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Abstract: This article shows, through the analysis of "real life" institutional interaction, how experienced teachers and supervisors negotiate face when teachers contest or manage supervisors' critical account requests during post observation feedback meetings. A linguistic micro-analysis of data extracts is supplemented with ethnographic data drawn from participant perspective interviews and researcher knowledge. The analysis shows how participants subtly and skillfully employ facework to manage the potential face-threat engendered by criticism and disagreement. This facework is mostly successful, but in one case the supervisor orients to face-threat and closes down the topic of discussion. This demonstrates that face is consequential to both unfolding talk and the feedback goal of dialogue and development. Feedback participants, both supervisors and teachers, also engage in moves of face support and face maintenance. The analysis shows face to be an emergent, situated relationship, co-constructed by both participants, and also shows that participants are willing to risk face-threat to achieve institutional goals (supervisors) and defend their actions (teachers). This supports the view that face-threat is rational and common and indicates that criticism, account requests, and disagreements are acceptable norms in post observation feedback.

Keywords: face; facework; institutional interaction; post observation feedback; teachers

1 Introduction

Much of the literature on face is theoretical (e.g., Arundale 2006, 2010; Locher and Watts 2005) and while this has advanced the development of face theory,

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researchers such as Copland (2011), Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2013), and Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini (2010) have called for more empirical research. Copland (2011) points out that research into face often relies on data from sources such as television programmes, but this is not necessarily representative of unelicited naturally occurring interaction (Dobs 2014). Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2013: 4) believes that researchers interested in face need to gather and analyze "actual, occurring discourse" among "intimates or people who are in constant contact with each other" (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2013: 6). Research into face also tends to focus exclusively on linguistic data with few studies exploring or invoking "situated and contextual factors" (Copland 2011: 3833) but Donaghue (2018), Copland (2011), Grainger et al. (2010), and Spencer-Oatey (2009) have all demonstrated the warranty of combining linguistic and ethnographic data and analysis to understand face.

This article examines how face is negotiated during real life institutional interaction in a higher education context. Detailed microanalysis of talk is supplemented with ethnographic data from participant interpretation interviews and researcher knowledge of the research context. The institutional interaction analyzed in this article is talk during post observation feedback meetings. In education contexts, a supervisor/trainer/mentor/peer often observes a lesson as part of teacher education programmes, teacher evaluation processes, or peer review schemes. After the observation, a feedback meeting takes place in which the teacher and observer discuss the lesson with a view to improving practice. Previous researchers have focused on the developmental aspect of feedback, describing the meeting as the locus of "help-giving and receiving" (Wajnryb 1994: 22) and an opportunity for teachers to reflect and "critically assess their performance to mediate judicious change" (Farr 2011: 73). Feedback, however, is complex (Farr 2011), and meetings can often be "difficult discoursal events" (Copland 2008: 67) which are challenging to negotiate (Copland 2008; Wajnryb 1994). Part of this difficulty is the fact that the observation and feedback process is frequently evaluative and carries high stakes for the teachers being observed, for example informing decisions on employment or passing/failing a course. Additionally, participants are frequently negotiating tensions between maintaining social, collegiate relationships and giving/receiving critical feedback aimed at improving teaching practice and enabling teacher development (Louw et al. 2016). These tensions include observers trying to manage two incompatible (Louw et al. 2016) and conflicting (Brandt 2008) roles: evaluator/gatekeeper and nurturing developer. Teachers too are trying to balance the requirement to demonstrate reflection and self-evaluation with the need to be judged as effective. These tensions, as well as the fact that managing bad news is a defining feature of the feedback genre (Johnson 2017), make the post observation meeting an event in which face is relevant.

The organization of this article is as follows. First, I briefly review the literature on face and facework and outline my understanding of these two terms. I then critically review the limited number of studies which have examined face in post observation feedback. This is followed by a detailed description of the methodology employed, including information about the setting, data, and the process of analysis. Next is a detailed micro analysis of three data extracts from post observation feedback meetings supplemented with data from participant interpretation interviews and researcher knowledge of the research context, followed by discussion of this analysis. In the conclusion, I consider the contribution and significance of this article and outline implications for practitioners in professional contexts which involve the evaluation of colleagues or novices.

2 Literature review

2.1 Face

Goffman's seminal and much cited definition of face suggests an individual's claimed self-image which is interpreted by others:

> … the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. (Goffman 1981: 5)

Goffman's description was later obscured by Brown and Levinson's (1987) re-interpretation of face within a framework of polite behaviour as something cognitive and individualist within a model person and limited to face-threat avoidance. Later still, the shift to a constructivist epistemology brought about an interpretation of communication as interactional, co-constructed and situated, and with this a revised conceptualization of face as a relationship that is interactionally achieved (Arundale 2010; Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini 2010). In this revised understanding, face does not reside in an individual, but rather is an emergent, situated, co-constructed relationship, and therefore something which should be analyzed at the level of interaction (Arundale 2010). Face is assessed and judged by interactants as part of a situated "discursive struggle" (Locher and Watts 2005). This means that particular types of speech act are not inherently face-threatening (Arundale 2006; Locher and Watts 2005) but rather an utterance or action is face-threatening if participants in a particular interaction make that evaluation or response in the context of the unfolding talk, as well as their shared history and broader sociocultural expectations (Chang and Haugh 2011). The same utterance produced in a different context or with different participants could be

interpreted as face-maintaining or face-supporting. Face is therefore negotiated within and constrained by context and by culturally recognized genres. This article aligns with a view of face as a relationship accomplished in situated talk within the constraints of generic norms and expectations.

