



A COLD WAR BETWEEN THE GENDERS: INVESTIGATING ATTITUDES OF JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Researchers in Japan now recognize that shyness and hesitation phenomenon is a sociolinguistic pandemic, especially where Japanese males and females avoid conversations, interactions, and relationships. This trend has led to a demographic crisis in which fewer Japanese marry and have children. This study will report on the results of a gender attitude survey (and its development) and the results of a questionnaire. The survey and questionnaire were implemented in 2016. Research questions focused on positive and negatives viewpoints that participants had of the opposite sex. Results showed that both genders *felt* that it was easy to relate to and understand the opposite sex; likewise, they felt that they showed interest in having discussions with the opposite sex. However, negative attitudes included issues relating to having to give long and informative replies, difficulty in understanding and making points or achieving goals with the opposite sex. Student replies on a questionnaire further indicated that a majority of students viewed themselves as open to experience. All of the comments, however, from both genders, showed that during their gendered interactions that the participants were tense and uneasy. The high percentage of comments from females, 78 percent, indicated that most were antisocial as they found it difficult to interact with males. A gender disparity was found in the percentage of comments from males who thought that the opposite sex understood and appreciated what they had to say and those from females: 75 percent and 46 percent respectively. In short, student morale in both genders is timid, insecure and interactions are often unsatisfying and demoralizing.

Keywords: Gendered interactions, Attitudes, Japanese youth, Hesitation phenomenon, Shyness.

Introduction

One of the first legends of Japan involve one of the gods of Japan Amaterasu who was frightened of her drunken brother, and shut herself in a cave, isolating herself from the rest of the world. This legend has particular meaning with many Japanese also isolating themselves from the rest of the world due to shyness. While most people do not consider *shyness* as an important issue, in Asia (particularly Japan) it is beginning to have serious consequences for society. One survey showed that 34% of Japanese men are afraid of female colleagues: Men's fear was based on the perception that women have a tendency to gossip and conspire against others.² This perception has fueled an antipathy that is now so widespread that 40% of males reported having had no romantic contact or relationships with women. In short, both genders are finding it difficult and stressful to initiate discussions with the opposite sex; furthermore, they see simple discourse as pragmatically challenging. When the genders do communicate with each other, they often fail to fluently express their ideas effectively, resulting in perceived or actual negative outcomes. These experiences then reinforce a poor self-esteem and power a reluctance to interact further

with the opposite sex, and so with more isolation, the result is that negative stereotypes remain unchallenged. Some have even described this phenomenon as a “gender war:” It has been a topic that has been discussed in the popular media, both in Japan and abroad.¹ Moreover, there are many Japanese called *hikikomori*, who have completely shut themselves off from their surroundings and society. This hesitation phenomenon is characterized as social anxiety that is marked by emotional discomfort, fear, and apprehension. Individuals also unduly worry about social situations, interactions with others, or being harshly evaluated or scrutinized by others.

This study will report on the development and the results of a gender attitude survey along with data collected from of a questionnaire. The aim is to better understand how the factors of communicative ability, personality traits and morale influence students’ attitudes towards the opposite sex. A second aim is to make specific recommendations in facilitating gendered interactions that are less threatening to Japanese youth.

Review of Literature

Gender Shyness

Definitions

According to Leary (1986) shyness has been defined in over a dozen ways, so much so that one of the issues in researching the concept of shyness is that the construct is vague and subjective. Pilkonis (1977) described shyness as the avoidance of social interaction due to timidity or the withdrawal from nature whereas Leary (1986) defined shyness as an “affective-behavioral syndrome characterized by social anxiety and interpersonal inhibition that results from the prospect or presence of interpersonal evaluation” (pp. 30). Shyness, which is a label for a broad construct of social withdrawal, is associated with a wide range of negative adjustment outcomes in childhood and adolescence (Rubin, Coplan & Bowker, 2009). According to Bohlin, Hagekull, & Andersson (2005), more empirical evidence links shyness with internalizing problems such as loneliness, anxiety, depressive symptoms, peer-relationships difficulties (e.g., peer rejection, victimization) and other problems at school (e.g., negative teacher-child relationships, poorer academic achievement).

