Insights into the concept of `face` in the Tunisian culture

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Abstract

This paper, basically, aims at conceptualizing a definition of face in the Tunisian culture. It, also, endeavours to draw a comparison between Tunisians` understanding of face and that of Goffman`s, and it investigates whether Tunisian face shares certain features with other Arab cultures, namely the Palestinian one. The study relies on a sample of Tunisian participants, form different regions of the country, responding to a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire about the different uses and interpretations of face expressions in interaction. Based on the analysis of Tunisian participants` responses, this study maintains, first, that face in Tunisia is, cogently, linked with the notion of embarrassment: the happening or the non-happening of embarrassment. The first is equated with face loss, whereas the second with maintaining face. This study, also, reveals that although Tunisians` understanding of face is similar to that of Goffman and to that of the Palestinian culture, its personal and lent-face characteristics are unique and Tunisian-specific.

Keywords: Face, face expressions, social interaction, embarrassment.

1. Introduction

Mao (1994), Watts (2003) and Farahat (2009) argue that the concept of face is, originally, a Chinese concept that has been translated to other cultures. However, it has been, academically, coined and introduced to social and interactional studies by the seminal works of Goffman (1956; 1967) (Henslin, 2008; West & Turner, 2008). Ever since, face, as a social and interactional phenomenon, has drawn the interest of scientific research in different cultures (Matsumoto, 2013).

Most of the scientific debate on face has been on its universality. What is meant by universality, here, is not whether or not all cultures have face, but rather whether a single definition or a conceptualization of face can be universal and generalized to include all different cultures. While some researchers, like Chiappini (2003), Arundale (2009) and Ehsretah (2015), argue that Goffman`s face can be extended or generalized to encompass interactants from different cultures, other researchers argue differently. They assume that face is culturally idiosyncratic, which means that different cultures have different conceptualizations and different characteristics of face. The following section provides a clearer insight into Goffman`s and other cultures` account of face.

2. Goffman`s notion of face

Goffman (1967) argues that all individuals, especially participants in interaction, have something called face. This face is the positive self image that an individual claims for himself, and it is best manifest in interaction (Goffman, 1967). That is, when individuals involve themselves in social interaction, they, automaticllay, involve their face. As this interaction and involvement of face go on, face, according to Goffman (1967), can be either maintained or lost. Maintaining face or the individual`s positive self-image prerequisites consistency between past actions or ``lines`` and current ones (Goffman, 1967, p. 8). By the same token, inconsistency in ``lines`` brings about the loss of face (ibid). Using Goffman (1967) `s own terms, these inconsistencies make interactants appear either ``in the wrong face`` or ``out of face`` (p. 8).

Goffman (1967), also, states that an individual does not just save and maintain his/her face in an interaction, but the face of the other participants in that interaction as well. The latters are expected to do the same, too. So, all participants in interaction engage in ``facework``: making the action taken by a person in interaction consistent with his/her face (p. 12). In other words, participants accept each other`s lines. This mutual acceptance is, actually, ```a working of acceptance`` and not a real one, and it is a ``basic structural feature`` of face to face interaction (p. 11). Having said that, and back to Goffman (1956)`s article ``The Art of Impression Management``, interactants are, in fact, performers. They stage a character of their own by attributing some attributes to themselves, and while doing so, they aim at making an appropriate impression (Goffman, 1956).

It is important to note, as well, that Goffman (1967) assumes that members in a social relationship share a common face. This common face makes the participant, who is a member

or a performer of a certain group, consider that he does not just represent his/her own face, but the face of their group and team mates as well (Goffman, 1956; 1967). Consequently, any disruption or an ill-impression on the part of one individual can be reflected and deflected to his/her group. By the same analogy, the opposite is correct: a threatening act on one member of the group is considered as a threat to the all other members (ibid).

What is left to be emphasized, here, is that Goffman (1956; 1967) `s works on face and self-presentation in interaction is, still, considered as one of the most influential works in the field of social interaction. It has influenced some other seminal works, like that of Brown and Levinson (1987)`s comprehensive framework of politeness (Chiappini, 2003; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003; Bayles, 2009).

2. Brown and Levinson (1987) `s notion of face

Brown and Levinson (1987) rely heavily on Goffman`s notion of face in elaborating their own. They admit to this in by saying `` our notion of face is derived from that of Goffman and from the English folk term`` (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 2). However, although their notion of face is based on Goffman`s, it differs from it in its cogent association with the phenomenon of politeness (Bayles, 2009; Haugh, 2009).

Brown and Levinson (1987), also, argue that every individual has two types of face: positive face and negative face. An individual`s positive face refers to the need and want to be accepted and that his/her needs or wants are approved of and attended to. A person`s negative face, however, is the need for independence, freedom for action and from imposition (Brown and Levinson, (1987).

Both negative and positive face are at the core of Brown and Levinson (1987) `s approach of politeness. They can not be separated from it. For this reason, they advance that participants can attend to the different face needs of their interlocutors only through the use of different and specific politeness strategies. These different politeness strategies, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), serve either to maximize the addressee`s positive face; positive politeness, or to minimize the threat on the addressee`s negative face; negative politeness.

They, broadly, have twenty five politeness strategies. Fifteen positive and ten negative politeness strategies that address the hearer`s positive and negative face wants. All these strategies amount from certain ``super strategies`` or super wants`` that function as the main mechanism of positive and negative politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 103).

