

Epilogue: The first-second order distinction in face and politeness research
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Abstract

The papers in this special issue on *Chinese 'face' and im/politeness* collectively raise very real challenges for the ways in which the now well-known distinction between first order and second order approaches is conceptualized and operationalized by face and politeness researchers. They highlight the difficulties we inevitably encounter when analyzing face and im/politeness across languages and cultures, in particular, those arising from (1) the use of English as a scientific metalanguage to describe concepts and practices in other languages and cultures, (2) the inherent ambiguity and conservatism of folk concepts such as face and politeness, and (3) the difficulties in teasing out face and im/politeness as important phenomena in their own right. In this paper it is suggested that these issues arise as a consequence of the relative paucity of critical discussion of the first-second order distinction by analysts. It is argued that the first-second order distinction needs to be more carefully deconstructed in regards to both its epistemological and ontological loci. It is suggested that equating first order approaches with an “emic” perspective and second order approaches with a “scientific” perspective masks a number of important distinctions that are too often glossed over by those who make claims to being either first or second order researchers. It is concluded that rather than treating the first-second order distinction as a simplistic dichotomy, it is much more productive to deploy the multiple loci of the first-second order distinction in clarifying the various focal points for analysis and theorization in face and politeness research.

Keywords: Face, im/politeness, epistemology, ontology, Chinese, culture

1. Introduction

The field of politeness research owes a particular debt to Chinese folk discourse on interpersonal behaviour. It is from this discourse that a theoretical notion of face was developed first by Goffman (1955, 1967) in its own right, and later deployed through the notion of facework in accounting first for politeness (e.g., Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987), and then subsequently in accounting for impoliteness (e.g., Culpeper 1996; Bousfield 2008). More recent theorization of im/politeness, or “relational work” more broadly, continues this tradition of drawing upon the notion of face to account for interpersonal phenomena (Locher and Watts 2005, 2008; Spencer-Oatey 2005, 2007; Arundale 2006, 2010a; Culpeper 2011; cf. Mills 2003). The connections between this theoretical tradition and the Chinese folk notion of face is readily apparent when one considers the basic collocations involving face in Chinese that underpin much of the latter theorization of im/politeness. As illustrated in Table 1 below, the major face collocations underpinning early theories of face and politeness all have equivalents with Chinese collocations (with the notable exception of face threat), a fact that can be traced to the formative influence of Hu’s (1944) explication of the Chinese folk notions of *miànzi* and *liǎn* on Goffman’s (1955, 1967) seminal work on face.

Table 1: Face collocations in Chinese and English

Hu (1944)	Goffman (1955)	Brown and Levinson (1987)
<i>yǒu miànzi</i>	maintain face (in face, have face)	maintain face
<i>bǎoquán/liú miànzi</i>	save face	save face
<i>gěi miànzi</i>	give/gain face	enhance face
<i>diū miànzi</i>	lose/lost face (wrong face, out of face)	lose face
---	threaten face	face threat

Yet despite acknowledgment of the way in which Chinese folk notions have contributed to academic theorization of face and politeness (Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Haugh and Hinze 2003; Haugh 2005; Terkourafi 2007), there have until recent years only been a limited number of attempts to better understand the place of face, politeness, impoliteness and other relational phenomena in Chinese interaction (e.g., Chen 1990/91; Gu 1990; Mao 1994; Lee-Wong 2000; Pan 2000; Ye 2004; Hinze 2005), with most of these limited to studies of contemporary Mandarin Chinese.¹ There has, however, more recently been a growing surge of interest in interpersonal or relational behaviour in (Mandarin) Chinese in both contemporary and historical Chinese (Kádár 2007a, b, 2008, 2010; Kádár and Pan 2011; Pan and Kádár 2011; Ruhi and Kádár 2011), as well as in other “dialects” such as Taiwanese (Chang and Haugh 2011, forthcoming), and Hong Kong Cantonese (Gibbons 2008; Pan 2011). The papers in this special issue of the *Journal of Politeness Research* are thus a very welcome addition to this rapidly growing body of work, which should be of interest not only to scholars of Chinese, but also to politeness and face researchers more generally. The papers break new ground in regards to variability in perceptions of im/politeness across a speech community (Pan), the relationship between perceptions of intent and ostensibly polite speech acts (He), the role of discourse structure in projecting politeness (Kádár), the role of different notions of self in framing polite discourse (Lee), and the fundamental question of what differentiates face from im/politeness (Hinze). The rich diversity of focus of these papers illustrates the growing interdisciplinary nature of politeness and face research, but also raises questions about the inter-connections between various relational and sociocognitive phenomena, and how to best theorize face and politeness as lying at the intersection of these.

Another reason why the impact of this special issue should be felt beyond those with a particular interest in Chinese languages and cultures is that the papers collectively raise very real challenges for the ways in which the now well-known distinction between first order and second order approaches (henceforth first-second order) is conceptualized and operationalized by face and politeness researchers. Such problems become particularly acute once one goes beyond the all too frequent practice of using data in English as an unmarked or unspoken baseline in the theorization of face and politeness, and starts to consider the implications of the first-second order distinction for the way in which we theorize across languages and cultures. Such a problematization of the first-second order distinction in relation to research on Chinese face and im/politeness does not in any way detract from the valuable contributions made by each paper in this special issue, but it does point to some very real analytical and theoretical challenges that continue to dog the field.