Characteristics of shyness

Lewin et. al (1996) examined pauses and verbal dysfluencies as an indication of speaking anxiety. The authors investigated whether a slower rate of speech or longer period of silence were more prevalent in high-speech subjects than in their low-anxiety counterparts. In examining the categories of pauses, pause-length, verbal errors (corrections, distortions, fragments, repetitions) and delaying verbalizations, Lewin found that the measures of state anxiety immediately before and during the speech task did not correlate with dysfluencies or pauses.

Shyness and social anxiety is not a new concept; reported that shyness and social anxiety are relatively common in Japanese culture. In fact, the avoidant personality disorder is reported to be the most common Axis II disorder in Japan (Kondo, 1997). Zimbardo (1977), however, contends that around 10% of individuals in Japan can be characterized as being shy in all situations. In comparison, 48.7% of the people in the United States consider themselves shy (Henderson and Zimbardo, 1999), and the most prevalent disorder is the Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder (Grant et al., 2004).

Aizawa and Whatley (2006) found that in some cases, cultural temperaments determine shyness or that culture is a mediator for shyness. Their conclusion is that social changes may be influencing a shift in cultural dimensions and as a result social behavior. Social anxiety can be marked by intense negative emotional reactions; these, in turn, cause the individual to avoid and to escape from interactions with significant others. There may also be inappropriate coping strategies that the individual might rely on;

nonetheless, severe social anxiety is a debilitating condition that interferes with one's ability to enjoy a healthy social life.

Another issue has been that over the past decade, women have become far more independent and outspoken in most countries throughout the world. While there has been tremendous research on the issue of power and on which gender tends to dominate discourse, a second and more important issue, as Crawford and Chaffin (1986) note, relates to communication anxiety for both genders. Understanding which gender is more uncomfortable with the interaction, (even if he or she is dominating the discourse) and how this leads to more dysfluency is also an issue to study.

Rationale for Study

One of the issues in shyness studies is to specifically examine how participants view their own conversational competency in a series of gendered interactions.

Research aims

1. On which variables did Japanese participants show a positive outlook about the opposite sex?
2. On which variables did Japanese participants show a negative outlook about the opposite sex?

Survey Development

Item generation

Three previous surveys were used to identify factors and variables: the Five Factor Model (FFM)³, the Profile of Social Moods 2 (POMs) Heuchert, McNair, (2015), and a survey based on PM Leadership Misumi, (1985) that was adapted for English language teaching Long and Inoue, (2004). For the first construct of personality traits, five variables were considered: First, openness to experience, which involved the trait of curiosity, in which asked how eager or interested students were in talking with the opposite sex. Second, the variable conscientiousness took into account the students' ability to listen, share ideas, give equal time when talking, and to conclude the discussion in a pleasant manner. For the third variable, extraversion, which involves the traits of sociability, acceptance, and candidness, questions were devised concerning how talkative participants were, how they felt when interacting with the opposite sex, and how easily it was to express emotions and relate to each other.

The fourth variable was that of agreeableness, which was defined as the tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than being suspicious or antagonistic towards others. High agreeableness is often seen as naïve or submissive whereas low agreeableness is associated with competitive or challenging people, which might be viewed as untrustworthy. This variable had two traits, likeability and friendliness with questions that focused on how the opposite sex liked the participant, and how easy it was to get along with them.

The last variable was that of neuroticism, which was the tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, or depression. Neuroticism is associated with one's degree of emotional stability and impulse control. A high need for stability will be seen in a stable and calm personality, but this can be interpreted as being uninspiring or unconcerned. This variable has two traits: tension and social discomfort, which takes into account any uncomfortable feelings the participants might have and if there were long pauses and silence when interacting with them.

The second construct, communicative competence, involves the variables of strategic competency, (which incorporates the traits of initiation, facilitation), pragmatism (etiquette), and communicative ability (taking into account fluency, nonverbal behavior, and comprehension).

