Compliment Exchanges in Taiwan TV Programs*

Yang-lien Chen** Victoria Rau***

Abstract

This study investigated compliment exchanges in Chinese TV talk shows and award ceremonies in order to see whether the spoken data can be accounted for by three metaphors: gift exchange, giving a trophy, and bribery. In addition to the three metaphors, the spoken data also produced examples of sarcasm, which on the surface appears to be a type of compliment exchange. The results show that the spoken data can be categorized into four types: three metaphors of compliment exchange and sarcasm. The first metaphor, gift exchange, is the most common type in the collected spoken data, perhaps due to the fact that Chinese tend to have certain kinds of interactions or small talk with their interlocutors in compliment exchanges to establish human relationships. The second metaphor, giving a trophy, is usually followed by a short acknowledgment. Bribery, on the other hand, often happens when the complimentee has a higher status than the complimenter or when the complimenter intends to benefit from the complimentee. Finally, with sarcasm a compliment seems to be offered, but the complimenter actually intends to express an ironic meaning.

Keywords: compliment exchange, speech act, metaphor

* The authors wish to express their appreciation to Dr. Gerald Rau for his invaluable editorial assistance.
** MA student at the Institute of Linguistics, National Chung Cheng University.
*** Professor, Institute of Linguistics, National Chung Cheng University.
（收稿日期：101.01.28；通過刊登日期：102.03.15）
1. Introduction

Compliment, according to Holmes (1986:485), is a speech act “which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possessions, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer.”

In the investigation of compliment behaviors, research studies have examined various cross-cultural issues. Scollon and Scollon (2001) described the concept of culture and the problems which may occur when members of different cultures or discourse systems interact in intercultural communication. They also made some comparisons between Asian culture and western culture, and mentioned several stereotypes and fallacies that people should avoid in cross-cultural communication. One particular area in which people from different cultures can behave differently is compliment exchanges.

Yu (2005) showed that English and Chinese speakers have different preferences for compliment strategies even though the two cultures share some common concepts about politeness. Tang and Zhang (2009) also noted a difference in the strategies adopted by speakers of Australian English and Mandarin Chinese. For instance, the Chinese participants tended to use more rejection and evasion strategies but fewer acceptance strategies compared to their Australian counterparts.

Rau and Chen (2010) examined how the concept of “thirdness” emerged in American English speakers’ perceptions of Chinese English speakers’ compliment exchanges; they also investigated how social identity is reconstructed by Chinese English speakers when using a combination of acceptance and non-acceptance strategies. American speakers tend to acknowledge a compliment with, “thank you,” and then answer the questions from the complimenter. On the other hand, Chinese participants also accept the compliment, but are more likely to express self-degradation. The notion of “thirdness” in this research is the suggestion that an alternative way of responding to compliment in communication between these two cultures would be to acknowledge it and then give an explanation to show
Compliment exchanges in Taiwan TV programs

modesty. Furthermore, it was suggested that English teachers include instruction in language diversity when teaching cross-cultural pragmatics instead of using a dichotomous model to evaluate L2 learners’ performances.

Yu (2011) investigated the interlanguage behavior of Chinese learners of American English in order to know how they offer compliments in L2. He found that although there were some similarities between Chinese speakers and English speakers, the former offered less compliments than the latter. Cultural differences were also reflected in syntax and lexicon. For example, the two verbs “love” and “like” had different meanings and functions in Chinese, and Chinese speakers had a preference for using a certain one when giving compliments, but for Americans these were the main verbs used in compliment, and used interchangeably.

In addition to cultural factors, social variables have also been addressed by different studies. Chen (2003) claimed that the complimentees’ strategy selections would be influenced by the complimenter’s social status relative to the complimentee. Moreover, Wang and Tsai (2003) specified the preference of syntactic patterns, topic, and compliment response strategies produced by different genders.

Most of the research studies, like those mentioned above, have focused on the use of compliment response strategies. In addition to strategies, Chen and Rau (2011) examined the perceptions of native speakers of American English towards the content and form produced by Chinese speakers when doing compliment exchanges in English. Eight types of content problems and four types of form errors were indicated by the American assessors. Some of them were violations of Grice’s Conversational Maxims or Brown & Levinson’s Politeness Principles, and some of them indicated the different attitudes and interpretations of Chinese and Western culture.

One of the problems is that for Chinese speakers, in addition to “讚美,” the English word “compliment” may be translated by many synonyms in Chinese, such as “稱讚,” “稱許,” “肯定,” “誇獎,” “誇讚,” “恭維,” “巴結,” “拍馬屁,” and so on, which display different interlocutor relationships. Among these Chinese words, it seems that a higher-status person tends to compliment a lower-status person by using “讚美” and “稱讚,” which are also used
between two people of equal status. The terms “稱許,” “誇獎” and “誇讚,” seem to appear in the situation where a higher-status person compliments a lower-status person, but do not occur between two equal-status people. On the other hand, “恭維,” “巴結” and “拍馬屁,” are more likely to occur in the situation where a lower-status person offers compliments to a higher-status person or a person gives a compliment for some self-serving purpose or to gain some benefit.

