

Sexual Teasing in Chinese Entertaining TV Programs

TAQUINERIE SEXUELLE DANS LES PROGRAMMES TÉLÉVISÉS DE DIVERTISSEMENT DE CHINE

中國電視娛樂節目中的“性”嘲弄

Li Jia Zhu Shanshan

李 佳 朱珊珊

Received 20 December 2007; accepted 15 February 2008

Abstract: Humor is a shared characteristic of human beings. Among various kinds of humor, teasing is one of the most risky forms. Teasing related to sex is even more sensitive in most cultures. As is learned in previous studies, females tease less than males in general and both males and females tend to tease males more than females. It is due to the power difference and social asymmetry between different genders. This phenomenon is what has been found in natural occurrence of teasing. However, it is not the case in entertaining TV programs. We examined two Chinese TV talk shows, and found that the hostess is as aggressive as the host when making sexual teasing towards guests. Furthermore, the host/hostess does not consider the gender of the guests when teasing them about sexuality. That is in contrast with the natural occurrence. The explanation to this difference can be attributed to the asymmetrical power between hosts/hostesses and guests in the entertaining TV programs.

Key words: sexual teasing, gender, power, entertaining TV programs

Résumé: L'humour est une caractéristique partagée des êtres humains. Parmi les diverses sortes d'humour, la taquinerie est une des formes les plus risquées. La taquinerie relative au sexe est même plus sensible dans la plupart des cultures. D'après les études précédentes, on sais que les femmes taquent généralement moins que les hommes, et que tous tendent à taquiner les hommes plutôt que les femmes. Cela est dû à la différence de puissance et à l'asymétrie sociale entre les deux sexes. C'est ce qu'on a trouvé dans la taquinerie naturelle. Mais ce n'est pas le cas dans les programmes télévisés de divertissement. Après avoir examiné deux talk show télévisés chinois, nous avons trouvé que l'animatrice est aussi agressive que l'animateur quand ils taquent les invités. De plus, l'animateur ne considère pas le sexe des invités en taquant sur la sexualité. C'est contraire à la situation normale. Cette différence est attribuée à l'asymétrie de puissance entre l'animateur et les invités dans les programmes télévisés de divertissement.

Mots-Clés: taquinerie sexuelle, sexe, puissance, programmes télévisés de divertissement

摘 要: 幽默是人類所共有的特點。在各種形式的幽默中，嘲弄是最冒險的形式之一。在大多數文化裏，與性有關的嘲弄尤為敏感。以往的研究中曾經提到，一般來說，同女性相比，嘲弄更容易發生在男性身上；而不論對女性還是對男性而言，他（她）們的嘲弄對象多是男性。這是由於兩性之間的力量差異以及社會地位不對稱性所造成的。這一特點是由在自然情況下發生的嘲弄現象中所總結出來的。然而，在電視娛樂節目中卻不盡然。本文對兩個中國電視脫口秀節目進行了研究，發現在對嘉賓進行“性”嘲弄的時候，女主持人在攻擊性方面與男主持人不相上下。另外，男女主持人在進行“性”嘲弄的時候並沒有刻意考慮嘉賓的性別。這些現象與自然情況下十分不同。這種差異可以由電視娛樂節目中主持人和嘉賓之間不對稱的力量關係來解釋。

關鍵詞: “性”嘲弄；性別；力量；電視娛樂節目

1. INTRODUCTION

Humor is “a universal human trait” (Raskin, 1985, p. 2). Many people possess the ability to create humor and more people, if not all, are able to respond to it. Like “language, morality, logic, faith, etc”, humor is also

“part of human behavior, ability, or competence”. According to Raskin (1985), an individual occurrence of funny stimulus (humor) can be called as the humor act, which is determined by six factors, or characterized by six phenomena, namely, human participants (speaker and hearer, abbr. S & H), stimulus (abbr. ST), life experience of an individual (abbr. E), psychological type of the individual (abbr. P), situation (abbr. ST) and society (abbr. SO). Whether a humor is funny (abbr. F) or unfunny (abbr. U) is determined by these factors. Taking all these factors into consideration, the formula of a funny humor should be: $VJ(S, H, T, E_s, E_h, E_{s,h}, P_s, P_h, SI, SO_{s,h})=F$. In this formula, VJ stands for verbal joke, T stands for text as “in verbal humor, the stimulus is always a text (T)” (p. 6).

