RedFame

Studies in Media and Communication
Vol. 10, No. 1; June 2022
ISSN: 2325-8071 E-ISSN: 2325-808X
Published by Redfame Publishing
URL: http://smc.redfame.com

Politeness as a Nonverbal Communication Behavior: An Investigation into Driving Habits in Asia

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Received: January 23, 2022 Accepted: April 2, 2022 Online Published: April 4, 2022

doi:10.11114/smc.v10i1.5455 URL: https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v10i1.5455

Abstract

Politeness is mainly investigated in verbal and written communicative encounters. This study novelistically examines politeness and politic behavior as a nonverbal communicative event concerning driving habits in Asia. Politeness is investigated based on four variables that are the country of origin, gender, age, and level of education. The novel framework is based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. This study revealed that Asian drivers use deference, hedges, and indirectness to minimize imposition while driving. The study showed that Hong Konger, Singaporean and Malaysian drivers are the most polite in Asia. This study also revealed that Hong Konger female drivers and Malaysian male drivers are the most polite in Asia concerning giving signals before changing lanes. It also revealed that Malaysian female drivers and Singaporean male drivers are the most polite in Asia concerning following traffic signs and speed limits. The study also found that Malaysian, Indonesian, Thai, Indian, Filippo, and Singaporean male drivers are more polite than their female counterparts with respect to following signs, while Hong Konger, Singaporean, and Taiwanese female drivers are more polite than their male counterparts pertaining to giving signals before changing lanes. It is also apparent that Malaysian, Chinese, Thai, Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepali, Pakistani, and Filipino male drivers are more polite than their female counterparts pertaining to giving signals before changing lanes. This study also established that old drivers are more polite than young drivers and old female drivers are more polite than old male drivers. In reference to the level of education, the study revealed a positive correlation between politic driving behavior and high level of education. Interestingly, highly educated male drivers are more polite than highly educated female drivers in Asia.

Keywords: politeness, politic behavior, nonverbal communication, driving habits, Asia

1. Introduction

There are four main mediums of communication that are the written, verbal, non-verbal, and electronic communication. These mediums are distributed into several channels or specific means of communication. As we communicate, we strive to encode our messages in the best-suited channel to establish effective communication, on the one hand, and facilitate the decoding process, on the other hand. This is particularly important to avoid distortion, which would not only tarnish the message or the task we strive to achieve but also our personal and/or professional image or face (Watts, 2003). In this article, the non-verbal communication medium is investigated; particularly, the sending 'encoding' and receiving 'decoding' of nonverbal messages while driving in Asia.

As we learn driving, we are taught, theoretically and practically, the importance of non-verbal communication on roads. Drivers are told that following traffic signs and communicating with other drivers by giving signals before taking any action or properly responding to the signals or the signs that are given by other drivers is vital, as, in addition to saving lives, it would make our driving experience more enjoyable. It would also maintain our face, which is the "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by his or her self-presentation" (Goffman, 1967. p. 5). Following signs, giving proper signals, and responding to signals of other drivers would additionally portray us as polite (Brown & Levinson, 1987) drivers who follow the politic behavior (Watts, 2003).

Unfortunately, even though all drivers are aware of the risks that may occur because of abandoning the safe driving protocol, some drivers break the rules of driving or commit offenses-face threatening acts (FTAs). These FTAs are the act[s] that may damage the face, which is the "individual's most sacred possession" (Deutsch, 1961, p. 897), of the driver by acting against the normal behavior (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In this case, the other feels threatened or

challenged and his/her reaction, as a result, may vary from slight discomfort to hostile behavior (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000). It is assumed that the higher the threat individuals face, the angrier they feel (Carson and Cupach, 2000). Therefore, the communicators, in general, are urged to 'weight' the degree of imposition of their actions and mitigate the FTAs to minimize threat and establish polite and effective communication (Mills, 2003).

In this study, maintaining face and committing FTAs in non-verbal communication while driving in Asia is investigated. This is conducted through the drivers' use of and response to signs, signals, and driving behavior. The analysis is carried out concerning four main variables that are drivers' age, gender, level of education, and country.

2. Literature Review

Lakoff (1989) defines politeness as a means to minimize confrontation in discourse. It is a strategy or a number of strategies that are used to maintain good relationships among communicators. Politeness is not only measured in verbal and/or written communications. It is a behavior that relates to people's social norms. In this case, politeness is considered good manners, social etiquette, social graces (Culpeper, 2011). In this study, politeness is looked at and examined as a social behavior that intends to minimize social confrontations and maintain one's face. Politeness, in this study, is looked at as strategies that are used to maintain harmonious social relationships to avoid conflicts.

Following Goffman's (1967) introduction of the concept of face, Brown and Levinson (1987) introduced their politeness theory in speech and writing. They built their theory on the concept of face stating that face is two-dimensional. People have a positive face, which is "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others executors" (p. 62), or, "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' claimed by interactants" (p. 61). The negative face, however, is defined as "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction" (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 61). Yule (1996) defined the negative face as "the need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed by others" (p. 62).