The third construct is that of morale, which was based on Misumi's (1985) survey on PM theory. It focused on performative behavior and motivational behavior and its overall impact on morale. For this survey, there are two variables, confidence, which takes into consideration L2 usage, and inhibition while

the variable of satisfaction takes into consideration goal achievement and motivation, see table 1 for schematic and see Appendix A, for the survey.

Table 1. Schematic of gendered survey

Five-Factor Model	Openness to experience, Curiosity
	Conscientiousness
	Extraversion
	Agreeableness
	Neuroticism
Communicative competency	Strategic competency
	Pragmatism
	Communicative ability
Morale	Confidence
	Satisfaction

Piloting

To better understand if male and female attitudes are fixed, a longitudinal study was conducted on how gendered interactions that took place over 18 weeks (Long, 2017). There were three groups of male participants who meet with two female students who had a similar level of proficiency. The males met with one female each week; the female participant was then switched for the following week along with different conversation topics. Also during the first session, the 12 students filled out the pre-discussion survey and then after the last session, they filled out the post-discussion survey. The descriptive statistics are shown below for the pre-survey and post-survey results.

Table 2. Descriptive results for pre- and post-surveys of gendered interactions

Variables	Pre-survey		Post-Survey	
	Average	# of No Opinions	Average	# of No Opinions
1. Follow up talks	1.75	1	1.66	1
2. Tries not to interrupt	1.69	0	1.41	0
3. Shares ideas	1.92	0	1.58	0
4. Some tension in discussions	1.81	2	2.41	1
5. Can conclude Discussions	1.91	1	1.83	0
6. Thinks partner likes Him/her	2.22	4	2.41	2
7. Feels some rejection	2.75	5	3.00	1
8. Tries hard to ask questions	2.15	0	2.41	1
9. Easy to relate to	2.69	0	2.25	0

10. You were talkative	2.23	1	2.33	1
11. You were friendly	2.15	0	2.33	2
12. You had a good time	1.90	2	1.83	1
13. You were not shy	2.53	0	2.58	0
14. Equal time in talking	2.00	0	2.16	2
15. You felt uneasy	2.27	2	2.75	1
16. There were long pauses	2.60	3	3.00	2
17. Easy to start discussion	2.18	2	2.25	1
18. It was difficult to Express yourself	2.27	2	2.75	2
19. You paid attention	1.92	0	1.66	0
20. You shared opinions	2.30	0	2.50	1
21. You smiled and Were attentive	2.00	1	1.81	1
22. Easy to understand Participant	2.84	0	2.33	0
23. You were confident	2.75	1	2.58	0
24. It was difficult in finding common interests	2.10	3	3.00	2
25. You achieved your goals	2.54	2	2.16	1
26. You showed some Interests	1.75	1	2.25	2
27. How many women/ men do you talk to for 10 minutes or more each day?	2.46		3.66	
28. How many Meaningful Relationships have You had with Women / men	4.38		5.00	
30. How interested are You in talking with Women / men?	7.23		7.58	

*Note: General answers 1 = Agree a lot, 4 = Disagree a lot

**#29 10+ = a lot, 1 = Not at all

Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was then used to evaluate whether this three-factor model adequately fit the data. The rotation was Promax; the chi-square statistic is 451.2 on 250 degrees of freedom, see table 3 for

additional data and table 4 for correlations. In the final three-factor solution, factor 1 included 5 items that related to communicative competency, whereas factor two had 7 items that were related to personality traits. The third factor, which was likewise labeled as morale, had 3 items. Accordingly, factor one was labeled as communitive competency, factor 2 as personality traits, and factor 3 as morale.