Raskin’s formula is a good attempt for the description of what a humor consists of. However, humor is difficult to define. As Raskin (1985) quoted Croce’s (1903, p. 228) words, “ ‘humor is indefinable like all psychological states’ ”(p. 6). To provide some definitions of humor nevertheless, Raskin (1985) has quoted several scholars, like Mindess (1971, p. 21), who defined humor as “ ‘a frame of mind, a manner of perceiving and experiencing life...a kind of outlook, a peculiar point of view, and one which has great therapeutic power’ ”, Fry (1963, p. 138), who claimed that “ ‘[h]umor is play’ ” and Leacock (1937, p. 214), who wrote “ ‘...a joke is a self-constrained humorous thought’ ” (pp. 7-8).

It is not disastrous if we do not have a decided definition of humor since we, as human beings, are already very familiar with it. What we may not be familiar with is the fact that humor can be further divided into different types. When considering the “social dynamic” of humor, which refers to its “positive or negative impact of a remark on its target” (p. 60), Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (2006) divides humor into three groups: flattery humor with positive remarks, ribs and teases with negative remarks, and neutral humor with neither positive nor negative remarks. As teasing is characterized as providing negative remarks, it is perceived as one of the most risky forms of humor. This paper is interested in teasing, this highly risky form of humor, with a focus on one special kind of teasing—sexual teasing. After reviewing the empirical studies on teasing in natural occurrence, this paper focuses on the sexual teasing that happens in Chinese TV talk shows, in particular, “*Kang Xi*” *Come*, hosted by *Xu Xidi* (female) and *Cai Kangyong* (male) within which most teasing is made by the female hostess and *Guess*, hosted by *Wu Zongxian*, who always teases the guests in the program. By adopting an approach of conversation analysis, it aims to explore the teasing that occurs in Chinese TV talk shows, which will expectantly reveal the power relationship between different sexes in entertaining TV programs as opposed to that in daily life.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A theoretical framework of the study

2.1.1 The release theory

It is discussed in Raskin’s (1985) book that “the theories of humor should be grouped into three large classes: cognitive-perceptual, social-behavioral and psychoanalytical” (p. 31). As is explained by Raskin, the third group is related to suppression/repression, in which sexual humor, as the focus of this paper, is included. This group of theory is also called the release theory. Under this theory, it is believed that human beings are constrained in many different aspects. For instance, they have to be logical, think clearly, talk sense, and act morally (Raskin, 1985). In face of the various constraints, including the sexual one, they are inclined to find a way to release their emotions which, at the same time, should not make them break the well-established social rules. To solve this problem, humor can be an acceptable approach to balance both their needs and their avoidance of violating social rules. As quoted by Raskin (1985), Mindess (1971, p. 28) also holds that humor is playing an important role in freeing us from “ ‘the chains of our perceptual, conventional, logical, linguistic, and moral systems’ ” (p. 38), and “ ‘[i]t should come as no surprise, then, that the sight of a comic ignoring conventions excites us... because it provides us, vicariously, a moment of freedom from the prisons of our adjustments’ ” (Mindess, 1971, p. 38, cited in Raskin, 1985, p. 39).

According to Raskin (1985), the focus of release theory is on the switch from bona-fide communication to the joke-telling mode. He defines bona-fide communication as “governed by the ‘co-operative principle’ introduced by Grice (1975)” (p. 100). The co-operative principle (CP) refers to the speaker’s commitment to the adequacy, relevance, good quality and manner of his verbal text, and the hearer’s awareness of it and the belief in it. “Whenever the hearer experiences difficulties at the receiving end in perceiving some text as true and relevant, in bona-fide communication he always gives the speaker the benefit of the doubt first, groping for some less obvious interpretations which will save the text by rendering it nevertheless true and relevant” (p. 101). That is to say, sexual teasing enables us to switch from bona-fide communication, which allows no ambiguity or absurdity, to a freer and more relaxed way of communication, which is also governed by certain rules of humor though. Thus, the social phenomenon of sexual teasing is justified with the help of the release theory.