I begin this paper by outlining three potential problems that arise when approaching the question of how to best analyze face and politeness across cultures, with particular reference to the papers in this special issue on *Chinese 'face' and im/politeness*. These issues stem from: (1) the use of English as a scientific metalanguage to describe concepts and practices in other languages and cultures, (2) the inherent ambiguity and conservatism of folk concepts such as face and politeness, and (3) the difficulties in teasing out face and im/politeness as important phenomena in their own right. It is suggested here that these issues arise as a consequence of the relative paucity of critical discussion of, or engagement with, the first-second order distinction by analysts. The rise of the first-second order distinction in politeness research, and its subsequent extension to face, is briefly outlined next with special attention being paid to the various ways in which it has been conceptualized relative to the emic-etic distinction following Eelen (2001). It is then argued — with particular reference being made to the papers in this special issue — that the first-second order distinction needs to be more carefully deconstructed in regards to both its epistemological and ontological loci. It is suggested that equating first order approaches with an “emic” perspective and second order approaches with a “scientific” perspective masks a number of important distinctions that are too often glossed over by those who make claims to being either first or second order researchers. It is concluded that rather than treating the first-second order distinction as a simplistic dichotomy, it is much more productive to deploy the multiple loci of the first-second order distinction in clarifying the various focal points for analysis and theorization in face and politeness research, and thereby recognize where the potential gaps in our understanding remain. It is suggested that the papers in this special issue collectively make an important contribution towards this endeavour.

2. Reflecting on challenges for face and im/politeness research across cultures

It is common for those of us interested in the study of language use to argue over definitions of concepts, and to carefully consider the implications of our choice of words in our analyses. Yet, curiously, there has been little in the way of debate about how to best approach the issue of defining the proper object of study cross-culturally when it comes to face and im/politeness research. The title of this special issue is (necessarily) ambiguous: *Chinese 'face' and im/politeness*. This ambiguity arises in a number of ways. The first is whether there is any distinction to be made between “Chinese face/facework/politeness” and “face/politeness/facework in Chinese”. The former, for instance, seems to take a more culture-internal perspective, emphasizing aspects of these phenomena that are unique or specific to Chinese, while the latter seems to assume more in the way of a (tacit) cross-cultural perspective, focusing on aspects of “face/facework/politeness” — which are presumed to be found in other languages and cultures — that emerge in the Chinese data in question. While one might assume, therefore, that the former represents more in the way of a classic “emic” (or cultural insider) perspective, while the latter represents an “etic” (or cultural outsider) perspective, such an assumption does not bear out in reality due to a second ambiguity in regards to the status of the terms face and politeness vis-à-vis folk notions such as *miànzi/liǎn* (cf. ‘face’) and *lǐmào* (cf. ‘politeness’). This second problem is particularly acute in the case of research on Chinese where colloquial terms from Chinese have been borrowed in the form of calques into English (e.g., *save face* from *bǎoquán/liú miànzi*), mixed with folk notions in English (i.e., *face* as “outward form or appearance”), and then formalized into a theory of face (e.g., Goffman 1955, 1967) or facework (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987), which has

subsequently been applied in the study of the latter phenomena in Chinese. This raises interesting questions in regards to the analytical status of folk or emic notions such as *miànzi*, *liǎn*, *lǐmào* and the like. When analysts adhering to a first-order approach identify “politeness” or “facework” arising in a particular text or interaction, it is sometimes not clear whether considerations of *lǐmào* or *kèqi* (both of which are possible translations of *polite*), for instance, are treated as relevant by analysts. The latter clearly fall within the scope of the participants’ perspective (although whether they are actually relevant in that particular interaction is inevitably an empirical question), yet analysts do not always identify perceptions of behaviour as *lǐmào*, *kèqi* and the like (particularly when the analysis is written in English). Yet this is exactly what participants themselves may be doing. The crux of the matter is that while in English (and arguably other cognate languages) the problem of folk notions of politeness, face and so on vis-à-vis technical notions of politeness and face is somewhat masked by the fact that the same terms are deployed in both cases, the same cannot be said for other less closely related languages.

This is not, therefore, a problem limited to Chinese. The same issues arise when analyzing interpersonal or relational phenomena in any language or culture when we apply theoretical tools couched in English. Indeed, what we strike here is the broader problem of using English as scientific metalanguage to study concepts in other languages and cultures. In a thoughtful consideration of the role of English in studying pragmatic phenomena, for instance, Wong (forthcoming) claims that “when we use complex English to describe speech acts used in other languages and cultures, we impose an English perspective onto the object of study. We understand other cultures from the perspective of English”. This point can naturally be extended to the description of politeness and face. Wong goes on to argue that “the problem with English (or any other natural language for that matter) is that it is neither a universal nor a culture-independent language, and it does not have a word for everything. It ought to be recognized that there are specific consequences when it is used to analyze speech acts from other languages”. Clearly there are no easy answers here. For better or worse, English is the predominant scientific metalanguage of our time. Nevertheless, there needs to be greater attention paid to the fact that not only are we as analysts and theorists wrestling with complex interpersonal phenomena, we are also wrestling with the metalanguage with which to describe them (albeit often without much awareness of the latter).