Table 3. Factor Analysis Data

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
SS. Loadings	2.778	2.702	2.221
Proportion Var.	0.107	0.104	0.085
Cumulative Var.	0.107	0.211	0.296

Table 4. Correlations

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	1.00	0.387	-0.562
Factor 2	0.387	1.00	-0.67
Factor 3	-0.562	-0.67	1.00

Table 5. Three-factor analysis of gendered attitudes

Variables	Factor 1 Communicative Competency	Factor 2 Personality Traits	Factor 3 Morale
Achieved goals	0.827		
Confidence	0.625		
Long replies	0.585		
Show interest	0.528		
Nonverbal	0.464		
Shares ideas	0.473		
Talkative		0.683	
Friendly		0.672	
Easy to start		0.589	
Relates to		0.525	
Not shy		0.506	
Understand		0.404	
Tension			0.714
Rejection			0.677
Uneasy			0.601

Results

The results, (concerning the first research question) see table 6, indicate that both genders felt it was easy to relate and understand the opposite sex, as seen in items 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 14, but also students felt uneasy about interacting, as seen in items 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10. Students were split in regard to how easy it was to start a conversation with the opposite sex, as seen in items 9, and how they achieved their goals with them (item 14). As for the second research questions, students also felt that it was difficult to understand the opposite sex, (#12); in particular, negative attitudes included issues relating to having to give long and informative replies, difficulty in understanding and making points or achieving goals with the opposite sex. A majority of these Japanese participants does report not seeing themselves particularly extroverted, see table 7, but while some state that they feel some tension with interacting with the opposite sex, a majority do report feeling uneasy. On the other hand, 56 participants reported being very curious about the opposite sex. In regard to the factor of communicative ability, most see themselves as exerting efforts in relating with others, but find it difficult to be fluent and to understand the opposite sex. For the final factor of morale, students reported that they felt were not shy, yet they also felt a lack of confidence in expressing their ideas. Thus, their satisfaction level was almost divided.

Table 6. Survey Results

Question	Agree A lot	Agree	Disagree	Disagree a Lot	No Opinion
1. You try to share your ideas without hesitation with the opposite sex.	10	33	18	1	2
2. You feel some degree of tension in talking with the opposite sex.	6	34	20	2	2
3. You often feel some rejection by the opposite sex.	1	8	40	8	7
4. It is easy to relate to and understand the opposite sex.	1	21	31	4	6
5. You are talkative with the opposite sex.	6	16	32	5	4
6. You are often friendly with the opposite sex.	2	33	17	5	7
7. You are not shy in talking with the opposite sex.	7	35	16	5	1
8. You feel uneasy in talking with the opposite sex.	1	13	41	8	1
9. It is easy to start a conversation with the opposite sex.	3	24	26	5	7
10. You always like giving long and Informative replies and sharing opinions when talking to the opposite sex.	1	7	33	8	15
11. You try to smile, be attentive, making Occasional eye contact, and gestures, when talking with the opposite sex.	11	32	11	1	8
12. You find it easier to understand the opposite sex.	0	5	38	11	10
13. You are confident about using English with a woman / man.	0	5	24	32	3

14. You feel that you can always make your Point and achieve your foals when talking with the opposite sex.	6	20	25	6	7
15. When talking with the opposite sex, you show some degree of interest.	14	42	4	1	0

Table 7. Interactions with the Opposite Sex

Item	Scale	Frequency
16. How many women / men do you talk to, for ten minutes or more, each day?	10+	1
	9	0
	8	0
	7	0
	6	3
	5	3
	4	0
	3	4
	2	12
	1	9
	0	32
Except for your family and relatives, how many meaningful relationships have you had with women / men?	10+	4
	9	0
	8	1
	7	0
	6	0
	5	12
	4	4
	3	14
	2	9
	1	9
0	11	
How interested are you in talking with women / men?	10+	4
	9	2
	8	7
	7	9
	6	5
	5	13
	4	9
	3	5
	2	4
	1	3
0	3	

Note: Directions were as follows for this section of the survey. "If you are a male, the question refers to 'women' that you might meet or talk to. If you are a female, then question then concerns 'men.'"

