

Popular Chinese Expressions

李杰群 李杰明 主编



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论中国人的面子 / 代序

本书的前身是我们在2000年写的《汉语流行口语》，那本小书出乎意料地受到欢迎，不仅在国内多次印刷，而且还先后在日本、韩国、俄罗斯面市。与此同时，也有不少外国朋友提出批评意见。问题集中在分类上：缺乏逻辑，相互交叉。“其实你们的落脚点都在‘面子’上，为什么不从‘面子’出发来分类呢？”经过近几年的教学实践，同留学生反复讨论，我们决定从“面子”切入，对原书进行大手术。

什么是“面子”？

“面子”是一个社会心理学意义上的人的感觉，是一个历史学意义上的人的价值，是一个人类学意义上的人的仪式，是一个语言学意义上的人的表达。

“面子”是一项科研课题。中国人一直在研究，外国人一直想了解，因为它是双方顺畅交流的必要前提。

当然，前人对此已多有建树。但是，纯粹从话语的角度来进行解析的，以本书为先（真有面子）。如果不从话语这个面子的最后的根破起，仅在意识、心理等方面对面子进行批判，那是不可能取得成效的。因为面子意识与面子心理早已成为我们民族的生理遗传基因。一个汉族人，还没有生下来，就已经被放置在面子的网络之中！所以除了封口以外，很难找到别的疗法了。

可是我们至今尚未得到一个具象的、可以量化的关于面子的定义，一个判断面子属性的标准。这大概是因为不管怎么说也说不清楚面子的内涵和外延。为此我们找到两个实例。

第一个是两千年前的西楚霸王项羽。

项羽的祖上是战国时代楚国的贵族，家里有钱有势——有面子。秦始皇统一中国后，原先各诸侯国的贵族失去了一切——没有了面子。项羽当然很不甘心，一天，他巧遇秦始皇出游，看到皇家车仗的威严盛大，他发誓要“取而代之”。项羽的“争要面子”也从此开始了。

不久，天下大乱，具有超人力量的项羽成了百战百胜威名远扬的楚霸王，他率领各诸侯国的起义军，灭掉秦国，得到了全国第一的“面子”。这时的项羽决定要回到家乡去光宗耀祖，而放弃了中原逐鹿的大好时机，他说：“富贵不归故乡，如衣绣夜行，谁知之者！”这种有了面子就要“讲面子”的做法，被一个有见识的人讥讽为“沐猴而冠”，意思是猴子虽然戴上人的帽子，它仍然还是猴

子——比喻项羽表面上轰轰烈烈，却成不了大事。项羽闻听后立即烹杀了那个胆敢损毁他面子的人。然而那个人并没有看错，项羽在之后的战争中逐渐处于劣势，面子越来越小，直至被对手汉王刘邦团团围住，一败涂地，脸面全无。

尽管如此，项羽在事实面前仍然不承认失败，他说：“此天之亡我，非战之罪也。”为了证明不是自己不会打仗，而是上天不帮助自己，他又几次冲入汉营，凭借匹夫之勇，杀伤汉军无数——用以挽回面子。

当他退到乌江岸边，有人劝他渡江回根据地重新发展时，他考虑的还是自己的面子：“天之亡我，我何渡为！且籍与江东子弟八千人渡江而西，今无一人还，纵江东父兄怜而王我，我何面目见之？纵彼不言，籍独不愧于心乎？”是啊，项羽宁可死了，也不能去面对八千子弟兵的妻儿老小，因为那是最没面子的！他再次杀回汉营，在寡不敌众的情况下，体面地自刎而死，完成了“死要面子”的最后一幕。

没有面子争面子，有了面子讲面子，讲了面子丢面子，丢了面子找面子，找不回面子也要死要面子。项羽的人生之路，生动地展示出关于面子的全过程。

帝王项羽爱面子，平民百姓同样爱面子。这就是我们要介绍的第二个人物——鲁迅先生笔下的阿Q。他和面子的关系就更有意思了。因为到了清朝末年，中国的国势已经弱得不能再弱了。如果说项羽的面子是强势中的真面子，那么阿Q的面子就是弱势下的虚面子了。