2.2 Facework

Brown and Levinson's (1987) view of facework as the employment of politeness strategies to mitigate a face-threatening act (FTA) has been criticized for being too restrictive (Locher and Watts 2005). Scholars such as Domenici and Littlejohn (2006) have broadened the definition to involve actions or practices which build, protect, support, maintain, or threaten the face (which they define as sought approval) of self or others. This is similar to Spencer-Oatey's (2007) notion of "rapport management" which refers to the use of language to promote, maintain or threaten harmonious social relations, and Locher and Watt's concept of relational work: "the "work" individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (Locher and Watts 2005: 10). This article aligns with a broader understanding of facework and uses the term to refer to the use of language for enhancing, maintaining and challenging relationships in interpersonal communication.

2.3 Post observation feedback and face

The few studies that have investigated face in feedback reflect the change in the conceptualization of face outlined in Section 2.1. Earlier studies (Roberts 1992; Vásquez 2004) draw on Brown and Levinson's (1987) interpretation of a strategic speaker trying to reach a communicative goal while assessing and choosing strategies to minimize face-threatening dangers. These studies are also influenced by Brown and Levinson's distinction between positive and negative face. Roberts (1992) coded FTAs and politeness strategies in feedback transcripts and presents lists of the frequency of FTAs and politeness strategies by trainer. She claims that the risk (in terms of imposition) of an FTA determines a speaker's politeness levels: "Higher politeness strategies … accompany more risky FTAs: with no risk, the FTA is done baldly, with no redressive or softening action" (Roberts 1992: 6). In a similar methodology, Vásquez (2004) identified FTAs of suggestion, advice and criticism from feedback meeting transcripts using Brown and Levinson's (1987) idea that certain types of speech act intrinsically threaten face. She then identified the positive and negative politeness strategies used to mitigate these FTAs. Vásquez

found that supervisors' use of these strategies resulted in teachers believing they had received no constructive criticism during feedback.

Four aspects of these studies can be questioned. First, both Vásquez (2004) and Roberts (1992) used pre-determined FTA categories to code feedback transcripts. Roberts (1992: 291) explains that "Codes were developed and tested for interrater reliability", which also implies multiple raters. However, the study of face has moved away from a focus on individual wants which guide language choices, to a more interactional understanding where face is emergent and situated, relational and dialectical (Arundale 2006). If we accept the premise that face-threat should be assessed and judged by interactants and assessed as part of a contextualized "discursive struggle" (Locher and Watts 2005), then raters coding predetermined examples of FTAs is a problematic notion. Second, Roberts uses institutional power to calculate the risk of an FTA. However, this is questionable. Power is often dependent on a range of factors which go beyond simple institutional roles. As well as (and sometimes instead of) attributed, pre-existing power from institutional hierarchy and status, power is also enacted and negotiated in discourse (Thornborrow 2002). For example, power can be achieved via linguistic processes such as winning an argument, introducing a new topic, or leading a discussion (Diamond 1996). Third, both studies focus only on how participants maintain face by the use of redressive strategies such as mitigation. However, mitigating face-threat is only part of the full scope of facework (Arundale 2006; Locher and Watts 2005) – both outright face-threat and face support are also frequently carried out. Studies into the discourse of post observation feedback tend to overlook these aspects. Fourth, both these studies examine only trainers' contributions to the interaction, ignoring teachers' talk, so seem to assume that facework is exclusive to trainers.

Unlike the studies outlined above, Copland (2011) did not use a pre-conceived typology of linguistic speech acts to interpret face but rather analyzed face in terms of the ongoing discourse and the context of the feedback meeting. Copland's (2011) study of negotiation in post observation group feedback shows the situated, discursive nature of face, and the importance of context and genre. Copland shows that cultural norms of interaction, personal relationships, and the speech genre in which participants are involved all exert influence both on what is said and how this talk is interpreted by participants. Speech acts such as giving advice and criticizing, which are automatically considered face-threatening by both Vásquez (2004) and Roberts (1992), are oriented to as generic norms by feedback participants. Thus, the feedback genre allows behaviour which might be considered face-threatening in other circumstances. This further problematizes Vásquez' (2004) and Roberts' (1992) use of pre-determined FTA categories to code feedback transcripts.

The studies outlined above all investigate face in feedback meetings between pre-service (i.e., novice) teachers and trainers. This reveals an important gap in the literature: there are no studies involving in-service teachers. This is problematic as ignoring in-service teachers means overlooking most of the profession. In addition, the analysis in Section 4 below suggests there may be significant differences in face needs and face negotiation between pre-service teachers/trainers and in-service teachers/supervisors. This article contributes towards filling this gap by looking at how face is negotiated in feedback between experienced teachers and supervisors.

3 Methodology

3.1 Setting and participants

The extracts featured in this article are part of a larger data set of 19 audio-recorded feedback meetings collected at a federal tertiary institution in the United Arab Emirates over a period of four years (Donaghue 2016). Although students' first language is Arabic, the medium of instruction at the institution is English. The feedback meetings involved well-qualified and experienced in-service English language teachers and supervisors (mostly expatriates) working in a foundation programme aimed at improving students' English language skills from A2/B1 level to B2 on the CEFR scale (Council of Europe 2018) to enable progression to undergraduate degree courses. Supervisors are line managers whose duties include carrying out an appraisal to determine if new teachers pass the first probationary year and whether post-probationary teachers have their three-year contract renewed. Part of this appraisal is an annual lesson observation. These high stakes observations are followed by a one-to-one feedback meeting, the purpose of which is to discuss the supervisor's evaluation of the lesson and ways of helping the teacher develop and improve.

The six participants featured in the data extracts in this article all had more than ten years' teaching experience at the time of data collection. All have a master's degree in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). All have English as a first language. Three are from the UK, two from the USA and one is from Canada. When the feedback meetings were recorded, all were ex-patriates living and working in the UAE. Their time at the institution ranged from two years to more than 20 years (more specific information pertaining to each participant is withheld to protect anonymity). Two of the supervisors were promoted to a management position after working at the institution as English teachers. One supervisor was recruited directly to this post. At any given time, two supervisors work concurrently for the foundation year programme, each managing a team of

approximately 20 teachers, one at the women's campus and one at the men's. During the data collection period of four years, a total of four foundation year supervisors worked at the institution, three of whom feature in this article.