2.1.2 Power relationship between two sexes

As is mentioned in the previous section, teasing is viewed as a highly risky way of conducting humorous

acts and usually associated with aggressive behaviors. As males are thought to be slightly more aggressive verbally and physically than females (Harris, 1992; Hyde, 1984; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, cited in Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006), it is believed that teasing, as a reflection of aggressive behaviors, is “more appropriate for men than for women” (p. 56). To explain this phenomenon, it should be noticed that men are viewed as having more power in the society than women. It is the power of “power” that enables men to tease more than women. As a matter of fact, it is just because teasing conducted by people of different genders is usually associated with power difference and moreover, social asymmetry, that in modern society, men are more careful than women when they want to tease the other sex. “...men who are sensitive to power issues may also avoid teasing women in a conversation so as not to establish an asymmetrical relationship” (Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006, p. 56). However, Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (2006) also find that teasing is seldom used in a conversation among women, but they tend to use teasing as a means to maintain power symmetry when talking with men, to counterbalance the traditional power relation between the two genders.

Besides them, Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey (2001) also mentioned in their paper that regardless of different ages, males are more likely to tease than females. This statement is supported by many empirical studies (Voss, 1997; Lampert, 1996; Straehle, 1993; Stebbins, 1975, etc., cited in Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, & Heerey, 2001, p. 242) which explore teasing that occurs among children, adults as well as friends. The results of these studies all show that males tease more than females do. In their explanation of this social phenomenon, they point out that women tend to use more positive and negative politeness tactics than men, which lead to their less use of teasing. The reason why it should happen is that “women [is] stereotypically of lower status than men” (p. 242). Thus, the fact that women teases less than men is once again explained in terms of status and power.

However, the focus of this paper will not be on natural occurrence, but on Chinese entertaining TV programs. That is to say, what it seeks to explore is the sexual teasing that occurs in TV talk shows. By analyzing specific teasing cases in those talk shows, this paper attempts to study the power relationship between hosts/hostesses and guests (either male or female) and its impact on their conduction of teasing. In a research paper on the power issue in radio talk show, Hutchby (1996) points out that hosts of the talk show usually have the edge on the callers for different reasons. One reason is about the theory of “first” and “second” positions, which is first put forward by Sacks (1992, cited in Hutchby, 1996). According to Sacks, the speaker who goes second is usually in a stronger position than the speaker who goes first as the latter is able to attack directly the weak points of the former. Since in the radio talk show, it is the caller who initiates

the topic, and the host/hostess who responds or even makes opposition, the sequence of “action-opposition”, as is mentioned by Hutchby (1996, p. 578), enables the hosts/hostesses to be in the second position, the stronger one. Another reason is that hosts/hostesses are able to “selectively formulat[e] the gist or upshot the caller’s remarks” (p. 581) so that they are able to control the agenda and thus more powerful. Similarly, this paper aims at exploring the power relationship between hosts/hostesses and either male or female guests in Chinese TV talk shows by analyzing the direction of their teasing, and further studying the impact of the power relationship on their teasing behaviors.

2.2 Empirical studies

According to Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young, and Heerey (2001), teasing has been studied by many scholars in the field of developmental, social-personality, and clinical psychology as well as anthropology, sociology, and discourse analysis. The definition of teasing should be “an intentional provocation accompanied by playful markers that together comment on something of relevance to the target of the tease” (p. 229). In their article, they review some of the empirical studies concerning teasing from 1962 to 2000, which explore teasing that occurs among children, adults as well as friends. All the studies yield the same result that males tease more than females do in general. Hey (2000) explores the teasing happened in young New Zealand Pakeha friendship groups, and Lampert and Ervin-Tripp (2006) do a similar research among European-American and Asian-American adults peers. Their findings all support the previous conclusion. Their explanation to this phenomenon is the “power” inequality caused by social asymmetry between different genders. However, these studies are all concerned about teasing in natural occurrence, which will not be the focus of this paper as stated above. What the present study is interested in is the teasing in entertaining TV programs. To make it more specific or typical, sexual teasing, one of the most sensitive and aggressive teasing, will be the focal point.