It is important to be cognizant of two things in particular. First, the use of English as a scientific metalanguage may unduly restrict the scope of what we as analysts treat as worthy of interest, because words and concepts inevitably encapsulate a worldview, including ways of perceiving, categorizing and evaluating our social world. Ye’s (2004) discussion of the “cultural logic of Chinese social interaction” from “an indigenous perspective” is instructive in that respect. She claims that while “‘face’ is indeed an important concept in Chinese culture”, the real “key force in Chinese social interaction is along the ‘outsider-insider’ continuum, pulling the relationship between the interactants towards the central figure” (Ye 2004: 227), the importance of which has also been noted by others (Pan 2000; Pan and Kádár 2011). Rather than framing relational work in Chinese primarily in terms of the “face” (in the sense of claimed social image or identity à la Goffman or Brown and Levinson), then, it appears the primary engine of relational work in Chinese may in fact be, well, relationships.² This is not to say that issues of identity and “face” in the above sense are not, at times, critical to a particular interaction, but there has been an undue focus on the concerns of the individual, which is a reflection, I would argue, of

the natural limitations of the worldview of any set of speakers, including those particular to (Anglo) speakers of English.

Second, the use of English for some concepts may mask important differences as well as underlying assumptions about those concepts in different languages and cultures. While it is common to search for translations of *im/politeness* and *face* in different languages (e.g., *lǐmào* or *kèqǐ* for ‘polite’ in Chinese; *mal élevé* or *impoli* for ‘rude’ in French; *kao*, *menboku* or *taimen* for ‘face’ in Japanese), and to treat these various concepts as first-order instantiations of im/politeness or face, the conceptual scope of these various terms is not usually synonymous. In fact, what we find is that various concepts embody a whole set of assumptions about personhood, relationships, and social structure that deserve much closer attention (Haugh and Hinze 2003; Haugh 2004). Indeed, I would suggest that rather than treating the metalanguage which we use to describe and analyze interpersonal or relational phenomena simply as a given, and masking complex semantic issues behind “operational” definitions, we need to make more serious attempts to tease out the worldviews that are inevitably intertwined with our analytical metalanguage. Otherwise we may fall into one of two traps: thinking we are talking about the same phenomena across languages and cultures when in fact we are not, or perhaps even worse, unwittingly generating analytical artefacts (i.e., that are of no consequence for those participants) in examining interpersonal phenomena through the imposition of tacit worldviews that underlie the metalanguage we use. While researchers in pragmatics have generally eschewed such discussions — the work of scholars using the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) being an important exception (Wierzbicka 2003; Goddard 2006) — such discussions seem crucial if we are to continue to advance in the ways in which we analyze face and im/politeness across languages and cultures.

A large part of the difficulty of this enterprise lies in the nature of the terms ‘face’ and ‘politeness’ themselves. They are both vernacular as well as scientific terms, as was first pointed out by Watts et al. (1992), and considerably expanded upon by Eelen (2001) in his seminal critique of first-generation theories of politeness. The use of vernacular terms is a natural move for any social scientist though. After all, if we are interested in interpersonal phenomena, then it is not surprising that we start by employing terms that we ordinarily use to represent our concerns. The more important those concerns are to us, the more likely that those terms will carry a rich conceptual load, but also the more likely that such terms will inevitably represent conservative worldviews. The notions of im/politeness (or rudeness) and face are a case in point. A rich tapestry of inter-related collocations has developed around the tropes *miànzi* and *liǎn* in Chinese (Hu 1944; Hinze 2005; Gao 2009), for example, and indeed, arguably a whole ideological discourse (Chang and Haugh forthcoming). This discourse on *miànzi* and *liǎn* is notable for two characteristics of vernacular words that are elevated to concepts for analysis by social scientists more generally. They are both inherently ambiguous and conservative in the sense of being biased towards the status quo (Scheff 2006). The inherent ambiguity of such terms, particularly those that are metaphorical, is perhaps what makes them so productive alongside their status as keywords in particular cultures. Yet as Scheff (2006) goes on to point out in relation to Wittgenstein’s work, “the reason many problems seem to be unsolvable is that they are expressed in ordinary language. Its ambiguity and bias toward the status quo...are impediments” (2006: 49). Ongoing debates around the conceptual scope of ‘face’ and ‘im/politeness’ (in a technical sense), namely, what phenomena they should properly encompass, for instance, suggest that the analytically productive nature of these concepts also constitutes in part their downside. While such debates are healthy

within a field to some extent, confusion about the proper object of study is perhaps not an entirely desirable trend. Scheff (2006) proposes that concepts be more carefully grounded by first listing the relationship of the concept in question with current vernacular and technical usage of words and phrases, followed by exploring concrete examples that show the limitations of the concept in question. The concept of ‘face’, for example, needs to be grounded with respect to *miànzi* and *liǎn*, while ‘politeness’ should be grounded with respect to *lǐmào* and *kèqǐ* in Chinese. This is not to say that a theory of face or im/politeness needs to fully describe or be overly constrained by the scope of vernacular concepts, but any theory of interpersonal or relational phenomena needs necessarily, I would suggest, to be informed by such vernacular concepts.

