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What Does 'Face' Mean to the Japanese? Understanding the Import of 'Face' in Japanese Business Interactions

Japan has the second largest economy in the world, and is a major trading partner for countries throughout the Asia-Pacific, including China and the United States. Due to the importance of the Japanese economy for international trade and business, ways in which to successfully conduct business with the Japanese have been the topic of both popular "how to" manuals and academic research. This work has focused on various dimensions underlying Japanese business practices, including such aspects as organisational structure, meeting practices, and negotiation tactics, but one area that has been fairly neglected in those discussions thus far is the notion of 'face.'

In the popular discourse on Japanese business interactions, the concept of 'face' has emerged as only a minor point of discussion, if it is indeed mentioned at all (for example, see Hodgson / Sano / Graham 2000 or Lewis 2000). In cases where it is alluded to, the explanation tends to be fairly rudimentary and focuses on the need to avoid "losing face" often associated with Asians in general. Lewis, for example, claims that the Japanese "must never lose face. If insufficient respect is shown or if they are cornered by ruthless logic, there will be no deal" (2000: 406). However, this kind of explication does not really indicate what face means to the Japanese, and focuses unduly on "loss of face" without really considering other aspects of face management.

In academic research into Japanese face, Brown and Levinson's (1987) supposedly universal construct of face, or other theoretical face constructs based on the assumption that face is part of personal identity, are most often applied to the analysis of various types of interpersonal interactions, including those in business contexts (for example, Sueda / Wiseman 1992; Cocroft / Ting-Toomey 1994;

Imahori / Cupach 1994; Hiraga / Turner 1996; Miller 2000). In the context of research into politeness, however, it has emerged that these theoretical constructs of face, particularly those based on Brown and Levinson's notions, are not suitable for the analysis of interpersonal interactions involving Japanese (Ide 1989; Matsumoto 1988, 1989). Yet while various scholars have claimed Japanese face differs from Brown and Levinson's conceptualisation of face, their discussions have been primarily focused on refuting the claims made by Brown and Levinson, and consequently they have had little to say about the actual constituents of face in Japanese.

The lack of explanation about the nature of Japanese face in the context of Japanese interpersonal interaction, or more specifically Japanese business interactions, is due in part to the lack of clarity as to the status of Japanese folk or emic notions of face in (Modern Standard) Japanese, including *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu* (and related terms), in research as pointed out by Usami (2002: 19-20). Indeed, most discussions of Japanese face that touch upon these emic perspectives have never clarified whether they are attempting to deconstruct these emic notions of face, or are intent on developing some kind of theoretical notion (for example, Morisaki / Gudykunst 1994; Sueda 1999, 2001, 2004; Yabuuchi 2004). In this chapter, the focus is on deconstructing *emic* rather than *theoretical* notions of Japanese face, or in other words, what face, namely *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu* (and related terms), means to the Japanese, particularly in the context of business interactions.

In the first section of this chapter, the history of the usage of the term face in both academic and popular discourse about Japanese is briefly discussed in order to illustrate how a significant gap has developed between folk or emic conceptualisations of face, and theoretical or etic notions. This is followed by an overview of previous research into the emic notions of face in (Modern Standard) Japanese that are the focus of this chapter. From this overview it emerges that there appears to be some confusion in the literature as to the conceptualisation of the various emic terms for face in Japanese, and there remains scope for a more comprehensive discussion of the various collocations of those terms. The various terms for face in (Modern Standard) Japanese, including *kao, menboku, taimen* and *mentsu* are thus discussed in more detail in order to clarify their

conceptualisations. The various collocations of those emic terms for face are then reviewed, with more detailed discussion of those expressions that have particular significance for business interactions. In the final section, the implications of this understanding of Japanese face for the question of what face means to the Japanese, and its import for business interactions are considered.

## 1. The emergence of the term 'face' in Japanese folk and academic discourse

The term 'face' in the figurative sense of 'positive social image' or honour, prestige or reputation is often associated with East Asians, including the Chinese and Japanese. This is not surprising as the use of face in this sense in both folk and academic discourse can be traced back to the Chinese term mian ('front of the head'; later extended to mean 'surface' and 'appearance'). The earliest recorded use of face in the figurative sense of positive social image is attributed to the Chinese around the fourth century B.C. (Hu 1944: 46). It developed various compounds and collocations over the centuries under the influence of Confucianism, serving as the basis for "strengthening and expressing the harmonization of human relationships among men in society" (Cheng 1986: 340). Some of the earlier compounds involving mian in Chinese included mianmu and timian. These were borrowed into Japanese in the form of menboku and taimen respectively, most likely during the Heian period (eighth - twelfth century A.D.) when there was a large amount of borrowing from Chinese into the Japanese lexicon (Loveday 1996: 28).2 It was at some time during this period

The term *mianmu* appears to no longer have the figurative sense of positive social image in Modern Standard Chinese, except in some written works, while *timian* still retains this sense, although with strong connotations of outward appearance gained from doing things such as wearing brand clothes or giving expensive gifts.

There are other alternative readings for these words, such as *menmoku* and *teimen*, but as these are synonyms of the terms *menboku* and *taimen* respectively, only the latter terms will be discussed in the main text.

that the native Japanese word for face in the sense of the front of one's head, *kao*, also acquired the figurative sense of positive social image. These three terms, *kao*, *menboku* and *taimen*, thus developed various overlapping meanings for the figurative sense of face in the milieu of a constantly evolving Japanese society over the centuries, and became associated with a number of other lexical items in particular collocations.