 It is crucial, here, to state that Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that their account of face is universal (Chiappinin, 2003). They claim that it is comprehensive enough to be applied to different cultures (ibid). Different researchers, however, have brought this universality claim into scientific investigation in different cultures. Some of these studies have concluded that Brown and Levinson (1987) `s face can not be universal due to cultural idiosyncrasies in the understanding of face. Some of these studies include: Chiappinin (2003, 2006); Haugh (2009); Arundale (2009) & Holtgraves (2009). Conversely and interestingly, as well, other studies bear evidence that Goffman (1967)`s older account of face, despite being

initially of the western culture, can, actually, be universal: it extended and generalized to encompass different cultures (Chiappinin, 2003; Arundale, 2009)

3. Face cross-cultures

Eshretah (2015) argues that there is ``no consensus on the definition of face`` cross-culturally (p. 13). The same point is pointed at by many researchers who investigated the universality of face in different cultures (Mao, 1994; Koutlaki, 2002, 2009; Ruhi, 2009; Matsumoto, 2009 and Gao, 2009). The dilemma, as Matsumoto (2009, p. xii) states is that affirming the universal validity ``of a fundamental concept as `face` risks overlapping important variability within and cross languages and their uses``. Of the many cultural differences in the conceptualization and understanding of face, this paper chooses to report how face is understood in these three different cultures: the Persian, the Chinese and the Arabic culture.

4.1. The Chinese face

Mao (1994) argues that face is originally a Chinese concept. He states that he traced its origins ``back to Chinese`` (p. 451). Face in China is made up of two components: *mianzi and lian.* These two components, broadly, involve meanings of good and descent images that persons ``can claim for themselves from communities in which they interact, or to which they belong`` (p. 457). In a more specific way, *mianzi* is about the individual, reputable and positive self-image that a person has earned, in interaction, and that that has been given to him by his own social circle. *Lian*, however, has to do with the community or the social circle of the individual. It refers to the reverence and esteem that the group has for individuals with high moral values and good reputation (Mao, 1994; Gao, 2009)

Mao (1994) contradicts the Chinese face against the traditional Brown and Levinson (1987)`s account of face. He argues that the Chinese face can not be, simply, claimed by individuals. It does not lay emphasis on the individual desires and wants, and thus, it ``does not privilege the self`` (p. 460), like Brown and Levinson (1987) have in their account of face. On the contrary, individuals can, only, claim face in interaction with others: face is closely related to how the community views and judges a person`s character in social encounters. It depends on  how an individual acts and on the community`s perception of that act (ibid). Mao (1994), thus, concludes that Chinese face is given by community in interaction, or, using Goffman (1967)`s expression, is ``on loan .....from society`` (p. 10)

4.2. The Persian face

Koutlaki (2002; 2009) argues that in harmony with Goffman (1967)`s pride and honour, the Persian face is made up of two sides: *saxsiat* and *ehteram*. *Saxsiat* refers to ``personality, character, self-respect, social standing`` (Koutlaki, 2009, p. 117). It is the results of different factors such as the home upbringing and the schooling that an individual had. Koutlaki (2002; 2009), also, argues that a person who respects and abides by the norms of the Persian society is described as *basaxsiat,* which means``with saxiat``. However, a person who does not respect the rules of the society and has a tendency to breach them is described as *bisaxsia*, which means that he/she has no *saxsiat* or he/she is ``without saxsiat`` (ibid).

The second component of face, ehteram, is associated with ``respect, esteem, dignity`` (Koutlaki, 2009, p . 117). *Ehteram* is manifest in interaction and it is about abiding by the conventional rituals of interaction. The interactional conventions or rituals, in Persian culture, differ according to the hearer`s age, social status, and according to the closeness and distance relations both interlocutors have (Koutlaki, 2002; 2009). In short, *ehteram* is about ``conformity to the conventions of ritual politeness`` (Koutlaki, 2009p. 117).

More importantly, Koutlaki (2009) condones that Persian *saxsiat* is different from Brown and Levinson (1987)`s notion of positive face. Positive face is an individualistic face: it refers to a person`s own wants to be liked and treated as a member of the group by others (Koutlaki, 2009). The Persian *Saxsiat*, however, is a collective and communal concept that ```does not exist outside the group and acquires its meaning in connection with it`` (p. 118). Plus, *saxsiat* is closely related to one`s family and social circle: *basaxsiat* individuals project their good character and society`s respect on their family and social circle, where a *bisaxsiat* individual does just the opposite (ibid). Another major and broader difference between Persian face and that of Brown and Levinson (1987) is that Persians are oriented towards group face and that they prefer face-enhancement over face-saving (ibid).

It is worth mentioning, here, that NaffSinger (1964) was the first researcher to make such assumptions about face for Asian countries. He argues that along with Arab Muslim cultures, Far Eastern countries highly valuate face. They associate it with honour, dignity, respect and pride. Face is like a ``syndrome`` for them (Naffsinger, 1964, p. 4). He, also, was the first to notice that the individual face, in those cultures, is so closely attached to one`s family and social circle that it converts into a commune or a collective face, as it is noticed in the Chinese and Persian cultures above.

The same assumptions, made by Naffsinger (1964), are validated by Sarah Rosenberg (2004). She argues that to understand face in different cultures one must distinguish between high-context and low-context societies. Low-context societies, according to Rosenberg (2004), are those of the U.S.A and western societies. They are characterised by: direct interaction, the superiority of truth and they have an individualistic spirit. These ``individualistic societies``, as Rosenberg (2004) label them, override and overweigh responsibility or obligation to one`s family, ethnic group or even nation (p. 3). The moral compass, here, is the individual and personal sense of guilt or shame. So face is personal, private and it reflects the individualistic spirit of the low-context societies (ibid).