The theorization of face and politeness is clearly an endeavour fraught with challenges once we start to consider how such theories might be applied across languages and cultures. The problem is two-fold. First, the “value-load” of comparable lexemes varies across languages and cultures. While face in English could only in fairly recent times be considered to have some kind of value-load,³ for example, the same clearly does not apply to comparable terms in other languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Turkish, Persian and so on. This means that any theorization of face that does not take into account this rich variation in folk concepts is very likely to lose its grasp on the object of study in the same way Eelen (2001) suggested was happening with first-generation theories of politeness. Second, we need to start untangling face from im/politeness (and indeed other phenomena such as self, identity, self-presentation and the like). It has been recently argued that both face (Haugh 2009; Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini 2010: 2073; O’Driscoll 2011) and im/politeness (Harris 2011: 148) need to be theorized in their own right (contra Brown and Levinson). This arguably leaves the notion of facework as a potentially interesting bridge between the two. It also perhaps entails that we need to be more careful when we use the term whether we mean facework in the narrower Brown and Levinsonian sense of “face-saving”/politeness, or in the broader sense of interactional or discourse moves that impact on “face”. More generally, the development of a larger framework that encompasses both face and im/politeness is called for. Approaches such as Rapport Management Theory (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005, 2007), Face Constituting Theory (Arundale 2006, 2010a), and the relational work framework (Locher 2004; Locher and Watts 2005, 2008) all represent attempts to do just that, although the question of how to untangle im/politeness from face arguably remains unresolved.

Throughout this discussion of the various challenges facing researchers dealing with face and im/politeness across languages and cultures, including the limitations of the use of English as a scientific metalanguage, the inherent ambiguity and conservatism of the terms face and im/politeness, as well as the difficulties in teasing out face and im/politeness as distinct analytical concerns, the underlying theme has been that of the critical importance of the first-second order distinction. In each case, the key to tackling such challenges revolves around clarifying the status of words and concepts as being first or second order. Such a point is hardly new. As we will see in the following section, since the first-second order distinction was first applied to politeness research by Watts et al. (1992), and its critical importance expanded upon by Eelen (2001), it has come to occupy a key place in our theorization of im/politeness (Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Locher 2004; Locher and Watts 2005; LPRG 2011), and more recently face (Terkourafi 2007, 2009; O’Driscoll 2011; Sifianou 2011). However, in briefly reviewing this now well-trodden road in the next section, I will start building the case that the first-order distinction has often been

deployed in ways that mask a complex epistemological and ontological landscape, a case which will be expounded upon further in section four that follows.

3. The rise of the first-second order distinction in politeness and face research

The first-second order distinction, as previously noted, was first made by Watts et al. (1992), who defined first-order politeness (politeness1) as “the various ways in which polite behaviour is *perceived* and *talked about* by members of sociocultural groups” (1992: 3, emphasis added), and second-order politeness (politeness2) as “a term within a *theory* of social behaviour and language usage” (1992: 3, emphasis added). They argued that unless we distinguish between “commonsense” and “scientific” analysis of politeness, “the epistemological status of the theoretical analysis becomes blurred” (Watts et al. 1992: 4). This initial distinction was further developed in more detail by Eelen (2001) who distinguished between two types of first-order notions of politeness: politeness-in action (expressive and classificatory politeness1) and politeness as a concept (metapragmatic politeness1). The former relates to “the way politeness actually manifests itself in communicative behaviour” (Eelen 2001: 32) (cf. “perceived”), and the latter to “commonsense ideologies of politeness...the way politeness is used as a concept, to opinions about what politeness is all about” (2001: 32) (cf. “talked about”). Watts et al.’s (1992) characterization of politeness2 as a “scientific conceptualization of the social phenomenon of politeness” was retained by Eelen (2001: 43). He added, however, the proviso that the key value of a theory of politeness was its ability to “*explain* the phenomena observed as politeness1” (2001: 44, original emphasis).⁴

The first-second order distinction in its first incarnation in politeness research thus bears remarkable similarity to the emic-etic distinction coined by Pike (1967) in anthropological linguistics. The emic-etic distinction draws on the distinction between *phonemic* and *phonetic* perspectives on analyzing language,⁵ where an emic unit is defined as a “a physical or mental item or system treated by *insiders* as relevant to their system of behaviour and as the same emic unit in spite of etic variability” (Pike 1990a: 28, emphasis added). Pike goes on to note that while something may be “recognized as an emic unit because it is named by the native participants in that culture”, not all emic units are “specifically named by the native...but [they] are nevertheless treated implicitly by them as emic by other criteria” (Pike 1990a: 29). In a very real sense, however, the first-second order distinction made by Watts et al. (1992) is closer to the conceptualization of the emic-etic distinction made by Harris (1990), who defines emic statements as “logico-empirical systems whose phenomenal distinctions or ‘things’ are built up out of contrasts and discriminations significant, meaningful, real, accurate, or in some other fashion regarded as appropriate by the *actors* themselves” (Harris 1990: 48), while etic statements are defined as “phenomenal distinctions judged appropriate by the community of *scientific observers*” (1990: 48). It is in this characterization of the etic perspective as lying within the domain of scientific observation and theory that distinguishes Harris’s position from that of Pike who challenges the assumption that there are “observer-independent bits of knowledge” (Pike 1990b: 187). Pike holds to the view that an etic perspective is simply “an approach by an outsider to an inside system, in which the outsider brings his own structure — his own emics — and partly superimposes his observations on the inside view, interpreting the inside in reference to the outside starting point” (Pike 1986, personal communication, cited in Harris 1990: 49). There appears to be less of a commitment in Pike’s view to the claim that an etic perspective is somehow more “scientific” than an emic one (cf. Terkourafi 2011: 161).