3.2 Account requests

One common feature to emerge from the larger data set was an action sequence in which one participant (usually the supervisor) asks why (or how) something happened (or didn't happen), i.e., an account request. The other participant (usually the teacher) then explains or justifies the action or decision. Account request questions differ from those which genuinely aim to elicit unknown information (K-, in Heritage's [2007] terms, i.e., lack of knowledge): they are evaluative rather than epistemic. Unlike K- questions, account requests are socially problematic because the speaker "has (and is recognised to have) an epistemic capacity to "competently" assess the accountable event" (Bolden and Robinson 2011: 96). This means that the purpose of an account request is not to elicit unknown information but rather to convey a challenging stance towards the warrantability of an accountable event/conduct, and/or to take a critical, disafiliative stance towards the addressee. These questions implicate the negatively valenced action of reproach: "one person raises a question about the goodness or reasonableness of another person's action" (Tracy and Robles 2013: 92). Account requests often engender face issues as they convey a challenging stance towards the addressee (Bolden and Robinson 2011).

Three data extracts featuring account request have been chosen for this article. The first is typical of the larger data set and as such is a telling case. It features a supervisor asking an account request in order to initiate a sequence which culminates in him giving advice. The second and third episodes have been selected because they feature teachers defending their classroom actions, and as such contest the assumption in much of the literature on post observation feedback that mitigation and facework is the domain of the supervisor (Roberts 1992; Vásquez 2004; Wajnryb 1994).

3.3 Analysis

Analysis of the larger data set involved a five-level process: (1) repeated listening to and transcribing of audio recordings and making "noticing" notes; (2) segmenting discourse into thematically bounded units; (3) identifying and categorizing episodes in which face is made salient; (4) a fine-grained, turn-by-turn micro analysis of these episodes; (5) supplementing linguistic analyses with ethnographic

information. The analysis in this article features the final two stages. A detailed microanalysis of three episodes is supplemented with ethnographic detail from researcher knowledge and an interview with one of the participants. I worked at the research site with the research participants for 13 years. My job involved planning and delivering professional development courses and one-to-one counselling. This "insider" status afforded me a rich understanding of the institution, its processes, and the participants' working lives. I also conducted participant perspective interviews in which participants commented on salient extracts from their feedback meetings. However, although I interviewed four of the six participants featured in this article (S1, S3, S4, and Eve), only Eve's comments are relevant to the focus of this article.

4 Results

This section is divided into three parts. Each part features an episode of talk initiated by an account request in which the supervisor signals a challenging stance.

4.1 Episode 1: Dan and S4

The first episode follows a common pattern in the larger data set (Donaghue 2016) in which, following a critical account request from the supervisor, the teacher concedes that a classroom activity could be improved, the supervisor offers advice, and the teacher accepts this advice. In Extract 1 below, the supervisor (S4) and teacher (Dan) are talking about a speaking activity in which student pairs described their dream house to each other in order to practice using the modal verb "would". At the beginning of the episode, S4 asks an "account solicitation" (Bolden and Robinson 2011) question: "How well do you think the speaking activity went?" (5). Although there is no explicit challenge or criticism, S4's question could be an indicator that he questions the success of the activity:

Extract 1

1	S4	ok then we moved on t:o (.) we'd done the listening (0.1)
2		and then we had th:e the speaking which was trying to
3		use would and some of the [earlier vocabulary↑
4	Dan	[yeah
5	S4	now I mean how how well do you think the speaking
6		activity went?

7	Dan	ahh↑ (outbreath) I mean I think it went all right the
8		main thing was I was trying to get them (0.2) the
9		modality↓ was [the big thing (.) instead of saying it is
10	S4	[mmhm↑
11	Dan	or it w- you know to to have this idea that (.) would is
12		for things that are NOT (.) real↓ [necessarily so I
13	S4	[yeah
14	Dan	THOUGHT I was hearing some pretty good stuff there e:m
15		some students were trying to even take it further
16	S4	mmhm↑
17	Dan	into like second conditional territory which we're not
18		(.) there yet but if they can go there great
19	S4	mmhm↑

Dan responds initially with a positive account "I think it went all right" (7) followed by a fairly detailed defence. However, Dan's defence is mitigated. His initial positive evaluation is delayed: "ahh↑ (outbreath) I mean I think" (7) and his opinion that it went "all right" is not exactly a ringing endorsement. He also mitigates his description of the students' performance with a mental verb: "I THOUGHT I was hearing some pretty good stuff" (12–14). The stress on "thought" shows perhaps that he recognizes a possible contrast with his opinion at the time and the current discussion. Dan's delayed and mitigated positive evaluation may suggest that he is orienting to S4's question as representing an (albeit mild) challenging stance and he is therefore producing a dispreferred turn by disagreeing. He may also be doing self-preserving facework (face maintenance) as he anticipates a critical evaluation from S4.

Throughout the short exchange, S4's response is non-committal with only brief response tokens at possible transition relevant places, delivered with a rising intonation which indicates a "keep going" message. Perhaps because of S4's lack of engagement or explicit agreement with his positive evaluation, Dan then voluntarily concedes that the activity could have been "more focused" (2):

Extract 2

1	Dan	**e:m (.) (tut sigh) I mean it could've been maybe a little bit**
2		more focused **I guess but (.)** (sound of pages turning) **you know**
3		**(laughs) I dah- [I didn't have-**
4	S4	[well I mean there's always there's always em
5	Dan	yeah I didn't have a TON of ideas for that em maybe you can
6		suggest

The concession is surrounded by markers of delicacy (indicated in bold). There is a tut, a sigh, a laugh, a long preamble, hesitation and the concession has five pre and post modifiers (*could've been*; *maybe*; *a little bit*; *I guess*; *but*). This extensive

linguistic cladding, or "politeness jewelry" (Tracy 2008: 187), is significant. Dan now seems to be accepting S4's hint that the activity was problematic, so these markers do not indicate a dispreferred response of disagreement. Instead, they may signal Dan's reluctance to concede that the activity had weaknesses. This interpretation is supported by Dan's comment "I didn't have a TON of ideas" (5) which suggests that he did however have some ideas, as well as perhaps implying that a "ton" of ideas were not necessary. Alternatively (or additionally), these modifiers may be self-protective facework, delaying his capitulation. Dan's next utterance (5–6) is important because he asks S4 for suggestions which positions S4 in the role of expert and advisor, a move of face support.