High-context societies, on the other hand, or societies that have ``a syndrome`` of face`` (Naffsinger, 1964, p. 4) are Asian countries and Arab Muslim countries (Naffsinger, 1964, Rosenberg, 2004). Those cultures, Rosneberg, (2004) states, are known as being ``collectivistic cultures`` (p. 4). They are interdependent and traditional societies where notions of collective honour and shame play an influential role in delimiting what is permissible and what is not permissible in the society (ibid). Therefore, family reputation, group harmony and accord are more important than individual needs or wants (Naffsinger, 1964; Rosenberg, 2004). In other words, collective face is highly more important than individual face (ibid).

Naffsinger (1964) and Rosenberg (2004), also, agree on the assumption that losing

face, in these societies, can be very costly. Once face is lost, it becomes hard to restore, especially when one is humiliated in front of his family or social circle. That ``can be a fate worse than death in some cases`` (Rosenberg, 2004, p. 3).

The different studies, dealing with face in Arabic culture, strongly support the earlier assumptions. They locate Arabic culture within the high-context cultures that have ``a syndrome`` of face (Naffsinger, 1964, p. 44; Rosenberg, 2004).

4.3. The Arab face

The earliest work on the term and concept of face in the Arab culture can be traced back to Naffsinger (1964) `s study. Naffsinger (1964), states, in his investigation, that face is the highest and most important concept and value in the Arab culture. it is ``a syndrome of the Arab values`` (Naffsinger, 1964, p. 44). He argues that maintaining and preserving face, for Arabs, is an absolute priority. It is a syndrome that pushes and, even, compels Arabs to lie in order to preserve it, which makes them, according to Naffsinger (1964), `` a living non-sequitor or else deliberately perverse`` (p. 44). He explain that Arabs resort to such devious acts, as covering the truth and lying, because, for them, the loss of face automatically results in character defamation and disgrace (ibid).

Naffsinger (1964), also, assumes that ``the ideal of maintaining face has a universality among them``, the Arabs (p. 45). It is so, regardless of their social status or positions. This common interest in preserving face, he argues, is due to the fact that someone`s face itself is inseparable from his/ her adherence to the social norms and values shared within his/her social group. To gain what Naffsinger (1964) calls ``social acceptability`` and to preserve their face, dignity and honor, Arabs are willing to cover the truth and, even, lie (ibid).

Recent studies on face in the Arabic culture affirm, to some extent, Naffinger (1964) and Rosenberg (2004)`s assumptions. Farahat (2009) and Eshretah (2015) argue that the notion of face in Arab culture originates from the classical Arabic expression ``irakat maa el wajah``. An expression that translates into ``losing the water of someone`s face`` (Eshretah, 2015, p. 17). It is idiomatically and metaphorically used to refer to concepts and expressions such as: respect, politeness, pride, dignity, shame, disgrace..etc (Farahat, 2009; Eshretah, 2015).

The only studies found on face in Arabic culture are that of the Palestinian face. Those studies, however, sometimes use the term Palestinian and Arabic interchangeably. The only study on the Tunisian face is reported by Eshreteh (2015), and it is carried by Elarabi (1997).

4.3.1. The Palestinian face

Farahat (2009) and Eshreteh (2015) argue that the Palestinian face is, considerably, in harmony with Goffman (1967) `s definition of face. They assume that face is the public self-image that an individual claims for himself in social interaction. This positive-self image is maintained, in Arabic culture, by avoiding behaviors and conducts that contradict the social norms and values. Thus, face is not an individual possession. It is only claimed by the individual, but it is given by society and can be taken by society as well: it is the collective

property of the group that the individual belongs to (Farahat, 2009; Eshreteh, 2015). It is noted, here, that those assumptions are in complete harmony with Naffsinger (1964)` s claims on Arabic face, as the latter, also, stresses the paramount role that society plays in issues like face.

Farahat (2009) and Eshreteh (2015), also, lay an emphasis on the fact that an individual`s face, in Palestinian culture, is firmly integrated into the face of the family or the close social circle. This collective aspect of face adds to the gravity of face and the gravity of its loss. That is, when an individual jeopardizes his/her own face, he/she jeopardizes the face of his/her family and close social circle as well (ibid).

For this very reason, Eshreteh (2015) believes that it becomes incumbent upon the individual to avoid anti-social behaviors. Avoiding anti-social behaviors can be attained, according to Ehsreteh (2015), when the individual, always, favors the group`s interest and face over his/her own. By doing so, he/ she can avoid any ``clash between one`s face and the face wants of his/her social circle`` (p. 18). This sacrifice of private face and wants is, only due to the ``syndrome of Arab values`` and face (Naffsinger, 1964, p. 44), which once lost, becomes difficult to repair and restore (Naffsinger, 1964; Farahat, 2009; Eshretah, 2015).

What is interesting about the Arab culture, in general, and the Palestinian culture, in particular, is the use of the very word face in their social interactions (Farahat, 2009; Eshreteh, 2015). It is used as a ``metaphor to describe politeness in action``, as Eshreteh, (2015, p. 18) assumes. This is done, particularly, through the use of certain face-upgrading or face-demeaning/threatening expressions (Farahat, 2009; Eshreteh, 2015).

Some of these expressions that praise face and that are related to politeness, in the Palestinian culture, are ``*fi wajhu dam/hayaa*`` and ``*bayad wajhu/wajahna*``. Those two expressions translate into: ``there is blood/blashfulness on his face`` and ``he whitens his/our face`` (Eshreteh, 2015, p. 88-89). Such expressions are used to describe a person as being very polite, respectable and honorable (ibid).