In Chinese, meanwhile, the terms *mianzi* and *lian* emerged by the nineteenth century as the main carriers of this figurative sense of face. It was these terms that became the focus of European traders and missionaries to China in the nineteenth century, and consequently the sense of face as one's reputation or good name entered English in the form of the calques *lose face* and *save face* (Ervin-Tripp / Nakamura / Guo 1995: 45); the first recorded incidence of the use of face in this sense being in 1876, according to the Oxford English Dictionary Online (1989-2005). Popular and quasi-academic discourse on face in the context of Chinese culture continued through to the middle of the twentieth century (Hinze 2002: 31-34). It was during this period, more specifically some time during the early twentieth century (1920s-1930s), that the Chinese term mianzi was borrowed into (Modern Standard) Japanese in the form of *mentsu*, and acquired the figurative meanings already associated with the existing terms kao, menboku and taimen (Umegaki 1966: 421; Yoshizawa / Ishiwata 1979: 632). Some calques from Chinese also entered the Japanese lexicon at this time, widening the range of collocations (Miller 1997: 566). There are thus currently four main emic or folk terms representing face in the figurative sense of positive social image in Japanese, namely kao, menboku, taimen, and mentsu, although the latter is only a recent addition to Japanese vocabulary.

The concept of face was first introduced into academic discourse by Goffman (1955, 1967). While Goffman acknowledged the Chinese source of the notion (Bargiela-Chiappini 2003: 1454), and drew from the seminal work on Chinese face by Hu (1944), he also drew from sociological theories, such as that of Durkheim (1915), to formulate a theoretical construct suitable for the analysis of self-presentation in interaction. His conceptualisation of face is thus distinct from the folk notion from which it is originally derived in at

least two main ways.<sup>3</sup> Firstly, face in Goffman's view is seen as the positive image of an individual, whereas the Japanese notion of face can extend beyond individuals to groups (Matsumoto 1988). Secondly, Goffman defines face as something that is claimed by an individual through his "pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (1967: 5). The Japanese folk notions of face, however, are not so much claimed by an individual through his/her behaviour, but rather are based on actual or potential evaluations of the individual (or group) in question by significant others, as will be seen in the course of this chapter.

Goffman's groundbreaking work stimulated the proliferation of a range of theoretical constructs of face, which further widened the emerging schism between the Japanese emic notions of face and theoretical constructs. Face was linked to wants by Brown and Levinson (1987: 62) who defined face as the desires of an individual towards his or her public self-image. This has been drawn upon in the study of Japanese business interactions (for example, Miller 1995, 2000), as well as politeness in Japanese. Face has also been linked to identity by Cupach and Imahori (1993) to study embarrassment across cultures in various settings, including business organisations (Sueda / Wiseman 1992; Imahori / Cupach 1994), and to the analysis of crosscultural conflict (Ting-Toomey 1988; Ting-Toomey / Kurogi 1998), including Japanese contexts (Cocroft / Ting-Toomey 1994).

While all these studies have furthered our understanding of Japanese interaction in various settings, it is argued in the following sections that the constructs of face that these researchers are

Goffman defined face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (1967: 5).

Face wants are divided into 'positive face' involving the desire that one's wants be desirable to at least some others, and 'negative face' encompassing the desire that one's actions be unimpeded by others (Brown / Levinson 1987: 62).

<sup>5</sup> See Haugh (2003) for a comprehensive discussion of the application of Brown and Levinson's theory to the study of politeness in Japanese.

Ting-Toomey, for example, defines face as "tied to a claimed sense of social esteem or regard that a person wants others to have of him or her" (1999: 37-38).

employing in their analyses are qualitatively different from the emic notions of *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu*. The gap between the folk notions of Japanese face and theoretical constructs of face is such, that if we are to further our understanding of Japanese business interaction, we must also study the way in which these emic notions of face are realized in business interactions, rather than relying only on analyses based on theoretical constructs. Having established how these two distinct views of face have developed over the course of time, we can now move on to discussing in more detail how these emic notions differ from the theoretical constructs of Goffman, Brown and Levinson, Ting-Toomey and others.

### 2. Previous studies of the emic notions of face in Japanese

A number of researchers have discussed the various different folk terms for face in (Modern Standard) Japanese, although much of this discussion has only been in passing, with little in the way of a systematic investigation of the nature of Japanese face. Discussion of the emic notions of *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu* has focused on two main aspects of Japanese face.

The first area that has been discussed is the core meaning of these terms and differences in their connotations. An ethnographic study of Japanese folk notions of face, for example, carried out by Cole (1989) found that face in Japanese relates to honour, pride, claimed self-image, trustworthiness, individual standing and dignity (cited in Morisaki / Gudykunst 1994: 56), although our understanding of the various terms for face in Japanese is hampered by the fact that it was not made clear which of these terms the glosses were supposed to refer to.

Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994: 48) discuss differences between the various terms in more detail, starting from the term *kao* to which they attribute three basic meanings: (1) the front of the head, (2) a person's reputation, and (3) social face. Social face in Japanese is represented, according to Morisaki and Gudykunst, by *mentsu* and

taimen, the latter referring to "the appearance one presents to others" (1994: 48). They claim that mentsu is based on the Chinese concept of mianzi, and that menmoku (an alternative reading of menboku) is simply a synonym of mentsu. They therefore closely link Japanese mentsu (and by extension menboku) to Hu's definition of mianzi as a "reputation achieved through getting on in life, through success and ostentation" (1944: 45). Mentsu is later conceptualised as something "located at the intersection of interdependent selves", and propose that multiple mentsu of both self and other can reside simultaneously with both individuals and groups (Morisaki / Gudukunst 1994: 72), a theme that is also picked up by Sueda (1999, 2001, 2004).

