Editorial: Face in interaction

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1. Introduction: Face in interaction

1.1. Face, politeness and interaction

Face has become firmly established as a key concept not only in pragmatics but also in anthropology, sociolinguistics, communication studies, sociology, psychology, and other related fields. Yet while it was Goffman (1955) who first introduced the notion, it has been Brown and Levinson's (1987) application of face in the context of politeness theory that has dominated much of the debate thus far. Such discussions have often centred on the validity of Brown and Levinson's notion of face for explicating politeness across various cultural contexts (Gu 1990; Ide 1989; Matsumoto 1988; Nwoye 1992; Pizziconi, 2003). The continuing controversy as to whether or not honorifics in Modern Standard Japanese are indeed examples of a failure of Brown and Levinson's theory is a case in point. On the one hand, there is the often cited argument by Matsumoto (1988) that "what is of paramount importance to a Japanese is not his/her territory [negative face], but the position in relation to others in the group and his/her acceptance by others" (p.405). On the other hand, other scholars have argued that Brown and Levinson's notion of face *can* in fact be applied to the study of honorifics, and thus politeness, in Modern Standard Japanese (Fukuda and Asato, 2004; Fukushima, 2000; Ishiyama, 2009; Usami, 2002). In these latter approaches, however, Brown and Levinson's notions of positive and negative face are reduced to an undifferentiated notion that can be "lost" or "saved" (Haugh, 2005: 44). It appears that what may actually be fuelling such (endless) controversies is the continued conflation of politeness with face. In this special issue, then, while acknowledging the important role face plays in politeness and impoliteness research, it is suggested that the time has come for face to be theorized on its own terms. In this way, echoing Bargiela- Chiappini's (2003) re-opening of discussion about face, (new) insights may be gained into these (old) debates.

   In making this move towards a theory of face that is (albeit temporarily) divorced from this focus on (im)politeness, we suggest that there are a number of salient issues. The first encompasses the place of folk or emic notions of face in a theory of face. While it is largely accepted that face involves culture-specific elements (see, for instance, de Kadt, 1998; Haugh and Hinze, 2003; Haugh 2007; Koutlaki, 2002; Mao, 1994; Ruhi and Işık, 2007; Yu, 2003), the way in which a broader theory of face can accommodate such folk theories, without being unduly driven by them, remains an open question. As Haugh (2009: 5) has recently argued, however, making recourse to folk or emic notions of face without a proper consideration of their ultimate grounding in interaction may simply led to unwelcome reification of such notions (see also Chang and Haugh, forthcoming).

   A second debate, which is only alluded to in this special issue, centres on the relationship between face and the notion of identity. This move towards conceptualising face in the context of a more general concern for identity in interaction has already been the focus of a recent special issue in *Journal of Pragmatics* (Spencer-Oatey and Ruhi, 2007). It is worth noting, however, that this shift towards conceptualising face as a concern for identity raises the question of whether research on face can be (or need be) distinguished in any meaningful way

from broader work on identity (Haugh, 2009: 3). The distinction that is generally drawn between face and identity rests on characterising face as "a person's immediate claims about 'who s/he is' in an interaction" (Heritage, 2001: 48), which is contrasted with the "more enduring features of personal identity" (ibid.: 48). This follows from Goffman's (1955) much cited claim that a "person's face clearly is something that is not lodged in or on his body, but rather something that is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter" (p. 214). The problem facing this distinction is that, on the one hand, identity has increasingly been conceptualised as rooted in interaction and thus less enduring than previously thought (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al, 2005), while, on the other hand, according to emic or folk conceptualisations, face is often seen as enduring across interactions unless otherwise challenged, as in the case of *mianzi/lian* in Chinese (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 102-103), for instance. The call for a greater focus on relationships as the "primary locus of social organisation," and thus a "key focus for pragmatics" (Enfield, 2009: 60) suggests a possible way forward in perhaps resolving some of these issues around the definition of face (see also Arundale 2006, this volume).