Dan's request for suggestions gives an opening to S4 to proceed to a move of advice-giving:

Extract 3

1	S4	em↑ (0.2) yeah I mean something I do mention in my
2		feedback as well FORMALLY is about (.) to think about
3		how can you (.) facilitate this discussion I mean
4		think for yourself when you were eighteen if [you were
5	Dan	[mm
6	S4	doing a foreign language class
7	Dan	right
8		and the:n let's imagine you and I are in this (.) I
9		don't know Arabic class and then they expect us to sit
10		and have a discussion
11	Dan	mm
12	S4	in a lan- in another language it's very ALIEN so (.)
13		it's something I think you have to build up to with
14		small exercises in [class (.) it needs (0.3) perhaps a
15	Dan	[ok
16	S4	a good model
17	Dan	[ok all right
18	S4	[of what's happening now how you model that is obviously
19		up to you but there's different ways I mean I've done it
20		(.) if it's perhaps a two or three person discussion I
21		play all three parts
22	Dan	mmhm
23	S4	and jump around and make them laugh a bit
24	Dan	(small laugh)
25	S4	you know and you can do things like when I was at the
26		men's I used to have different hats that I put on so
27		they knew it was a different person or I'd sit in
28		different chairs

It is now made clear that S4's aim from his initial turn in Extract 1 is directed towards giving suggestions for task improvement, evidenced by the fact that he has already written his suggestions on an observation form "I mean something I do mention in my feedback as well formally" (1–2). Although Dan has given S4 "permission" to proceed with suggestions, S4 still does face work while delivering these. He delays the suggestion with a lengthy preamble (3–14), setting up an imaginary situation (note the inclusive "you and I are in this I don't know Arabic class" [8–9]), and the suggestion itself is mitigated with pauses, hesitation and a modifier: "**(.) it needs (0.3) perhaps a** a good model" (14–16). The fact that Dan immediately agrees twice (17) in an overlap with S4's speech and does not wait for a transition relevance place in which to respond indicates acceptance of S4's point. S4's next utterance "now how you model that is obviously up to you" (18–19) recognizes that Dan has the knowledge and experience to decide how to model the activity independently. S4 gives his suggestions in a light-hearted tone and Dan's laughter at line 24 indicates alignment. S4's preamble, modifiers, and humorous tone indicate he is doing facework to downplay his criticism of Dan's activity and soften the advice-giver/advice-needer relationship he has instigated. Dan's laughter and immediate acceptance are face supporting as they verify S4's advice-giver claim.

This extract shows a delicate balancing act of subtly hinted criticism, mitigated defence, initially reluctant concession, advice giving, and advice receiving. Dan defends his actions to some extent, but he doesn't challenge S4 any further than a conceded mitigated defence. Dan accedes to S4's suggestion that the activity didn't work very well and allows S4 to achieve his aim of giving advice. Face is being negotiated while these actions are accomplished. The fact that Dan's responding account is initially positive and his concession is much more heavily mitigated than his initial evaluation suggests he is doing facework and protecting his own self-image. He is also orienting to the delicacy involved in disagreeing with S4's implied criticism.

Dan may realize the trajectory of the conversation so decides to ask for S4's suggestion (the outcome S4 is heading for). This request for a suggestion is cooperative and as such is another instance of self-protective facework. Potential face-threat in the shape of criticism, disagreement, and making suggestions is recognized and headed off (by both parties) through various linguistic means such as hesitation, delay, and adverbial and modal modifiers. Face support also occurs in Dan's clear acceptance and S4's recognition of Dan's ability and independence. The episode ends in alignment and S4 is able to perform his role of knowledgeable supervisor and fulfill the goal of the meeting.

In contrast to Episode 1, the following two episodes feature sequences in which a teacher responds to an account request with a defence and the supervisor concedes to the teacher.

4.2 Episode 2: Anna and S3

In this next episode, the supervisor (S3) takes a critical stance as she asks the teacher to account for a classroom decision to play an audio track as a whole-class activity instead of asking students to listen to the track individually on their laptops with headphones. The teacher (Anna) claims superior knowledge of the students to successfully explain her decision. The episode starts with the supervisor (S3) referring to a video Anna used in the class:

Extract 4

1	S3	I REALLY liked it (.) but I've said here (.) with the video
2		listening and the listening whatever (.) but why didn't they
3		use headphones? With the laptops?
4	Anna	well because not all of them have headphones
5	S3	mm
6	Anna	so it becomes a problem when they DON'T have it and then you
7		know they start playing at different times
8	S3	a:hh
9	Anna	so it's I thought it was better if th- even when they practice
10		*Road to IELTS* sometimes we have ten minutes at the end I just
11		tell them let's play you know I'll play it and then you all do
12		it in your own time (.) I think maybe (xx) like I think we
13		suggested that when we sell the laptops sell it with
14		headphones

S3's positive comment (1) is followed by "but", which signals a contrast. S3's account request is phrased as a negative interrogative "why didn't they use headphones?" (2–3) which is a clear challenge, implying that headphones would have been a better (but not employed) alternative. Anna's reply indicates that she recognizes the challenge. Her first move (4) is an explanation, prefaced with "well", perhaps indicating awareness that her account is a disaligning action. Her justification consists of a fairly long turn (4–14) with a detailed explanation of why the students didn't use headphones. S3 produces two positive response tokens, the second of which "a:hh" (8) sounds like a change of state token i.e., from uninformed to informed.