However, the claim that *menboku* is simply a synonym of *mentsu* is problematic in that it ignores the fact that *mentsu* is a very recent borrowing into Japanese, and is still regarded as a loanword (*gairaigo*), whereas *menboku* has become an integral part of the Japanese lexicon, as discussed in the previous section. A more fundamental problem with their claim is that Japanese *mentsu* and Chinese *mianzi* actually differ quite markedly. Sueda (1995: 28), for example, claims that the notion of *mentsu* in Japanese is related only to one's social status and personal appearance, whereas *mianzi* also encompasses material profits or benefits, personal competence, and ostentation. This can give rise to misunderstandings between Chinese and Japanese in some instances as noted by Tsai (1996: 312-313)

A number of studies of Japanese folk notions of face have been based on comparisons with the Chinese notion of *mianzi*. Yabuuchi's (2004) recent paper further develops Morisaki and Gudykunst's (1994) two-fold distinction between *mentsu* and *taimen*, in comparing Japanese face with Chinese *mianzi* and English *face*. Yabuuchi, however, treats *mentsu* rather than *kao* as the over-arching concept, with *menboku* and *taimen* as the two main types of face. *Menboku* is glossed as "approved self" or aspects of self approved of and/or respectability given by others, while *taimen* is termed "projected self" or ostentation (Yabuuchi 2004: 266). In the context of business interactions, one's approved self, or *menboku*, is closely related to fulfilling one's duties (*gimu*) in the workplace, while projected self, or *taimen*, is associated with the duty to clear one's reputation of insult or imputation of failure, avoidance of admitting professional failure or

ignorance, and the obligation to behave according to Japanese proprieties (*li*) (Yabuuchi 2004: 269-271).

Sueda (1995, 1999, 2001, 2004) focuses only on the notion of mentsu, based on the assumption that mentsu is, at least superficially, the closest term in Japanese to the Chinese term *mianzi*. She argues that *mentsu* is crucial in vertical relationships, and the need to save it depends on one's relative status, and thus it is generally considered more important to save the mentsu of one's superiors than one's subordinates or peers (Sueda 1995: 28-29). This is of particular importance in Japanese businesses, which traditionally have a fairly rigid vertical organisation. In addition, mentsu can be extended beyond individuals to encompass groups to which the individual belongs. For example, in a Japanese literary work (Ozaki 1961, cited in Sueda 1995: 25), the hero tries to persuade his love to marry him by claiming "not only himself but also his friends at school will lose mentsu if she does not accept his proposal because his friends also wish their marriage and have encouraged him." Sueda (1999, 2001, 2004) also argues that an individual has multiple mentsu, which are primarily based on his/her identities. However, since Sueda defines mentsu as "the public image people want to present within a given social framework" (1999: 81), she appears to vacillate at times between the theoretical notion of face as a form of claimed identity, and the emic notion of *mentsu* that she tries to explicate.

There thus appears to be some confusion in the literature as to the conceptualisation of the various emic terms for face in Japanese, and so there is more research needed to define all these terms in relation to each other. It is clear from the literature, nonetheless, that while the core (or denotational) meaning of these terms overlaps to some extent, they differ in terms of their connotations, a point which is explored in more detail in the following section. It also appears that emic notions of face can be extended beyond individuals to encompass groups, and in this respect differ crucially from theoretical conceptualisations of face. Moreover, an individual (or group) has multiple faces, which become salient depending on the context. In relation to business interactions, the import of face is evident from the fact that it is related, for instance, to performing one's duties at work and maintaining a reputation of professional competence.

Another area that has received attention concerns the various collocations involving face found in Japanese, although there has been little in the way of systematic study of those collocations. Cole (1989: cited in Morisaki / Gudykunst 1994: 56) found in an ethnographic survey that to 'lose face' was associated with an inability to maintain in-group harmony, while 'giving face' was related to allowing others to look good or take prestigious positions, although again it was not made clear as to what collocations these glosses refer.

Other researchers have listed examples of face collocations in Japanese (Tanaka 1986; Yabuuchi 2004), but only Ervin-Tripp, Nakamura and Guo (1995) have attempted to systematically analyse these collocations. They classify face collocations into essentially three main groups: to 'have no face' (e.g. *kao ga nai*), to 'lose face' (e.g., *kao ga tatanai*), to 'give face' (e.g., *kao o tateru*) (Ervin-Tripp / Nakamura / Guo 1995: 49-53). However, their survey does not consider a number of other important collocations such as keeping or saving face (e.g., *kao o tamotsu*). There thus remains scope for a more comprehensive discussion of the various collocations of the emic terms for face in Japanese, as the ways in which a word collocates can give further insight into its meaning.

In the following section, the four main terms for face in (Modern Standard) Japanese (*kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu*) are discussed in order to further clarify their conceptualisations, and this is followed by a review of the various collocations involving these face terms, in an attempt to answer the question of what face means to the Japanese.

