

Chapter 2

Research on Face in Communication Studies

2.1 Purpose of This Chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on face in communication studies and related fields and point out the importance of shedding light on affective aspects of face. Goffman is often regarded as a forerunner of research on face. Based on Goffman and subsequent scholars, in the field of communication, how communication is governed by ‘interaction rituals’ and how the orientation of face differs culturally have been discussed. By looking at the origin and functions of face in China¹ and Japan, the necessity of exploring the affective aspects of face is suggested.

2.2 The Perception of Face

When it comes to research on face, Goffman (1959, 1963, 1967) is frequently cited. Although the concept of face has its origin in China (Thomas, 1995), it is essential to review Goffman’s definition of face as it is widely used. In Goffman’s (1967) definition, face is ‘an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes’ (p. 5). Although a possible revision of the definition will be suggested later in the present study, Goffman’s (1967) definition is a starting point to review the construct of face. According to Goffman (1959), social interactions are based on the facework or interpersonal work one does to save one’s own and the other’s face. Goffman’s (1959, 1967) notion of face has the following premises: (1) One values one’s own and the other’s face; (2) one usually maintains or saves one’s own and the other’s

¹In the present study, ‘China’ refers to the mainland of China until PRC was established basically, while the People’s Republic of China (PRC) refers to the country established in 1949 on the mainland of China. Moreover, ‘Chinese’ refers to those who have Chinese as ethnicity. Depending on necessity, extra notes will be added.

face; (3) when one loses face, one tries to restore one's own face; and (4) when one loses face, the other party present in the situation tries to help the first party restore the lost face. For instance, in an embarrassing situation (Sueda & Wiseman, 1992), the first party tries to alleviate a sense of embarrassment, and the people surrounding the first party help him/her alleviate his/her sense of embarrassment, for example, by making a joke, making an excuse or apologising. Thus, a series of verbal and nonverbal behaviours that help people to cope with a face-threatening situation make up what Goffman calls facework (Goffman, 1955, 1956, 1967).

Goffman's analysis of face and facework came from symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). Mead (1934) made a distinction between the 'I' as a unique individual and the 'me' as the internalised attitudes of significant others. By communicating with others, we monitor and correct our own behaviour through the eyes of others, and in so doing we create our own selves. The central part of Goffman's discussion concerned 'me' as a social being. He was interested in how an individual is viewed by others. His way of handling 'self' has been assessed rather negatively by some scholars (e.g. MacIntyre, 1981). It seems to these scholars that Goffman denied the possibility of keeping the core part of oneself in the framework of postmodern society, where personal meaninglessness pervades as a problem, as suggested by Giddens (1991). On the other hand, a symbolic interactionist, Shibutani (1961), claims that an individual's framework of behaviours is the set of standards of the group he or she belongs to and that an individual can be creative enough to act independently of the group standards. In taking the same dramaturgical model as Goffman, Harré² (1979) places more emphasis on the process of role making and the individual's intentions than does Goffman.

As shown above, there are variations among the scholars of symbolic interactionism in the way how they approach to 'self'. MacIntyre (1981) concentrated on only one aspect of Goffman's work, and his general criticism may not apply to the symbolic interactionist tradition as a whole. Scheff (1990), for example, would agree with MacIntyre's reservations about postmodernist theory while regarding Goffman's work as very valuable.

2.3 Research on Face in Communication Studies

Although Goffman's argument is subject to criticism inside and outside of the field of symbolic interactionism, it has been applied in various fields such as sociology, social psychology, communication studies and sociolinguistics. Developing Goffman's notion of face, Brown and Levinson (1978) present two additional foci: positive face and negative face. The former refers to the basic claim over the

²It is worth noticing that with other scholars, Rom Harré paid attention to affective factors later and created the positioning theory, which goes beyond the perception of 'identities' to include emotional states such as 'I am sad' and 'I am saddened by him' (Harré & Monghaddam, 2003; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999).

projected self-image to be approved by others. The behaviour that meets one's or the other's positive-face needs is considered as positive politeness. The latter refers to the basic claim to territories, personal reserves and rights to nondistractedness. The behaviour that meets one's or the other's negative face needs is considered as negative politeness. The construct of face has been the central theme in one branch of the field of linguistics, pragmatics, since Brown and Levinson presented the notion of politeness (Thomas, 1995) and various researchers in social science have explored politeness in various contexts (e.g. Chang, 2001; Dillard, Wilson, Tusing, & Kinney, 1997; Hummert & Mazloff, 2001; Lambert, 1996; Lee-Wong, 2000; Pearson & Lee, 1991; Pedlow, Wales, & Sanson, 2001). This indicates in itself that the concept of face is present universally.