The opposite of those expressions are face-demeaning/threatening expressions. They are used to describe the person as being severely impolite (Farahat, 2009; Eshreteh, 2015). Of these expressions, we can mention: ``*ma feech fi wajhu dam/hayaa*`` and ``*sawad wajhu/wajahna*``*,* which, respectively, translate into: ``there is no blood/blashfulness on his/ face`` and ``he blackens his/our face`` (Esheteh, 2015, p. 89-90). Such expressions describe the person as being shameless, impolite and infamous. He/she is so because he violates, in words or actions, the social norms and the boundaries of politeness (ibid).

Despite the absence of other studies dealing with face and face-expressions in the Arab culture, it is important to note that, approximately, all other Arab cultures have very similar face-expressions that they use in their daily interactions. This can be noticed in Arabic TV shows, especially Arabic series and drama.

4.3.2. Face in the Tunisian culture

The only study found on the Tunisian face is cited in Eshretah (2015) and it is carried by Elarabi (1997). Elarabi (1997) argues that `wajah` in Tunisian Arabic can be interpreted as face in English. It is, metaphorically, associated with politeness and embarrassment, just as it is in English and other Arabic cultures (Eshretah, 2015)

Elaborating on his account of the Tunisian face, Elarabi (1997) contends that different parts of the face, as a part of the body, are, also, associated with politeness, in the Tunisian culture. These face parts, associated with politeness, are: `the beard`, `the moustache` and `the eyes`. The beard and the moustache, which are ``gender specific`` to man, according to Elarabi (1997), are related, in terms of the Tunisian social code, to good reputation and honor (Eshretah, 2015, p. 19). Thus, when a person is said to have a beard or a moustache, he is regarded by his society as being respectable, moral and having a good reputation. However, when a person is said to have no beard or moustache, it indicates that he has no morals and that he has a bad reputation because of his ``despicable or immoral behavior`` (Eshretah, 2015).

The `eye` part of the face, however, is not ``gender specific`` in the Tunisian account of face (Eshretah, 2015, p. 19). When it is used, in relation to politeness and face, it encapsulates both genders. Citing Elarabi (1997,p. 16), Eshretah (2015), states that Tunisians use the expression ``he/she fell from my eye`` to refer to a person who did something immoral. Another non-gender specific expression, used by Tunisians, is ``his/her face is covered with shit, may god protect you from- from having the same disgrace-`` (Elarabi, 1997, cited in Eshretah, 2015, p. 19). This expression is typically used to describe someone`s stained and blackened face because of the serious moral breach that he/she has committed (ibid).

Elarabi (1997), also, argues that face in Tunisia is a collective or a group face (Eshretah, 2015). It is given by society and can be taken away from society, as well. Moreover, and similarly to the Palestinian face, the damage that an individual brings on his own face can be extended to affect the face of his family and the social circle to which he belongs. Plus, when face is lost or damaged, it becomes difficult to restore. For those reasons, Tunisians, as Elarabi (1997) argues, are careful and prudent in dealing with their face (Eshretah, 2015). This is an important common feature that the Tunisian culture shares with the Palestinian and other Arab cultures (ibid).

It is clear, in Elarabi (1997)`s account of face, that he, almost entirely, neglects the face expressions that, are associated with politeness, and that Tunisians use in their interaction. He, mainly, focuses on face-parts that can be gender or non-gender specific: beard and moustache form men, and the eye for, both, men and women. Thus, his account of the Tunisian face is limited and does not account for an important element in Tunisian culture: the use of face expressions and the interpretations of such uses in social interactions. This paper aims to make up for those shortcomings so as to, eventually, have a better understanding of the important notion of face in Tunisia.

4. Methodology

This section, first, explains the sampling technique adopted in this study and, then, the methods used in data collection.

5.1. Sampling

Pattan (1990), Teddlie and Yu (2007) and Battaglia (2008) argue that there are, basically, two different methods of sampling. They are probability and non-probability or purposive sampling. Probability sampling is, mostly, used in quantitative studies. It aims at achieving representativeness in the selected sample by giving every member of the population ``a known non-zero chance of being selected`` (Battaglia, 2008, p. 523). Probability sampling includes different techniques, like: random sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling and cluster random sampling (Teddlie and Yu, 2007).

On the contrary, non-probability sampling does not involve randomization (Patton, 1990; Battaglia, 2008). It opts for more or less ``subjective methods`` in selecting the sample (Battaglia, 2008, p. 523). While Pattan (1990) postulates that the main logic behind the use of non-probability sampling is the focus on ``information-rich cases`` (p. 169), Battaglia (2008) argues that it is used: when the population is not precisely defined, when there is no significant interest, in the study, to generalize the findings and, more commonly, when it is easier and not as expensive as probability sampling to apply. Non-probability sampling, also, includes different techniques, such as: deviant or extreme case sampling, intensity sampling, criterion sampling, convenience sampling…etc (Pattan, 1990; Battaglias, 2008; Palinkas et al, 2013).

This study, in the selection of its sample, opts for non-probability sampling, particularly convenience sampling. This sampling technique, as Pattan (1990) and Battglias (2008) assume, is the most common sampling strategy in non-probability sampling. What makes this strategy desirable for researchers is that it is ``fast and convenient`` (Pattan, 1990, p. 180). It obtains data from a sample that is easier to access in terms of geographic distance or financial costs (ibid). In other words, it is used when the researcher needs to save time and money and when his time is limited (Battaglia, 2008; Palinkas, et al, 2013).