# 3. The notion of face in Japanese: *kao, menboku, taimen* and *mentsu*

The word *kao* literally means the front of one's head in Japanese, and also incorporates the appearance and condition of one's physical face. However, its meaning has also been extended to encompass a number of related figurative meanings. According to the *Koojien* dictionary,

these figurative extensions are possible, because one can distinguish between people by looking at their physical face, and also because it is the most conspicuous aspect of people. Such figurative meanings of *kao* include the following (Shinmura 1991: 435):

- 1. (Hiyutekini mochiite) yoosu.
- 2. Sono hito to mishirareteiru koto. Chimeido. Mata, sono koto ni yoru sekenteki eikyoo.
- 3. Aru dantai ya jibutsu o daihyoo suru mono.
- 4. Menboku. Taimen.
- 1. (Figuratively) appearance.
- 2. To be known by sight by that person. Degree to which one is well-known. Also, one's societal influence due to that [fame].
- 3. Someone who represents a certain group or thing.
- 4. Menboku. Taimen<sup>7</sup>

It thus appears that *kao* in its figurative sense encompasses both *menboku* and *taimen*, but it also has additional related senses of having influence due to being well-known, and being someone who represents a certain group. This is further expanded upon in the *Daijiten* dictionary where the figurative definitions of *kao* include "*Ittei no chiiki ya nakama no naka de seiryoku ya meiboo no aru hito*" [A person who has influence and reputation in a particular area or group] (Daijiten 1973: 4, 335). The figurative senses of *kao* relevant to the analysis of Japanese business interaction can therefore be broadly classified into two types of *kao*. *Kao*<sub>1</sub> encompasses the core meanings of *menboku* and *taimen*, which are discussed in further detail below, while *kao*<sub>2</sub> encompasses being a visible representative of a group and the influence within the group arising from that profile.

Other terms related to kao include tsura and omote. The former encompasses the figurative senses of  $kao_1$ , but is mainly used in place of kao in certain expressions by males in colloquial speech (Ervin-Tripp / Nakamura / Guo 1995: 49). The latter expression, omote, also included the figurative senses of  $kao_1$  in classical Japanese, but it no longer generally carries this sense (Doi 1986: 24).

<sup>7</sup> All translations are the author's own.

The term *menboku* consists of the character for mask (*men*) and eye (*moku*). It encompasses two core meanings according to the *Koojien* dictionary (Shinmura 1991: 2527).

- 1. Hito ni awaseru kao. Seken ni taisuru meiyo.
- 2. Monogoto no yoosu. Arisama.
- 1. The  $kao_1$  with which one meets people. Honour in the public world.
- 2. The appearance of things of matters. State of affairs.

It is the first sense that is most salient to understanding business interactions, as it overlaps with the figurative sense of  $kao_1$ . It appears that external and public evaluations of self by others are crucial to the functioning of menboku, a view that is supported by the Daijiten dictionary which offers an additional explanation of menboku as " $Seken\ kara\ no\ hyooka$ " [evaluations from the public] (Daijiten 1976: 19, 232). In other words, through these external evaluations one can gain meiyo. The two key terms in this explanation of menboku are thus seken (encompassing the public world or gaze) and meiyo (lit. honour), and so a better understanding of menboku requires analysis of these two notions.

The notion of *seken* encompasses the notion of world in the sense of those with whom one is acquainted or surrounded by in society (Shinmura 1991: 1437), or in the words of Inoue (1982, cited in Nishida 1996: 108) is a kind of "reference group." That is to say, the external evaluations that form the basis of *menboku* are limited to a particular community, implying that it is primarily the evaluations of people with whom one has at least some acquaintance that are salient in the management of *menboku*. In the context of business, this means *menboku* is based on evaluations of those within that particular business organisation, and others outside the business with whom the organisation interacts.

The term *meiyo* is related to the notion of *honour* in English, but has a slightly different nuance in the Japanese context. *Meiyo* encompasses a number of different senses, but the one most relevant to *menboku* is:

Kojin, matawa shuudan no jinkaku ni taishite, shakaiteki ni shoonin sareta kachi. Mata , soreni taisuru jikaku

The socially approved value of the quality of character of an individual or group. Also, the awareness of that. (Daijiten 1976: Vol. 19, 158)

This means the *meiyo* that forms the basis of *menboku* is related to the value ascribed to the quality of character (*jinkaku*) of a particular individual or organisation. This is often related to receiving praise of one's performance, abilities or professional conduct, or acknowledgement of one's status and influence within a particular group in the business context. Quality of character is also related to the degree of social conformity of an individual within a business, or across the individuals that constitute that particular organisation (Yabuuchi 2004: 284-285).

There are other alternative readings of the characters that constitute the term *menboku*, including *menmoku*. There does not, however, appear to be any significant difference between the two terms in regards to the figurative sense of *menboku* as positive social image, although *menmoku* has additional senses such as the look of one's face (*kaotsuki*), and main aim or purpose (*honshi*) (Shinmura 1991: 2527).

The third major term for face in Japanese is *taimen*. This word consists of the characters for physical body (*tai*) and mask (*men*). The main meaning of *taimen* according to the *Koojien* dictionary is an individual's or group's appearance in public (Shinmura 1991: 1559). The *Daijiten* (1974: 12, 633) dictionary gives two additional senses of *taimen*:

- 1. Soto kara mieru yoosu. Teisai. Arisama. Sugata.
- 2. Seken ni taisuru teisai. Menboku. Mie.
- 3. Teisai no yoi koto. Rippa na koto. Reigi tadashii yoosu o suru koto.
- 1. Appearance visible from the outside. Decency/form. Appearance. Form.
- 2. Appearance in public. *Menboku*. Display/show.
- Good appearances. Something splendid. To have an appearance of correct manners.