Table 7. Factor / Variable breakdown

Factors	Variables	Agree Ave.	Disagree Ave.
1. Personality Traits			
Extraversion	It is easy to start a Conversation with Opposite sex	27	31
	You often feel some Rejection by the opposite sex	9	48
	You are talkative with The opposite sex	22	37
	It is easy to relate to And understand the opposite sex	22	35
	You are friendly with The opposite sex	22	37
Neuroticism	You feel some tension when Talking with the opposite Sex	40	22
	You feel uneasy in talking With the opposite sex	14	49
Curiosity	When talking with the opposite sex, you show some degree of interest	56	5
2. Communicative Ability			
Ability (nonverbal ability)	You try to smile and be attentive	43	12
Fluency	You always like giving long and Informative replies and sharing Opinions	8	41
Comprehension	You will find it easier to Understand the opposite sex	5	49
3. Morale			

Confidence (L2 usage)	You are confident about using English with a woman / man	5	56
Inhibition	You are not shy in talking with The opposite sex	42	21
Satisfaction	You feel that you can always make Your point and achieve your goals When talking with the opposite sex	26	31

Participants' replies on a questionnaire further indicated that a majority of students viewed themselves as open to experience. All of the comments, however, from both genders, showed that during their gendered interactions that the participants were tense and uneasy. The high percentage of comments from females, 78 percent, indicated that most were antisocial as they found it difficult to interact with males. A gender disparity was found in the percentage of comments from males who thought that the opposite sex understood and appreciated what they had to say and those from females: 75 percent and 46 percent respectively.

Questionnaire Data Reduction

As for issue involving interacting with the opposite sex (#1, #2 and #4), the percentage of comments, from males, who are *antisocial* and find it difficult interact with females was 83%. There were still no males who saw themselves as being social but found it easy to interact with females. Females, on the other hand, who deemed themselves as being antisocial was 78%. Despite these rather high averages, the percentage of comments from males who found conversations with the opposite sex satisfying was 67 whereas for comments from females who found conversations with the opposite sex satisfying the percentage was 43%.

For the issues involving personality and outcomes (#3, #5, and #6), the percentage of comments from males who rated their personality as sociable was 67%; this differed for comments from males who rated their personality as shy (17%).

On the other hand, the percentage of comments from females who rated their *personality* as sociable was high (91%) and as for comments from females who rated their personality as shy, the percentage was 41%. The gender divide was also more evident when it came to the question of how the opposite sex understands and appreciated what you had to say: For men, it was 75% while for women it was 46%.

Likewise, concerning the tension felt while talking to the opposite sex, 100% of males felt so, while none of the females reported any *uneasiness*.

Questionnaire Synthesis

Thus, in regard to the five factors of personality traits, the following synthesis can be presented. In regard to being open to experience, the majority of students viewed themselves as open to experience, as indicated by the data that percentage of comments from males who rated their personality as sociable (67%) which differed from females (91%). This shows that females considered themselves to be more sociable, confirming the general view that females are much better talkers than males. Around 30 % of males could not view themselves as open to experience, which also confirmed the real-life situation in which 3 out of 10 males are not open to interaction.

In regard to conscientiousness, there were no males who described themselves as social and found it easy to interact with females while for females; 78% reported it was difficult to interact with males, and they saw themselves as being antisocial.

Thus, the data suggests that males found themselves in the hopeless situation where they have serious difficulty communicating with females. Still more surprising is the fact that the majority of females were also antisocial having difficulty interacting with the opposite sex.

With the variable of extraversion, the percentage of males who reported being extraverted was 67% compared to females (17%) indicating that from both genders' point of view was based on their ideal image. The data for *agreeableness*, also indicated a gender divide, with males thinking that females appreciated what they had to say (75%) while for females, the percentage was only 46%. This indicates that females could not express themselves satisfactorily, and likewise felt that their counterparts did not appreciate what they had to say. The end result of this is apparent miscommunication between with the genders leading to a breakdown of interactions.

For the last variable of neuroticism, all males reported being tense and uneasy while talking with females, but only 20% females reported being relaxed when talking with males. Both genders were uneasy when talking with the opposite sex. Therefore, both genders can be regarded even as neurotic. However, negative attitudes included issues relating to having to give long and informative replies, difficulty in understanding and making points or achieving goals with the opposite sex. A majority of students viewed themselves as open to experience. All of the comments, however, from both genders, showed that during their gendered interactions that the participants were tense and uneasy. In sum, student morale in both genders is timid, insecure and interactions are often seen as unsatisfying and demoralizing.