比如，阿Q同别人争吵时，常说：“我们先前——比你阔得多啦！你算是什么东西！”——这是说大话撑面子。再如，阿Q没钱找女人，就去摸小尼姑的脸，还说：“和尚动得，我动不得？”——这是欺负弱小挣面子。当他被别人痛打之后，总是说：“儿子打老子！”——这是假托大辈儿找回面子。当他被押赴刑场，已经吓得心惊胆战时，居然还能说出“过了二十年又是一个……”的豪言壮语，博得看客的一片喝彩声。——阿Q也完成了他“死要面子”的最后一幕。

从项羽到阿Q，我们社会的历史与心理的特征，保持着一定的惯性。为了抓住要领，本书以“面子”为话题，展开讨论。因为“面子”是中国人文化心理的内核，是第一生存意义，是基本话语基因。要学习中国语言，要了解中国社会，不明白“面子问题”是不行的。

我们把有关面子的短语分成四大类：给自己面子、给别人面子、不给自己面子、不给别人面子。每大类中又分为三小类：主动的情况，即：我方强于对方（在强势中）；一般的情况，即：双方地位均等（在均势中）；被动的情况，即：我方弱于对方（在弱势中）。分类是不可能尽善尽美的，有的语条可以在多个类别中使用，我们只择其一类解析，相信读者在理解之后，自会灵活运用。每小类中的语条按音序排列。全书序号为：1、1.1、1.1.1……。

对每一条话语又从两个角度进行分析。一是话语脉络，即在同一语义表述上，列出古语——古代汉语，雅语——现代书面语，对话——当代口语，类语——当代口语中的近似说法。一是话语情境，即通过对话尽量具象出特定氛围，然后，再详细诠释中国文化心理在该情境中的思维走势、动机缘由和利害取舍。由此，就形成了：语条、对话、语境、古语、雅语、类语的“六合一”的体例模式（本着宁缺毋滥的原则，有个别空缺）。

本书由李杰群、李杰明主编，参加编写工作的还有高永安、马骏鹰先生。限于水平，有不妥之处，望读者赐教。

李杰群 李杰明

2006年5月

于北京西郊红果园

Assessing Chinese' Face / Preface

This is the second edition of *Popular Chinese Expressions*. The first edition published in 2000 and reprinted in 2001 and again in 2004, was surprisingly well received. It not only sold well in China, but also in Japan, Korea, and Russia. During this time, we have received many letters from our foreign readers, some criticizing and others offering suggestions. The critical questions concentrated on the system of classification we used in grouping the phrases: stating that they were not logical and occasionally overlapped. The correspondence from our readers asked: "Why don't you categorize all phrases by feature topics' concerning face, since the fundamental philosophy of the book is about 'face'?" Through further teaching experience and discussion with our students, we decided to reorganize the phrases as they relate to the concept of "face", and undertook a major restructuring of the original book.

What is "face"?

It is multifaceted. The concept of "face" is a human sense perception related to social psychology, it is a human value from a historical perspective, a human custom with formal and informal rituals from the view of anthropology, and a human testimonial as viewed through its expression in language.

"Face" has been a subject of research for many years among Chinese. Foreigners have worked extensively toward understanding it, since "face" is an essential condition to an unhindered cultural exchange between East and West.

Of course, there have been many books about this topic, but this book is the first to analyze "face" from the perspective of language. Since language is the root and origin of human "face", we sought to create something distinct from those books that only describe "face" from the view of human consciousness and psychology. We think the concept of "face" has become a kind of cultural 'genetic factor' in our country, especially among those of Han ancestry. Everyone is captured within a web of connections concerning their "face" before they are even born. To reformat our spoken language is the best way to cure this predicament.

But we haven't found an exact definition and measurement for this term yet, because the concept of "face" has a very rich connotative meaning and an almost

infinite number of explanations. Hence, we are using two examples here to better define this term.

The first example is a story about Xiang Yu, the Conqueror (232-202 B.C.). Xiang Yu was born of a noble family in the Chu State, during the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.) with money and power, so he had a lot of “face”. Since all the dukes and nobles lost their power and money after Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of Qin unified China, they lost “face”. Xiang Yu, of course, was not going to take his defeat lying down. One day, he saw Qing Shi Huang on a tour and the carriages were exceptionally ornate and large. He was jealous and swore that he would “take it over”. From then on, Xiang Yu began to compete for his own “face”.