Although they admit that the construct of face pervades in any society, some scholars pay attention to cultural differences in the orientation of face (e.g. Chang & Holt, 1994; Scollon & Scollon, 1994; Shimanoff, 1994; Ting-Toomey, 1988). As a leading study, Ting-Toomey (1988) pays attention to cultural differences such as that of high-context versus low-context communication (Hall, 1976), collectivism and individualism (Triandis, 1995) and power distance (Hofstede, 1984, 2003) and analyses how these cultural differences affect the orientation of face. According to Hall, cultures vary on a continuum that ranges from high to low context. People in high-context cultures tend to use high-context messages where they tend to share a cultural background and value, and most of the meaning is suggested by the physical setting or nonverbal messages. On the other hand, people in low-context cultures tend to use explicit verbal messages as they are not familiar with each other's cultural background and value.

Closely related to the continuum from high-context to low-context communication is the dimension of the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism. Triandis (1995) claims that collectivism is a social pattern where individuals are closely linked to one another and see themselves as parts of collectives such as family, co-workers, tribe and nation. On the other hand, individualism is a social pattern where individuals are loosely linked to one another and perceive themselves as independent of collectives. Moreover, collectivists are motivated by their norms and duties to the collectives and give priority to the goals of the collectives over their own personal goals. On the other hand, individualists are motivated by their own needs, rights, preferences and the contracts they established with others and put priority to their own personal goals over the goals of the collectives. Cultures also differ in the degree to which they view status inequalities as good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust and fair or unfair (Hofstede, 1984, 2003). Ting-Toomey explored how these cultural patterns influence the orientation of face. Considering these dimensions of cultural differences, Ting-Toomey (1988) claims that in individualistic cultures such as are found in Western countries, where one tries to keep one's personal rights or autonomy, negative-face needs are greater than positive-face needs. In collectivistic cultures such as those in Asian countries, however, where one tries to gain the approval of others, positive-face needs are greater than negative-face needs.

Ting-Toomey and subsequent scholars (Ting-Toomey, 1988, 1993, 1994; Ting-Toomey, & Cocroft, 1994) have developed the face negotiation theory and

shown how cultural differences in the orientation of face are reflected in the way people manage conflicts. The theory is based on two assumptions as follows: (1) We negotiate our own and others' face by communicating with others in any culture, and (2) in a given situation, the meaning of one's face is interpreted differently and one's facework differs depending on the cultural framework. Thus, the theory implies that it is important for people from different cultural backgrounds to respect others' face because there is a potential danger of threatening the other party's face.

As shown above, while the theory at the beginning (Ting-Toomey, 1988) was built under the framework of cultural differences such as that of collectivism versus individualism (Triandis, 1995), high-context versus low-context communication (Hall, 1976) and power distance (Hofstede, 1984, 2003). The theory was later extended to include Kitayama and Markus's (1995) analysis of the cultural impact on self as a framework. According to them, the self is independent and autonomous, and the boundary and the separateness of individuals are assumed in Western societies. On the other hand, the self is contextually determined and interdependent in Asian societies. Connectedness is valued in these societies, and people try to meet their duties, obligations and social responsibilities to be connected with others.

Therefore, the face negotiation theory suggests that the more the society leans towards the dimensions of individualistic, low-context communication and low power distance index such as found in Western society, the more people value self-face, and in resolving a conflict, they tend to claim their own interests and engage in a direct communication style. On the other hand, the more the society leans towards the dimensions of collectivistic, high-context communication and high power distance index as found in Asian society, the more people value other-face or mutual face, and in resolving a conflict, they tend to engage in indirect communication styles such as compromising, accommodating or avoiding (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2007).

Lim and Bowers (1991) reorganised Brown and Levinson's (1978) construct of face and presented three foci of face. They divided Brown and Levinson's positive face into two categories: fellowship face and competence face. The former concerns one's needs to be included and the latter concerns one's needs to have one's abilities recognised and respected. They retained Brown and Levinson's notion of negative face and labelled it autonomy face.