The emic-etic distinction has thus not been without controversy, and indeed in a classic meeting of the two key proponents of the distinction (Pike and Harris), it was concluded that “there are many meanings today for emics and etics” (Headland 1990: 23). The most common problem is that emic is equated with “native or insider’s point of view”, while etic is equated with “outsider’s view” (Headland 1990: 21), generally that of the “scientist”. This over-simplification has also arguably dogged the first-second order distinction despite the move by Watts et al. (1992) to side-step such problems in (deliberately) not making reference to the emic-etic distinction (cf. Eelen 2001: 77-72).

This problem has become evident in the recent extension of the first-second order distinction to the analysis of face. In such work, first-order face (face1) appears to be equated with folk notions and expressions, while second-order face (face2) is characterized as a theoretical construct (Terkourafi 2007, 2009; O’Driscoll 2011; Sifianou 2011; cf. O’Driscoll 1996). According to this approach, then, *miànzi* and *liǎn* would be situated instantiations (i.e., face1) of “a single, universalizing, abstract concept” (i.e., face2) (Terkourafi 2009: 284). This treatment, however, neglects the fact that participants do not only *talk about* face (using folk terms such as *miànzi* and *liǎn* in Chinese), they may also have *experiences* of face(work) where the emic terms would not normally apply since they lie outside the folk discourse or ideology on face in that culture. Chang and Haugh (2011, forthcoming), for instance, have examined instances of what they term “strategic embarrassment” in Taiwanese business interactions. They argue that strategic embarrassment occasions analytically consequential evaluations of face threat, yet such incidents are not readily discussed using the folk notions of *miànzi* and *liǎn*. The relegation of the first order perspective to just the explicit use of terms is also evident in Terkourafi’s (2011) otherwise impressive analysis of the metapragmatics of politeness discourse across cultures and time. In her treatment of politeness1 as “the use of the terms *politeness* and *polite* by speakers themselves” (Terkourafi 2011: 160) she only addresses one dimension of first-order politeness, namely, politeness as a metapragmatic concept, neglecting those participants’ perceptions or understandings that arise in interaction yet are not explicitly commented upon. Goodwin (1984) warns of the inherent fallacy in conceptualizing the participant or emic perspective as simply “linguistic labels obtained from informants” or “data obtained in response to requests by the researcher for phenomena that the researcher has already decided are theoretically interesting” (1984: 243), as does Hymes (1970) who points out that “natives normally are neither conscious of their emic system nor able to formulate it for the investigator” (Hymes 1970: 281-282, cited in Headland 1990: 21). The first-second order distinction, just like that between emic and etic perspectives, was never intended to be limited to the analysis of explicit metapragmatic discourse, and it does a disservice to the field to conceptualize it in this way.

A focus on first-order politeness and face as encompassing “participants’ understandings or concerns” is evident in recent work taking an interactional approach to analysis (Piirainen-Marsh 2005; Arundale 2006, 2010a, b; Cook 2006; Haugh 2007, 2010, 2011a; Hutchby 2008; Márquez-Reiter 2008, 2009; Merrison 2011). In focusing on participants’ understandings, it has been suggested that evaluations of politeness are not only projected by speakers (expressive politeness1) or interpreted by recipients (classificatory politeness1), but may, in some instances, be interactionally achieved (Haugh 2007: 306-307), with the same claim being extendable to the analysis of impoliteness and face. Insofar as the interactional achievement of evaluations of im/politeness or face is an emergent, non-summative

outcome of interaction (Haugh 2012), we are moving into analytical territory where the participants themselves are unlikely to be able to articulate such evaluations without considerable prompting, if at all. Participant understandings in this sense refers not to those evaluations or interpretations that can be explicitly agreed upon by participants, but rather to those evaluations or interpretations that are procedurally consequential in the course of interaction; in other words, participant understandings of face and im/politeness that are inferable from interactional conduct.

In this brief overview of the rise of the first-second order distinction in face and politeness research a number of points of difference in their conceptualization by various researchers have been identified. In the following section, I suggest that these differences need to be attended to carefully. I attempt to do so by deconstructing the first-second order distinction into the multiple loci from which it is constituted, with particular reference to the various instantiations of these loci that have emerged in the papers in this special issue.

