Face, Culture and Social Interaction

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A key issue facing researchers making recourse to face in their analyses of social phenomenon is arguably the progressive dichotomisation of second-order (or face2) and first-order (or face1) notions of face (cf. the distinction between first-order and second-order politeness: Eelen (2001: 30-48); Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992: 3-4)). However, while face1 is often equated with folk or emic notions of face (Haugh and Hinze, 2003: 1582; Haugh, 2007: 302; O’Driscoll, 1996: 8; Ruhi and Işık, 2007: 684; Terkourafi, 2007: 315-316), face can also be conceptualised as being grounded in the participant’s perspective, as opposed to that of the analyst. In other words, in applying the first-order/second-order distinction we need to ensure we do not conflate a finer distinction, namely that between (first-order) *emic* perspectives, where the aim is to ‘understand speech practices which make sense to the people concerned, i.e., in terms of indigenous values, beliefs and attitudes, social categories, emotions, and so on’ (Goddard, 2006: 2), and (first-order) *participant* perspectives, where the aim is to understand ‘the participants’ orientations to meanings, interpretations and evaluation of utterances’ (Piirainen-Marsh, 2005: 214). While the notion of *wakimae* (translated as ‘discernment’) invoked by Ide (1989) in place of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) etic (or ‘universal’) notion of face to account for politeness in Japanese is culture-specific and so emic in nature, for example, Ide makes no claim that her analyses would be understood as such by the participants in interactions. In fact, Ide seems to not consider the participant’s perspective at all, apparently comfortable with her status as a ‘cultural-insider’ to justify her analyses. However, to make recourse to folk or emic notions of face without proper consideration of their (ultimate) grounding in interaction may simply led to a reification of such first-order notions. What has been missing in much work to date, therefore, is a deeper consideration of the intervening level of interaction. In this paper, then, it is proposed that by placing interaction at the centre of the analysis of *face* - echoing Bargiela-Chiappini’s re-opening of discussion about face in her 2003 article - (new) insights may be gained into these (old) debates.

**References**


The Southern African Concept of ‘Face’ and its Relevance to Intercultural Interaction

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Current debates around Brown and Levinson’s (1978; 1987) concept of face largely draw on the distinction between 'Western' and 'Eastern' languages. In general, British and North American face considerations are thought to be based on individualist assumptions whereas the Far Eastern notion of face is based on collectivist assumptions which may not be very amenable to Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. Africa has been largely overlooked in these discussions but some recent scholarship in South Africa suggests that the concept of face and the notion of self in black southern African culture may have more in common with Eastern collectivist cultures than with Anglo-American culture. There are also some unique aspects to the southern African face which can be related to the Zulu notions of 'hlonipha' (deference) and 'ubuntu' (tact) and which deKadt claims promotes public face over private or collective face needs.

It might be expected, then, that 'face-to-face' encounters between southern Africans and people from 'Western' cultures could result in misunderstandings and clashes. This paper examines the nature of intercultural communication between Zimbabwean English speakers and British English speakers in the context of a community singing group in the UK. Using naturally-occurring interactional data, supplemented by interviews, we analyse the sociolinguistic behaviours and interpretations exhibited by the Zimbabwean group leader and British group members. In particular, we examine the ways in which 'face' is negotiated in a situation where a southern African speaker gives direction to British participants whose expectations are, arguably, those of an individualistic culture. However, in our discussion we question the extent to which the notion of face can be dichotomized and reduced to a culturally relative phenomenon.
Brown and Levinson’s reformulation of the Goffmanian notion of face has repeatedly met with criticisms of Anglocentricity, while subsequent revisions based on an ever-expanding range of languages have highlighted different aspects of this notion as important in different cultures. One possible conclusion from this line of research is that the quest for an all-encompassing notion of face should be abandoned: all that exists are disparate, local conceptualisations of face that must be reconstructed for different societies at different times. An alternative to this sweeping conclusion is that, while these local conceptualisations of face may be all that is psychologically real for speakers and that can be observed in conversational transcripts, an ‘all-encompassing’ notion of face may still be useful as a methodological abstraction, offering a unifying principle from which the various local conceptualisations of face can be generated in different socio-historical and situational settings. Capitalizing on a distinction, now current within politeness studies, between Politeness1 and Politeness2, this paper explores this alternative. Face2 is proposed to be biologically grounded in the dimension of approach/withdrawal, and intentional (i.e. directed at an Other). It is thus both universal, and uniquely human and irreducibly relational. Face2 as such, however, is an analyst’s tool. To play a role in speakers’ language production and comprehension, the situated contents of Face2 must be ‘fleshed out’ in particular socio-historical circumstances, resulting in a multiplicity of ‘Face1’s operating simultaneously in interaction.