Applying this theory of three foci of face, Cupach and Imahori (1993) presented identity management theory. Although Cupach and Imahori use the terms 'face' and 'identity' interchangeably, they present 'face' as a frame of interpersonal/intercultural communication. In this theory, Cupach and Imahori argue that in any interpersonal or intercultural interactions, one's competence is partially determined by how well one balances three kinds of dialectic³ tensions in respect of one's interlocutors' face. First, in supporting fellowship face, one may threaten

³While 'dialectic' generates unity and the creation of something new out of opposing components (Ting-Toomey, 1993), Cupach and Imahori (1993) use the term 'dialectic' to mean 'conflicting'. Therefore, I use this term to refer to 'opposing' or 'conflicting' in the present study.

the other's autonomy face and his/her need to be separated from the rest of the group. For example, foreign managers visited Japan on business. At the beginning, they were grateful to their Japanese counterparts' invitations to parties and activities besides business meetings. However, by the time the foreign managers went home, they had become irritated and they wished the Japanese side would leave them alone. This case indicates how much the Japanese side tried to associate with the American side by getting together, as well as how much autonomy the American side needed.

The second dialectic tension exists between competence face and autonomy face. For example, many *kikokushijo*⁴ (Japanese returnees) hate being called *kikokushijo* because the word has a negative stereotype, such as they are poor at Japanese or incompetent in building interpersonal relationships in Japanese society (Shibuya, 2001). Some of them wish to have the autonomy to be identified as an individual or as a member of another group and think if they were treated as such, they would not be negatively evaluated by people surrounding them.

The third dialectic tension exists between autonomy face and either fellowship or competence face. One of the major sources of communicative conflict between the Japanese and Chinese is a particular speech act such as apology or compliment (Sueda, 1993, 1995). When a Chinese does not thank a Japanese, the Japanese person tends to interpret this as 'Chinese being rude' or 'Chinese being incompetent in communication'. Based on Japanese rules, it is important to keep '*Shitashiki nakanimo reigi ari* (even between close friends, we had better keep a certain distance to keep a good relationship. Or the closer you are to your friend, the less trouble you should make.)'. However, the Chinese does not give thanks because he/she does not think they should do so. Based on Chinese rules, if interlocutors are relationally close, saying 'thank you' is too polite to retain or develop their relationship.

As shown above, it is worthwhile to explore the mechanism of how different face needs interact with one another or how we keep a balance among the three needs, fellowship, competence and autonomy needs. This will be discussed further in Chaps. 6 and 7.

2.4 The Origin of Face

2.4.1 Chinese Face

2.4.1.1 Historical Development of the Perception

As shown above, research on face has developed in the field of communication studies for the past 20 years, and it has centred around how communicators interact over their own or others' face and what kind of rules governs the interaction. What

⁴The definition will be given later in Chap. 4.

is missing from the literature is an account of affective aspects of face. Reviewing Chinese scholars' contribution (e.g. Bond & Hwang, 1986, 1996; Hwang, 2000; Jia, 2001) should allow me to highlight the missing element in North American interpretations of the perception of face.

As noted above, the concept of face in the sense used here originally came from China, and the term face in the sense of reputation started to be used in English in 1876 (Thomas, 1995). As I will elaborate in explaining my position on conducting research in the following chapter, I strongly believe that face is a universal perception and experience and that what constitutes the perception or experience may vary depending on various factors. Thus, in exploring the original meaning of the term face and the behaviours centring on the construct of face in Asian cultures, I do not intend to stress the cultural particularity of face. I rather intend to enrich my understanding of the perception of face and the dynamics of facework more generally.

In Chinese culture, the construct of face includes two aspects, *lian* and *mianzi*. The former represents the confidence of society in the integrity of a person's moral character. King (Vagg, 1998) suggests that this aspect of face is qualitative, that individuals are either moral or not and that this judgement is based on their individual integrity. The latter represents a reputation achieved through success and ostentation and is quantitative in nature (Bond & Hwang, 1986, 1996). Another difference might be that the former does not need an audience for it to be lost while the latter does (Bond & Hwang, 1986). That is, *mianzi* can be won or lost only when an audience approves or denies, and *lian* can be lost without having an audience present.

However, some scholars consider these two, *lian* and *mian*, inseparable, and among them is Jia (2001), who illustrates the developmental history of *lian/mian* concepts. According to Jia, the character *mian* (面), which meant status and fame, was originated in the fourteenth century BCE while *lian* (臉) was originated in the Yuan Dynasty (1206–1368). It is most likely that *mianzi* (面子) derived from the term, *mianju* (面具 literally means face tool), which was used in ceremonies as a means to communicate with the spirits and deities in primitive Chinese society. It later also functioned as an identity card for each tribe, and if people lost *mianju*, they felt threatened or shameful as losing *mianju* meant losing an identity card to verify the membership of the pertinent community.