Meanwhile, the viewpoint put forward by Hutchby (1996) attracts our attention. He claims that hosts/hostesses in a radio talk show usually take a more powerful position than the callers. Ohara and Saft (2003) also come to the same conclusion through analyzing the conversation between the hosts and callers in a Japanese phone-in consultation TV program. Based on this, the present study wants to explore that if the power relationship between different genders will be changed in an entertaining TV program due to the different identity of being a host/hostess or a guest. Since very few such studies have been conducted among Chinese people, two Chinese entertaining TV Programs, “*Kang Xi*” *Come* and *Guess*, will be chosen as the research objects. The choosing criteria will be further illustrated in the Data Collection part.

Therefore, the hypothesis of this paper is that the powerful position of hosts/hostesses in a Chinese entertaining TV Program will influence their conduction of sexual teasing, which means that hosts will make sexual teasing towards not only male guests but also female guests while hostesses will dare to make sexual teasing to both male and female guests as well.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper has adopted an approach of conversation analysis (CA). Developed from ethnomethodology, CA is contributive to the research of gender and language. Stokoe and Weatherall (2002) point out the two contributions CA has made to gender and language. First, feminists' focus on gender difference does no good to feminism "as it reifies the gender dualism and perpetuates stereotypes" (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1994; Stokoe, 2000, cited in Stokoe & Weatherall, 2002). As conversation analysts hold that gender is something speakers do, instead of something speakers have, they help to shift the attention of feminists from focusing on the difference. Second, while feminists hold their own positions and tend to give priority to politics, conversation analysts, by contrast, are more reflexive and focus on analyzing the conversation itself. Thus, when attempting to study the teasing behaviors and power relationship from a gendered perspective, this paper adopts CA as the methodology.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND CODING

As stated previously, this paper examines the power relationship between different sexes in TV programs through analyzing the sexual teasing discourses that occur in Chinese entertaining TV programs. The data is collected from two TV talk shows of Taiwan named "*Kang Xi*" *Come* and *Guess*.

But why are Taiwan TV talk shows chosen instead of mainland ones? There are two main reasons: First, the entertaining TV programs of Taiwan have a long history of more than forty years and have fully developed since the 21st century. Now there have already been tens of TV programs of this kind in Taiwan. In contrast, there are very few entertaining TV programs in mainland China. The existing ones are just imitating their Taiwan counterparts and are vapid as well as stiff. Second, most of the TV stations in Taiwan are private, so the hosts/hostesses and guests in those TV talk shows are daring to talk freely about some sensitive topics, such as politics, privacy, and sex, in order to attract more audiences. However, in Chinese mainland, all the TV stations are government owned and the censorship is very strict, thus the conversations between hosts/hostesses and guests in a TV talk show are usually

rehearsed and it is impossible to have those sensitive topics involved in the conversations. Therefore, sexual teasing rarely appears in Chinese mainland TV talk shows.

Moreover, there are good reasons for choosing "*Kang Xi*" *Come* and *Guess* as well. According to the statistical results, both of them are listed in the top ten Taiwan TV talk shows that have the highest audience rating. Their popularity is earned for the special hosting style and program content. "*Kang Xi*" *Come* is hosted by *Xu Xidi* (female) and *Cai Kangyong* (male), and *Xu* plays the main role. *Guess* is hosted by *Wu Zongxian* (male). *Xu* and *Wu* are both famous for their bold and open hosting style. In the two TV talk shows, several popular actors/actresses or singers are usually invited as guests in each episode. *Xu* and *Wu* tease these 'stars' a lot within the programs and they are inclined to make more sexual teasing to cater for the taste of the audiences. By analyzing the sexual teasing made by *Xu* and *Wu* in the two TV talk shows respectively, this paper will make a comparative study between hosts and hostesses.