However, in the next episode S3 challenges Anna again (1–2), although this time the challenge is prefaced by two pauses and "I think" which is less direct than her previous negative interrogative. This new challenge therefore seems less certain:

Extract 5

1	S3	(.) I think (.) you can INSIST that they bring
2		headphones with [the laptop
3	Anna	[you could insist but with the guys its-
4	S3	you but you can! (.) if we insisted they bring a laptop
5		we can insist they bring a laptop with headphones
6	Anna	well [because I've tri- yeah they
7	S3	[and if they DON'T they can't do the activity and
8		if they can't do the activity↑
9	Anna	(1.0) °then they miss some?°
10	S3	they miss OUT but they THEY'LL know that

Anna starts to disagree with S3's suggestion, but very indirectly (3). Anna's shift in tense from S3's "can" to "could" indicates tentativeness. Her disagreement is weak (Pomerantz 1984) i.e., prefaced with an agreement: "you could insist but" (3). She is unable to finish her disagreement because S3 interrupts her with a direct contradiction "but you can!" (4), with a shift back to the present tense, indicating certainty which is strengthened by definite and emphatic intonation. Anna's unfinished comment at line 3 is important because she is talking about the male students ("the guys") and it is clear that she thinks they cannot be depended on to bring headphones to class. This brings to the surface a façade that teachers maintain with management about the nature of the male students. Teachers frequently complain that the male students are often absent or late, bring nothing to class with them except their phone, and never do homework. There is an understanding, however, that this is not talked about with management who are reluctant to admit to the problem of student behaviour and even sometimes adopt the stance that teachers are responsible for students' actions. This is mentioned twice by another teacher in an interview from the larger data set:

> Sometimes you sort of feel that within the organisation there's a sort of, you know, at high levels there's this denial about what a lot of the students are like. We know what it's like but we don't talk about it.
>
> These guys are a nightmare! I didn't want to say that to [the supervisor] and I know that within the institution that's the worst thing to say
>
> (teacher interview extracts from the larger data set [Donaghue, 2016])

Anna is therefore engaged in highly delicate talk as she is not only disagreeing with S3 but she is also crossing the line of "denial" and doing so directly after S3 has interrupted her with an emphatic disagreement (4). At line 6, Anna seems to be on the point of bringing in her experience to support her argument that the students will not bring headphones. Her use of "well" signals awareness that she is performing a disaligning action. However she doesn't manage to complete her turn as S3 speaks over her (7), introducing a new (and modified) suggestion that the students who don't have headphones don't do the listening activity. In line 9, Anna pauses for a whole second before replying, and her response is significantly quieter than previous turns. These actions seem to show surprise at S3's statement which is now arguably almost indefensible. Anna produces a checking question (9) which although more indirect than an outright disagreement, still challenges the worth of denying students the opportunity to develop their listening skills because they don't have headphones.

Anna then continues her disagreement in the next extract, clearly signalled by "but" (1):

Extract 6

1	Anna	(inbreath) but **you know** with all this other challenge and
2		[(xxx)the pace and the curriculum it's **just** easier to
3	S3	[I know
4	Anna	have it as a as a whole class [listening
5	S3	[mm
6	Anna	**just** to make sure that they all follow have to follow and
7		answer and **e-** they can even work **you know (xxx) wi-** with
8		together with partners
9	S3	yeah
10	Anna	this way it's not completely individual (.) [I I think
11	S3	[but
12	Anna	IDEALLY could've been probably better but they only
13		listen once it's not like they can listen [as many times
14	S3	[yeah
15	Anna	as so I have more control over it
16	S3	yeah
17	Anna	as well
18	S3	yeah
19	Anna	and that's probably better for them for their test taking
20		skills as well

Anna's disagreement, however, is delayed (1–2) and she also pursues S3's agreement with "you know", uses modifiers, and hesitates (indicated in bold). Anna

adds to her epistemic high ground by layering several more reasons for her decision, but although she has multiple reasons for not using headphones, Anna prefaces her defence with a modified agreement "IDEALLY **could've probably** been better" (12) despite evidence suggesting that she does not believe this. Anna seems to be doing facework to mitigate her socially problematic justification, but she also manages to keep the floor when S3 attempts to interrupt ("but", line 11) by speaking louder (the stress on "ideally" comes immediately after S3's overlapped speech) which shows a degree of confidence.

At the beginning of Extract 7, Anna's account seems to be successful as S3 accepts her account: "true yeah" (1):

Extract 7

1	S3	true (.) yeah but with the VIDEO they could've (.) again
2		if you'd [had more TIME
3	Anna	[but again yeah
4	S3	they could've-
5	Anna	because [logistically by the time they open the video
6	S3	[gone through it-
7	Anna	and find it and like you said you know those weak ones
8		they need individual [help it will have taken I mean
9	S3	[mm
10	Anna	five minutes longer than you know [for just for pre
11	S3	[or
12	Anna	listening and pre pre first [stages so it's
13		[yeah
14		(0.3) [I I thought I mean I tried BOTH and I find it that
15	S3	[wa-
16	Anna	when [**I** play the video they they concentrate more
17	S3	[ah- yeah
18	Anna	because it's like oh you know she's looking around but
19		when they're on their OWN they can play ANYTHING and I
20		wouldn't [know so [or they can play it twice and go back
21	S3	[true [ok

However, once again S3 resumes her challenge but with a new focus – that the students could have used headphones in the video activity (1–2). S3's new challenge is less direct – instead of a question (why didn't they use headphones?) she makes a suggestion, plus S3 modifies (and weakens) the suggestion with "if you'd had more time" (2). However, this modified suggestion does not work because Anna has a sound rationale for not using headphones in this situation either.