Between 551 BCE, when Confucius was born, and the early nineteenth century, CE *lian/mian* became a central part of Chinese people's social and family life within the framework of Confucianism (Jia, 2001). Jia does not believe that Confucianism is the only source of the penetration of the concept of *lian/mian* but that it plays an important role in Chinese people's social and family life. This echoes Hu and Grove's (1991) claims that the notion of *mianzi* developed and was perpetuated under Confucianism. *Lian/mian* concerned basic human feelings such as shame or fear accompanied by social blunders in a close-knit society. Also, it is important to note that *mianzi* bridges between *lian* or inner moral self and *mian* or outer self as evaluated by the society. This may well be understood by the expression,

‘A man needs *mianzi* as a tree needs bark’ (Hwang, 2000; Tao, 1997⁵). *Mianzi* is considered to be important to one’s self-esteem and as a way of expressing one’s social worth. In any situation, people are expected to behave ‘appropriately’ in accordance with the relationship between themselves and their counterparts. This includes the expectation that people should be sensitive about who they are in a hierarchical order in a given situation. Maintaining and maximising one’s fame and dignity, one tries to present one’s social worth in interactions (Tao, 1997).

Between 1800 and 1970, practising *lian/mian* was considered to be difficult but was placed and stabilised as the core of an ‘ideal person’ (Jia, 2001). At the same time observing *lian/mian* and behaving ‘appropriately’ in accordance with one’s position in the hierarchical structure was justified as a means to keep the social order. Then, during social reforms such as the Cultural Revolution, *lian/mian* was criticised and discouraged by intellectuals and political leaders who argued that *lian/mian* had been institutionalised and could be a potential barrier for social reforms (Jia, 2001; Sechiyama, 1996). That was because if people were bound by preserving *lian/mian* and keeping social order, they could never reach a social goal. This also implies how much *lian/mian* involves affective elements.

From the 1980s on, *lian/mian* is neither a rigidly institutionalised norm nor a source of criticism and functions as flexible symbolic capital or social resources (Jia, 2001). People try to get economic or social resources through the informal social structure of *guanxi* (connection).⁶ King (Vagg, 1998) describes *mianzi* as ‘possession of prestige deriving from visible social success and ostentation, tangible achievement in the sense of high honour, high scholarly accomplishment, etc.’ (p. 252). And this aspect of face is quantitative in that individuals have different degrees of social influence based on their face.

Therefore, it is stated that *mianzi* is considered as social or positional face and *lian* as moral face (King & Myers cited in Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998). It is also suggested that these two aspects of face affect one another to a certain degree (Sonoda, 1991) and that a loss of *lian* could incur a loss of *mianzi* on occasions.

However, these two aspects of face cannot be completely interchangeably used. A loss of *mianzi* does not bring shame or disgrace to the individual concerned or his/her family. Furthermore, maintaining one’s or the other’s *mianzi* is more important than being honest about one’s feeling in the relationship (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). For example, even if one is angry with one’s friend, he/she will not express his/her feeling directly and either hide his/her feeling or indirectly imply to the other that he/she is angry. An overview of these constructs is illustrated in Fig. 2.1.

As stated earlier, social resources are distributed in People’s Republic of China (PRC hereafter) through not the formal but the informal network. Having big

⁵This Chinese document was translated into Japanese by Professor Emeritus Shizuka Ide at Aoyama Gakuin University for me.

⁶*Guanxi* means a reciprocal interpersonal relationship where people exchange gifts, foods and mental support (Yang cited in Sonoda, 2001).

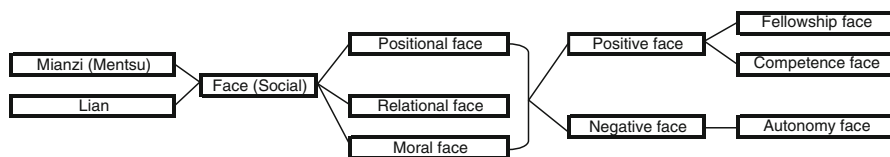


Fig. 2.1 Perception of face⁷

mianzi (face) means the ability to get what one wants in the Communist regime. Thus, people in PRC are much concerned with the dimension of competence face including economic ability (Matsudo, 1989; Nakajima, 1990; Sonoda, 2001). Wang (2006) explains how in PRC capitalist-style economic activity coexists with the continuing power of the Communist Party and how the concept of *mianzi* helps in understanding this. The public officials abuse their power and corruptions prevail through *guanxi*, and often *mianzi* is used strategically to get their business go smoothly. ‘Please give me face this time, and I will give you face next time’ is an expression used for business negotiation in Chinese society (Japan Overseas Enterprises Association, 1992).