One aspect of the socio-historical context that seems to be particularly relevant to situated conceptualisations of Face1 is the degree of functional diversification within a society. Sociologists such as Durkheim, Elias and Tönnies, have theorised this in different ways. In this paper, I explore the potential of the notions of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (Tönnies 1887/2001), respectively corresponding to the pre-industrial/rural and industrial/urban modes of social existence, to flesh out the situated contents of Face1 for contemporary Greek society. A specific hypothesis based on Tönnies’s distinction is that in Gemeinschaft, explicit negotiation should be minimal, commonality of origin and purpose guaranteeing shared understandings and serving to amplify the content of indirect modes of communication; while in Gesellschaft, explicit negotiation should be necessary to bridge the gap left by the lack of deeper intimacy. This hypothesis is tested for contemporary Greek society by mapping the (changing) distribution of several linguistic devices, including diminutives, the T/V distinction, and responses to thanks.
The present paper addresses a methodological issue regarding the study of the enactment of face in naturally occurring discourse. Postmodern approaches to social interaction and studies on (im)politeness in particular have argued that post facto evaluations of interaction may not necessarily reflect explicit or implicit evaluations that actually occurred during the interaction and that these evaluations create another interaction during which other presentational concerns may be impacting this interaction (e.g. Mills 2003). Partly in response to this issue, scholars in communication and (im)politeness have underscored the need to closely examine participant uptake in unfolding discourse to unravel interlocutors’ assessments of ongoing interaction (e.g., Arundale 2005; Haugh 2007; Terkourafi 2001). The same methodological issue is relevant to the study of face. The question that this paper addresses is whether analysts can and should rely solely on participant uptake in his/her investigation of face phenomena to investigate the participants’ understandings. This question is crucial to the study of face as understanding how people construe social interaction is as important as how social interaction is constructed (Hammersley 2003).

The paper addresses this question on a set of spoken data compiled for the purpose of investigating face and (im)politeness expressions in Turkish discourse. The paper first briefly overviews findings on Turkish face (Ruhi, fc, Ruhi and İşık-Güler (2007)). It then proceeds on to a close analysis of a number of excerpts that involve exchanges related to ‘classificatory face’ (a term constructed as an analogy to the concept of “classificatory politeness” in Eelen (2001), that is, exchanges where participants voice judgements about face and face-related issues either in the actual interaction or in post facto contexts. This analysis suggests that how people evaluate face-related phenomena may not necessarily emerge in the ongoing interaction as what people actually say may not reflect or be at odds with what they say they felt during the interaction. These findings imply that understanding people’s expectations regarding face, the (linguistic) norms which they believe are/should be operative, and the values that they uphold in interaction may be better investigated with the complementary methods of conversation analysis and ethnographic investigations that tap people’s judgements of actual discourse.

The paper concludes with a brief description of the findings of an ongoing diary study in Turkish that probes participants’ reports of face sensitive interactions with respect to what happened in the interaction, what they said/did and what they did not do/say. These findings suggest that combining the study of naturally occurring discourse along with post facto evaluations and ethnographic studies can better equip analysts in developing emic and etic ontologies for the study of face.

References
Saving or Losing Face with the Judeo-Spanish, Turkish, and Turkish Cypriot Idioms and Proverbs with the Organ of Face

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In this study, I am going to talk about the data I gathered by observing the Judeo-Spanish messages found in a chat-room called “Ladino komunita,” a Yahoo group on the net, founded by Rachel Bortnick. I analyzed the interaction between native Judeo-Spanish speakers interacting with each other by using some idioms and proverbs that include the body part of face in order to express their negative and positive emotions. The negative emotions include shame, anger, fear, and sadness, and the positive emotions include happiness and love.

This study examines the role of the concept of face and politeness in the Sephardic culture, thus the culture of the Spanish Jews who arrived in the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion from Spain in 1492. One may use a specific Judeo-Spanish idiom or proverb to be polite and to preserve face by maintaining one another’s face. Sometimes Judeo-Spanish speakers may refer to idioms and proverbs using some politeness strategies such as indirectness, avoidance of confrontation, the suppression of negative emotions, and praises of one’s positive values for not mentioning this person’s negative sides so that one cannot lose face. However, some Judeo-Spanish idioms and proverbs with the organ of face may be used to express that one loses face, by becoming ashamed, angry, or sad.