As we have face, sometimes we find ourselves in encounters that we convey or face, what Brown and Levinson (1987) called, face-threatening acts (FTA) "that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (p. 65). FTAs obstruct both positive and negative aspects of communicators' face. FTAs may obstruct the negative face of the speaker or the hearer by placing pressure on the hearer not to perform an action or by expressing the opinion or the feelings of the speaker. FTAs obstruct the positive face by damaging a person's face by showing a lack of appreciation or approval. This can be carried out by expressing speakers' evaluation of hearers' positive face simply by expressing the lack of care for the hearers' positive face.

To formulate a polite message, Brown and Levinson (1987) came up with four politeness strategies. These strategies can be carried out verbally, in writing and/or para-verbally (i.e., using the tone, the voice). The first strategy is the bold on record politeness strategy in which the speaker does not attempt to minimize the imposition on the hearer. The second strategy is the positive politeness strategy in which the speaker tries to minimize the imposition on the hearer by making the hearer feel good about himself/herself. The third politeness strategy is the negative politeness strategy in which the speaker tries to avoid any imposition on the hearer. The fourth politeness strategy is the off record politeness strategy in which the speaker removes any potential to place any imposition on the hearer.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory was used in a big number of studies to investigate politeness in business communication (AlAfnan, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c), politeness across cultures (Grindsted, 1997), and politeness among native and nonnative speakers (Afnan, 2015a, 2015b, 2021a, 2021b; Murphy and Levy, 2006). All these investigations looked into verbal and written politeness encounters. However, it is obvious that politeness studies on nonverbal encounters are almost nonexistent. This study strives to fill this gap by investigating politeness strategies based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory in nonverbal social communicative encounters.

Even though Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory was criticized as it does not provide a universal interpretation of politeness and face, this theory is suitable for the purpose of this study. Politeness and face in this study are examined in relation to a set of universal traffic rules. These formal traffic rules are imposed by formal traffic authorities all around the world, including Asia, to make sure that drivers minimize imposition and maintain face. They are set to keep face and avoid any unnecessary confrontations. Politeness theory, in this study, is taken out of it normal context as it neither investigates politeness in speech nor writing. It is applied to investigate politeness and politic behavior in nonverbal social communicative norms that are formally established and legally imposed to maintain a polite, safe, and aggravation-free social communicative environment.

3. Methods

To collect the data about the driving habits of individuals in Asia, a multiple-choice questionnaire is prepared by the researcher. The questionnaire is prepared online using 'Google Forms'. Google forms allow any willing user to plan an event, create a form or collect feedback in the form of a questionnaire or survey. The user may create his/her own

template or alternatively, he/she may choose a template from the given list and amend it. After creating the questionnaire, the user may share it online and/or print it out.

The first question of the questionnaire was 'do you drive?' If the answer is 'yes', the following message appears 'please proceed with the questionnaire'. If the answer is 'no', the message was 'end of the questionnaire, thank you'. The main body of the questionnaire included two main sections. The first section included four questions about the four main variables of the study that include drivers' age, gender, level of education, and country of origin. The second section included ten statements about driving habits. Respondents were asked 'if they give signals before changing lanes', 'follow road signs and speed limit', 'give way for other vehicles', 'beep the horn', 'practice lane hogging', 'practice tailgating', 'jump the queue', 'use a high beam or fog lights', 'break for no obvious reason' and finally 'give way to pedestrians'. The respondents were given five choices to select from that are 'almost never', 'less than half of the time', 'about half of the time', 'more than half of the time' and 'almost always'.

After creating the questionnaire, it was shared with my contacts and the public on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts. The contacts were also asked to share it with their contacts as well. The questionnaire was also shared with several specialized groups on the above-mentioned social media platforms. To have more varied responses, the questionnaire was also shared in several car forums in Asia. The collection period lasted for two months, in which 2136 responses were received from more than 12 countries that are: Malaysia, China, Indonesia, India, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Unfortunately, the respondents from South Korea do not drive and their answers were excluded. The Middle East isn't targeted in the data collection. Even though the researcher received quite a big number of responses from Middle East countries, these responses were not included in this study.

The categorization of the responses was carried out in relation to traffic regulations and traffic codes. Drivers who followed the traffic regulations and codes are considered 'polite drivers' as they "minimize the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 129). Drivers who do not follow the regulations, however, are considered imposing and aggressive as they act recklessly and commit a FTA. For example, the first statement in the questionnaire reads 'I signal before changing lanes'. According to traffic regulation, drivers may change lanes, but they must give a signal before doing so. As such, the drivers who give a signal before changing lanes hedge and minimize the imposition; therefore, they maintain their face. The drivers who do not give signals before changing lanes are considered aggressive as they commit a FTA. The five given options after every statement are used to calculate the frequency of the occurrence.