2.4.1.2 Variation of Facework

Goffman’s basic premises of facework were presented in Sect. 2.1. Further varieties of facework have been identified. For example, Tao (1997) illustrates ten kinds of facework in the Chinese context as follows.

1. Maintaining one’s fame and dignity, one tries to present one’s tactfulness and gracefulness in interactions and maximise *mianzi*.
2. Using manpower, physical power and money, one tries to make oneself look nice and appeal to others. Sometimes, one sacrifices others’ or one’s own life to maintain one’s own *mianzi* or good public image.
3. In losing *mianzi*, one feels uncomfortable, embarrassed and shamed. Then one tries to restore one’s *mianzi* at all costs, and there are three types of ways to do so. The first tactic is trying to make up for one’s lost *mianzi*. If one himself/herself is responsible for the lost face, he/she tries to stop a potentially *mianzi*-threatening act and explain and justify their act, get an excuse from the first party and try to improve their position. The second tactic is to take revenge if the other party is responsible for the lost *mianzi*. If the other party is an in-group member, the first party will not take revenge overtly by embarrassing the other party, but will do so to an out-group member. The third tactic is self-defence. If the first party cannot either make up for the lost *mianzi* or take revenge, he/she tries not to make a big deal of the event or pretends that nothing has happened.

⁷I modified Figure 2-1 in Sueda (2002, p. 22).

4. To improve one's *mianzi* or one's own image, one tries to do 'apple-polishing' to those who have power by meeting their requests, flattering, complying with them, giving gifts and making the powerful happy. Thus, the powerful, in turn, reward him/her.
5. One can hardly reject requests from the powerful and their relatives. Nor does one criticise the powerful and their relatives.
6. In trying to improve one's relative social status, one tries to show off his/her talents and good quality. One tries one's best to make his/her background, competence, social relation and quality look better. In order to look better than anyone else, he/she tries to appeal to the public.
7. In maintaining status and fame, one has to follow moral standards. If someone violates morality, he/she would be blamed as 'he/she does not need face' or 'he/she has no face'. If one loses *mianzi*, members of the whole group he/she belongs will also lose *mianzi*.
8. You have to know who is higher and lower in the hierarchy and who is powerful. If one wants the powerful to do something for him/her, he/she has to know the powerful person. If your request is accepted, the powerful person gives you *mianzi*.
9. In a very special situation, terminating the relationship and breaking face happens. It may happen between parent and child, brothers and teacher and pupil. For some kind of interests, one gives up on one's face and curses the other party. In its extreme case, there is a war.
10. Having a double *mianzi* means doing one thing at the front stage and doing a totally different thing at the backstage.

Although some of the above-mentioned variations of facework apply elsewhere, these taken as a whole may apply particularly well to the PRC, where there is a huge variance among people, communities and regions in social and economic power and resources and the Communist Party controls advancement (Amako, 2013). However, these strategies are not universally used in any relationship. Chinese ways of doing facework depend on the relationship between interlocutors in a given situation. Hwang (2000) divided Chinese interpersonal relationships into three kinds: expressive ties, mixed ties and instrumental ties. Expressive ties refer to the relationships among family members or very close friends. Mixed ties refer to relationships with acquaintances outside the immediate family. Instrumental ties refer to relationships established for acquiring a specific social resource.

In expressive ties, *mianzi* also refers to one's natural relational obligation for his/her friend (Lu, 1996). Someone may say, 'I have to help my friend because I have *mianzi* for him'. This means that he/she feels it natural to help his/her friend because that is expected from their close relationship. If their relationship is close, they are not aware of the fact that they are exchanging something (Sonoda, 2001). In this category, directness of speech, which is often considered as face threatening, is neither face threatening nor imposing (Lee-Wong, 2000). However, when one fails to fulfil what one is expected to do, he/she will easily get criticised for being inhumane.

In instrumental ties, people put a priority on what they want, and they may treat each other as out-group members and not care about each other's *mianzi*. In mixed ties, people have to balance between the importance of *mianzi* and the importance of their instrumental purpose, and this is where strategies of facework are displayed (Hwang, 2000).