The above mentioned characteristics of convenience sampling are the main rational behind its use in this investigation. First, the population of this study is quite large. It is made up of Tunisian people aged between twenty and thirty five years old. This demographic sample of the Tunisian society is chosen because 70% of the Tunisian society is under the age of thirty five; that is, almost, seven million of people, according to the Tunisian School of Politics (http://www.tsop.tn/ar/about_us). This large population is scattered on twenty four cities. This geographical distance is the first rational behind the use of convenience sampling, and it is the reason why only three cities are chosen for participants.

Those three cities are: Tunis, Sfax and Gabes. Tunis is chosen because it is the capital and the biggest city in terms of the population. It is, also, chosen because the researcher is a frequent commuter to it, which makes the sample easier to access for the study. Sfax, as well, is chosen because it is the second biggest city in the country, and it is, also, close to the

researcher`s home town: Gabes. The latter, of course, is chosen because it provides the easiest access to participants. In more technical terms, those three cities meet the criteria of geographical proximity and easier accessibility to the sample, which are the main logic and rational for the use of convenience sampling (Patton, 1990; Battaglia, 2008; Palinkas, et al, 2013; Etikan, et al, 2015).

It should be emphasized, here, that three cities are selected, in this convenience sampling, and not just one. This decision aims at making up for the shortcomings that are, usually, associated with convenience sampling, typically when only one sample is selected. The major weakness of this sampling technique, according to several researchers, is that the sample size is not representative of the population and it ``is too small to permit generalization`` (Patton, 1990, p. 180). That is why this study selects three different samples from three different cities, and not just one: to make the sample more representative which allows for making generalizations.

What is left to be stated, here, is that 40 participants are chosen from each city. That is 120 participants as a whole. Those 120 participants are given and asked to fill out a questionnaire to collect data.

5.2. Date collection instrument

The instrument used for collecting data from those 120 participants is questionnaire survey. This techniques is defined as a `` means of gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people`` (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993, p. 77). It is, also, praised by several researchers as the primary and the most common form of data collection from respondents (Creswell, 2003; Zohrabi, 2013).

Several characteristics make the questionnaire survey a highly effective method of data collection. Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993), Creswell (2003) and Zohrabi (2013), they all argue that what makes questionnaires the most capable of obtaining data is: first, their transferability to a large number of people at the same time, second, they are an easy and ``a time efficient way of collecting data`` (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 255). Another important feature of the questionnaire is that its respondents can be anonymous. This anonymity can make respondents more at ease in answering the questions, which, in turn, can improve the quality of the data given by them (Pinsonneault and Kraemer, 1993; Creswell, 2003; Zohrabi, 2013).

Basically, there are two types of questionnaires. A third type, however, can be added to the typology when the two type are mixed (Zohrabi, 2013). Those three types are: closed-ended questionnaire, open-ended questionnaire and a mixture of closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire. The main difference between the first two types of questionnaire is that the latter provides the researcher with ``quantitative or numerical data``, whereas the former with ``qualitative or text information`` (Zohrabi, 2013, p. 254). The third type, however, provides both forms of data (ibid).

Each of the two basic types of questionnaire has its own favorable characteristics for both the researcher and the respondents. Open-ended questionnaires, to start with, are the easiest and the most efficient for both parties. For the participant, he or she is asked to,

simply, choose one of the provided alternatives that are given by the researcher whose task of analyzing data is made easier by the quantitative nature of the collected data (Fowler, 1995; Zohrabi, 2013). On the other hand, in open-ended questionnaires, the participants respond to the questionnaire in their own words and expressions (ibid). Thus, data is qualitative, which leads to a deeper, but more difficult, analysis of data (ibid).

Having said that, it follows that combining both types of questionnaires into a single one gives, first, the researcher an easy analysis of the alternative responses that he/she provided to the respondents: the quantitative aspect of data. Second, it gives the respondent the opportunity to express himself/herself and answer the questions in his/her own words (Zohrabi, 2013).

This study combines closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires into a single questionnaire. This questionnaire is made up of two parts that are inter-connected. The first part is closed-ended. It includes ten Tunisian face expressions and asks the 120 respondents to tick the yes alternative for the expression they use and no for the expression that they don't use in their interaction. The data collected from respondents, in the first part of the questionnaire, is easier to analyze because it is quantitative in nature: it is numerical and can be transformed into frequencies and statistics (Flower and Cosenza, 2008; Zohrabi, 2013). The logic behind using closed-ended questionnaire, first, in this study, is to determine the frequent use of the different face expressions among Tunisian respondents.

The second part of the questionnaire is open-ended, and it is related to the first part. With references to their answers in the first part, respondents are asked to express, in their own wording, what they exactly mean when using the face expressions to which they ticked `yes` for using in interaction. The same expressions, in the same order, are provided in the second part of the questionnaire to facilitate the task for the participants. Since respondents are not limited to any alternatives and are free to express themselves, data would take a qualitative form, which allows for a better understanding and deeper analysis of Tunisian people use of face expressions. An example of the questionnaire is provided in the appendix.

5. Results

Participants` responses, as it is explained in the method section, yields to, both, quantitative and quantitative analysis. Thus, the results, in this paper take, first, a quantitative form, and, then, a qualitative one.