Anna's speech overlaps S3's as she starts her defence before S3 has finished modifying her suggestion. Anna's defence is again based on experience and she again employs face-sensitive strategies: at line 7 she appeals to comments made previously by S3 as part of her defence ("like you said"), and twice pursues S3's agreement with the phrase "you know" (7, 10). Anna seems to be engaging in face support by showing that she has listened to and values what S3 has said previously. At line 14 there is a fairly long pause, and preamble "I I thought I mean I tried BOTH and I find it that" before delivering her final argument. However, as well as these conciliatory moves, Anna interrupts S3 twice (5, 7), suggesting confidence in her account. These moves show a willingness to continue making her defence, to disagree with the supervisor, to keep the floor, and to produce a lengthy turn, all of which are implicative of conviction. At the end of Anna's account, S3 is forced to finally concede (21) and Anna not only maintains her stance of superior knowledge and experience but also achieves a position of interactional power as she stands her ground and keeps the floor. This power shift is temporary, however, because S3 then initiates a topic change (3) by returning to the observation form to comment positively on one of the criteria (quality of communication). S3 reclaims interactional power by exercising the right to change topic that her position of authority affords her (Heydon 2003):

Extract 8

1	S3	it was a question that I-[yeah
2	Anna	[mm
3	S3	ok the quality of communication is lovely (.) VERY nice
4		(.) absolutely nothing to say there other that it was
5		very very nice (.) I mean the teach – the you know
6		students are obviously very happy in your class

This move of evaluation reasserts S4's institutional authority, a possible face-saving move after her concession.

Anna employs superior knowledge and pedagogical reasoning to defend her actions and disagree with the supervisor which necessarily indicates a contrasting lack of knowledge on S3's part. This is a potentially face-threatening move, indicated by Anna's facework which include weakening her arguments by prefacing and delaying them, hesitating, using modifiers, using a question rather than statement, and speaking quietly. She also employs several face support strategies but these are more subtle than Dan's overt advice acceptance at the end of Episode 1. Face-threat is managed in this episode and S3 and Anna have a lengthy discussion in which the issue of using headphones is fully explored.

4.3 Episode 3: Eve and S1

In the final episode, the teacher (Eve), like Anna above, assumes a stance of epistemic authority after the supervisor (S1) challenges her classroom actions. The teacher does not concede to the supervisor's critical comment but defends her actions by invoking the English language teaching (ELT) literature and her experience.

Extract 9 starts with an account request (1–4) from the supervisor:

Extract 9

1	S1	I WAS curious to hear what their pronunciation would've
2		been like so I thought it [would be if you had time
3		[yeah
4		[to hear some of them read aloud
5	Eve	[yeah pronunciation no that would've been good yeah
6		that's [valid
7	S1	[ah cos paragraphs were hard [(xxx) the text was
8	Eve	[yes
9	S1	very very challenging
10	Eve	but there's a (.) quite a lot of debate isn't there↓ about
11		reading aloud
12	S1	well I always use it and I will never stop
13	Eve	yeah
14	S1	so and you can quote me on that [(xxx)
15	Eve	[ok (laughs)
16	S1	I just think it's just really important

Unlike S3 in Extract 4, S1 does not ask a direct account request question but instead suggests an alternative course of action: "I thought it would be if you had time to hear some of them read aloud" (2–4). Despite this, the utterance can be seen as an (albeit mild) account request as it seems to require a response from the teacher to explain why she didn't follow this course of action. The comment is embedded in pre and post modifications: "I was curious to hear" (1); "if you had time" (2) which may indicate that S1 is orientating to the account request as socially delicate and potentially face-threatening. Eve produces a disagreement (and defence), clearly signalled with "but" (10). However, Eve's defence is modified – her disagreement is indirect (i.e., not attributed to herself but to the literature), it is delayed and weak (her previous turn is an agreement), it is not stated explicitly, and there is hesitation (10) and modification ("***quite** a lot*", line 10). All of this may be facework indicating that Eve is aware of the sensitivity in disagreeing with S1's suggestion.

Eve also seeks S1's agreement: "isn't there" (10), a tag question which indexes inclusiveness as her falling intonation suggests she expects him to agree.

Although presented very tentatively with a great deal of facework, Eve's appeal to the literature produces a vehement (but unsubstantiated) defence from S1 "well I always use it and I will never stop so and you can quote me on that" (12–14). Eve's account raises questions about the merit of S1's suggestion and this seems to cause S1 to orient to face-threat. S1's response in lines 12–14 is bald, direct and assertive, unlike his initial suggestion in lines 1–4. Eve's unshared laughter (15) seems to indicate that she recognizes S1's outburst as an orientation to face-threat. S1 then produces a softening modifier (perhaps to dilute the strength of his previous assertion) by saying "I just think it's just really important" (16). On reading this extract, Eve commented:

> He doesn't give a valid reason for it. I don't understand why that would help them in any way. He doesn't give any justification – he just says I do it and you can quote me on that very defensive and doesn't give any reasons why he does it.

S1's reaction and his position of supervisor means that it is problematic for Eve to pursue her disagreement. However, she disagrees again, but performs another "weak" disagreement (Pomerantz 1984) by again agreeing first (1) and then by qualifying her disagreement with an explanation (4–10):

Extract 10

1	Eve	yeah [I mean I often think it it [would be valid
2	S1	[um [yeah
3	S1	especially if [(xxx)
4	Eve	[the only thing I find with because I've
5		never taught such a (.) BIG class [because it's been
6	S1	[eh ok
7	Eve	mostly EFL em eh it's (.) I've always taught EFL with
8		classes of like fifteen and [so so I'm always a bit
9	S1	[oh ok
10	Eve	worried about some of them getting bored [with listening
11	S1	[right what are
12		they doing ◦this is true◦
13	Eve	to other people and their mistakes so I'm never really
14		quite sure whether to do it but I I do think about it
15	S1	all right em let's see (*reads aloud from the observation*
16		*form*) perhaps the lesson could have been split into two
17		classes with the vocabulary and sentence writing saved
18		for a third lesson or for homework …

Eve draws on her teaching experience which she uses to explain her decision, a less threatening move perhaps than her previous recourse to literature. The disagreement is mitigated with a preface "the only thing I find", there is modification ("**a bit** worried" [8–10]); "I'm never **really quite** sure" [13–14]), and she also ends with a softener "I do think about it" (14). This comment, as well as "I often think it would be valid" (Extract 10, line 1) are purely facework, as Eve made clear in an interview:

> I just said it because I thought it was what he wanted me to say. I thought it would be excruciating if someone's reading aloud. It'll be bloody boring for the rest of [the students].