4. Deconstructing the first-second order distinction

In prior work I have claimed that we need to distinguish between two types of first-order perspectives, namely, *emic* understandings versus *participant* understandings (Haugh 2009: 5, 2011b: 262). The former encompasses an “understand[ing of] speech practices which make sense to the people concerned, i.e., in terms of indigenous values, beliefs and attitudes, social categories, emotions, and so on” (Goddard 2006: 2), while the participant perspective involves “the participants’ orientations to meanings, interpretations and evaluation of utterances” (Pirainen-Marsh 2005: 214). The former can also be further subdivided into “emic concepts” and “emic practices” (Chang and Haugh forthcoming), where emic practices refer to those understandings that can be analytically traced through the interactional conduct of participants, in acknowledgment of the original meaning of the emic perspective on phenomena as defined by Pike (1967, 1990a). I have also suggested in other work that the analysis of im/politeness involves complex epistemological and ontological issues (Haugh 2007). In this section, I extend these claims in the course of deconstructing the first-second order distinction into four main loci with reference to their underlying epistemological and ontological bases, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

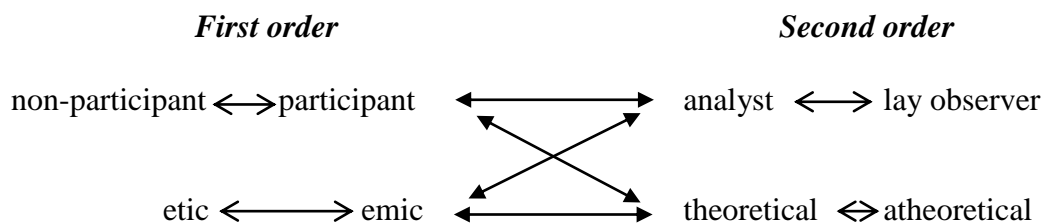


Figure 1: Deconstructing the first-second order distinction

The first two loci that constitute the first-second order distinction relate to the epistemological basis of face and im/politeness research. A first-order approach is grounded in an emic epistemology while a second-order approach is grounded in a theoretical one. It is important to note that an emic and a theoretical epistemology do not form a natural contrastive dichotomy. Instead, both an emic and theoretical epistemology have their own internal contrasts, namely, with etic and atheoretical

perspectives respectively. The second two loci that constitute the first-second order distinction relate to the ontological basis of face and im/politeness research. A first-order approach is grounded in the participants' interpretations, while a second-order approach is grounded in that of the analyst. Once again, an ontology grounded in the participant and analyst respectively does not form a natural dichotomy. Indeed, one person may simultaneously be both a participant and an analyst. Instead, they have their own internal contrasts, namely, with the understandings of non-participants and lay observers respectively. It is also worth noting that there is no inherent value placed on these different loci. They are descriptive in nature, and their value for researchers is an empirical question, the answers to which will depend on the aims of their research and the degree of coherence between these aims and the ways in which they collect and analyze data. The aim of deconstructing the first-second order distinction in this way is not therefore to argue for either a first or second order approach to analyzing face and im/politeness. Indeed, it is my view that such arguments are ultimately circular in that any analysis of face and im/politeness that does not wish to generate a "rupture between scientific and commonsense notions, causing the theory to lose its grasp on the object of analysis" (Eelen 2001: 253) will inevitably involve elements of both.

4.1. Epistemological locus

Epistemology refers to the study of the nature and scope of knowledge (from Greek *ἐπιστήμη* [*epistēmē*], meaning "knowledge, science", and *λόγος* [*logos*], meaning "study of"), and generally involves "a way of looking at the world and making sense of it" (Crotty 1998: 8), or more generally understanding "what it means to know" (1998: 10). In the case of face and im/politeness research this making sense of the world involves evaluations of the interpersonal import of (linguistic and non-linguistic) behaviour, with such evaluations inevitably involving interpretations and categorizations of meanings and actions relative to the two pillars of sociality, namely, persons and relationships.⁶ The first-second order distinction as defined by researchers thus far has been drawn with reference to emic and theoretical perspectives on face and im/politeness.

An emic perspective, as previously noted, encompasses understandings of interpersonal phenomenon in "terms of *indigenous* values, beliefs and attitudes, social categories, emotions, and so on" (Goddard 2006: 2, emphasis added). The rich set of expressions involving the 'face' terms *miànzi* and *liǎn* in Chinese or *kao*, *menboku* and *taimen* in Japanese, for instance, constitutes a form of folk or emic "theorization". They represent the accumulation of "accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by native members of the 'culture' being studied" (Lett 1990: 130), as "inter-action within a network across time and space creates a structural form of social memory, independent of the memories of individuals" (Arundale 1999: 141). Such folk theorization does not necessarily yield consistently applied distinctions, and indeed may be characterized by internal contradiction and inconsistency that should not be found in formal theorization. The difficulties researchers have found in consistently applying Hu's (1944) characterization of *miànzi* as social prestige and *liǎn* as a kind of moral reputation is a case in point (Hinze 2005). An emic perspective may also vary in its degree of salience amongst members of the group in question, with those concepts that become highly salient often becoming ideologically-charged discourses, or even the subject of stereotyping, and thus become open to strategic manipulation.

An emic perspective does not form a contrastive dichotomy with a theoretical epistemology, however, but rather with an etic perspective, where the aim of researchers is to allow for motivated comparisons to be made between different emic perspectives on interpersonal phenomena. The Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) is an example par excellence of a grounded etic approach to representing emic understandings of key interpersonal phenomena and practices (Goddard 2006; Wierzbicka 2003). It does not constitute a theory as such, although this is not to be considered a drawback of the approach, since theorizing is not the attested aim of NSM scholars, who are instead primarily focused on explicating emic perspectives on pragmatic phenomena.