These debates surrounding the place of face both in interaction and across interactions, and its conceptualisation vis-à-vis both emic notions and identity, thus lead us to (re)consider the recent call for a shift back to Goffman's original conceptualisation in theorizing face (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; Spencer-Oatey, 2005, 2007; Watts, 2003). Such a move is arguably not without its problems either. Although Bargiela-Chiappini (2003) called for researchers to re-visit Goffman's work on face, she went on to point out that Goffman's notion of face was intended for examining interaction in North American contexts, and so is ultimately rooted in a view of social actors who are concerned with protecting or enhancing their own self-image (p.1463). Moreover, as Arundale (2009: 37-40) has recently argued, on closer examination, it becomes apparent that Goffman conceptualised face as a personal or individual possession that arises through pre-established patterns of action (see also Schegloff, 1988). In particular, while Goffman (1955) alluded to the importance of interaction in suggesting that face is "diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter" (p.214), his conceptualisation of face ultimately remains firmly embedded in the cognition of individuals. This becomes clearer when one examines what precedes the above often cited quote: "A person may be said to *have*, or *be in*, or *maintain* face when the line he effectively takes presents an image of him that is internally consistent, that is supported by judgments and evidence conveyed by other participants, and that is confirmed by evidence conveyed through impersonal agencies in the situation" (Goffman, 1955: 213-214, original emphasis). Here Goffman conceptualises face as image that must be "internally consistent" (i.e., what I think of me) and "supported by judgments" displayed by others (i.e., what I think you think of me), both of which point towards the cognition of self and others. Thus, as Arundale (2009) goes on to argue, while "Goffman's account of face and facework was an innovative application of the theoretical resources available in the 1950s[, s]ubsequent developments in research and theory make apparent that his explanation is no longer viable and alternative frameworks are needed for studying the phenomena to which he called attention" (p.40; see also Heritage, 2001: 49). In revisiting Goffman's (1955) insights about face, then, the question arises as to how we might move beyond broader disputes about the validity of explanations of social behaviour rooted in the cognition of individuals versus explanations that make recourse to norms shared across sociocultural groups. It is the aim of this special issue to consider just that. It is proposed that by placing the

intervening level of interaction at the centre of the analysis of face we may reinvigorate research in this area.

It might appear, then, at first glance, that in placing an increased emphasis on interaction, we are advocating a shift towards an approach to face grounded in ethnomethodology or conversation analysis in this issue. Indeed, face or face-threats have been mentioned in passing by conversation analysts, including in the context of preference organisation (Heritage, 1984: 268; Heritage and Raymond, 2005: 16; Lerner, 1996: 303), turn-taking (Chevalier, 2009; Hutchby, 2008: 226-227), repair (Robinson, 2006: 155; Svennevig, 2008: 347), epistemic authority (Heritage and Raymond, 2005), and social actions such as "getting acquainted" (Svennevig, 1999). The fact that conversation analysts have invoked either Brown and Levinson's (1987) or Goffman's (1955) notions of face thus far, however, is in our view problematic, as on closer analysis it becomes apparent that the epistemological and ontological assumptions underlying both these conceptualisations of face are not consistent with those to which conversation analysts or ethnomethodologists are explicitly committed (Arundale, 2009; Schegloff, 1988). One issue is that both Goffman's (1955) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) notions of face are embedded within an intention-based, transmission model of communication, which is inconsistent with a social constructionist or interactional view of communication as a joint and collaborative activity. This potentially gives rise to theoretical incoherence in that conversation analysts assume a constructivist epistemology, yet they are utilising a notion of face embedded within an objectivist epistemology (cf. Svennevig and Skovholt, 2005). Another issue for conversation analysts or ethnomethodologists is that the analyst's perspective is elevated above that of the participants themselves, since both Brown and Levinson and Goffman are committed to an ontology where the analyst alone decides what kind of face(work) has arisen in the interaction. In neither approach, then, do we see how the participants' understandings might be incorporated into the analysis. Thus, if we are really committed to an analysis of face in interaction, the conceptualisation of face needs to be shifted to an epistemology grounded in social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Garfinkel, 1967), where "meaning comes into existence and out of our engagement with the realities in our world" (Crotty, 1998: 8), and an ontology grounded in interpretivism (Sacks, 1992), "where social reality is regarded as the product of processes by which social actors negotiate the meanings for actions and situations" (Crotty, 1998: 11). In the papers that follow, the implications of such a frameshift for both theorizing and analysing face are considered.