Eve's account and disagreement has made relevant a reply from S1, the most logical of which would be a convincing explanation of his position. However, despite his previous assertion that it is "important" (Extract 9, line 16) and despite the fact that Eve has indicated a willingness to be persuaded (4) and a willingness to discuss the issue, S1 closes down the topic (15). In her interview Eve wondered why S1 had made the suggestion:

> I didn't understand why he thought I should do pronunciation. If it was a reading comprehension if they're reading out loud they're not focusing on the comprehension

S1 concedes to Eve's account (15), but then immediately initiates a topic shift which brings things to an abrupt end with no resolution, which Eve highlighted in her interview:

> The weird thing is that he doesn't really go anywhere with it …When I started talking about it he changed the subject

S1 changes the subject by taking control of proceedings and turning the conversation back to the observation form and his evaluation of Eve's lesson. This may be a move of face maintenance as it allows him to reassert his role of supervisor and assessor. However, face-threat causes S1 to miss an opportunity to discuss a teaching issue which he considers important. Face is therefore shown to be consequential to both the trajectory of the conversation and to the wider goal of feedback.

5 Discussion

The extracts above show how teachers and supervisors negotiate face during post observation feedback. When producing critical account requests, supervisors vary: one (S3) produces a direct, overtly critical account request, while the other two are

indirect and attenuated. All three teachers challenge the criticism (explicit or implied) in these initial account requests and all employ politeness strategies to help them do this: they delay disagreements, perform "weak disagreements" (Pomerantz 1984) by prefacing them with agreements, and adorn disagreements in "politeness jewellery" (Tracy 2008) such as pauses, hesitations, and modifiers. One of the supervisors, S4, also does facework as he gives advice: he delays the advice with a long preamble, and accompanies it with humour, hesitation, and modifiers. In two cases, the facework done by participants to attenuate possible face-threat is successful, evidenced by alignment between interactional partners. Episode 1 ends with the teacher clearly accepting the supervisor's advice, and Episode 2 ends with the supervisor accepting the teacher's justifications after a long discussion about the use of headphones in the class. However, in Episode 3, the supervisor's bald, direct and assertive reaction to the teacher's disagreement indicates an orientation to face-threat, despite the facework done by the teacher. This face-threat causes the supervisor to shut down the discussion with an abrupt topic shift, with the teacher left wondering why he made the initial account request. In this case, face-threat hinders the feedback goal of dialogue and development.

Participants also engage in face-saving strategies. Although Dan concedes to S4's criticism, the concession is very heavily mitigated and prefaced with a positive evaluation of his speaking activity. Both S3 and S1 make face maintaining moves at the end of their episodes as they re-assert their institutional identity of assessor by returning to the assessment criteria on the observation form and evaluating the teacher. As Episode 2 plays out in a series of challenges (the supervisor) and justifications (the teacher), S3's challenges become correspondingly less direct and more mitigated. This may be self-preserving facework before her eventual concession.

Feedback participants also engage in face support. Dan's concession and request for suggestions boost S4's face, confirming his position of expert and authority. Dan's immediate agreement with S4's suggestions validates S4's position of advice giver. S4, in return, makes clear his confidence in Dan's ability to incorporate the suggestions into his teaching. Anna's appeal to S3's previous comments when constructing her defence is a move of face support, showing S3's comments are both remembered and valued. The gradual weakening of S3's challenges may also indicate face support as she recognizes and accepts Anna's arguments as valid.

This analysis in this article challenges the image drawn in previous post observation feedback studies of an institutionally powerful observer avoiding or mitigating face-threatening acts in order to maintain a social relationship with a teacher, often at the expense of giving clear critical feedback (Roberts 1992;

Vásquez 2004). Underpinning this image are two biases. Firstly, these studies conceptualize face as production based i.e., the concern of the speaker. As a consequence, they focus on analyzing the observer's talk. In contrast, the analysis in this article highlights the evaluative role of the hearer as fundamental (Culpeper 2005; Mills 2005; Mullany 2008) and conducts a turn-by-turn micro-analysis of *both* participants' talk. This sequential analysis shows face to be a more subtle, wide ranging, and interactional accomplishment than previous feedback studies suggest.

The second bias is an assumed goal of face-threat evasion – a Brown and Levinson influenced model of conflict avoidance. The analysis above shows that supervisors *and teachers* are frequently willing to risk face-threat, supporting the view that face-threatening behaviour is rational and common (Culpeper et al. 2003; Mills 2005; Mullany 2008) i.e., not a marked deviance from the unmarked norm of face-threat avoidance. Supervisors are willing to risk face-threat to fulfill feedback goals – they challenge decisions and behaviour they feel could be improved while also meeting their institutional duty of evaluating teachers, making suggestions, and giving advice. The institutional purpose of evaluation and improved teaching therefore legitimizes moves such as account requests, critical feedback, and directives focusing on changing teaching practice. Teachers, too, risk face-threat in order to justify and explain their actions. Teachers' willingness to engage in this behaviour suggests that disagreement is also an accepted feature of the feedback genre.