4. Results and Findings

As mentioned earlier, the researcher received 2136 responses from 13 Asian countries. Out of the 2136 respondents, 48 respondents do not drive; the 'do you drive?' question was the end of the survey for these 24 respondents. As such, we have 2088 respondents who proceeded to the rest of the survey. The respondents were 62.5% males and 37.5% females (see figure 1 below).

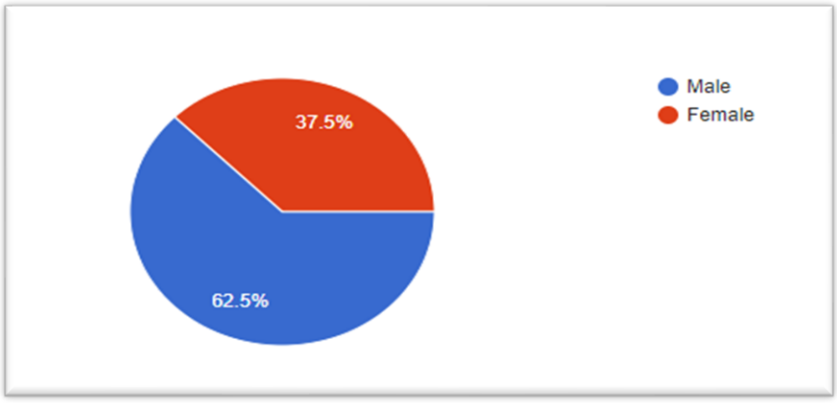

Figure 1. Gender of respondents

The respondents' age groups ranged from 20 to above 60. They are 20.4% from the 20-29 years old age group, 24% from the 30-39 years old age group, 18.5% from the 40-49 years old age group, 21.6% from the 50-60 years old age group and 15.3% are above 60 years old. None of the respondents is below 20 years old as they possibly did not want to fill in the questionnaire, which was also shared on cars and racing platforms that attract teenagers (See figure 2 below).

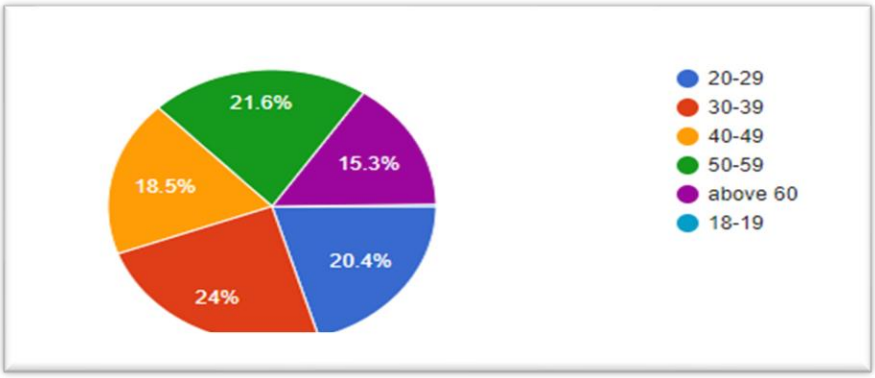

Figure 2. Age group of respondents

The respondents' highest level of education ranged from primary school to Doctorate/PhD levels. As you can see in figure 3, it was found that 9.1% of the respondents have a high school education, 45.7% have college/university education, 29.1% have postgraduate certification and 16.1% have more than 23 years of education (PhD holders). Interestingly, none of the 2088 respondents has primary education as the highest level of education. This means that the overwhelming majority (91.9%) of the respondents have at least college/degree education, which is expected as the questionnaire was circulated through online platforms.