The analysis of participants` responses is, quantitatively, demonstrated in the, below, table 1.
Table 1

The frequent and percent use of face expressions by respondents

The face expressions	The respective English translation for each face expression	The number of respondents using each expression	Respondents` percent use of each expression
1-Flan sawwad wajahna	He/she has blackened our face	76	63.33%
2- Flan bayyadh wajahna	He/she has whitened our face	72	60%
3- Banahou wajah bech nkabla	By what face would I meet him/her	92	76.66 %
4- Maach indi wajah bech nkabla	I no longer have a face to meet him/her	88	73.33%
5- Wajha ghasla fi wad majerda	He/she has washed off his/her face in Majerda`s valley	16	13.33%
6- Wajha mas`ha	His/her face is wiped	20	16.66%
7- Zallaat wajhi ala khatra	I sladhed my face for his sake	44	36.66%
8- Zallaali wajhi koddam ennas	He/she sladhed my face in front of people	60	50%
9- Dra mkhalli wajhi inda!	Am I leaving my face with him	72	60%
10- Wajhi tbaddal/tlawwan alwan alwan	My face changed/ turned into colors	68	56.66%

The above table illustrates the frequent and percent use of each of the ten face expressions, suggested in the questionnaire. It showcases that respondents are more inclined and accustomed to use some particular face expressions more than others in their daily interactions. Out of the ten face expressions, it is considerably remarkable that Tunisians,

mainly, use seven face expressions. These face expressions that received higher frequent and percent uses are: expression three, four, one, two, nine, ten and expression seven.

Expression three, ``*banahou wajah bech nkabla*`` which translates into `` by what face would I see him``, is the most commonly used by respondents. It is used by 92 out of 120 participants; that is 76.66% of the participants. The expression that is very closer to expression three in its meaning as well as its use by respondents is expression four. It is used by 88 out of 120 participants, which corresponds to 73.33% of the participants. Expressions one, two and nine have, also, received a closer rate of use among participants. They are, respectively, used by 63, 33% and 60% of the respondents. Those three face expressions, as it is shown in table one, translate in English into: ``he/she has blackened our face``, ``he/she has whitened`` and ``am I leaving my face with him``, respectively. The last other two face expressions that are most commonly used by respondents are expressions ten and eight: ``my face turned into colors`` and ``he/she has slashed my face in front of people``. Their percent use, however, didn't exceed 50% by participants.

The other expressions that respondents use in a quite less frequent rate are expressions seven, six and five. Expression seven is used by 36.66% of participants. However, expressions six and five are, only, used by 16.66% and 13.33% of respondents, respectively.

The analysis of respondents` written replies, to the uses of the ten face expressions, reveals a pattern. This pattern is about a frequent and a regular use of certain words and expressions that are detected when using those face expressions. Throughout their replies, respondents use words and expressions that, typically, revolve around words and notions of embarrassment, blashfulness, boldness or shamelessness. Although, those words and expressions that convey what participants mean, when using a particular face expression, are omnipresent in all ten replies, the focus of the analysis is limited to the seven most used face expressions.

The analysis of participants` intended meanings in using face expressions one and two reveals two contradictive, but, somehow, related results. When a Tunisian uses the expression ``*flan/ flana sawad wajahna*``, meaning ``he/she has blackened our face``, he/she means that that person has embarrassed him/her. The same expression is, also, used to express that that person has embarrassed his/her family and friend, as well, by doing something improper. Some of the respondents have made this clear in their replies: ``*amel aamla khayba koddam nas naarfouhom*`` and ``*amel aamla khayba hacham beha aayeltou*``, which can be, repectively, translated into `` he/she has done something inappropriate in front of people we know`` and ``he/she has done something inappropriate that has embarrassed his/her family``.

While the first expression is about causing embarrassment or a degree of shame, the second expression suggests the complete opposite. ``he/she has whitened our face`` is used by Tunisian respondents to express that someone has, not just, hasn`t embarrassed them, but made them proud instead. Some of the respondents use the expression ``*rfalna rousna*``, meaning ``he raised our head high``, as the intended meaning for the second face expression.

It can be argued, for expression one and two, that the symbolism of the colors `black` and `white` play an important role in forming the meanings that are associated with the two

face expression. It is a given that the color and the word `black` has a negative connotation, whereas `white` has a positive one. That`s why expression one suggests inappropriateness and embarrassment, whereas the second appropriateness and pride. The same remark on the symbolism of the colors `black` and `white` is made by Farahat (2009) and Eshretah (2015) in their analysis of Palestinian face expressions.

Face expressions three and four are quite similar, that is why they have received similar responses. Both expressions are used, by a Tunisian, to say that he/she is way too embarrassed from a person that he/she can`t meet or speak to. He/ she is embarrassed, either, because he/she has done or said something bad about that person, or because that person has already did him/her too many favors. Some of the frequent responses to these two expressions include: ``*hachem menah*`` and ``*amelt maah haja khayba w hachem menah*``, respectively meaning ``I am embarrassed of him/her`` and ``I did something bad to him/her and I embarrassed``. Other participants argue that they use expressions three and, particularly, four when they have been wrong to a person too many times, and that they ``no longer have face to see him/her``. That is the loss of face, which is explicitly conveyed in expression four.

Unlike the first four face expressions, which are somehow related and similar, expressions eight, nine and ten are non-related. Each expression has its own distinct meaning from the other two. Yet, they can be similar to the first four expressions. Expression eight, for instance, is similar to expression one. Tunisians use the expression ``he/she has slashed my face in front of people`` to simply say that that person has really embarrassed them in front of people. A frequent reply to expression eight is ``*hachamni koddam ennas*``*,* meaning ``he/she has embarrassed me in front of people``.