Discussion

Considering the current trend of population decrease in Japan, this study indicates that the attitudes and values behind the population decline are serious and need to be addressed. National educational policies need drastic reforms that include the abolition of men's and women's schools nationwide and the single gender schools to be consolidated into all co-ed schools to increase the opportunity of gender interactions. Class work must include interactions between different genders, and this needs to be made as a national school policy. Other extra-curricular activities should be devised to accommodate more gender interactions. At home, for those who have no siblings of the opposite sex, interactions with individuals of different genders need to be encouraged and promoted as a part of national educational policies.

Conclusion

Results showed that both genders *felt* that it was easy to relate to and understand the opposite sex; likewise, they felt that they showed interest in having discussions with the opposite sex. However, negative attitudes included issues relating to having to give long and informative replies, difficulty in understanding and making points or achieving goals with the opposite sex. Student replies on a questionnaire further indicated that a majority of students viewed themselves as open to experience. All of the comments, however, from both genders, showed that during their gendered interactions that the participants were tense and uneasy. The high percentage of comments from females, 78 percent, indicated that most were antisocial as they found it difficult to interact with males. A gender disparity was found in the percentage of comments from males who thought that the opposite sex understood and appreciated what they had to say and those from females: 75 percent and 46 percent respectively. In short, student morale in both genders is timid, insecure and interactions are often unsatisfying and demoralizing. Thus, society needs to take serious measures to address this issue to avoid further problems in education, the workplace and in the home.

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Appendix A. Gender Fluency Survey

Name (Romaji) _____ Student Number _____

Gender: (Male) (Female) (Other)

Gender Fluency Inventory

Directions: Mark the box with a “0” to show your views. If you are a male, the question refers to “women” that you might meet or talk to. If you are a female, then question then concerns “men.”

Pre-survey	Agree A Lot	Agree	Disagree	Disagree a Lot	No Opinion
1. You try to share your ideas without hesitation with the opposite sex.					
2. You feel some degree of tension in talking with the opposite sex.					
3. You often feel some rejection by the opposite sex.					

4. It is easy to relate to and understand the opposite sex.					
5. You are talkative with the opposite sex.					
6. You are often friendly with the opposite sex.					
7. You are not shy in talking with the opposite sex.					
8. You feel uneasy in talking with the opposite sex.					
9. It is easy to start a conversation with the opposite sex.					
10. You always like giving long and informative replies and sharing opinions when talking to the opposite sex.					
11. You try to smile, be attentive, making occasional eye contact, and gestures, when talking with the opposite sex.					
12. You find it easier to understand the opposite sex.					
13. You are confident about using English with a woman / man.					
14. You feel that you can always make your point and achieve your goals when talking with the opposite sex.					
15. When talking with the opposite sex, you show some degree of interest.					

Directions: If you are a male, the question refers to “women” that you might meet or talk to. If you are a female, then question then concerns “men.”

16. How many women / men do you talk to, for ten minutes or more, each day?	10+, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0
17. Except for your family and relatives, how many meaningful relationships have you had with women / men?	10+, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0
18. How interested are you in talking with women / men?	(A Lot) 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 (Not at all)

Appendix B. Questionnaire

名前（ローマ字） _____ 学籍番号 _____

性別：（男性）（女性）（その他）

アンケート

記入の仕方: 以下の質問にできるだけ正直に答えてください。

1. 異性と話すことは難しいですか？もしそうなら、理由を記入してください。

2. 同性の人と話すのと、異性の人と話すのには違いはありますか？

3. 自分の性格をどのように評価しますか？あなたは社交的で外交的ですか？それとも恥ずかしがり屋ですか？

4. 異性との会話は満足のものですか？それとも大変ですか？

5.あなたが言うことを、異性は理解して評価してくれると思いますか？

6. 異性と話す時、緊張して不安になるのが普通ですか？もしそうなら、なぜでしょうか？