*Taimen* thus crucially involves external evaluations of self by others in the same manner as *menboku*. What is crucial to these public evaluations is not one's *meiyo* (quality of character), however, but one's *teisai* (appearances). In other words, the key concept underlying

taimen is the notion of teisai. According to the Daijiten (1976: 14, 160) dictionary there are a number of related senses of taimen, but the one most salient to taimen in business organisations in Japan is "Tanin kara mirareta toki no kakkoo" [the appropriateness of one's manner/form when seen by others] (Daijiten 1976: 14, 160). This is most often related to maintaining conduct appropriate to a business environment, such as being competent in the use of honorifics superior-subordinate relationships, and indexing keeping professional appearance through good quality clothing and grooming. When taimen is extended beyond individuals within a business to the whole company itself, it most often relates to the reputation of the company (that is, how it is seen by other companies it deals with, and in the eyes of the public).

The final major term for Japanese face is *mentsu*. As noted in a previous section, the word *mentsu* has only been recently borrowed into Japanese, and so has not developed such a rich semantic field as the other terms kao, menboku and taimen. Indeed, rather than introducing the meanings associated with the Chinese notion of mianzi, it has acquired the senses of menboku and taimen that already exist in Japanese (Daijiten 1976: 19, 229: Shinmura 1991: 2526). It appears, then, to be closely related to  $kao_1$  as it encompasses both menboku and taimen, but it does not include the influence that arises from having a high profile in a particular business or the wider business community  $(kao_2)$ . It has a much more restricted collocational range, however, in comparison to kao, menboku and taimen, as will be seen in the following section.

The four main words for positive social image in Japanese are *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu*. These various terms for the figurative senses of face in Japanese are related to each other in the manner represented in the word map in Figure 1 below.

From this analysis of the various emic terms for face (in the sense of positive social image), it appears that *kao* has the widest semantic field, encompassing the notions of *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu*, as well as incorporating the degree to which an individual represents a certain business and/or the influence he/she has within that business. The notion of *mentsu* embodies both *menboku* and *taimen*, although its use as a synonym for these terms is restricted by its narrower collocational range. The concept of *menboku* and *taimen* 

are related in that they both involve external and public evaluations of an individual within a business, or the business as a whole, but *menboku* mainly involves evaluations of *meiyo* (quality of character), while *taimen* primarily encompasses evaluations of *teisai* (appearances). In the following section it will be seen that these various terms not only differ in the senses of positive public image they encompass, but also vary in their collocational range.

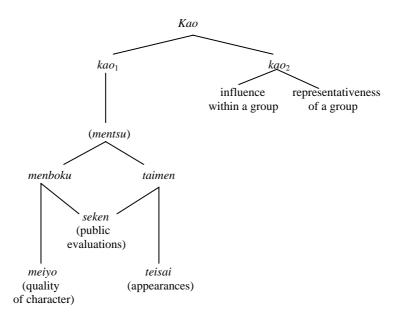


Figure 1. Word map of kao and related terms.

## 4. The collocational range of *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu*

The ways in which *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu* can be combined with other words varies. While there are some collocations that are common to all four terms, there are others that are only found

for one or two of these concepts, indicating some further crucial differences between them (in addition to their obvious commonalities). These expressions can be categorised into four main groups:

- (1) negative changes to, and states of, *kao* (and related terms);
- (2) positive changes to *kao* (and related terms);
- (3) managing *kao* (and related terms) for self and other; and
- (4) attitudes towards and judgements about *kao* (and related terms) adapted from Hinze (2002: 60).

The following analysis focuses mainly on expressions involving *kao* (and related terms) that have import for Japanese business interactions, however, and thus is not totally exhaustive. Examples are given where necessary to illustrate differences between various expressions, so there is not necessarily an analysis of each individual expression, as this goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

#### 4.1. Negative changes to, and states of, kao (and related terms)

Negative changes to, and states of, *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu* all fall under what is commonly termed *losing face* (or *loss of face*) in English. There is, however, a much wider range of expressions to be found in Japanese. These negatives states of, or changes to, *kao* (and related terms) can be further divided into three sub-categories:

- (1) describing a negative state (e.g., *kao ga nai* [to have no *kao*]);
- (2) describing a negative change (e.g. *kao o ushinau* [to lose *kao*]);
- (3) describing an action leading to a negative change (e.g. *kao o tsubusu* [lit. to crush *kao*]).

The main expressions that have potential import for business interactions are represented in Table 1 below. Two of the most common collocations for *losing face* are 'to lose a positive social image' (~ o ushinau) and 'to crush a positive social image' (~ o tsubusu), as these two verbs can co-occur with all four terms for face in Japanese. For example, a senior colleague could 'lose face' (mentsu

o ushinau) if he/she did not pay for the drinks of subordinates at a company social event, as his/her actions would not 'match' those expected of him/her in that position. There are a number of other expressions, however, that are also important, such as 'to dirty a positive social image' (kao/taimen o yogosu), 'to do damage to a positive social image' (menboku/taimen o kizutsukeru), and 'to have a positive social image that does not stand up' (kao/menboku ga tatanai).

	kao	menboku	taimen	mentsu
(i) Negative state				
~ga nai [to have no ~]	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>		
~ga tatanai [~ does not stand]	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>		
(ii) Negative changes				
~o ushinau [to lose ~]	<b>√</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>√</b>
(iii) Actions leading to negative				
changes <sup>8</sup>				
~o tsubusu [to crush ~]	✓	<b>✓</b>	<b>√</b>	<b>✓</b>
~o kizutsukeru [to do damage to ~]		<b>√</b>	✓	
~o yogosu [to dirty ~]	<b>√</b>		✓	
~o doro ni nuru	<b>√</b>			
[to cover with mud]				
o fumu [to step on ~]	<b>√</b>			

Table 1. Negative changes to, and states of, kao (and related terms).

