

Managing Threats to Teacher Face in Discussions of Video-Recorded Lessons

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Abstract: Scholars and educators are increasingly enthusiastic about the potential benefits of video-based teacher learning. However, collaborative analysis of video is a complex social endeavor entailing numerous obstacles to learning, central among them face threats. In this study, we use linguistic ethnographic methods to investigate the implications for teacher face of using video in professional development, and the implications of teacher facework for their learning. We analyze 15 case studies of video-based discussions in school-based teacher teams, identifying and classifying face-threatening acts and the facework involved in responding to them. We then identify and analyze exemplary cases involving key facework strategies (face threat avoidance, face defending, and face correction), focusing on the ways these strategies opened up or closed down opportunities for learning. This study will contribute to our understanding of the interaction of social and cognitive dimensions of professional learning in general, and of teacher facework in video-based professional development.

Keywords: teacher learning, video-based professional development, face, linguistic ethnography

Video-based teacher professional learning

Research has demonstrated the potential benefits of on-the-job teacher collaborative discourse for instructional improvement (Little, 1982; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Particularly productive, studies suggest, is discourse that deprivatizes teaching practice (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu & Easton, 2010; Little, 1990), involves rich representations of everyday classroom experiences (Gaudin & Chalias, 2015; Little, 2003; Van Es & Sherin, 2002), and engages practitioners in collaborative and reflective inquiry on problems of practice (Horn, 2005; Horn & Little, 2010; Lefstein & Snell, 2013).

In particular, educational researchers and teacher educators are increasingly enthusiastic about the potential benefits of video representations of classroom practice as tools in teachers' learning (e.g., Sherin, Jacobs & Philipp, 2011; Zhang, Lundeborg, Koehler & Eberhardt, 2011). Video-based discussions have the potential to cultivate collaborative teacher professional learning; make classroom practice public and explore theory in relation to concrete problems of practice (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Stoll & Louis, 2007; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). However, video-based discussions entail exposure, which may be experienced as threatening by teachers who are concerned about accountability or are uncertain about the quality of their own performance. Above all, such exposure and the associated discussions of video-recorded practice inevitably lead to face threats.

While the efficacy of video-based learning has been demonstrated, the social processes through which teachers learn in such settings have yet to be thoroughly examined. This gap is particularly significant in light of evidence that teachers' work is governed by non-collaborative norms such as privacy, individualism and noninterference (Hargreaves, 1994; Little, 1990; Lortie, 1975). Video-based learning works against such norms, by exposing practice to scrutiny and critique in ways that other discussions, such as planning or consulting, do not. When colleagues watch a video of a teacher's practice, the video-recorded teacher has little control over what is exposed, relative to, for example, sharing a problem of practice through replay or rehearsal (Horn, 2010). In addition, video analysis often takes place in situations of complex power relations – among teachers, school management and external coaches (Lefstein & Snell, 2011). Thus, while video analysis has great potential for teacher learning, it is a complex social endeavor entailing numerous obstacles for learning. This study aims to shed light on this complexity through a linguistic ethnographic investigation of teachers' face-work in video-based discussions.

Framed by a socio-cultural perspective, in this study, we view learning in teacher teams as involving active participation in a community of practice (Wenger, 1999). We foreground social processes over individual ones, focusing on opportunities to learn, i.e., the ways access to professional knowledge is provided to participants, affording changes in participation and practice (Horn & Kane, 2015). Opportunities to learn are constructed through actions and interactions interpreted by members of the community. As an important facet of all social processes, facework is necessarily an important aspect of processes of social learning.

Face work

Face is one's positive image before others. It may be defined as the positive social value "a person effectively claims for himself" (Goffman 1955, p. 5) by presenting one's 'self' to others – and being perceived by them – in particular ways. A person may be presented through interaction as successful, or kind, or intelligent, or whatever social attributes are valued in that setting, and this is the image, or face, that the other parties to the interaction perceive. "Face, therefore, is precisely the conceptualization each of us makes of our 'self' through the construal of others in social interaction and particularly in verbal interaction, i.e. through talk" (Watts, 2003, p.124). Face is subject to constant, ongoing negotiation through micro-processes of talk and interaction. It is a changeable, unstable entity "diffusely located in the flow of events" (Goffman, 1955, p.7).

The work we do in social interaction to enable our self and others to construct and maintain face, is called *facework*. Facework is 'the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face. Face work serves to counteract "incidents" -- that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face.' (Goffman, 1955, p. 12). Generally, the prevalent social norm is face maintenance, that is: people are expected to behave in a way that maintains both their own face (defensive orientation) and that of others (protective orientation), and prevents loss of face (Brown & Levinson, 1978). This is done by identifying potential face threats and working towards mitigating them, by: (a) avoiding them (e.g., changing the subject of discussion when it approaches a sensitive topic); (b) defending or protecting face when a threat is posed (e.g., by justifying a criticized behavior) and (c) reconstructing or correcting face when it was harmed (e.g., by apologizing or compensating through complimenting).