Before doing so, however, it is important to clarify exactly what is meant by interaction. In its most fundamental sense, interaction refers to situations in which two or more people communicate. Face is uncontroversially interactional in this sense in that face necessarily involves evaluation by others, which in turn presupposes that interaction has indeed taken place (Arundale, 1999; Haugh and Hinze, 2003; Ho, 1976). The move in pragmatics - albeit not always accepted - towards examining samples of real-life interaction is thus largely consistent with a conceptualisation of face as interactional in this ordinary sense. However, interaction can also be understood in a more technical sense, namely, as the reciprocal influence two or more persons have on each other in communicating, through which fundamentally non-summative outcomes emerge (that is, meanings which are not necessarily synonomous with what the speaker might have intended nor with what the recipient might have understood) (Arundale, 2006: 196). The papers in this special issue all analyse face in interaction, but vary somewhat in the way in which they conceptualise

interaction and thus in their approach to analysing face. We believe the range of approaches represented here mirrors ongoing debates about the importance of interaction for pragmatics more broadly.

1.2. Face in interaction: Overview of the issue

The volume opens with the lead paper by Robert Arundale, "Constituting face in interaction: face, facework, and interactional achievement," where the author outlines an alternative theory of face and facework grounded in social constructionism and interpretivism, termed Face Constituting Theory. Arundale first argues that sequence and recipient design, two key notions in conversation analysis, have been frequently overlooked in studies of face, and so proposes that the analysis of face should be framed within a broader interactional achievement model of communication, namely, the Conjoint Co-Constituting Model of Communication. Within this broader model, face is theorized as participants' understandings of relational connectedness and separateness which are conjointly co-constituted in the course of the interaction, while facework is reconceptualised as evaluations made by participants of face interpretings as threatening, supportive, or in stasis in the course of designing and comprehending utterances. In other words, face is conceptualised in terms of the relationship that is interactionally achieved between two or more persons, rather than a person-centred construct such as Goffman's (1955) claimed self-image/social identity, or Brown and Levinson's (1987) social wants. The paper concludes with careful analysis that locates face in interaction. Arundale's key contribution lies in drawing together the long research traditions of pragmatics, conversation analysis, and (North American) communication studies to construct an alternative theory of face that provides a rich and complex framework in which researchers may further explore face(work) across languages and cultures.

The next paper, 'Jocular mockery, affiliation, and face' by Haugh draws from Face Constituting Theory in exploring a particular type of teasing, namely jocular mockery, where the speaker somehow diminishes something of relevance to self, other, or a third party not present, but does so in a non-serious or jocular frame. Through an analysis of representative instances of jocular mockery drawn from interactions between Anglo-Australians, the author argues that not only can jocular mockery be interpreted as aligning or disaligning with the previous action, and thus index an affiliative or disaffiliative stance, but is consequential for the evolving relationships of the participants. It is in this latter sense that face is invoked in the subsequent analysis. Haugh further proposes that while jocular mockery may occasion evaluations of face interpretings as both threatening and supportive, the interactional achievement of jocular mockery is ultimately coordinate with the conjoint co-constitution of interpretings of connection face. He also suggests that face interpretings may be involved in recipient design, and thus face is also arguably co-constitutive of interaction. Haugh concludes that an approach where face is regarded as emerging not only from single interactions in isolation but rather evolves over the course of relationships situated in a broader societal context necessitates a consideration by the analyst of the broader historicity of face.