There are a number of points to note about the expressions involving negative changes to, and states of, the social image of an individual or a business. Firstly, one can only talk about having 'no face' in regards to *kao* and *menboku*. This follows from the fact that *menboku* and *kao* can both refer to external evaluations of the quality of character of individuals/organisations, and so, of course, one can have no, or at least very little, character. For example, if one recommends a particular product or service to a business colleague and it turns out to be not very good, then one's *kao* (or *menboku*) will *tatanai* [lit. one's *kao/menboku* will not stand]. In contrast, one cannot

The intransitive forms of *tsubusu* (*tsubureru*), *kizutsukeru* (*kizu ni tsuku*), and *yogosu* (*yogoreru*), can also be used to describe a negative change in social image.

have no, or very little *taimen*, since appearances lie on a scale from good to bad, rather than varying in size.

Secondly, there are varying degrees to which an action can cause a 'loss of face.' For example, if a prominent member of a company commits suicide, then the company's social image may be crushed (*kaisha no kao o tubusu*), but if someone in the company is caught cheating on taxes, then their company's social image may only be dirtied (*kaisha no kao o yogosu*), which is somewhat less serious. There is, however, variance in the degree of seriousness that speakers of Japanese attach to these various expressions, and so a definite scale of these varying degrees cannot yet be established.

Thirdly, *kao* has a slightly greater number of collocations than *menboku* and *taimen*, while *mentsu* has only two main collocations involving 'loss of face.' Thus while *mentsu* can be used as synonym of *kao* (and *menboku* and *taimen*), its usage is restricted by its collocational range.

#### 4.2. Positive changes to kao (and related terms)

Positive changes to, and states of, *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu* all encompass what is commonly termed *gaining* or *giving face* in English. There are only a limited number of expressions involving 'gaining face' in Japanese, which can be divided into two groups: (1) describing a positive change, that is, *gaining face* (e.g., *menboku ga tatsu* [lit. to have a *menboku* that stands up]); and (2) describing an action leading to a positive change, that is, *giving face* (e.g. *menboku o hodokosu* [to give credit to *menboku*]). The main expressions involving positive changes that have potential import for business interactions are represented in Table 2 below.

	kao	menboku	taimen	mentsu
(i) Positive changes				
~ga tatsu [to have a ~ that stands up]	✓	✓		✓
(ii) Actions leading to positive changes				
~o tateru [to build up/erect ~]	✓	✓		✓
~o hodokosu [to give credit to ~]		✓		

Table 2. Positive changes to kao (and related terms).

One of the most important expressions related to positive changes in *kao* (and related terms) is the verb *tateru*, which literally means 'to erect something', and its related intransitive form *tatsu*. As was previously noted in this chapter, there has been thus far some bias towards viewing Japanese face as something that is 'lost', and avoiding 'loss of face." Lewis (2000: 406), for example, discusses face in only this manner. The use of the expressions *kao o tateru* (and the related *menboku o tateru* and *mentsu o tateru*) indicates that the emic notions of face in Japanese can also be positively affected, and indeed, this is an essential part of business interactions. For example, praising a colleague's children on their academic achievements in entering a prestigious school may also 'give face' (*kao o tateru*) to that colleague as a parent.

There are a few restrictions, however, on the range of expressions involving positive changes in *kao* (and related terms). Firstly, *taimen* does not appear to be something that can be positively affected. In other words, one's appearances (*teisai*) are perceived as something that can be damaged or spoiled, but they cannot be improved. This means *taimen* is somewhat analogous to *good reputation* in English, which is also difficult to regain once it is lost.

Secondly, different expressions are used depending on the power relationship existing between interactants, and whose social image is in question. For example, *kao o tateru* [to build up *kao*] tends to be used in situations where one is 'giving face' to a superior or a colleague in business, and is not normally used in cases involving subordinates. The expression *menboku o hodokosu* [to give credit to *menboku*], on the other hand, is reserved for situations involving the social image of subordinates. For example, if a section head sees that one of his/her subordinates' work is not going well, and so gives the subordinate some special assistance, then the section head is helping the subordinate to maintain his/her position in the company, and this help can be described as *menboku o hodokosu*. In other words, by 'saving' the subordinates' *menboku*, the section head can also 'give' *menboku*.

#### 4.3. Managing kao (and related terms) for self and other

The management of the *kao* (and related terms) of oneself, and the company to which one belongs, and the *kao* (and related terms) of others and other companies is another important category of expressions. These expressions, summarised in Table 3 below, are roughly equivalent to *saving face* in English.