A review of Chinese strategies of facework tells me more than that there are cultural variations. It gives me an insight into the importance of the emotional aspect behind face. That is, the type of facework depends on one's psychological distance from the other party. If interlocutors are emotionally very close, they take their reciprocal relationship for granted, and respecting each other's face is *a priori*. In cases where one jeopardises the other's face, one is considered to be immoral or inhumane. However, negotiation of face will not take place if the interlocutors recognise each other as outsiders; it takes place only when the interlocutors recognise some degree of emotional involvement in their relationship.

2.4.2 Japanese Face

2.4.2.1 Japanese Face in Relation to Chinese Face

With the increase of interaction with the Chinese, the word *mianzi* was introduced to Japan and read as *mentsu* (Inoue, 1977). Several authors suggest that this original sense of face (*mianzi*) was transmitted to Japan and has been adopted as the notion of *tainen*, *kao*, *menboku* or *mentsu* (Haugh, 2005; Morisaki & Gudykunst, 1994; Sueda, 1995; Yabushita, 2004). As Confucianism was adopted in Japan and transformed into a form that Japanese people could accept easily (Chen, 1995), it is not known whether or not the perceptions of *lian/mian* and *mianzi* were transmitted to Japan in such a way that they kept the original meanings, and further study has to be done to explore the process of adapting *lian/mian* and *mianzi* to the Japanese context. However, one of the characteristics of the Japanese perception of face, *mentsu*, is that it is closely related with the Samurai's honour or dignity under feudal systems (Mori, 1989). Therefore, what constitutes Japanese people's face is positional face (Sueda, 1993, 1995, 1998), and what people are concerned with is how appropriately they are treated in accordance with their position.

This is illustrated in one example in the handbook that compiles the experiences of Japanese business people overseas (Japan Overseas Enterprises Association, 1991). A Japanese manager working in Taiwan, named Mr Tanaka, noticed many careless mistakes made by Mr A, who was a local employee. He scolded Mr A in front of everyone else, and he even hit the desk with his fist. Ever since then, few people have greeted Mr Tanaka, and many of his subordinates looked unhappy. The book says that making someone lose face in front of someone else is a bad thing to begin with, and hitting the desk with one's fist is the last thing that should be done. Damaging the other's face in front of someone else is considered a taboo in Chinese society, and it is said that this kind of behaviour is hard to forgive for the Chinese.

In Chinese society, everyone's face must be respected regardless of one's social status (Sueda, 1993). However, in Japanese society overall, one's social status reflects the importance of face. That is, a subordinate has to be concerned about his/her superior's face more than his/her own face. A comparative study of Japanese and US American business people (Sueda & Wiseman, 1992) found that one feels one's face more threatened if his/her mistakes are pointed out by someone lower in social status. That is, managers would feel their face more threatened if their mistakes were pointed out by subordinates than by superiors or peers. Thus, in this case study, Mr Tanaka might have thought that taking care of Mr A's careless mistakes even in front of other people was practically more important than saving his subordinate's face. He could have warned Mr A in a separate room, but this idea never occurred to him.

In another example, one Japanese professor was asked to find a part-time job by a Chinese student. The professor tried very hard to find him/her a part-time job, and then the student took another job offer through another Japanese whom he/she had asked for the same thing (Sueda, 1993 & Sueda in Yabushita, 2004). I asked the participants of my study (Sueda, 1993), and they answered, 'We decide not by the order of the time we asked but by the order of importance of relationship.'⁸ A similar case was also reported by Sonoda (2001).

The above-mentioned professor was upset about the Chinese student who had asked him to help him find a part-time job. Within the hierarchical relationship, the professor is higher than the student in social status. Thus, it is natural for the student to respect his/her professor's face. Moreover, it was the student who asked the professor the favour of finding a part-time job, which is not related with any direct academic support. However, the student took someone else's offer and the professor's face was not respected as much as it should have been, and he became angry that he was not treated as well as he should have been.

This episode also depicts the second characteristic of Japanese *mentsu*: It is not concerned with material benefits. In the previous situation, when the Japanese professor found a part-time job for the student, he could gain respect for having such a large social network and proving how influential he is in the society. However, that does not allow the Japanese professor to get any material benefits associated with having found a job for the student.