A theoretical perspective, on the other hand, involves explicitly defined and formalized understandings of interpersonal phenomena that are shared amongst scientific observers. A theoretical epistemology is (theoretically at least) meant to involve “accounts, descriptions and analyses” that can be consistently applied without contradiction. It is also one that is regarded as “meaningful and appropriate by the community of scientific observers” (Lett 1990: 130–131). Similar to emic knowledge, scientific knowledge is co-constituted across the social networks that comprise the social group in question, although it is a much more delimited group in that it consists primarily of scientists or academics. Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) politeness theory, for instance, represents a theoretical epistemology that was previously regarded as “meaningful and appropriate” by most politeness researchers, but nowadays is regarded in that way by only some researchers. It is worth noting that not only do our views of scientific knowledge change, the key source of scientific theorizing (at least in social sciences) is in fact emic perspectives on interpersonal phenomena. While this generates challenges for face and politeness researchers as previously noted, it also suggests that extending the sources of second-order theorizing to encompass a greater range of emic/folk theorizations of interpersonal phenomena, such as the insider-outsider distinction noted by Ye (2004) among others in relation to social interaction in Chinese, for example, is likely to be very productive. While the scientific metalanguage may at present be predominantly English, this is no reason to not look beyond emic notions in English to those in other languages and cultures for productive sources of scientific theorizing.

A key contribution of papers in a special issue such as this on Chinese face and im/politeness is that they may offer just that. The paper by Hinze (this issue), for instance, is grounded thoroughly in an emic epistemology (in contrast to the other four papers which are arguably grounded in various theoretical epistemologies). An important finding to emerge from Hinze’s paper is that while *miànzi* is commonly thought to belong to either individuals or groups of individuals (He and Zhang 2011), it is something that is always lost, saved and so on *with* someone. In other words, *miànzi* has no currency unless it is situated in a relationship. This finding has important implications for the way in which we attempt to theorize about face as it arises in social interaction in Chinese, and indeed more broadly. This is not to suggest that theoretical accounts should mirror emic ones, but rather that our theorization of face and im/politeness should be informed, although not unduly constrained, by an emic epistemology.

4.2. *Ontological locus*

Ontology refers to the study of the nature of being, existence or reality (from Greek *ὄντος* [*on*, meaning “of that which is”, and *λόγος* [*logos*], meaning “study of”), and generally involves “understanding *what is*” (Crotty 1998: 10). In the case of face and

im/politeness research, this involves careful consideration of *how* we come to constitute particular interpretations or evaluations, and *whose* understandings are involved. The first-second order distinction as defined by researchers thus far has been drawn with reference to both participants' and analysts' perspectives on face and im/politeness.

The participants' perspective encompasses the understandings of speakers and recipients formed in the course of their interactional conduct or in subsequent discourse. The participant perspective thus inevitably involves not only the speaker's and hearer's understandings, but also that of various kinds of recipients, including direct addressees, side participants, bystanders and the like, and it stands in contrast to the understandings of non-participants. Chang and Haugh (forthcoming) argue in their study of Taiwanese business interactions, for instance, that "participants can be observed to be demonstrably orienting to and interactionally achieving face through particular linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour". These instances of interactional conduct are argued to be "recognizable through their doing in interaction" rather than being "explicated in folk ideologies of face". It is for this reason that while emic and participant perspectives may coincide in some cases (the data in Hinze's paper being a case in point), this is not always the case (Chang and Haugh 2011, forthcoming). Indeed emic understandings can be formed just as easily by non-participant observers of social interactions and discourse. The distribution of understandings of (non-)participants across social networks is arguably what underlies (perceptions of) face and im/politeness norms at the societal level (Haugh 2012). They therefore constitute another important first-order locus of analysis, as Mills (2009) has argued in drawing a contrast between politeness at the individual and social levels.

The analysts' perspective encompasses the understandings of speakers' and recipients' interpretations and evaluations of behaviour that are inferred by those engaged in systematic rather than spontaneous investigation of interpersonal phenomena. Analysts undertaking a CA-informed interactional approach, for instance, are required to establish with reference to their data how participants are oriented to or engaged in achieving the meaning, action or evaluation in question (participant orientations), and that such understandings are consequential for the design and sequential organization of subsequent turns (procedural consequentiality) (Haugh, Chang and Kádár forthcoming). In the case of less interactional data such as letters or monologues, where responses are not readily evident, analysts may focus on establishing that such understandings are normatively plausible. The systematic nature and the evidential requirements for analysts contrast with the spontaneous nature and less stringent evidential requirements placed on lay observers. However, as Xie et al. (2005: 449) point out, analysts are also at the same time lay observers, and indeed, they may also be participants, and thus analysis of interpersonal phenomena is inevitably fraught with the danger of conflating perspectives.

Indeed, it would be fair to say that the participant versus analyst ontological loci of the first-second order distinction are to some extent inter-related. As Pike (1990b) warns, "there are no observer-independent bits of knowledge of any kind — scientific or other...there is no observer-independent world view; there is no set of observer-independent data accessible to us; the scientific method does not eliminate that dependency" (1990b: 187). Nevertheless, greater clarity as to the nature and source of our analyses of face and im/politeness is arguably an important step forward towards a truly empirical research program.

