by non-conformity to politeness rules even where it is expected. These first two levels of Lakoff’s politeness would belong to what Watts (2003) calls “politic behavior”, which adheres to socially sanctioned norms of interaction.

It would seem that there lies discrepancy in the second level of Lakoff’s politeness between Chinese learners and English native speakers. The expectations of social interaction differ between Chinese learners and English native speakers. In instances where English native speakers *expect* conformity to some politeness rule, it is often the case that Chinese learners feel that non-polite behavior will suffice.

Lakoff (1973) identifies two pragmatic rules of conversation: 1) be clear, and 2) be polite. It seems that Chinese learners of English place great importance on the first rule, sometimes at the expense of the second.

As per response of the two Chinese learners asked about their choices of acceptability (on previous questionnaire), “it is acceptable because it’s very clear”. Clarity, rather than politeness, seems to be of greater importance to the Chinese learners in speech. Simply put, what is clear is acceptable. The native English speaker however, feels that only what is polite is acceptable.

We conclude in this article that the heart of the problem lies not in the politeness of one culture or another, but rather in the differences in expectations and social norms of the two. It is the social norms of Chinese culture that lead Chinese learners to underutilize linguistic surface structures that native English speakers consider necessary in everyday interaction. As linguistic politeness strategies from native English speaking cultures do not seem to be normally used or deemed necessary in the Chinese culture, it only stands to reason that Chinese learners of English, if not otherwise instructed in the language classroom, would not naturally implement these strategies in their speech production.

Kasper (1990) proposes a distinction between motivated and unmotivated rudeness. “Unmotivated rudeness refers to the violation of the norms of politic behavior due to ignorance”. It is unlikely that Chinese learners of English intend to be rude, as many respondents expressed concern about showing proper politeness when speaking English. Chinese learners of English therefore, would belong to the latter category, in that it is rare, if ever, that they are educated in the knowledge of social norms and expectations of cultures where English is the native language (as attested by the respondents). The pragmatic failures often displayed by these learners result from their unfamiliarity with culturally appropriate forms of politic behavior, and how to properly encode their requests linguistically. We cannot fairly deem these individuals as rude, as it is clear that they do not fully understand what it is to be “polite” from a western perspective. This would indicate that some sort of change in the language classroom or language curriculum here in China (Shanghai) is needed.

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Appendix A

Table 1. Differences in Input of Knowledge of Politeness

	Chinese learners of English	Native English speakers
Sources of politeness knowledge input	Mostly from parents, little from school, environment is an important influence.	Parents, teachers, and environment all play important roles in input of influence.
Feedback on politeness of behavior and speech	Feedback comes mainly from parents, teachers at school do not often comment on politeness, social environment rarely provides feedback, sometimes no feedback is readily available, even from parents.	Parents and teachers both provide substantial feedback. Peers at school and social pressure are both important factors in providing feedback.
Is punishment used as a strategy in teaching politeness?	Punishment is rarely administered, mainly in the form of verbal or educational punishment. Physical punishment is rare indeed.	Verbal and educational punishment is common. Physical punishment is often administered as well, although mostly not severe in nature.
Views towards the role of politeness in verbal interactions	Politeness in speaking is welcome and sometimes socially rewarded. However, impoliteness or lack of politeness is not always problematic and indeed a certain amount of impoliteness is accepted as a normal occurrence in everyday life.	Politeness and respect are essential parts of social interaction, not an option. Impoliteness is almost never tolerable and is an impediment to normal social interactions.

Appendix B

Questionnaire on perceptions of politeness and acceptability

Rate the politeness and acceptability of the following requests by checking the box which best describes your feelings.

1. When speaking to a person of higher social status or power:

Go get the book.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

You will go get the book, right?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Why don't you go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

The book is downstairs, isn't it?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I want you to go get the book.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I would like you to go get the book.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Could you go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would you go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would it trouble you to go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

2. When speaking to a person of equal social status or power:

Go get the book.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

You will go get the book, right?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Why don't you go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

The book is downstairs, isn't it?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I want you to go get the book.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I would like you to go get the book.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Could you go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would you go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would it trouble you to go get the book?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

3. When speaking to a person of higher social status or power.

Lend me a thousand dollars.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

You will lend me a thousand dollars, right?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Why don't you lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

You have a thousand dollars, don't you?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I want you to lend me a thousand dollars.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I would like you to lend me a thousand dollars.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Could you lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would you lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would it trouble you to lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

4. When speaking to a person of equal social status or power.

Lend me a thousand dollars.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

You will lend me a thousand dollars, right?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Why don't you lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

You have a thousand dollars, don't you?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I want you to lend me a thousand dollars.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

I would like you to lend me a thousand dollars.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Could you lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would you lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite

Would it trouble you to lend me a thousand dollars?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but not polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable and polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acceptable but overly polite
<input type="checkbox"/>	Not acceptable and overly polite