

## Face and politeness phenomena in the changing China

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini, secara umum, ditujukan untuk mengetahui persepsi masyarakat Cina moderen terhadap konsep tradisional Confucianism tentang wajah (lian atau mianzi). Secara khusus, penelitian ini mengungkap bagaimana persepsi tersebut tercermin dalam pola komunikasi antarpersonal mereka. 100 orang Shanghai terlibat dalam penelitian ini, 50 orang diambil dari daerah perkotaan dan 50 orang dari pedesaan. Mereka merepresentasikan berbagai latar belakang sosial yang berbeda, meliputi usia, jenis kelamin, tempat tinggal, dan pekerjaan. Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, kemudian dianalisis dengan menggunakan kerangka ajaran Confucianism tentang sifat-sifat yang mendasari konsep wajah. Sifat-sifat itu meliputi relasional, komunal/sosial, hirarkis, dan moral.

Analisis data menunjukkan bahwa dalam keseluruhan interaksi berbahasanya, para responden sangat memperhatikan nilai-nilai yang terkandung dalam konsep wajah seperti terkandung dalam Confucianism. Diketahui bahwa dari keempat sifat wajah itu, integritas moral de menjadi acuan paling penting untuk menilai apakah seseorang itu masih memiliki wajah atau justru sebaliknya. Hilangnya moralitas berarti hilangnya sifat-sifat manusiawi pada seseorang.

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This study aims to investigate the Chinese perceptions about the traditional Confucius concepts mianzi/lian ?face? in the context of the world that is changing. In particular, the study focuses on how such perceptions are reflected in their interpersonal communication. Data was collected through direct semi-structured interviews with the respondents, guided by a set of questions regarding the situations they might hypothetically find themselves. Shanghai was chosen as the site for this study because, among other places in China, it has undergone considerable changes. 100 Shanghainese were involved in the study; 50 were city dwellers and 50 villagers, representing their various social backgrounds. The data were analysed by using the Chinese cultural notions underlying the concepts of face: relational, communal, hierarchical, and moral. Analyses show that the respondents often avoid conflicts with their interlocutors, even if they were put in very unfortunate circumstances. These face-favouring acts are indicative of their closed observance of the norms and hence the concepts of face, by which they could gain, maintain, and enhance their own face. In return, they would be regarded as members of the society with polite behaviours and with other good moral characters.

The study concludes that although China is changing, the conceptions and practices of the traditional concepts mianzi/lian "face" among Chinese have remained constant. This is because into these concepts are attached the most basic concepts of humanity; the absence of the concepts of face in the mind of human beings can mean the loss of humanity as a whole.