	Kao	menboku	taimen	mentsu
~o tamotsu [to preserve/save ~]		<b>√</b>	✓	✓
~o tateru [to save ~]	✓	<b>√</b>		✓
~o nuguu [to wipe ~]	<b>√</b>			
~o kaifuku suru [to recover ~]		<b>✓</b>		
~o tsukeru [to spread/attach ~]		<b>✓</b>		
~o tsukurou [to patch up ~]			✓	
~o sukuu [to save~]				<b>√</b>

Table 3. Managing the *kao* (and related terms) of self and other.

All four types of positive social image can be 'saved', although the verb tamotsu [to preserve, save] is only associated with menboku, taimen and mentsu, and is not found in co-occurrence with kao. The Japanese native term tateru [lit. to build up; to save], on the other hand, is only associated with kao, menboku and mentsu, but not with taimen (for discussion of this issue see the previous sub-section). There are also a number of other particular expressions that involve recovery from an existing negative state, as represented in the expressions kao o nuguu [to wipe kao clean], menboku o kaifuku suru [to recover menboku], menboku o tsukeru [lit. to spread ~, to save ~], taimen o tsukurou [to patch up taimen], and the recent calque from Chinese, mentsu o sukuu [to save mentsu].

There are various situations in business interactions in which management of *kao* (and related terms) becomes a salient issue. For example, if an acquaintance or friend helps one to find work in a particular company, then one must not quit for the sake of preserving the *menboku* of the person who used his/her influence to get one that job (*menboku o tamotsu*). One can also preserve one's own *mentsu* in a company by not disturbing the social *wa* (lit. circle, links). This means upholding the unwritten rules that exist in the culture of that

particular company. In some organisations, for example, criticising superiors may be frowned upon, so to preserve *mentsu* (*mentsu* o *tamotsu*) one has to avoid directly criticising one's superiors in that organisation, even in situations where they might be in the wrong.

The need to save face is also something that can be appealed to, in some instances, to get what one wants. For example, if one wanted to introduce someone from a particular business to another colleague, but they were not keen to do business with them, one could appeal to saving one's face (*kao o tateru*) by saying something like, *Watashi no kao o tateiru to omotte, au dake demo onegaidekinai ka ne* [Can I not ask you to just think of it as saving my *kao*, and meet them?]. The management of *kao* (and related terms) is therefore something that can be manipulated in order to achieve one's own ends.

#### 4.4. Attitudes towards and judgements about kao (and related terms)

There are also a number of expressions relating to attitudes towards and judgements about *kao* (and related terms). These fall into three broad groups as illustrated in Table 4 below:

- (1) to involve issues of *kao* (and related terms);
- (2) to be 'face-conscious' (that is, to be concerned about positive social image); and
- (3) to endure or bear a negative state of *menboku*.

	kao	menboku	taimen	mentsu
(i) Issues relating to social image				
~ni kakawaru [related to ~]	<b>✓</b>	✓	✓	✓
~ni menjite [in consideration of ~]	<b>✓</b>			
~ni kangaete [think of ~]	<b>√</b>			
(ii) Sensitivity to social image				
~ni kodawaru [to be sensitive about~]			✓	✓
~ni omonjiru [to think much of ~]			✓	
(iii) Endurance of negative social image				
~shinogu [to endure no ~]		✓		

This example is adapted from a situation that arose in a Japanese drama set in a fictional television channel company.

Table 4. Attitudes towards and judgements about *kao* (and related terms).

One may refer to matters of *kao* (and related terms) in conversation using the expression *kao ni kakawaru* [relating to *kao*], for example, in a situation where one explains to another colleague why a certain decision has been made that relates more to preserving the *kao* of a superior than profitability. In some instances, this can be associated with an appeal to another party when someone feels their *kao* (and related terms) is being threatened. For example, if one is buying a coffee for a client at a business meeting held in a café, and the client insists on paying, one may appeal to consideration for one's face (*kao o kangaete, kao ni menjite*) to allow one to pay and avoid a loss of *kao* (*kao o ushinau*).

One can also be sensitive about one's taimen and mentsu, as seen in the expressions taimen/mentsu ni kodawaru [to be very sensitive about taimen/mentsu] and taimen ni omonjiru [to regard taimen as very important]. There are no similar expressions involving kao and menboku, reflecting the fact that taimen (and thus mentsu) relate to one's appearances in the public eye. One may be sensitive to one's mentsu (mentsu ni kodawaru) by being careful that one's actions are appropriate to the position one holds in a particular business. For example, reading manga (comic books) on the train might be seen as inappropriate for an executive of a major publishing house of academic monographs, and thus the executive may avoid being seen reading such things, even if he/she likes to do so, in order to avoid loss of mentsu (mentsu o ushinau), due to his/her sensitivity to mentsu.

In some situations, one may have to endure a state of *menboku* which is negative, that is, where people evaluate the quality of character of an individual or business negatively. This situation is encapsulated in the expression *menboku o shinogu* [to endure having no *menboku*]. In cases where an employee has made an error that has cost the firm money, that employee may have to endure the accompanying loss of *menboku* until such time as he/she can recover it by making amends in some way (such as compensating for the error through another profitable venture).

As seen in this section, there are a large number of different expressions involving *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu*. While some

collocations are common to all four terms, others are restricted to only one or two of them. This is partially a result of the different etymology of the terms, and partially a result of the different senses of positive social image that they convey, as discussed in the previous section. In the final section of this chapter, particular aspects of the emic notions of face in Japanese that are salient to business interactions are highlighted in order to illustrate the aspects of Japanese face that are important for successful interaction.