2.4.2.2 Face Demonstration in Social Issues and Business

Then, how is face demonstrated in social as well as business contexts in Japan? There was an article from the *Asahi Shimbun* (newspaper) (Tsuji, 2008, August 30), written by Professor Tsuji at Osaka University about 'toilet lunch (*benjo meshi*)'. According to him, this term means having lunch in the toilet in order not to be seen eating alone. That is, when young people have no one to have lunch with, they would

⁸Yabushita (2004, p. 283); the original Japanese version was written by Sueda (1993).

have lunch alone in the toilet. Asking his students about this, he found that quite a few students told him that they would not necessarily do so, but they understand where this behaviour is coming from. It seems that students in general try to find someone to have lunch with at the university cafeteria first, and if they cannot find anyone, they would call or send their friends text messages by their mobile phones. What they do not like is not having lunch alone but being seen having lunch alone. Tsuji surveyed 1,000 people up to 49 years old, and of people between the ages of 20 and 24, only 16 % answered, 'I cannot stand being in a room or having a meal alone.' However, 43 % of the same age bracket answered, 'I cannot stand being considered a lonely person who does not have any friend around.' Interestingly enough, they do not mind having a meal alone at a place far away from the university.

Tsuji further analysed the data and suggested that young people in their early 20s, who are already or are soon going to be in the workforce, tend to pay exceedingly close attention to interpersonal relationships and carefully 'read the air' (*Kuuki o yomu*). Under strong peer pressure, they do not want to be viewed as 'a person having no friends'. Therefore, they try to make sure that their behaviour is not out of place and go along with the flow of the conversation as if they totally agree to what their friends say and return their friends text messages as soon as possible. This may not be a simple illustration of the collectivistic aspect of Japanese people. Instead, the young people illustrated in the article indicate strong fellowship face needs, and these strong fellowship needs are deeply rooted from their childhood.

The details of *ijime* (school bullying)⁹ will not be discussed here, but it may be fair to suggest that one of the key factors in why *ijime* is hard to discover is that those who are bullied have a sense of face (*mentsu*) and do not want to look bullied or appear as having no friends. Children especially do not want their parents to discover the fact that they are being bullied. Nor do they want their parents to think that they are not socially competent, either. If the person has autonomy needs more strongly than his/her fellowship face or competence face needs, he/she may be all right and enjoy the freedom of being alone. However, this is not likely to be the case in Japan.

Then, how is face demonstrated in a business context? Especially since the beginning of 2008, there has been much coverage of food scandals in the Japanese media. In 2000, there was a very bad case of food poisoning, and 14,000 people were made sick by the old milk distributed by Snow Brand (*Japan Times*, July 15, 2000). There were a series of cases, one after another, and people in Japan cannot easily trust Japan-made products any more. Some companies certainly violated laws and put false label on their products to show incorrect expiration dates or shipping places.

⁹According to the governmental census, the number of cases of school bullying that took place and were acknowledged in primary and secondary schools including schools for those who need special education in 2010 was 39,520. If the case becomes very serious, it may lead the bullied person to commit suicide (Asahi Shimbun, Oct. 20, 2012b).

However, there have been no repeat reports about food poisoning lately even though these companies lack business ethics. What they have done cost them their customers' trust and damaged the image of their companies. This is an example of losing a sense of moral value (*lian*) and losing reputation (*mianzi*) and that these two elements of face interact with one another. What these companies tend to do to restore their honour or face is having the head of the company resign. By stepping down, the head of the company will be out of sight of the customers, and in doing so, he/she tries to retain or protect the decent image of the company.

2.5 Summary and Implications

In reviewing the literature on the construct of face and facework, and variations in the presentation of face, five points should be noted. First, the emotion behind face should be further explored. As Scheff (1997) pointed out, Goffman's (1959, 1967) frame of analysis is individual rather than relational, and his central discussion concerns how competently an interlocutor defends or protects one's own face and how competently he/she saves the other party's face in order to give a good 'impression'. Moreover, as shown in the title of his book (Goffman, 1967), face and facework are part of a ritual, which could exist without any emotions. I will return to this point in the next chapter.

However, as scholars (e.g. Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Retzinger, 1991; Rogan & Hammer, 1994; Scheff, 1994; Wilson, 1992) have noted, in any conflictual situation or negotiation setting, how the emotions involved are treated is an important element in the relationship. Ting-Toomey and Cocroft (1994) acknowledge the contribution of Scheff's (1990) research and imply the importance of doing research on the emotion behind face. Scheff (1994, 1997) treats shame as 'the master emotion' (p. 12). In any interpersonal relationship, shame and pride play an important role: pride generates a secure bond while shame generates a threatening bond. Too much shame will cause isolation or alienation while too little shame would cause engulfment (Scheff, 1994). That is, if one is too ashamed of oneself or made to feel ashamed by the society, one is isolated or even alienated. Social integration takes place when people have a sense of pride. I think that how shame is managed and pride is restored in a face-threatening incident is important in any interpersonal relationship and identity negotiation. Scheff's contribution will be discussed further in Chap. 3.