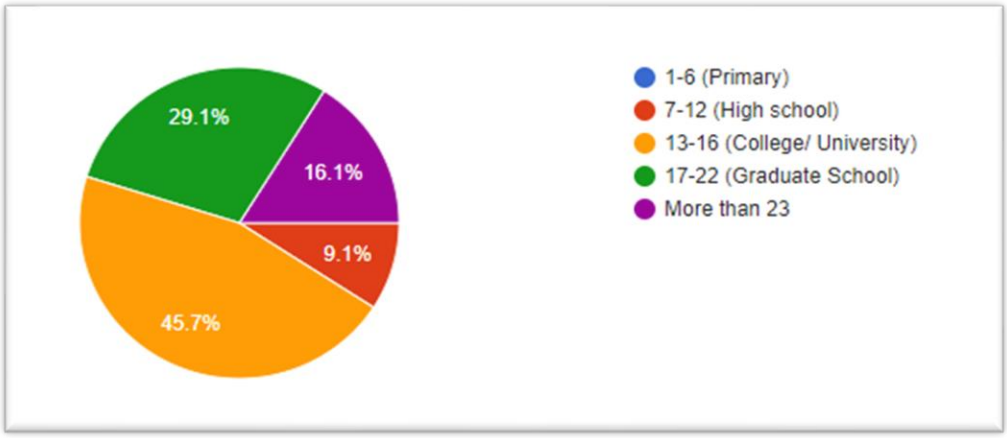

Figure 3. Respondents' level of education

Overall, Asian drivers, in general, seem polite as a big number of them follow traffic signs. As table 1 shows, more than 50% of the drivers follow traffic signs as stated by traffic regulations and traffic codes. We find that a big number of male and female drivers give signals (60.53%), follow road signs give way to other vehicles (21.45%), do not beep the horn (20.14%), do not practice tailgating (44.06%), do not jump the queue using emergency lanes (58.62%), and do not use high beam at night (16.09%). Even though table 1 provides general insights into the driving practices in Asia, which seem positive, it does not provide insights into the actual driving habits of drivers concerning some demographic factors that may influence the quality of driving. To have an in-depth understanding of driving in Asia, the data is further investigated in relation to four variables that are the age of drivers, the gender of drivers, the level of education of drivers, and the country of origin.

Table 1. Driving habits in Asia

Replies / Focus		Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never		Total
Giving signals before changing lanes	M	1176	696	304	216	288	216	272	208	48	0	1336
	F		480		88		72		64		48	752
Following road signs and speed limit	M	1264	784	224	136	224	120	248	192	128	104	1336
	F		480		88		104		56		24	752
Giving way to other vehicles	M	448	200	584	456	712	432	280	216	64	32	1336
	F		248		128		280		64		32	752
Beeping the horn	M	224	152	384	272	240	184	696	464	504	264	1336
	F		72		112		96		232		240	752
Practicing tailgating	M	120	88	328	280	360	312	360	136	920	520	1336
	F		32		48		48		224		400	752
Jumping the queue using the emergency lane	M	32	32	224	192	248	248	360	192	1224	672	1336
	F		0		32		0		168		552	752
Practicing lane hogging	M	128	80	248	192	456	328	320	208	936	528	1336
	F		48		56		128		112		408	752
Using high beam/fog light at night	M	336	240	368	280	416	336	568	312	400	168	1336
	F		96		88		80		256		232	752
Applying brakes for no obvious reason	M	56	32	224	192	272	248	440	240	1096	616	1336
	F		24		32		24		200		480	752
Giving way to pedestrians	M	56	32	256	192	240	216	416	240	1096	648	1336
	F		24		64		24		176		448	752

Investigating the level of politeness in relation to giving signals before changing lanes based on the country of origin, table 2 shows that Hong Konger drivers are the most polite in Asia as 6.1% out of 8.4%, which is equivalent to 70.11% of the drivers, always give signals before changing lanes. This is followed by Singaporean drivers as 6.3% out of 9.3%, which is equivalent to 67.74% of the drivers, always give signals before changing lanes. We find that Malaysian drivers are the third most polite drivers in Asia as 5.8% out of 9.1%, which is equivalent to 63.73%, always give signals before changing lanes. This is followed by Taiwanese (fourth place-60.22%), Chinese (fifth place-58.33%), Thai (sixth place-53.42%), and Pilipino drivers (seventh place-50.61%). After this comes Sri Lankan drivers (eight place-48.71%), Indonesian drivers (ninth place-47.12%), Pakistani drivers (tenth place 45.94%), Indian drivers (eleventh place-44.31%) and Nepali drivers (twelfth place-40.78%). Table four also shows that female drivers are more polite than male drivers in relation to giving signals before changing lanes. The table shows that Hong Konger, Singaporean, and Taiwanese female drivers are the most polite female drivers in Asia as they come in the first three places respectively. They are followed by the Chinese, Malaysian, and Sri Lankan female drivers as they come in the 4th, 5th, and 6th most polite female drivers in Asia pertaining to giving signals before changing lanes.