The above reasons can explain why the two Taiwan TV talk shows are chosen as the analyzing objects of this paper.

The videos of the two TV talk shows from January of 2006 until today were downloaded from the internet for their timeliness and accessibility. According to Brunner and Costello (2002), "sexual humor" is humor that relates to issues of either gender or sexuality. So this paper defines teasing that relates to issues of either gender or sexuality as "sexual teasing". We watched 20 episodes of "*Kang Xi*" *Come* as well as 20 episodes of *Guess* and found that almost every episode involved more or less sexual teasing. After that, we intercepted the video segments that involve sexual teasing according to the above definition. Five first year undergraduates majoring in linguistics and applied linguistics from Beijing Foreign Studies University were asked to code independently all the sexual teasing moves also based on the above definition. Only those video segments on which three or more than three coders agreed were categorized as sexual teasing. For the present study, only four video segments that involving most typical sexual teasing were transcribed and analyzed for the limited paper length and writing time. The transcription conventions used in this paper are based on the appendix of Potter (2000, pp. 233, 234), which follows the system developed by Gail Jefferson (1985, cited in Potter, 2000).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper focuses its analysis on sexual teasing in two Taiwan TV talk shows in order to explore whether the power relationship between different genders will be

different from natural occurrence due to their position of being hosts/hostesses or guests in the entertaining TV programs. Because of the anticipated gender variation, this paper will look at the sexual teasing between host and male guest, host and female guest, hostess and male guest as well as hostess and female guest separately.

5.1 Sexual teasing between host and male/female guest

In *Guess*, the host *Wu Zongxian* very often makes sexual teasing towards the guests. However, he does not care much about their gender. That means, whether the guest is a male or a female, the sexual teasing he makes is indecent to the same extent. Extract 1 is an example of the host (*Wu*) making sexual teasing towards a male guest.

Extract 1 The male guest is talking about what he has sent to his female friend as birthday present. Selina is a temporarily hostess who still cannot host very freely.

嘉賓：她過生日的時候我有錄一個錄音帶，錄給她。

Guest: She pass birthday de time I have record a tape, record give her.

I did give her a tape recorded by myself when it was her birthday.

吳：錄音帶？裏面錄些什麼？

Wu: Tape? Inside record some what?

A tape? What was recorded in it?

Selina: 內容是=

Selina: Content is=

The content is=

吳：呼吸聲啊？（大家笑）

Wu: Breath sound ah? ((People laugh))

The sound of breath? ((All the people present laugh))

Selina: 那也太猥褻了啦。

Selina: That also too obscene le la.

That's too obscene.

吳：（發出粗重的呼吸聲，像在ML）

Wu: ((Produce heavy de breath sound, like is making love))

((Breathing heavily, just like he is making love))

The guest is telling of what he has sent to his female friend as birthday present. *Wu* asks about the content of the tape in a normal and serious way. Selina thinks that *Wu* is really caring about the content of the tape, so she asks the same question again. Then *Wu* puts forward a sexual teasing suddenly. That is so indecent and embarrassing that the guest does not know how to react when all the people present laugh. Even Selina feels it is too obscene and she makes a comment. *Wu* keeps on performing and makes the sexual teasing much barer by

breathing heavily which reminds everyone of making love.

According to the previous studies (Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006; Hey, 2000), males are very careful and cautious when teasing females or even tend to avoid doing so if they are sensitive to power issues between different genders. But in *Guess*, the host *Wu* just makes sexual teasing towards female guests without thinking of saving their face. Extract 2 is an example of *Wu* teasing a female guest by using sexual words.

Extract 2 The female guest is a very beautiful woman and her pictures are very popular on the internet. She is describing her internet photo album.

嘉賓：我有網路相簿，一開始是因為那個 [網路相簿]-

Guest: I have internet photo album, one beginning is because that [internet photo album]-

I have an online photo album. At the beginning, it was because that [internet photo album]-

吳: [為什麼] 一分鐘 會 收費 到 三十 塊, 會 不 會 太 貴。

Wu: [Why] one minute shall charge to thirty yuan, shall shall not too expensive.

[Why] do you charge thirty yuan per minute? Don't you think it's too expensive?