In this study, the uses of the organ of face for indicating different emotions are calculated with a Chi-Square test. The Chi-Square test results show that the organ of face is used in the Judeo-Spanish proverbs and idioms in order to indicate more negative emotions than the positive ones. Therefore, the organ of face is widely used to explain that one loses face. Furthermore, I compared these results with the uses of the equivalents of these idioms and proverbs by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot university students between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Ten Turkish native speakers and ten Turkish Cypriot dialect native speakers took a multiple choice test of 40 questions that measures the cultural differences in using the organ of face in order to express certain emotions for showing one’s politeness or for expressing one’s resentment or anger. The participants selected in which situation they would use the idiom or the proverb. This study shows that although people had lived within the borders of the same country, i.e. the Ottoman Empire in the past, today they may prefer to use different politeness terms constructed with the organ of face in order to indicate that one saves face or loses face. Besides, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is used for explaining the cultural reasons of the statistical differences.
Cultural Variability in Face Interpretation and Management

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Face is a socio-cultural construct. It is created by the participation of others during social interaction. It is a complex entity shaped in terms of social values (Lim, 1994: 210; Goffman, 1967; Chu, 1985: Brown and Levinson, 1987). Goffman (1967:5) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself" and "an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes." In other words, face is a complex image of self which is socially constructed and determined by a system of cultural values.

Thus, although public self-image (face) and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction are universal, the former has also culture-specific constituents. The basic, universal desire inherent in human nature “for a ‘good’ face” earns different interpretations in different cultures, because the constituents of ‘good’ are culturally determined (O’Driscoll, 1996: 4); so there are differences in the content of face (Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988). Moral rules, hierarchies of values and social organisation are specific to particular cultures; as a consequence the image of self created on their basis must also differ across cultures.

The aim of the paper is to present an alternative model of face, trying to explain the cultural variability both in its interpretation and management. According to the model, face is a multi-faceted construct which can be analysed at many interrelated levels.

The second part of the paper will be devoted to testing the applicability of the model of face to two cultures, Polish (collectivistic culture) and Anglo-American (individualistic culture). The fact that these two cultures differ significantly along the dimension of individualism-collectivism is one of the main reasons for choosing these cultures. Another one is almost complete inexistence of the concept of face in Polish academic texts. While face in Anglo-American culture has been thoroughly described by sociologists, social psychologists and linguists, the concept of face in Polish culture has not aroused much interest among researchers, Polish researchers included.

The data used in the research come from participant observation, introspection and written sources.

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Construction of Face in Japanese Business Settings

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In the last two decades, researchers constantly pointed out limitations of the etic notion of face developed by Western academics (e.g., Bargiala-Chiappini, 2003). The claimed universality of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory was challenged by researchers who examined applicability of the politeness theory in interaction involving Japanese (e.g. Matsumoto, 1988). Furthermore Haugh’s meta-linguistic research (2005) revealed the multiple interrelated notions of face in Japanese language. However, how Western speakers’ individual-based notion of face and Japanese notion of face interplay in intercultural interaction still remain insufficiently explored.

Recent discussions of face and facework emphasize the need to view face as interactional rather than individual phenomena and suggest the importance of examining contextual and situational face construction and facework in action (Arundale, 2006; Earley, 2003). Nevertheless few studies to date have investigated face from a discursive perspective, in particular in business settings.

The focus of the paper is to provide a view of face construction and negotiation from a local and situational perspective using the data from business people in intercultural environments. This paper illustrates how such an emic notion of face is manifested in the participants’ intercultural encounters.

The study employs multiple methods. In the first step, the researchers analyse Internet and major Japanese newspaper corpus data and examine subject-verb collocation in order to see the linguistic level association of groups and individuals with face. The data show strong association of face and groups rather than individuals. For example, more than 65% of the verb-objective phrase ‘tainen wo Yogosi’ (to derty face) in the examined corpora have groups or groups of people as their subjects.

In the following step, the interview data from the participants of Japanese-Westerner meetings and Japanese-Chinese meetings are analyzed. The data were collected in three different Japanese corporations. In the light of past research on Japanese face, the authors use horizontal, in-and-out-group, dimension (Moeran, 1988), as well as frequently discussed vertical dimension (Matsumoto, 1988) as a framework to analyse the participants’ recognition of relationship. One of the findings from the data is that the participants negotiate to situate themselves vertically and horizontally in the business situation and the negotiated social positions of the participants construct their notions of face. The data further show the participants’ constructed face particularly influences their turn taking frequency and silence. The study illustrates the participants’ concerns about the image of their team as well as themselves unconsciously drives the participants’ behaviour in business meetings.

References
Conflict of Power and Face, or is it just a Difference in Culture?:
How does a novice claim his Face to climb the corporate ladder in the second language?

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Based on Goffmanian notion of face, the current understanding of Face is that it is not only given to an interlocutor by their social construct outside of the interactional context but is also constructed and negotiated within the given social group and their interactions (Arundale, 2006). The interlocutor can “claim” face by showing the others in the social group what he/she is capable of doing. The Japanese notion of “Kao” also seems to stand on one’s social position and ability, based on what they have achieved in the past. One can “lose” kao if what can be reasonably expected of him/her is not delivered (Haugh & Watanabe, forthcoming).