These extracts also show interactants employing facework during power moves. Power is gained by Anna and Eve as they successfully resist criticism by demonstrating knowledge and experience, and position supervisors as less experienced and less knowledgeable. Following these moves, S3 and S1 have to work to reclaim power by reasserting their authority through topic shifts (interestingly, both shifting to assessment criteria on the observation form which also constitutes a powerful identity of institutional assessor). These two episodes show that, despite the status afforded by institutional roles, power is not static and "possessed like a commodity" (Locher 2004: 37) but rather fluid, contestable and discursively realized (Mills 2005; Mullany 2008). These power shifts may be more common with in-service teachers as their experience and knowledge may make them more powerful interactants than trainees in the pre-service contexts previously studied.

The analysis in Section 4 adds weight to researchers proposing a benefit in combining linguistic and ethnographic data and analysis to understand face (e.g., Copland 2011; Donaghue 2018; Grainger et al. 2010; Spencer-Oatey 2009). However, one significant limitation of this article is the fact that participant interview data is limited. Although I interviewed Eve and the three supervisors, only Eve

commented on the extracts in this article. In addition, both Dan and Anna left the research institution before I had finished analyzing the larger data set, so I was unable to conduct participant perspective interviews with them. I remain intrigued by Dan's mitigated concession in Extract 2: "e:m (.) (tut sigh) I mean it could've been maybe a little bit more focused I guess but (.) you know (laughs)". As an analyst I can guess why he uses so much linguistic cladding but it would be illuminating to gain Dan's perspective. I would also like to have interviewed Eve to ask her why she chose to pursue her defence of using headphones so persistently instead of the easier option of simply agreeing with the supervisor. Despite these limitations and frustrations, however, my knowledge of the research context and Eve's interview comments add insight to the linguistic analysis.

6 Conclusion

This article shows how face is negotiated between experienced teachers and supervisors following critical account requests in post observation feedback discussions. Face is shown to be an important and pervasive feature of feedback interaction as it is tied to the achievement of the feedback goals of teacher development and evaluation. This article adds to existing literature by responding to recent calls for more "real life" empirical research (Copland 2011; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2013; Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini 2010). My contribution is a detailed analysis of extracts from situated real life institutional interaction which shows how face is negotiated on a turn-by-turn basis. This close analysis provides empirical evidence that face is an emergent, interactionally achieved relationship, negotiated by both participants. A key contribution of this article is the analysis of the full spectrum of face, encompassing face-threat, face maintenance, and face support. Previous research into face in post observation feedback has focused exclusively on face-threat, reflecting a tendency in the wider literature to neglect other aspects of face. The extracts in this article show that face support is an important part of post observation feedback which suggests that it may also be significant in other types of institutional interaction. Face support therefore merits more research attention.

The significance of this article extends beyond the realm of post observation feedback to other high-stakes contexts in which one professional evaluates another. There is a growing body of research studying expert-novice evaluative interactions, for example language teacher education (Copland 2011; Vásquez 2004; Wajnryb 1994), medical residency (Apker and Eggly 2004), postgraduate student supervision (Chiang 2009; Vehviäinen 2009) and school counsellor training (Gordon and Luke 2012). These studies highlight power asymmetry and

novice socialization as key features of expert-novice interaction (Gordon and Luke 2012). This article extends such research by looking at evaluative interactions in which the participant being evaluated is an experienced practitioner i.e., not a novice. In this dynamic, power relations are more fluid and face more complex due to the fact that in-service teachers often have more knowledge and experience than their observers. For example, the analysis above shows that experienced teachers are willing to risk the face-threat involved in contesting supervisors' critical account requests and defending their classroom decisions and actions. Analysis also shows one of the supervisors orienting to face-threat, a feature of feedback rarely (if ever) discussed.

These findings have significance for those working in contexts in which experienced professionals are evaluated. Evaluative events such as post observation feedback or staff appraisal meetings often have important consequences but these meetings can be difficult (Copland 2011), delicate, and are often approached with trepidation (Clifton 2012; Donaghue 2016). This article shows that facework can help participants deal with the delicacy and difficulty of evaluation, help maintain relationships, and contribute towards achieving the goal of the event. Clifton (2012) points out that knowledge of staff appraisals is often based on second order accounts rather than analysis of situated interaction and warns that such knowledge may provide practitioners with training or advice which is limited in value or, worse, detrimental to effective communication. In the field of English language teaching, supervisors and trainers have little (or no) training in managing feedback, and often approach meetings with nervousness, especially if they anticipate giving critical feedback or expect disagreement. In her interview, S3 compared criticizing a teacher's lesson to telling someone their baby is ugly and commenting on feedback added "I absolutely hate it". Both S1 and S4 recounted instances of teachers' negative reactions to their critical feedback – one teacher threatened to resign after a meeting with S1, and S4, despite careful preparation, ended up having to justify his feedback to the director of the institution:

> I spent all weekend putting that person's [feedback] putting it into language that I thought would be constructive and helpful, and then running through and even having notes about what I was going to say and I thought I'd done a good job. I thought I did it very very well, patted myself on the back, and thought it went fine. And it ended up in [director]'s office. (Extract from S4's interview)

The guided analysis of feedback extracts such as the ones in this article (or better still, extracts from their own feedback meetings) may raise observers' awareness of face and help them understand their own and teachers' face needs and how face can influence the goals of the feedback meeting and the unfolding talk.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

[	indicates the point of overlap onset
(0.3)	an interval between utterances (3 tenths of a second in this case)
(.)	a very short untimed pause
WORD	indicates a stressed word
we:ll	: indicates lengthening of the preceding sound
-	a single dash indicates an abrupt cut-off
↑	rising intonation, not necessarily a question
↓	falling intonation
° °	utterances between degree signs are noticeably quieter than surrounding talk
!	definite and emphatic intonation
?	intonation indicates a question
(xxxx)	a stretch of unclear or unintelligible speech
(guess)	indicates transcriber doubt about a word
(sighs)	additional information
(laughs)	indicates laughter
eh, ah, um	fillers
mm/mmhm	backchanneling indicators

non-standard forms included: cos (because); yeah (yes); ok

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