The third paper, "Teasing and ambivalent face in Japanese multi-party discourse" by Geyer explores teasing and face in another cultural context, namely faculty meetings held at secondary schools in Japan. The author draws from both discursive psychology, where face is theorized as an interactional self-image discursively constructed through particular contacts, and conversation analytic approaches to

teasing in interaction, to undertake a detailed analysis of two particular teasing sequences. Geyer argues that teasing sequences ultimately involve instances where tacit norms of what is considered appropriate (or not) become observable in discourse. In invoking discursive norms, facework is reframed as an argumentative process where one's face ascription can be contested and altered, in this instance through teasing. Geyer's paper thus provides an interesting contrast to the previous paper on jocular mockery, not only in the sense that different cultural and situational contexts are involved, but perhaps more importantly in relation to the theme of this issue. By comparing Haugh's preceding paper with Geyer's paper, we can see how the analysis of a similar phenomenon from two closely related approaches, namely a pragmatics grounded in conversation analysis in the case of the former, and an ethnographic approach grounded in the commitments of discursive psychology and conversation analysis in the case of the latter, may develop in quite different ways.

The fourth paper, "Face as an indexical category in interaction" by Ruhi explores the ways in which face and self-presentational concerns, which are often backgrounded in interaction might be teased out by the analyst. It is also argued that since what is unsaid and thus "unobserved" nevertheless indexes and so gives structure to what is said, it may therefore be consequential for the analysis of face. The importance of historicity, in the sense of individual, sequential and historical time, is emphasised by Ruhi as being crucial to an indepth analysis of face as well. It follows from these two claims that studies of face in interaction need to look beyond the local talk. Through a detailed analysis of interactions surrounding photo-taking at a Turkish wedding, Ruhi shows how the analysis of face may draw from 'parallel documents', namely data that stands in indexical relations to situated interaction. She concludes by arguing that face is ultimately a categorisation of self in interaction, and thus a theory of face grounded in interaction would benefit from exploring insights from membership categorisation analysis.

The next paper by Samra-Fredericks, "Ethnomethodology and the moral accountability of *inter*action: navigating the conceptual terrain of 'face' and face-work" continues exploring the possible contributions ethnomethodology can make to studies of face. She argues that ethnomethodology provides the grounds for more clearly articulating what might constitute the resources, practices, procedures and expectations underlying face(work). In doing so she warns against approaches that might (inadvertently) allow face to develop into a "short-cut concept" that overlays or even hides considerable moral complexity. Face is reframed in her paper from the perspective of membership categorisation, that is, as involving attending to sequential relevancies and the inferential practices of participants intermeshed with background constitutive expectancies. In this way, then, we can see how an approach drawing from ethnomethodology might develop and thereby enrich our understanding of face in interaction.

The final paper by Grainger, Mills and Sibanda, "'Just tell us what to do': South African face and its relevance to intercultural communication" explores yet another facet involved in theorizing face, namely, (inter)cultural variation. The analysis draws from yet another approach to discourse, namely, interactional sociolinguistics where close attention to the details of conversational structure and sequence is complemented by invoking relevant details of the situational context in interpreting naturally occurring interaction between a Zimbabwean community artist who is leading a choir and British members of the choir. While the interaction occurs in English, the authors argue that there is evidence that the facework and politeness which arise are influenced by the different understandings of participants' face needs

in this context. They suggest that the Zimbabwean choir leader's interactional style is constituent with a particular form of paying respect (*hlonipha*) and the contrasting belief that we are all interconnected through our humanity (*ubuntu*). In invoking culture-specific, emic notions in the analysis of face(work), then, the authors illustrate how sociocultural dimensions of face can be explored within an interactional framework.

In summary, then, while the papers in this issue all explore face in interaction, the different ways in which interaction itself is approached by the authors impacts on their analyses of face, leading to a diverse range of issues being raised for further debate, including the role of emic notions of face and culture, the relationship between self, identity and face, and the question of just how to account for the inherent historicity of face not only within interactions, but also across interactions, within a broader societal context. In a recent special issue entitled "About face", Jacob Mey (2003) called for us "to go critical about face and politeness, and examine those time-honoured concepts anew" (p.1451). While we have only focused on the first half of this challenge, this special issue is nevertheless offered as a move to do just that: to re-examine the time-honoured concept of face in the context of interaction.

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