The three sets of compliment expressions, related to praise, positive evaluation, and flattery, have distinct meanings in Chinese, which can be associated with three different metaphors (Rau 2012). With praise, giving a compliment is like gift exchange, which is also accompanied small talk and has many social functions (Coupland 2009). Asians are more likely to use deflection strategy or set the “gift” aside when respond to such a compliment, while Westerners tend to receive the “gift” and open it right away, mirroring the way each culture tends to deal with physical gifts. Second, when someone is given a positive evaluation, giving a compliment is like giving a trophy, a situation often seen in award ceremonies. Generally speaking, the compliment exchange in this situation will not last too long; the complimentee often simply receives the acknowledgement and ends the interaction. Finally, giving a compliment in the context of flattery is like bribery, which refers to a speech event in which the complimenter intends to speak well of the complimentee in order to benefit from him or her, or to achieve some personal goal.

When investigating compliment exchanges, sarcasm is another interesting expression that is worth exploring. Toplak and Katz (2000) contrasted the effects of making a criticism directly with that of making it indirectly by using sarcasm. They pointed out that in some contexts, a person makes “a seemingly positive comment” that can be considered to be an indirect criticism. They also indicated the functions of indirect criticism (sarcasm) to be saving face, expressing humor, and so on.

In the past, many studies on compliment exchanges have been based on discourse completion tests (DCTs). In addition to these artificial situations, authentic spoken data such as conversations from TV programs or recordings of daily conversations can be collected and investigated in order to see how actual compliment behaviors occur in our daily life.
These natural data reflect real conditions, rather than hypothetical contexts. Thus, this current study aims to investigate compliment exchanges from two types of Chinese TV programs, a talk show and an award ceremony, in order to see whether the spoken data can be accounted for by the three metaphors mentioned above, and whether there is any evidence of sarcasm or ironic meaning in a seemingly positive comment.

2. Methodology

The research questions of this study are as follows: (1) Can the spoken data in Mandarin be accounted for by the three metaphors of compliment exchange? (2) Can any other type of compliment exchange be identified in the spoken data? Discourse analysis will be used to analyze the data of spoken compliment exchanges.

2.1 Data collection

Two types of spoken data were examined to identify compliment exchange in Mandarin: 1. award ceremonies (the 49th Golden Horse award ceremony and the 47th Golden Bell award ceremony), and 2. talk show (eight episodes of Kang-Xi Lai Le - 康熙來了).

These two TV programs are similar in that there are frequent interactions between the host and the guest or between the award presenter and the awardee; therefore, examples of compliment exchange can readily be found in these interactions. In those conversations, compliment exchanges are not only offered between the host and the guest but also among the guests.

There are distinct differences in the atmosphere of these two types of TV programs. In the talk show, the pace of the conversations is faster, while in the award ceremony there are some fixed program procedures and the pace may be slower.

2.2 Data analysis

A single compliment exchange was determined to begin with the giving of a compliment and end with the end of a certain topic. For example, in extract 1 (Section 3.1),
in line 1 speaker A begins by offering a compliment to speaker B, and the small talk of speaker B (line 11) represents the end of the topic.

A discourse analysis approach was applied to the collected compliment exchange data. The concept of Hymes’ (1986) SPEAKING grid (Settings, Participants, Ends, Act sequences, Keys, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genres) was also used to analyze the spoken data in Mandarin. For example, the sources of the extracts, the relationships between the complimenter and complimentee, and the intentions as well as interaction between the participants were all analyzed.

3. Results and discussion

The results show that the three metaphors and another type of compliment exchange, sarcasm, are sufficient to account for the spoken data from Chinese award ceremonies and talk shows.

Table 1. Types of compliment exchanges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gift exchange</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>(57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving a trophy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bribery</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarcasm</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 displays the frequency of the four types of compliment exchange found in the spoken data from the award ceremonies and talk shows. Among the 53 examples of compliment exchanges found in the two award ceremonies and eight episodes of the talk show, the gift exchange metaphor predominates, accounting for 57% of the compliment exchanges. This is perhaps related to the finding in Scollon and Scollon (2001) that Asians tend to be more aware of their connections with other members in a social group. In a compliment exchange, when the complimentee hears a compliment, in addition to accepting
Compliment exchanges in Taiwan TV programs

it, he or she may have additional interaction or small talk with the complimenter. Through these interactions, a kind of relationship is established between the complimenter and the complimentee. The second type, giving a trophy, accounts for 21%, followed by 13% and 9% for bribery and sarcasm, respectively.