Table 2. Giving signals based on the country

Replies / Country		Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never		Total
China	M	4.9%	1.8%	1.2%	0.5%	1.2%	0.8%	0.7%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	4.0%
	F		3.1%		0.7%		0.4%		0.2%		0.0%	4.4%
Hong Kong	M	6.1%	1.7%	1.4%	0.6%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	2.9%
	F		4.4%		0.8%		0.5%		0.1%		0.0%	5.8%
India	M	3.9%	2.3%	1.2%	0.7%	1.7%	0.9%	1.4%	0.8%	0.6%	0.3%	5.0%
	F		1.6%		0.5%		0.8%		0.6%		0.3%	3.8%
Indonesia	M	4.1%	2.5%	0.9%	0.5%	1.9%	0.7%	1.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%	4.2%
	F		1.6%		0.4%		1.2%		0.9%		0.4%	4.5%
Malaysia	M	5.8%	3.1%	1.3%	0.8%	1.3%	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	4.7%
	F		2.7%		0.5%		0.7%		0.4%		0.1%	4.4%
Nepal	M	3.1%	1.4%	0.9%	0.4%	1.7%	1%	1.2%	0.7%	0.7%	0.4%	3.9%
	F		1.7%		0.5%		0.7%		0.5%		0.3%	3.7%
Pakistan	M	3.4%	1.5%	0.8%	0.5%	1.6%	0.9%	1.1%	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%	3.7%
	F		1.9%		0.3%		0.7%		0.5%		0.3%	3.7%
Philippines	M	4.1%	2.4%	1.1%	0.6%	1.5%	0.5%	1.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	3.8%
	F		1.7%		0.5%		1.0%		0.8%		0.3%	4.3%
Singapore	M	6.3%	2.7%	1.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	4.2%
	F		3.6%		0.8%		0.4%		0.2%		0.1%	5.1%
Sri Lanka	M	3.8%	1.7%	0.8%	0.5%	1.6%	0.7%	1.1%	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%	3.6%
	F		2.1%		0.3%		0.9%		0.7%		0.2%	4.2%
Taiwan	M	5.3%	1.7%	1.4%	0.5%	1.3%	0.8%	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	3.6%
	F		3.6%		0.9%		0.5%		0.2%		0.0%	5.2%
Thailand	M	3.9%	2.1%	0.9%	0.3%	1.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	3.2%
	F		1.8%		0.6%		0.9%		0.6%		0.2%	4.1%
Total		1144 (54.7%)		280 (13.4%)		352 (16.8%)		224 (10.7%)		88 (4.4%)		100%

As table 3 shows, the older the driver gets, the more he/she follows traffic signs and road regulations in Asia. Out of the 648 respondents who are 40 years old and above, 81.48% give signals before changing lanes at least around half of the time. However, it seems that 40 years and above female drivers are more polite than male drivers as all female drivers give signals at least more than half of the time. It seems that young drivers, in general, and young female drivers, in particular, do not pay a lot of attention to signaling before changing lanes, which is a face-threatening act. As table 3 shows, 56 out of the 288 females who are 18-29 years old and 32 out of the 312 females who are 30 to 39 years old have almost never given signals before changing lanes, which reflects reckless driving and imposing driving habits. This shows that young drivers, in general, and young female drivers, in particular, are more imposing than elder male and female drivers are. This phenomenon may require more investigation as this imposing and impolite driving habit (reckless) among young females may lead to more accidents.

Table 3. Effects of age on giving signals before changing lanes

Replies / Age group		Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never		Total
20-29	M	360	232	152	96	120	96	80	56	56	0	480
	F		128		56		24		24		56	288
30-39	M	352	144	32	32	112	64	144	120	32	0	360
	F		208		0		48		24		32	312
40-49	M	176	120	96	64	64	64	0	0	0	0	248
	F		56		32		0		0		0	88
50-59	M	184	120	0	0	32	32	0	0	0	0	152
	F		64		0		0		0		0	64
above 60	M	72	72	0	0	24	24	0	0	0	0	96
	F		0		0		0		0		0	0
Total		1144		280		352		224		88		2088

To take the investigation a step further, the level of education of drivers is also investigated in relation to age when it comes to giving signals before changing lanes. As table 4 shows, the level of education plays an important role in driving habits. It seems that the females who 'almost never' given signals before changing lanes (see table 3) have a high school, college, or university degree as their highest education level. The highly educated females (Master and PhD holders) in Asia are more polite than the less educated (high school, college, and Bachelor's degree holders). Table 4 also shows that education plays a significant part in following traffic signs, in general, and giving signals before changing lanes, in particular, among male drivers. It seems that almost all (97.4%) male drivers who have high degrees give signals before changing lanes.

Table 4. Effects of education on giving signals before changing lanes

Replies / Level of education		Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never		Total
7-12 (High school)	M	24	24	0	0	192	160	128	128	0	0	312
	F		0		0		32		0		0	32
13-16 (College/ University)	M	152	120	272	216	184	80	32	24	0	0	440
	F		32		56		104		8		0	200
Graduate School	M	480	256	32	0	64	16	0	0	24	0	272
	F		224		32		48		0		24	328
23+ years of education	M	376	304	32	0	64	8	0	0	32	0	312
	F		72		32		56		0		32	192
Total		1032		336		504		160		56		2088