### 5. Face in the context of Japanese business interaction

Face has long been regarded as an elusive concept that defies definitive explanation. Yet while it does encompass a complex network of inter-related meanings, a number of key features of *kao* (and related terms) in the context of Japanese business interaction have emerged from the preliminary analysis undertaken in this chapter. It has become clear that the multiple faces of an individual and/or group are co-constructed through external, public evaluations of particular criteria by a certain audience. In other words, *kao* (and related terms) are based on the perceptions of "what others (can) show they think of me/my group." The salience of these multiple faces depends on the context, in particular the setting (e.g. social, educational or workplace settings), and the relationship between the interactants (e.g. superior-subordinate, degree of intimacy and so on).

The external, public evaluations that underlie *kao*, *menboku*, *taimen* and *mentsu* can only be made by a particular audience. While tripping over in front of a stranger may be embarrassing, for example, it does not normally lead to a loss of *kao*. The qualifications for being part of this audience thus depend on one's position or place, and the setting. In business settings, others within the company, or people with whom the company interacts form the core of the audience underlying the states of, and changes to, *kao* (and related terms).

<sup>11</sup> See Haugh and Hinze (2003) for further application of this metalanguage to the notion of 'face.'

However, not everyone in a company can influence a particular person's face. For example, if a subordinate in a company criticizes his boss, the senior colleague will not lose *mentsu*, as what the subordinate thinks about his boss is not important enough to warrant this. The subordinate, on the other, may lose *mentsu*, due his/her disturbance of the social *wa* (lit. circle, links) within the company.

The evaluations underlying *kao* (and related terms) may be actual evaluations or only potential evaluations. In other words, a person's face can be influenced by what others *might* show they think of him or her. For example, a Japanese businessman overseas watching a news report about a Japanese national who has committed a horrific crime might feel he has lost *menboku* in front of the people in the company he is visiting, since this crime has been committed by a Japanese person (*menboku o ushinau*). There may be no one around to say something that indicates they think less of Japanese because of this crime, but the person watching the news report may nevertheless think they have lost *menboku*, because of what he thinks someone else (namely, the non-Japanese in the company he is visiting) can or might show they think of him.

The emic notions of face in Japanese can also be extended beyond individuals to encompass groups to which an individual belongs. The management of face, therefore, not only involve consideration towards the *kao* (and related terms) of individuals, but also the *kao* (and related terms) of groups. Of particular import in business interactions is the *menboku* or *taimen* of a company, and the *kao* of the head of a company, which is also, in practice, synonymous with the 'group face' of that company. The maintenance of this collective *kao* (or *menboku* or *taimen*) is dependent on all those within the business: those who are lower in the organisational hierarchy have the responsibility to build up the *kao* of their superiors (*kao o tateru*), while those higher in the hierarchy have to take responsibility for individuals who have caused shame (Sueda 1993: 96).

Moreover, the vertical nature of interpersonal relations that persists within Japanese business organisations, along with the close association between the *kao* of superiors and the company *kao* (or related terms), also means that superiors within businesses have a larger *kao* or *menboku*, which can be more easily damaged. In other

words, the importance of one's *kao* (and related terms) depends upon one's position or place within a certain business.

Kao (and related terms) can be influenced by the actions of others who are in some way connected to that person. For example, if the head of a large company X introduces members of company Y to members of company Z (which is a subsidiary of company X) for the purpose of establishing a new business relationship, then members of companies Y and Z need to keep on good terms in order to protect the kao of the head of company X (kao o tateru). In other words, the head of company X will lose kao if the relationship between companies Y and Z does not go smoothly. Face in the Japanese context is thus something that can be influenced vicariously.

There are a number of situations in which *kao* (and related terms) can become salient. Japanese face can be 'lost', 'damaged', 'given', 'gained', and 'saved', and it is something that people may be sensitive about, as discussed in the previous section. While face is typically regarded as something that should not be lost (and thus needs to be saved at times), it has emerged from this analysis that 'giving face' (e.g., *kao o tateru*) is a vital element of facework in Japanese business interactions. Indeed, expansion of one's business can depend, in part, on this practice of giving face.

There are a number of ways in which to 'give face' (kao o tateru) in the context of business interactions. One can give compliments by admiring someone's business sense (e.g. Suzuki san wa hontooni senken no me ga arimasu ne [Mr Suzuki, you really have foresight huh?]), or by noticing luxury items they have that reflect their success in business (e.g., Itsumo rippana kuruma ni notteraremasu ne [You are always driving fancy cars huh?]). Giftgiving is another means of 'giving face.' For example, gifts are exchanged at the end of the year (oseibo), and to a lesser extent midyear (chuugen) by Japanese businesses in order to express gratitude for help or favours received during the previous year. One can 'give face' by giving a more expensive gift or buying it from a more prestigious shop. Showing modesty about one's own opinions or ideas, or avoiding criticism of the opinions or ideas of others, particularly when one's position or status is lower than others, is another way in which to 'give face' to those superiors. From this analysis is thus clear

that facework in Japanese business interactions thus involves more than just avoiding insults or embarrassing others.

The notion of face is an important one in Japanese business interactions, yet has thus far received only scant attention in the literature. The main aim of this chapter has been to investigate this crucial concept as it arises in Japanese business interactions, and preliminary analysis has shown that the emic notions of face in (Modern Standard) Japanese, *kao, menboku, taimen* and *mentsu*, encompass a complex web of inter-related meanings. Another aim of this study has been to lay groundwork for more in-depth cross-cultural studies of face in Asian business discourse.

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