Power, on the other hand, is possessed by an interlocutor who, socially or otherwise, allowed to force or to influence others to do certain actions, either intentionally or unintentionally (Wartenberg, 1990). The amount of power possessed by a person seems to correspond to the status of the interlocutor in relation to the others in the social group (Watts, 1991).

The definitions of these two notions seem to be closely interrelated; the higher the social status, the more power one may possess, and the more face one must maintain. For example, a company president possesses power over his/her employees, but he/she must also maintain his/her face by displaying how capable he/she is of running the business (cf. Erchul & Raven, 1997). Often, exercising his/her power can enhance his/her face.

At the other end of the spectrum, a member of the social group whose status is relatively low, he/she possesses less face than his/her boss. A young, new employee who is starting out at a new company must follow the same steps to be welcomed by the co-workers and gain face over time. Once he/she is promoted as a result, they must maintain the newly-claimed face by keep showing that they can be a capable member of the company.

In the process of a junior member claiming their face, it can inadvertently threaten a senior member’s power and face, especially when the cultural and linguistic background of these members are different. In such cases, a conflict of face and power may occur.

In this paper, the interaction of a discussion held after a product development meeting in a Japanese company is analysed to show how a non-native speaker of Japanese attempts to claim his face and how his superiors, both native and non-native speakers of Japanese, react to such attempts. The aim of this paper is to analyse how conflicting face claims are dealt in a business meeting and yet participants achieve an understanding.

References
Facework and Event Description in Japanese Multi-party Discourse

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Current politeness research is moving away from the original models (e.g., Brown and Levinson 1987), advancing the view of politeness as a discursive phenomenon (e.g., Eelen 2001, Mills 2003, Watts 2003). This significant paradigm shift has triggered new approaches to the notion of face, a central theme in Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory. However, the problem of devising an empirically grounded analytical framework for politeness and facework remains. Recognizing this challenge, this paper is concerned with the validation of the analysis of face in naturally occurring discourse. Instead of paying primary attention to participants’ psychological mechanisms, which are difficult to capture in discourse, this study adopts a conversation analytic (as used in discursive psychology) and ethnographic approach. Informed by discursive psychology’s respecification of psychological elements in terms of discursive reality, it reconsiders the notion of face and facework as discursively constructed phenomena.

Applying this new approach, the paper examines one type of social action—event description—situated in Japanese institutional multi-party discourse (i.e., a faculty meeting in a Japanese secondary school). Even though event description appears to be face-neutral, researchers have pointed out its action orientation. For instance, Potter (1996) illustrates procedures for fitting descriptions to activities, stating that description is a practical and rhetorical accomplishment that plays a role in activities. The action-oriented nature of description suggests that some type of facework can be achieved through this rhetorical practice.

This paper demonstrates how participants (teachers) display their face (i.e., their interactional self-image) as a responsible, motivated and/or knowledgeable teacher, and how they build alliance and solidarity. It also discusses how a speaker’s invoked membership categorization as well as the foregrounding of certain aspects of an event can be instrumental in displaying his or her face.

The observation of facework provides insights into participants’ conception of institutional face shared within their community of practice: the discursive practice of event description reveals what behaviors and attitudes receive positive evaluation in the case of a school emergency. These discursively negotiated evaluations are closely linked to participants’ discursive construction of face. The analysis suggests that event description sequences represent instances in which a tacit conception of positive institutional face becomes observable in discourse, and that facework can be depicted as a discursive process in which face ascriptions are negotiated, contested, and altered.
How to get rid of a telemarketing agent? Face-work strategies in an intercultural service call

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This paper discusses how face and face-work are manifested in an intercultural service call between a Uruguayan telemarketing agent and a prospective Argentinean client. The interaction analysed is a service call in which an institutional representative, from a multinational company, telephones a client for the purpose of having the client’s membership renewed as it had lapsed for a relatively long period of time. The conversational participants’ contributions are oriented toward the achievement of a task; namely, the institutional representative wants to obtain a sale and, the client wants to obviate any possible avenues for the former to attain her goal.

The main source of data is a recorded call between an institutional representative and a potential client. The call is part of a 200-hour service call database from a call centre. The analysis is supplemented by recorded informal interviews with institutional representatives from the call centre, including post-performance interviews with the agent who participated in the call, and field notes from (non)participant observation.

The analytical stance is sociopragmatic and makes uses of concepts developed in Conversation Analysis. Specifically, manifestations of face, face-work and the incidence of metapragmatic acts are examined from a sociopragmatic perspective while the place in the overall conversation where they occur and the way in which they are co-constructed is analysed using units of analysis from Conversation Analysis.

The analysis shows that manifestations of face occurred in the opening sequence and during the unfolding of metapragmatic acts. Specifically, face was manifested as part of the conversational politeness norms for the occasion and grew out of the ongoing interaction upon marked interactional behaviour. Face also emerged as the participants tried to re-establish their conversational identities in the light of a conversational shift.