To double-check the findings above, the following of road signs and the speed limit are also investigated as shown in table 5. Table 5 shows that Asian drivers are a bit less polite in relation to the following of traffic signs and speed limits than in giving signals before changing lanes. It is apparent that Malaysian drivers are the most polite in Asia as 3.5% out of 8.1%, which is equivalent to 46.91% of drivers, almost always follow traffic signs and speed limits. This is followed by Hong Konger drivers, who come in the second most polite place in Asia, as 3.69% out of 8.7%, which is equivalent to 42.40% of the drivers, almost always follow traffic signs and speed limit. The third most polite drivers in Asia in relation to following traffic signs and speed limit are the Singaporean drivers as 3.8% out of 9.3%, which is equivalent

to 40.86%, almost always follow traffic signs and speed limit. After that comes the Taiwanese (fourth place-36.36%), Chinese (fifth place-32.95%), Thai (sixth place-32.46%), Filipino (seventh place-30.86%), Sri Lankan (eighth place-30.26%), Indonesian (ninth place-28.50%), Indian (tenth place-27.27%), Pakistani (eleventh place-27.02%) and Nepali (twelfth place-13.15%) drivers. Concerning gender, table 5 shows that Chinese, Hong Konger, Nepali, Pakistani, Singaporean, Sri Lankan, and Taiwanese female drivers are more polite than their male counterparts in relation to following traffic signs and speed limits. However, it is noticed that Indian, Indonesian, Malaysian, Pilipino, and Thai male drivers are more polite than female drivers in these countries concerning following traffic signs and speed limits.

Table 5: Following signs and speed limit based on the country

Replies / Country		Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never		Total
China	M	2.90%	1.10%	2.30%	0.90%	1.50%	1.00%	0.90%	0.70%	0.36%	0.36%	4.00%
	F		1.80%		1.40%		0.50%		0.20%		0.00%	4.40%
Hong Kong	M	3.69%	1.00%	2.70%	1.10%	1.00%	0.30%	0.40%	0.25%	0.09%	0.09%	2.90%
	F		2.69%		1.60%		0.70%		0.15%		0.00%	5.80%
India	M	2.40%	1.40%	2.30%	1.30%	2.10%	1.10%	1.90%	1.10%	0.54%	0.27%	5.00%
	F		1.00%		1.00%		1.00%		0.80%		0.27%	3.80%
Indonesia	M	2.48%	1.50%	1.70%	0.90%	2.40%	0.90%	1.80%	0.50%	0.45%	0.09%	4.20%
	F		0.98%		0.80%		1.00%		1.30%		0.36%	4.50%
Malaysia	M	3.50%	1.90%	2.50%	1.50%	1.60%	0.70%	0.85%	0.28%	0.09%	0.00%	4.70%
	F		1.60%		1.00%		0.90%		0.57%		0.09%	4.40%
Nepal	M	1.00%	0.87%	1.70%	0.70%	2.10%	1.20%	1.70%	1.00%	0.63%	0.36%	3.90%
	F		1.70%		1.00%		1.00%		0.70%		0.27%	3.70%
Pakistan	M	2%	0.90%	1.50%	0.90%	2.00%	1.10%	1.50%	0.80%	0.45%	0.18%	3.70%
	F		1.10%		0.60%		0.90%		0.70%		0.27%	3.70%
Philippines	M	2.50%	1.50%	2.10%	1.10%	1.90%	0.6%	1.50%	0.40%	0.27%	0.00%	3.80%
	F		1.00%		1.00%		1.30%		1.10%		0.27%	4.30%
Singapore	M	3.80%	1.60%	2.90%	1.30%	1.00%	0.60%	0.71%	0.42%	0.18%	0.09%	4.20%
	F		2.20%		1.60%		0.40%		0.29%		0.09%	5.10%
Sri Lanka	M	2.30%	1.00%	1.50%	0.90%	2.00%	0.90%	1.50%	0.50%	0.45%	0.27%	3.60%
	F		1.30%		0.60%		1.10%		1.00%		0.18%	4.20%
Taiwan	M	3.20%	1.00%	2.70%	0.90%	1.60%	1.00%	0.85%	0.56%	0.18%	0.18%	3.60%
	F		2.20%		1.70%		0.60%		0.29%		0.00%	5.20%
Thailand	M	2.37%	1.40%	1.70%	1%	1.80%	0.6%	1.10%	0.28%	0.27%	0.09%	3.20%
	F		0.97%		0.70%		1.20%		0.82%		0.18%	4.10%
Total		692 (33.1%)		542 (25.9%)		452 (21.7%)		316 (15.2%)		86 (4.1%)		100%

As table 6 shows, elderly drivers in Asia are more polite than young drivers in relation to following road signs and speed limits. It is obvious that drivers who are elder than 40 years old follow the speed limit as they also follow traffic signs. Young drivers who are below 39 years old are more aggressive as they exceed the speed limit and do not follow road signs. Table 5 also shows that young male drivers, especially the age group that belongs to the 30 to 39 years old, are more aggressive than female young drivers in Asia.

Table 6. Effects of age on following road signs and speed limit

Replies / Age group		Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never		Total
20-29	M	168	24	128	96	240	184	168	144	64	32	480
	F		144		32		56		24		32	288
30-39	M	168	48	192	128	120	64	136	88	32	32	360
	F		120		64		56		48		0	288
40-49	M	160	96	96	96	80	56	24	0	0	0	248
	F		64		0		24		24		0	112
50-59	M	136	80	64	40	16	0	0	0	0	0	152
	F		56		24		16		0		0	64
above 60	M	0	0	48	48	48	48	0	0	0	0	96
	F		0		0		0		0		0	0
Total			632		528		504		328		96	2088

In relation to the effects of level of education on following the signs and the speed limit, table 7 shows that male drivers with high degrees mainly follow road signs and speed limits.