The use of expression nine, however, is not about another person, another `he` or `she`. It is linked to the speaker himself/herself. When the speaker uses the expressions `` *dra mkhalli wajhi inda*``*,* meaning ``am I leaving my face with him/ her``, he states that he would, using Brown and Levinson (1987) `s terms, ``go bold on record`` (p. 60) and speak his/her mind to the other party without any need to be feeling afraid or embarrassed of him/her. ``*manech hachem menah*`` is the most frequent response to the use of this ninth expression, and it can be translated into `` I am not afraid or embarrassed of him/ her``.

The last face expression that Tunisians use in their daily interaction is ``*wajhi tlawan alwan alwan*`` whose English equivalent is `` my face turned into colors``. This expression is used by Tunisians when a person is put or finds himself in a very embarrassing situation. It suffices to report, here, that ``*ki net`hat fi mawkef mohrej barcha*``, meaning ``when I am in a very embarrassing situation``, is the typical response, from Tunisian respondents, for their use of expression ten.

6. Discussion

It is clear, throughout the earlier account, that face expressions, in Tunisian culture, are closely related to the word and concept of `embarrassment``. Some expressions, like two and nine, suggest the absence of embarrassment. However, the others suggest the occurrence or the happening of embarrassment. This binary classification or division, that reveals itself through the analysis of Tunisian respondents` use of face expressions, is similar to Farahat

(2009) and Eshretah (2015) `s binary classification of Palestinian face expressions into face-upgrading and face-demeaning expressions. In fact, Tunisian face expressions can be categorized as such, too. Face-expressions that cause no embarrassment can be described as face-upgrading, whereas those that cause embarrassment can be described as face-demeaning.

Tunisian face and face expressions share other important features with the Palestinian face. The two culture, for instance, have some identical face expressions that convey the same meaning. Those expressions are ``*flan bayadh wajahna*`` and ``*flan sawwad wajahna*``, respectively meaning ``he/she has whitened our face`` and ``he/she has blackened our face``. In both cultures, the first expression means that a person has not disappointed us and has made us proud, by doing something great, whereas the second conveys the complete opposite: a person has embarrassed and disappointed us.

The plural inflection morpheme `*na*` in `*wjahna*`, which translates into the possessive adjective `our` in English, is, also, revealing in the Tunisian account of face. It shows that face, in the Tunisian culture, can be a collective property, and not a personal one. This is another common feature between Tunisian and Palestinian face. Having said that, it follows that what Farahat (2009) and Eshretah (2015) assume about the collective aspect of the Palestinian face is, also, applicable to the Tunisian one. Thus, face is given by society or a person`s close social circle when he/she abides by the shared social norms and codes, and it is taken away by the same giver when he/she violates the shared social norms and codes.

Within the same vein, the plural inflection morpheme in `*wajahna*`, our face, explicitly suggests that when a person does something, be it good or bad, it reflects on his/her social group. In face-terms, when a member of a group is embarrassed and loses his/her face, he/she, by default, causes embarrassment and loss of face to his entire group. This group can be his family, his friends or any other social entity to which the person belongs. This is another common feature between Palestinian and Tunisian face.

However, it is paramount to state, here, that this collective aspect of face has, initially, been pointed at by Goffman (1956, 1967). Goffman (1956, 1967) assumes that participants in interaction are performers. Those performers, in social interactions, are not just considerate to their own performance, image or face, but they are, also, responsible for maintaining and promoting the face and the line of their other team members. They do so because members in a social relationship share a common face (Goffman, 1956, 1967), or what Bulls (2003) calls a ``collective face`` (p. 132). This collective aspect of face might be, better, referred to as the representative aspect of face, since participants in interaction are, actually, representatives of their own and their group`s face.

Although no studies in the Arab context, at least as far as this studies knows, have stated this, it can be assumed, from a background knowledge of the Arab culture, that those two face expressions, mentioned above, and the collective aspect of face in them, are common in almost all Arab cultures, and not just the Palestinian and Tunisian ones. However, the other five expressions, dealt with in this study, are, more likely, idiosyncratic and Tunisian-specific.

In expressions three, four, nine and ten, face is not used in its collective connotation or

meaning. It is cogently and exclusively attached to the speaker himself/herself. In expression three, four and nine, it is the speaker who is embarrassed and it is he/she who has no face or has lost face. This is best manifest in expression four: ``I no longer have face to see him``. Thus, face, here, is personal and private.

Expression eight is peculiar from all the previous expressions. It does suggest that face is personal, like expressions three, four and ten, yet, and more significantly, it suggests that face can be lent to someone else. The expression ``he/she has slashed my face in front of people``, clearly, demonstrates two things. First, the speaker has lent his face to someone else. Second, this someone else, who is normally a friend or an acquaintance, has not preserved this lent face and has slashed it. And since the owner of the face is the speaker, it is he/she who suffers the consequences of what happened to his face: he/she is the one who is, actually, embarrassed, and not the one who lent it. It is worth mentioning, here, that this peculiar lent-face characteristic of the Tunisian face can be idiosyncratic and exclusive to the Tunisian culture.