嘉賓: 啊:: 不是, 不是。

Guest: Ah:: not is, not is.

Ah:: no, no.

吳: 你 不 是? 你 不 是 阿 咪 給 我 看 的 那 個?

Wu: You not is? You not is A Mi give me see de that?

Aren't you? Aren't you the one that A Mi showed me?

嘉賓: 不是::人家是 比較 健康 那 種, 正 常 在 [這個]-

Guest: Not is::I am comparatively healthy that kind, normal in [this]-

No:: I am of a decent sort. Normally in [the]-

吳: [阿咪] 還 威 脅 人 家, 再 不 脫 我 要 走 嘍。

Wu: [A Mi] also threaten her, still not undress I will leave lou.

[A Mi] also threatened her: "I'm leaving if you don't undress".

The guest is describing her internet photo album. Wu interrupts her and mistakes her photo album as pornographic website on purpose. The female guest feels embarrassed, so she tries to deny Wu's statement and explain what kind of photo album hers is. Wu ignores her denial and explanation, and keeps on describing the pornographic website that he pretends hers to be. The words he uses are very straightforward and indelicate.

The above analysis shows that there are no big differences when a male host makes sexual teasing towards male or female guests in a Taiwan TV talk show. The host is not bound by the sensitiveness of power asymmetry between different genders at all. Similar to what has been mentioned by the previous studies (Hutchby, 1996; Ohara and Saft, 2003), the host/hostess in a TV program is also in a more powerful position compared with the guests. This could explain Wu's behaviors in the talk show. He always makes sexual teasing after the guests' narration, so he is in a "second position" (Hutchby, 1996), in other words, a stronger position. Furthermore, as the host of the TV talk show, he automatically occupies a superior position. Therefore, when talking with the female guests, he dares to

deliberately ignore the universal social ideology that it is not suitable for male to tease female, especially tease about sexuality. It is not the power relationship between different genders that impacts the host's performance of sexual teasing towards guests in a TV talk show, but the power difference caused by different positions in the TV program that acts as the decisive factor.

5.2 Sexual teasing between hostess and male/female guest

In "*Kang Xi*" *Come*, there are one host and one hostess, and most sexual teasing is made by the hostess—*Xu Xidi*. Although it is found in natural occurrence that females do not tease so much as males do, in this TV program, the situation seems to be reversed. Most questions put forward in the program by the host, *Cai Kangyong*, are decent and not related to sex, while those asked by *Xu*, the hostess, are in most cases aiming at either provoking jealousy among guests or teasing them sexually.

Extract 3 The conversation occurs among the host, hostess and two male guests. One of the male guests is called Leon Jay Williams and has just published a new book.

嘉賓 1: 我 今 天 是 來 宣 傳 立 威 廉 的 新 書

Guest 1: I today is come promote Li Weilian de new book.

I come to promote the new book written by Leon Jay Williams today.

蔡: 他 出 什 麼 書 啊?

Cai: He publish what book a ?

What book is it?

嘉賓 1: 《陪 你 說 英 語 》 這 本 書。

Guest 1: Company you speak English this book.

The book is called "Speaking English with you".

嘉賓 2: 好, 謝謝。

Guest 2: Good, thanks!

Good, thanks!

蔡: [哇]!

Cai: [Wow]!

[Wow]!

嘉賓 1: [對].....

Guest 1: [Yeah]...

[Yeah]...

蔡: 所以肯定很多人願意跟你學英語啊。

Cai: So must many people willing follow you learn English ah.

So there must be many people who would like to learn English from you.

徐: 如果書名改成 陪你上床 我就會買。

Xu: If book name change into make love to you I then will buy.

Should the book be named "Make love to you", I will buy it.

觀眾: ((大笑))。

Audience: ((Laugh)).

In this extract, when talking about the new book written by Leon Jay Williams, the host *Cai* just asks some questions concerning the name and contents of the book and makes some positive comments on it. All these questions and comments sound very proper. While for the hostess *Xu*, though she has kept silent in most part of this conversation, when she finally makes one

comment on the book, it is a sexual teasing. Thus, in an entertaining TV program, it is not rare occurrence for a female to tease a male, and we can see that when put into a powerful position, the hostess can even be more aggressive than the host. However, the teasing objects of the hostess are not limited to males. Extract 4 is an example of *Xu*'s teasing of her same sex.