Nevertheless, in some social situations, face threatening acts are legitimate and even called for (e.g., news interviews). In other situations, such as video-based discussions, the observed teacher's face is on the line by virtue of the exposure of her practice and speech acts that are endemic to this activity, such as advice giving, evaluation and questioning (Copland, 2011). It is therefore important to understand:

1. What are the implications of using video for teachers' facework?
2. What are prevalent acts of facework in teachers learning from video: How do teachers: (a) avoid face threat? (b) Defend their own face? (c) Protect their colleagues' face? (d) Correct face loss?
3. What are the implications of such facework for teacher learning from video-based discussions of practice?

We explore these questions by analyzing 15 case studies of video-based discussions in school-based teacher teams.

Research methods

The data for this study was collected in the context of a large design-based implementation research project focusing upon teacher professional discourse and leadership. In the development year of this study, we worked with the coordinators of ten teacher teams in four schools in a large Israeli school district. These teacher leaders were responsible for facilitating weekly team meetings in their schools. In addition, they participated in a bi-weekly professional development workshop, in which they were provided with tools for fostering and enhancing the pedagogical discourse in their in-school meetings. We conducted participant observations in 118 of these team meetings over the course of the 2014-2015 school year; we audio-recorded these meetings, kept field notes, interviewed participating teacher leaders and recorded professional development workshops.

The data corpus for this study is comprised of 15 team meetings in which teachers discussed videos of classroom practice of an attending member of the team. One of the tools introduced in the program is protocols for video-based discussions. The protocols provide guidelines for structuring professional conversations, including delineation of roles, topics, sequences and ways of talking. The idea behind the protocol is to facilitate the development of productive norms for discussing practice and to counter restricting norms, such as normalization of problems of practice on one hand and hypercriticism on the other.

Data analysis and preliminary findings

To explore the implications of using video for teacher facework we analyze the data through both systematic coding of the episode and microanalysis. We identify face-threatening acts and classify them using categories based on Goffman (1955) and Brown and Levinson (1978), which we have further refined based upon our initial analysis (Table 1). The coding distinguishes between acts that threaten the face of the filmed teacher and are initiated by her ("self face") and face threatening acts that are initiated by others ("other face"). For example, the face of the filmed teacher may be threatened by criticizing the practice she exhibits in the video, but such face threat may have different implications depending on whether she criticizes herself or others criticize her. We then code these events (that involve face threatening acts) for facework that acts to: (a) avoid face threat; (b) defend

self or protect other's face when a threat is posed; and (c) reconstruct face when face was lost. Through this analysis we aim to provide a broad and nuanced account of different types of teacher facework in video-based discussions (Table 1).

Table 1. Initial coding scheme

	Self face	Other face
Face-threat avoidance	Change topic	
	Ignore	
	Withhold questions	
	Withhold disagreement	Withhold critique
Protect/defend face	Normalize	
	Ask reassurance, self-reassure	Reassure
	Attribute blame	
	Justify	
	Explain	
Correct (reconstruct) face		Apologize
	Compensate (e.g., self success story, self-provided solution)	Compensate (e.g., other's success story, self face threat, Compliment)
	Punish	
	Retreat	
	Humor	

To investigate the implications of different types of face work on teachers learning, we identify illustrative cases (based on the coding above) representing discourse dominated by:

1. Face threat avoidance. For example, in one team, video based discussions were limited to "appreciative feedback" in which participants highlighted positive aspects of the observed practice and avoided asking substantive questions, problematizing or criticizing practice.
2. Face defending and protecting. For example, in one case, teachers raised questions regarding a practice they observed in the video, whereby the teacher dictated the correct answer for the students to write. Following this potentially face-threatening questioning, the filmed teacher and her colleagues engaged in a series of acts (reasoning, blaming) that served to justify and unproblematize the teaching practice.
3. Face correction. For example, in one case a teacher was criticized for her failure to foster student talk in her class. The other teachers interrogated her, compared her practice to their own "successful" ones and gave her advice. She suffered face loss. Reconstructing her face she went into great length telling a heroic story of her own professional success.

Our analysis of these illustrative cases employs linguistic ethnographic methods (Rampton, Maybin & Roberts, 2015): we repeatedly listen to recorded episodes, transcribe them in detail, and brainstorm about what was happening and what we found interesting. We then use micro-analytic methods to analyze the sequential unfolding of selected events. Such analysis involves proceeding slowly through the recording, asking at each line, "What is the speaker doing?" "Why that, now?" "How does this turn at talk respond to what came before?" "What else might have been done here but wasn't?" etc. (Rampton, 2006). We focus on the ways different types of facework opened up or closed down opportunities to learn (Horn & Kane, 2015), such as identifying problems of practice, reframing them and deliberating about them, multiplicity of interpretations and alternative courses of action and considerations of the pros and cons of each of them. This analysis also incorporates data from field notes, coordinators interviews and the workshop recordings, in which participants shared their perspective on the video and the analyzed discussions.

Significance and contribution

This study will contribute to our understanding of teachers' video-based learning, and in particular to the social processes such learning entails. It will yield practical recommendations of ways to enhance the productivity of teachers' video-based learning. It will also shed light, more generally, on the implication of face threat and facework on professional learning.

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