Weighing all the above accounts about Tunisian face expressions and their meanings, a definition of the Tunisian face can be elaborated. Three paramount remarks should, however, be illustrated before. First, face, in Tunisian culture, can be lost, maintained, slashed, or up-graded. Second, Tunisians feel embarrassed or even a degree of shame when their face is damaged or lost. Three, face is as personal as much as it is collective. Having explained those three important factors of the Tunisian face, we can argue that face, for Tunisians, is a highly valued public and personal self-image that Tunisians have, and that they endeavor to keep and not to damage or lose. It is not surprising that this definition is similar to that of Goffman (1967) `s: face is the individual public self-image of positive approved social values that the individual claims for himself (ibid). This similarity between Tunisian and Goffman`s face does add to the significance of the claim of the universality of Goffman`s face. The only distinction, however, is that Tunisian face is, both, public and personal and that it can be lent.

Conclusion

This study has provided an initial insight into the socio-interactional notion of face in the Tunisian culture. By examining Tunisian respondent`s use of certain face expressions, it has demonstrated how most of Tunisian face expressions are, closely, associated with the notion of embarrassment. It has, also, shown that the happening or occurrence of this embarrassment is equated with a loss of face to Tunisians; however, its absence means that face is saved and maintained. In addition, this study reveals and explains how the Tunisian face shares certain face expressions and aspects with the Palestinian culture, namely the collective or group aspect of face. What is, yet, distinct and peculiar about the Tunisian face, according to this research paper, is that it is not just collective, but can be very personal, as well. That is why it can be lent to someone else. Eventually, this study aspires to stimulate further research on the Tunisian face. It may have laid some ground for an examination of face in different contexts and types of encounters, like political interviews or debates. The study, also, invites researchers to investigate and explain the expected interplay between face and the socio-pragmatic phenomenon of politeness in Tunisian culture.

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Appendix

A questionnaire about the use of the word and the concept of face in Tunisian Arabic conversations

استبيان حول استعمال كلمة و مفهوم الوجه في المحادثات بالعربية التونسية

اسم و لقب المشارك: .... الولاية: ....

العمر: ...... الصفة: .... الجنس: ذ ☐ أ ☐

البريد الإلكتروني (إن وجد) : ....

القسم الأول من الاستبيان: هل تستعمل العبارات التالية في حديثك اليومي؟ ضع علامة أمام نعم أو لا.

	نعم	لا
1- فلانه/ فلان سود وجهنا	نعم	لا
2 - فلانه/ فلان بيض و جهنا	نعم	لا
3- بناه وجه باش نقابلا	☐	☐
4- معاش عندي وجه باش نقابلا	نعم	☐
5- وجها غاسلا/ غاسلاتا في واد مجردة	☐	☐
6- وجها ماسحا/ ماسحاتا	نعم	☐
7- زلعت وجهي غلى خاطرا/ خاطرها	نعم	☐
8- زلعلي وجهي قدام الناس	نعم	☐
9- درا مخلي/ مخليا وجهي عندا	نعم	☐
10- وجهي تبدل/ تلون ألوان ألوان	نعم	☐
	☐	☐
	☐	☐

القسم الثاني من الاستبيان: في أي حالة و ماذا تعني حين تستعمل العبارات التالية؟ في حالة عدم استعمال أحد العبارات, اترك مساحة ☐ الإجابة ☐ .

				☐	هنا ☐
1-	فلانه/	فلان		☐	☐ هنا

....
....

| - | 2 | فلانه/ | فلان | بيض و | جهنا |

....
....

| 3- | بناه | وجه | باش | نقابلا |

....
....

نقابلا   باش   وجه   عندي   معاش   -4

....

....

مجردة   واد   في   غاسلا/غاسلاتا   وجها   -5

....

....

ماسحاتا   ماسحا/   وجها   -6

....

....

خاطرها   خاطرا/   غلى   وجهي   زلعت   -7

....

....

الناس   قدام   وجهي   زلعتلي   زلعلي/   -8

....

....

عندا   وجهي   مخليا   مخلي/   درا   -9

....

....

ألوان   ألوان   تلون   تبدل/   وجهي   -10

....

....

A questionnaire about the use of the word and the concept of face in Tunisian Arabic conversations

Name and surname of the respondent : ……………………………… **The city :** …………
Age : …………….. **Status :**……………..   **Sex :** Male ☐   Female: ☐

Part one of the questionnaire: Do you use the following expressions in your daily conversations. Tick Yes or No.

1-Flan sawwad wajahna   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
He/she   has   blackened   our   face

2- Flan bayyadh wajahna   Yes   No
He/she   has   whitened   our   face

3- Banahou wajah bech nkabla   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
By   what   face   would   I   see   him

4-Maach indi wajah bech nkabla   Yes   No
I   no   longer   have   a   face   to   see   him

5- Wjha ghasla fi wad majerda   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
He//she   has   washed   his   face   in   Majerda`s   valley

6- Wajha masha   Yes   No
His/her   face   is   wiped

☐   ☐

☐   ☐

7- Zallaat wajhi ala khatra   Yes   No

I slashed my face for his/her sake

8- Zallaali wajhi koddam ennas   Yes   No

He/she has slached my face in front of people

9- Dra mkhalli wajhi inda?   Yes   No

Am I leaving my face with him?

10- Wajhi tlawwan alwan alwan   Yes   No

My face turned into colours

Part two of the questionnaire: In which situation and what do you mean when you use the following expressions. In case you don't use one of the expressions, leave the answer space   **empty.**

1- He/she has blackened our face

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

2- He/she has whitened our face

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

3- By what face would I see him

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

4- I no longer have a face to see him

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

5- He/she has washed his face in Majerda`s valley

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

6- His/her face is wiped

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

7- I slashed my face for his/her sake

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

8- He/she has slashed my face in front of people

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

9- Am I leaving my face with him?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

10- My face turned into colours

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………………