Extract 4 *Xu* and *Cai* are chatting with a pretty girl who is famous for her photos on the internet.

嘉賓: 我現在在上班, 然後我的同事會偷偷去我的

Guest: I now at work, then my colleague will stealthily go my

網簿—, 那個相簿看, 然後她就

internet photo album—, that album look, then she then

說, 因為我常常去夜店, 她就說, 她就

say, because I often go night club, she then say, she then

在公司散佈說, (0.1) 我私生活很亂。

in the company gossip say, (0.1) I private life very in a mess.

I am now working. My colleague will stealthily browse my internet photo album. Because I often go to the night club, she will gossip that (0.1) my private life is in a mess.

徐: 可是你只是愛去夜店而已。

Xu: But you just love go night club just.

But you just love to go to the night club, nothing else.

嘉賓: 對, 她說我私生活很亂, 然後交很多男朋友這樣子, [然後還給人家包養]。

Guest: Yes, she say I private life very in a mess, then make many boyfriends and alike, [then also by others kept as mistress].

Yes. She says that my private life is in a mess, I have many boyfriends and things alike. She also claims that I am kept by others as a mistress.

蔡: [你在夜店]

Cai: [You at night club].

[You are at a night club.]

蔡: 有被包養嗎?

Cai: Have by kept as mistress ma?

Are you kept as a mistress?

嘉賓: (0.1)沒有。

Guest: (0.1) No.

(0.1) No.

徐: ((用手指著嘉賓, 笑)) 那你怎麼想那麼久?

Xu: ((Use hand point at guest, laugh)) Then you why think that long?

((Using her hand to point at the guest and laughing)) Then why should you think for that long?

In this extract, the host *Cai* also asks some sensitive questions such as asking to confirm whether the guest is kept by a man as a mistress or not, however, it doesn't sound that provoking as it is the guest herself who starts mentioning this issue. However, when the guest denies that she has been kept as a mistress by a man, *Xu* is sensitive enough to notice that there is a hesitation before the guest's denial of the fact. Compared with the question *Cai* has asked, what *Xu* has pointed out is more acute and also arouses much laughter from the audience. So it is obvious that as a female, *Xu* does not hesitate when teasing both male and female guests in the TV program, which differs from what will usually happen in natural occurrence.

Although there are occasions when the hosts or hostesses are teased by guests, which indicate a power shift, they do not happen very often. Thus, in TV programs, regardless of gender, the hosts or hostesses are usually in a more powerful position than the guests. In a word, whether it is a host or a hostess, and whether the guests are male or female, those who are powerful tend to make more sexual teasing.

Teasing is one of the most risky forms of humor and teasing related to sex is regarded as more sensitive and aggressive in most cultures. The previous studies find that males and females perform differently in natural occurrence when adopting teasing because of gender difference. That is, males tease more than females do and both males and females are more likely to tease males than females due to power asymmetry between the two genders. However, the present study finds that it is not the same in Chinese entertaining TV programs through analyzing the sexual teasing made by the host/hostess towards the guests in two Taiwan TV talk shows, "Kangxi" Come and Guess. Hostesses are also daring to make a lot of sexual teasing when they are talking with the guests. Moreover, both the host and hostess do not care about the guests' gender, and they tease female guests a lot about sexuality as well. Therefore, we can reach the conclusion that, in Chinese entertaining TV programs, it is not the power relationship between different genders that impact the host/hostess's conduction of sexual teasing towards guests, but the power difference caused by different positions in the TV program that acts as the decisive factor.

6. CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

- Brunner, P. W. and Costello, M. L. (2002). Where's the joke? The meaning behind sexual humor. *Advancing Women in Leadership*. <https://www.advancingwomen.com/awl/spring2002/BRUNN~37.HTM> accessed on July, 1st, 2007.
- Fry, W. F., Jr. (1963). *Sweet Madness*. Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books.
- Grice, H. P. (1975) *Logic and Conversation*. In: Cole and Morgan, (pp. 41-58).
- Hare-Mustin, R. T., and Maracek, J. (Eds.) (1994). *Making a Difference: Psychology and the Construction of Gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Harris, M. B. (1992). Sex, race, and the experience of aggression. *Aggressive Behavior*. 18: 201-17.
- Hay, J. (2000). Functions of humor in the conversations of men and women. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 32: 709-742.
- Hutchby, I. (1996). Power in discourse: The case of arguments on a British talk radio show. *Discourse & Society*. 7: 481-97.
- Hyde, J. S. (1984). How large are gender differences in aggression? A development meta-analysis. *Developmental Psychology*. 20: 722-36.
- Jefferson, G. (1985). An exercise in the transcription and analysis of laughter, in T. Van Dijk (ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, vol. 3. London: Academic Press.
- Keltner, D., Capps, L., Kring, A. M., Young, R. C., and Heerey, E. A. (2001). Just teasing: A conceptual analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin*. 127(2): 229-48.
- Lampert, M. D. (1996). Gender differences in conversational humor, in D. I. Slobin, J. Gerhardt, A. Kyratzis, and J. Guo (Eds.), *Social Interaction, Social Context, and Language* (pp. 579-96). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Lampert, M. D., and Ervin-Tripp, S. M. (2006). Risky laughter: Teasing and self-directed joking among male and female friends. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2006(38): 51-72.
- Leacock, S. (1937). *Humor and Humanity: An Introduction to the Study of Humor*. London: Thornton Butterworth.
- Maccoby, E. E., and Jacklin, C. N. (1974). *The Psychology of Sex Differences*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Mindess, H. (1971). *Laughter and Liberation*. Los Angeles: Nash.
- Ohara, Y. and Saft, S. (2003). Using conversation analysis to track gender ideology in social interaction: Toward a feminist analysis of a Japanese phone-in consultation TV program. *Discourse & Society*. 14(2): 153-172.
- Potter, J. (2000). *Representing Reality: Discourse Rhetoric and Social Construction*. London: SAGE publications.
- Raskin, V. (1985). *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. D. Reidel, Dordrecht.
- Sacks, H. (1992). *Lectures on Conversation*, vols 1 and 2. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stebbins, R. A. (1975). Putting people on: Deception of our fellowman in everyday life. *Sociology and Social Research*. 59: 189-200.
- Stokoe, E. H. (2000). Towards a conversation analytic approach to gender and discourse. *Feminism and Psychology*. 10: 552-63.
- Stokoe, E. H., and Weatherall, A. (2002). Gender, language, conversation analysis and feminism. *Discourse & Society*. 13(6): 707-13.
- Straehle, C. A. (1993). "Samuel?" "Yes, dear?" Teasing and conversational rapport. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Gender and Conversational Interaction: Oxford studies in sociolinguistics* (pp. 210-30). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Voss, L. S. (1997). Teasing, disputing and playing: Cross-gender interactions and space utilization among first and third-graders. *Gender and Society*. 11: 238-56.

APPENDIX

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

- Underlining indicates words or parts of words which are stressed by the speaker.
- Colons mark the prolongation of the sound immediately before; more colons would show a longer prolongation.
- A dash marks a noticeable and abrupt termination of a word or sound.
- The brackets mark the onset and completion of overlapping talk.
- Where one turn runs into another with no interval, this is marked by an equals symbol.
- Clarifactory comment is placed in double parentheses.
- Numbers in brackets are the times of pauses in tenths of a second.

THE AUTHORS

Li Jia (李佳), female, MA candidate of Grade 2006, majoring in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in the School of English and International Studies in Beijing Foreign Studies University. Beijing, 100081, P.R China.

Email: lijia10249@hotmail.com

Zhu Shanshan (朱珊珊), female, MA candidate of Grade 2006, majoring in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in the School of English and International Studies in Beijing Foreign Studies University. Beijing, 100081, P.R China.

Email: iamzss@163.com