Soon there was a great disorder throughout the country. Xiang Yu proved to be a superman in mental and physical strength. He led the rebellious armies from all the States and defeated Qin and won power and his “face” back. At this time, Xiang Yu decided to go back home and bring glory to his ancestors and give up the opportunity to take control over the Central Plains of China. He said: “If a person has wealth and honors and doesn’t go back home, it is no better than wearing fine cloths in the dark, nobody will see it.” He was particularly concerned with “face”, and showing off the signs of that “face”. One of his companions’s ridiculed him, saying that: “Even if a monkey wears a human hat, it is still a monkey.” Xiang Yu killed him because he insulted his “face”. But this companion was correct, and Xiang Yu’s force was gradually reduced to absolute inferiority. Ultimately he was completely surrounded by Liu Bang and suffered a huge defeat. He lost all his “face” in the end.

Under these circumstances, Xiang Yu couldn’t admit his mistakes. He said: “I am not vanquished through battle, but through the force of heaven.” In order to prove this and his ability to fight, he rushed into the Han military camp and killed many enemy soldiers to save his “face”. When he drew back to the Wujiang River, one advisor urged him to cross the river and go back to his base camp to fight again. He still considered his face and said: “Why should I cross the river, if it is the heavens that want to kill me! I led eight thousand soldiers to this place and all of them are dead now. Even if their parents, wives and children all forgive me; I don’t have the face to stand before them. Even if they don’t say anything to me, how could my heart be quiet?” So, he went back to the enemy camp to fight again. Since he fought against hopeless odds, he respectably committed suicide by cutting his throat in the end. Xiang Yu preferred to commit suicide rather than face his solders’ families. He is a perfect example of the process where a person dedicates his life in the struggle for face, gives in to the excessive display of face, loses face and dies in his determination to save face.

But, just as a general or government minister cares about face, common people also care about their face. This brings us to the second person we want to introduce: Ah Q, the main character in Lu Xun's book of *The True Story of Ah Q*. His story is more interesting than Xiang Yu's. Xiang Yu wanted to project a real face under strong and powerful conditions, but Ah Q wants an empty face during a period when the nation was weak at the end of the Qing Dynasty.

For example, Ah Q's often quarreled with others and countered them by saying: "Previously we were much richer than you, you count as nobody!" This boast is used to maintain his face. Another example concerns the fact that Ah Q didn't have enough money to own a woman, so he touched a little nun's face and said: "Why can you be touched by a monk, and not by me?" This sentence is used to take advantage of weaker people in order to maintain his face. When people would beat him, he would always yell "A son is beating his father!" Here he falsely acts as if he belongs to an older generation to recover his face. When he was taken to the execution ground and was shaking with fright, he still had some brave words to save his face: "Twenty years after today, there will be another" His action won everyone's acclaim. Thus, Ah Q also finished his life with a "dead determination to save face".

From these two examples, we can see how it is that Chinese people would even today hold to these characteristics of our social history. In order to grasp this essence, we launch a discussion around the topic of "face" in this book. If you want to learn the Chinese language and understand Chinese society, you have to first, understand the "face problem", because "face" is the nucleus of Chinese cultural psychology and the key to survival in Chinese society.

We classified all the phrases into four categories: saving your own face, giving other people face, failing to retain your own face, and denying other people face. Under each category, we further divided the topics into three subtitles: stronger than others, equal to others and weaker than others. The classification is not perfect; since many phrases can be used under more than one title we put them under what we believe was the most suitable one. We believe the reader can use these phrases with some flexibility after understanding them. Each phrase is alphabet-ordered as 1, 1.1, 1.1.1 ...under the subtitles.

Each phrase is analyzed from two angles: language sequences and language contexts. Language sequence includes how this phrase was used in ancient communication, in contemporary written usage, contemporary oral language and all comparable phrases. Language context is given through conversations providing all the specific circumstances of use, and then providing explanatory notes explaining

the Chinese cultural background, motivations, and gains and losses. The content of the book includes phrases, conversations, contexts, ancient language usages, and similar phrases (note, there may be content missing for a few phrases).

Compilers are Li Jiequn and Li Jieming. Associated Compilers are Gao Yong'an and Ma Junying.

Li Jiequn, Li Jieming

May 2006

Hongguoyuan, Xijiao, Beijing

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李杰明

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Authors' Short Biography

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