Second, the relationship between the two terms, face and identity, is neither clear nor dynamic in the literature reviewed here. The term face tends to be treated either as a synonym of identity (e.g. Cupach & Imahori, 1993) or as a dependent variable of identity (e.g. Morisaki & Gudykunst, 1994). In the former case, the two terms face and identity are used interchangeably. In the latter case, face needs and facework depend on whether an individual views himself/herself as independent of the situation or interdependent in the situation. The face that is valued in an interdependent society may not be equivalent to the face that is valued in an independent society. What is common in both studies (Cupach &

Imahori, 1993; Morisaki & Gudykunst, 1994) is that face is treated statically. On the contrary, Penman (1994) has a dynamic view of face and facework, and her following argument is insightful.

Facework is not something that we do some of the time, it is something that we unavoidably do all the time – it is the core of our social selves. (Penman, 1994, p. 21)

This comment echoes Scheff's (1994, 1997) argument that shame is the most important social emotion. Based on Penman's (1994) approach, face is neither a dependent variable nor an independent variable in a causal relationship but may be the core part of an individual in developing his/her identities. This process-oriented approach to face and facework is adopted in the present study.

Third, there is a conceptual confusion in that the construct of face tends to be treated as an Asian notion. There are possible two reasons for this confusion. First, as discussed earlier, the concept of face has its origin in China. Although this fact does not necessarily limit the application of the concept to Asia, some researchers (e.g. Chang & Holt, 1994) treat face as an indigenous concept. The other possible reason for this conceptual confusion may be the fact that politeness is often equated with the notion of deference, as Thomas (1995) points out. While deference refers to respect for others by virtue of their higher social status, greater age, etc., politeness is consideration towards others in general (Thomas). Although both of the two terms, politeness and deference, are linked to the notion of face, the notion of deference is distinct linguistically in the form of honorific in countries heavily influenced by Confucianism¹⁰ such as Japan or Korea. For example, according to Asahi Shimbun (July 14, 2012a), a command of interpersonal communication skills including a proper use of honorifics matters a great deal in hunting a job for Japanese university students. Some Japanese universities¹¹ even offer lectures that help students use Japanese honorifics properly. Thus, face can be easily interpreted as being unique to these East Asian countries.

Fourth, although the construct of face exists universally, how it is presented may vary depending on various factors. And these various factors tend to be subsumed by the term culture (e.g. Chang & Holt, 1994; Shimanoff, 1994; Ting-Toomey, 1988). Chang and Holt (1994) claim,

Western understanding of facework is very much influenced by the idea of impression management, reflecting the dominant individualistic value characteristics of Western cultures. This can be contrasted with the Chinese conception of *mianzi* which places more emphasis on the nature of the relationship. (pp. 126–7)

¹⁰According to Sechiyama (1996), Confucianism is retained in its original form more in South Korea or Japan than the People's Republic of China, where Confucianism was discouraged during the Cultural Revolution.

¹¹Hakuhodo, one of the major advertising companies in Japan, conducted a survey on Japanese aged between 18 and 69 and found that 'Enthusiastic about helping students find a job' is ranked as the top reason for being considered as a 'good' university (Asahi Shimbun, July 14, 2012a).

However, as earlier discussed, Chinese people may not be relationship-oriented in an instrumental relationship. Other factors than ‘culture’, such as the distribution of social and economic resources, may influence face and facework. For example, in the PRC, social resources are distributed through not the formal social structure but the informal human network. Thus, how much an individual can gain what he/she wants and needs depends on his/her social evaluation or worth (Hwang, 2000; Sonoda, 2001; Sueda, 1993, 1995).

Last, researchers still have a difficulty resolving the relationship between the specific and general cultural frameworks in the study of face. In their comparative study between the USA and Japan in the perception of face, Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994) claim,

Only when this groundwork is completed will we be in a position to discuss conceptual equivalence of face and facework in Japan and the USA. (p. 83)

Although it is important to explore the conceptual equivalence of concepts in different social contexts, I attempt to observe a cultural specific phenomenon and analyse the phenomenon to explore possibly universal rules for social interaction and communication. Thus, in the present study, I try to ‘observe locally and analyse globally’.

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