The papers in this special issue represent an interesting range of ontological bases for analysis. Hinze draws primarily from the understandings of participants in

his analysis of the use of *miànzi*-expressions in discourse, and thus, in combination with an emic epistemological basis, represents a clear instance of first-order research. He's analysis of the intentions claimed and attributed by participants in follow-up interviews contrasts the understandings of participants and analysts with somewhat sobering results. From her results it appears that approximately 20% of compliments and compliment responses identified by two analysts working in tandem were not interpreted as such by the speakers and recipients in question. However, when one considers that the participants themselves did not coincide 18% of the time in their own (reported) understandings of the compliments as being intended or not, such a degree of divergence seems less surprising. It appears, therefore, that participants' interpretations and evaluations of interpersonal phenomena emerging in interaction do not necessarily converge but may also diverge, and thus the theorization of face and im/politeness must take the distributed nature of these interpretations and evaluations into proper account. The analyses conducted by Pan and Kádár tend towards the perspective of the analyst, although great care is exercised to ensure that their conclusions are consonant with those of the participants; being consonant does not entail being synonymous, of course, since they are couched in theoretical rather than emic epistemologies. Finally, Lee's analysis of texts from the Confucian Analects is firmly grounded in the analyst's perspective, since the analysis is grounded entirely in a theoretical framework. The fact that all the analyses of data in these papers prove illuminating is testament, in my view, to the need for face and im/politeness researchers to embrace the multiple loci of the first-second order distinction rather than seeing them as rival approaches.

5. Concluding remarks

My aim in this paper has been to consider some of the key theoretical implications of the papers in this special issue on *Chinese 'face' and im/politeness*. With such a rich collection of papers, I have inevitably been able to only touch upon a few of these. The importance of concerted efforts such as this special issue should not be underestimated in my view, as it throws new light on the analytical and theoretical challenges facing all face and im/politeness researchers. In this paper I have focused in particular on the difficulties we inevitably encounter when analyzing face and im/politeness across languages and cultures. However many of these challenges may be addressed, I would suggest, through better clarifying the underlying epistemological and ontological basis of our research into interpersonal and relational phenomena. It has been proposed, for instance, that since we rely on vernacular terms in face and politeness research, we need to more carefully ground the concepts of politeness, impoliteness, face and the like relative to these vernacular (or emic) terms (Haugh 2011b: 263). It has also been suggested that we are necessarily working across multiple loci of the first-second order distinction in our analyses of face and im/politeness. As Hatfield and Hahn (2011) argue, one's approach to analysis and theorization necessarily depends on the question asked.

However, if we are to effectively compare the findings of different studies, we need to ensure that we are indeed comparing like with like. The deconstruction of the first-second order distinction is offered here as one means of accomplishing just that. It has also been pointed out that greater clarity as to the object of analysis, whether it be face, im/politeness or other interpersonal phenomena, is likely to be aided by further investigation not only into the relationship between face1 and face2, and politeness1 and politeness2, but also into their status vis-à-vis identity, self-presentation, relationships and so forth. Finally, while the focus of theorization has

largely been on first-order participant understandings of face and im/politeness, it seems clear that first-order emic concepts across languages and cultures offer a rich wealth of new concepts from which to draw. The need to develop approaches that focus on the analysis of such first-order emic concepts, such as the initial framework developed by Ruhi and Kádár (2011) in their comparative study of folk concepts of face in Chinese and Turkish, is also another area where further work is likely to be of enormous benefit to the field. Indeed, it seems that it will be through reaching a balance in studies across the first-second order distinction that the fields of face and im/politeness research will continue to flourish productively.

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Notes

¹ Mandarin Chinese is just one of the different languages (or dialects) spoken by the Chinese in Mainland China, Taiwan and the broader Chinese diaspora.

² Indeed, many would argue that the same applies in the case of other languages and cultures as well. Arundale’s (2006, 2010a) Face Constituting Theory is the most comprehensive attempt to date to foreground relationships in the analysis of interpersonal phenomena.

³ See Haugh (2009: 12–14) for a brief analysis of the limited scope of current usage of ‘face’ collocations in English newspapers in Australia.

⁴ It is notable that in his introduction to the second edition of the volume where the first-second order distinction was first made, Watts (2005) does not provide a definition of politeness², and indeed suggests that a theory of politeness is not a feasible aim.

⁵ A phonetic perspective analyzes all the different sound distinctions possible that can be measured instrumentally. A phonemic perspective focuses on sound distinctions which are meaningful to speakers of the language in question. For example, in English there is a difference in meaning between “bed” and “bet”. However, we make no distinction between aspirated and unaspirated ‘b’, ‘k’ (e.g., “car”). Phonetically there is a difference between aspirated and unaspirated ‘k’, but not phonemically (at least not generally).

⁶ A person refers to an individual in a social environment, a usage that goes back at least to Radcliffe-Brown (1952: 194). In other words, “a person refers to the individual as construed by a cultural group, with whom she/he is linked in social

interaction” (Arundale 2011 personal communication). A relationship refers to a non-summative system of two or more persons. It broadly involves “establishing and maintaining of connection between two otherwise separate individuals” (Arundale 2010b: 138).

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