Table 7. Effects of education on following road signs and speed limit

Replies / Age group		Almost always		More than half of the times		Around half of the times		Less than half of the times		Almost never		Total
7-12 (High school)	M	32	0	24	24	128	128	128	128	32	32	312
	F		32		0		0		0		0	32
13-16 (College/ University)	M	150	88	170	138	194	126	104	66	22	22	440
	F		62		32		68		38		0	200
Postgraduate certification	M	324	76	164	132	72	32	40	32	0	0	272
	F		248		32		40		8		0	328
23+ years of education	M	186	124	184	120	58	38	44	30	32	0	312
	F		62		64		20		14		32	192
Total			692		542		452		316		86	2088

Female drivers with high degrees, on the other hand, do follow road signs and speed limits, but we also have quite a high number of them who ignore these important polite nonverbal communication signals, which reflects a relatively aggressive behavior and dangerous driving habits. Interestingly, female drivers with high school certificates and bachelor's degrees are more polite than male drivers who belong to the same category as their tendency to follow road signs and the speed limit is higher. Overall, highly educated Asian male and female drivers follow road signs and speed limits more than the less educated male and female drivers, which reflects the importance of education on following traffic signs and speed limits, on the one hand, and politic driving behavior, on the other hand, in Asia.

5. Discussion

Politeness, as in Brown and Levinson (1987), is conceptualized around the efforts that speakers carry to avoid the effects of face-threatening acts on the speaker and the hearer. In order to do so, speakers may select among four strategies to save speakers and hearers positive and negative face. The four strategies are namely: the bold on record, positive, negative, and off record politeness strategies. These four strategies that are outlined by Brown and Levinson

(1987) are mainly applied on verbal and written communicative encounters to identify the use of polite and/or impolite language in given encounters. This paper takes the investigation of politeness with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory to a new level. This study investigates politeness as a nonverbal behavior among Asian drivers in relation to the country of origin, age, education, and gender.

In driving, drivers have to communicate to other street users almost in the same way as in conventional communicative encounters, except that the communication is entirely carried out using nonverbal communicative strategies and techniques. These strategies and techniques are conventional and highly established in a formal manner. The knowledge of these strategies and traffic communicative conventions among drivers is formally tested as a prerequisite to obtaining a driving license. The breach of these conventions is formally punished by traffic authorities in the form of traffic fines, confiscating the driving license, and/or even imprisonment depending on the seriousness of the traffic breach. Unlike the conventions of speech and written communication, these traffic conventions are conventional and universal, which downplays the critics of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory.

In this study, the following of traffic conventions is considered a polite behavior where the breach of or the unfollowing of traffic conventions is formally named as a threatening act, impoliteness, and impolitic behavior. For example, as per the traffic rules and regulations, drivers need to give signals (blinkers) before changing lanes. This practice intends to inform (communicate to) drivers on the other lane that the driver of the signaling vehicle intends to move to their lane, which is generally considered a threatening act. This act is considered a threatening act as the driver of the signaling vehicle invades the space of the other vehicle. In this scenario (the changing of road lanes), the driver of the vehicle who intends to change lanes has two options to choose from. The driver may signal (use blinkers) before changing lanes, which is negative politeness as the driver tries to emphasize avoidance of imposition on the other driver. The giving of signals before changing lanes is also considered negative politeness as the signaling driver attempts to avoid imposition, which reduces the threatening act. On the other hand, if the driver who intends to change lane does not give a signal before changing the lane, he/she does not attempt to minimize the threating act to other drivers. It is a shocking move and threatening act as the driver of the changing lanes vehicle will shock the other drivers and possibly push them to make mistakes or accidents.

The above is also applicable to the following of road signals and speed limits. The act of following road signs and speed limits intends to facilitate the common use of roads by all users such as drivers and pedestrians. The following of this act attempts to improve road traffic safety and reduce the number of casualties. As such, following road signs and speed limits, in this study, is considered negative politeness as drivers who commit to this act are concerned with proceeding towards a goal in the smoothest way and with sensitivity to other road users. On the other hand, the no following of road signs and the speed limit is considered a threatening act as the driver does not show upkeep to other road users as he/she foregrounds one's interests/wants and does not show any interest to the other users' wants or interests. This reflects impolitic behavior and a lack of politeness (Watts, 2003).

The results and the findings, in this study, show that Asian drivers are polite, in general, as a big number of them use negative politeness while driving. Asian drivers, in general terms, use negative politeness as they use deference, hedges, be indirect, and minimize imposition while driving. This can be reflected in their use of signals before changing lanes (deference, hedges, and being indirect) and following road signs and speed limits (minimize imposition, reduce the redressing of threatening acts). However, it is noticed that there are factors that play a crucial role in this behavior. These factors relate to the country of origin, gender, age, and level of education of these drivers. Some factors relate to the driving rules and regulations. In regards to giving signals before changing lanes, it is noticed that Hong Konger drivers are the most polite in Asia as 70.11% of the drivers in Hong Kong give signals before changing lanes. However, in relation to following traffic signals and speed limits, it is noticed that Malaysian drivers are the most polite in Asia as 46.91% follow traffic signs and speed limits. Concerning giving signals before changing lanes, data shows that after Hong Konger drivers, who come in the first place as the most polite drivers in Asia, Singaporean, Malaysian, Taiwanese, Chinese, Thai, Filipino, Sri Lankan, Indonesian, Pakistani, Indian, and Nepali drivers are placed in second to the twelfth positions respectively. In relation to following traffic signs and speed limit, after Malaysian, who came in the first place as the most polite drivers in Asia, Hong Konger, Singaporean, Taiwanese, Chinese, Thai, Filipino, Sri Lankan, Indonesian, Indian, Pakistani, and Nepali drivers come in the second to the twelfth positions of the most polite drivers in Asia respectively.

In relation to the effects of gender on driving habits in Asia, results show that while Malaysian male drivers are more polite than Malaysian female drivers with giving signals before changing lanes, Malaysian female drivers and more polite than Malaysian male drivers in relation to following traffic signs and speed limit. It is also noticed that Chinese female drivers are more polite than Chinese male drivers concerning giving signals before changing lanes, while Chinese male drivers are more polite than Chinese female drivers with following signs and speed limits. Singaporean male drivers are more polite in giving signals before changing lanes, but Singaporean female drivers are more polite in

relation to following traffic signs and speed limits. Hong Konger female drivers are more polite in following traffic signs and speed limits than Hong Konger Male drivers, but Hong Konger male drivers are more polite than Hong Konger female drivers in relation to giving signals before changing lanes. It is also noticed that Indonesian, Thai, Filipino, Pakistani, and Nepali male drivers are more polite than their female counterparts concerning giving signals before changing lanes and following traffic signs and speed limits. However, Taiwanese female drivers and more polite than Taiwanese male drivers in relation to following traffic signs and speed limits, but Taiwanese male drivers are more polite with giving signals before changing lanes than Taiwanese female drivers. Remarkably, Hong Konger female drivers are the most polite in Asia with giving signals before changing lanes and following traffic signs and speed limits. Singaporeans and Malaysian female drivers follow Hong Konger female drivers as the most polite in Asia as they come in the second and third place respectively.

Concerning the effects of age and level of education on driving habits in Asia, results show that drivers who are 40 years and above are more polite than young drivers (below 39 years old). It is also shown that 40 years old and above female drivers are more polite than 40 years old and above male drivers. With young drivers, it is obvious that female drivers, in general, are more polite than male drivers as they follow traffic signs, speed limits and give signals before changing lanes. The only exception to the above is the female drivers who belong to the 20 to 39 years old age group with giving signals before changing lanes. It is noticed that Asian male drivers who belong to the 20 to 29 years old and 30 to 39 years old are more polite than female drivers who belong to the same age groups as they give more signals when changing lanes. Concerning the level of education, results show that the higher degree the driver has the more he/she follows driving signs, speed limit and give signals before changing lanes. The only exception to this is the highly educated female drivers as we have 32 (16.6%) highly educated female drivers with PhD degrees who almost never gave signals before changing lanes and do not follow traffic signs and speed limits. This leads to concluding that educated male drivers in Asia are more polite than educated female drivers as they are more delicate in giving signals and following traffic signs and speed limits.

6. Conclusion

This study examined driving habits in Asia as a nonverbal politeness behavior in relation to four variables that are the country of origin, age, gender, and level of education. The study found that while Chinese, Hong Konger, Nepali, Pakistani, Singaporean, Sri Lankan, and Taiwanese female drivers are more polite than their male counterparts with following traffic signs and speed limit, Malaysian, Indonesian, Thai, Indian, and Filipino male drivers are more polite. The study also found Hong Konger, Singaporean, and Taiwanese female drivers are the most polite female drivers in Asia as they come in the first three places respectively. They are followed by the Chinese, Malaysian, and Sri Lankan female drivers as they come in the 4th, 5th, and 6th most polite female drivers in Asia in relation to giving signals before changing lanes. Concerning age, the study confirms that the elder the drivers (male and female) get, the more polite they become. With the level of education, the study revealed that education has positive effects on driving habits as the higher degree the driver has, the more polite he/she gets. The study showed that highly educated male drivers are more polite than highly educated female drivers. This study was carried out on driving habits in Asia (South East Asia, Far East Asia, and Central Asia). The Middle East was not targeted as part of the data collection.

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