3.1 Gift exchange

An example of compliment exchange classified as gift exchange is shown below. The main feature of this type is that the conversation lasts longer than giving a trophy, as there is some small talk or exchange between the complimenter and complimentee. The complimentee in extract 1 adopts an acceptance strategy to respond to the compliment. Explanations will be presented in the following paragraphs of why the complimentee may have chosen this response strategy.

Extract 1 is a conversation between the hostess (speaker A) and a nominee (speaker B) on the red carpet of the 47th Golden Bell award ceremony. As the artists arrived at the location, the hostess interviewed them on the red carpet. After that, the artists entered the ceremony hall to wait for the beginning of the award ceremony.

Extract 1

1 A: 聲哥真的是最近運氣非常好，
2 對不對？
3 B: 還可以還可以。
4 A: 結婚、生小孩，
5 現在又入圍金鐘獎。
6 B: 謝謝大家。
7 A: 說不定真的一路上就得獎了。
8 B: 嗯，我希望，
9 如果可以得獎的話，
10 我會感謝很多很多人，
11 但是我們會繼續努力把節目做得更好。
A: Shunge, you have been very lucky recently, haven’t you?
B: It’s been OK. It’s been OK.
A: You got married and had a child.
Now you have even been nominated for the 47th Golden Bell award.
B: Thank you.
A: Perhaps you will really get the award this time.
B: Yes, I hope so.
If I could get the award,
I would give thanks to many people.
We would also keep working hard to make our program better.

In this extract from the 47th Golden Bell Award Ceremony, speaker B was on the red carpet, being interviewed by the hostess, speaker A. The hostess gives a compliment to speaker B for his good fortune of getting married, having a child, and being a nominee. Speaker B first expresses his humbleness (line 3), then accepts the compliment by expressing gratitude toward everyone (line 6). Line 3 shows that speaker B did not directly accept the compliment (lines 1-2) because he wanted to ascertain the intention of the complimenter before accepting the compliment. Thus he said, “It’s been OK. It’s been OK” in anticipation of further confirmation.

This extract is considered to be an example of gift giving in that after speaker B accepted the compliment, he not only accepted it but had a short exchange with the hostess. As explained by Coupland (2009), small talk has many social functions, one of which is to bring people closer. In this case, through the small talk (lines 8-11), speaker B tried to get closer to the TV audience in order to get more support for his program. This intention corresponds to Bell’s (1997) concept of audience design. Therefore, speaker B promised that if he got the award, he would work harder to make his program better. Through this kind of “appeal,” speaker B not only responded to the hostess’ compliment but also achieved his purpose of attracting a certain audience.
3.2 Giving a trophy

The following two examples illustrate compliments that are like giving a trophy. One of the features of this kind of compliment exchange is that the procedure is relatively shorter than gift exchange. Sometimes, the complimentee may just acknowledge the compliment and the conversation ends.

In extract 2, taken from the opening utterances of the conversation between the host and hostess at the 47th Golden Bell award ceremony, the complimentee indeed simply accepts the compliment and ends the talk.

Extract 2
1 A: 所以製作單位找你是因為快、狠、準
2 B: 可以這麼說。
3 A: 那他找我的原因呢？
4 B: 找你的原因很重要，
5 也很簡單，
6 因為你中文不太好，
7 所以話就不會太多，
8 這樣的話整個晚上就會非常非常地緊湊，
9 好不好？
10 而且你人長得不錯，
11 身材也可以，
12 在我旁邊很 OK 的，
13 很 OK 的，
14 OK？
15 A: Thank you!

1 A: So you were chosen by the organizer of the program because of your quick, concise and sharp speaking ability.
2 B: That’s right.
3 A: What was the reason I was chosen?
At the beginning of the award ceremony, there was a dance performance, and then the host and hostess began to talk about the reason they were chosen as emcees of the program. The hostess first offered a compliment to the host by praising him for his quick, concise and sharp tongue. The host wittily accepted the compliment without hesitation in a quick, concise, and sharp manner.

Furthermore, when the host told the hostess why she was chosen, he made a joke about her Chinese speaking ability. In other words, she was chosen because of her limited Chinese speaking ability, so the procedure of the ceremony would not last too long. Lines 6-7 are framed as a joke to set a lighthearted tone for the evening. The hostess accepted the “compliment” from the host by responding with a “thank you” and ended this interaction. Perhaps as an ABC (a Chinese born in America), she did not catch the sarcasm due to her limited Chinese proficiency.

In extract 3, taken from one of the award presentations during the 49th Golden Horse award ceremony, the complimentee does not even directly accept the compliment but responds with laughter.

4 B: The reason is very important, and simple.
5 As your Chinese is not very good,
6 you will not talk too much.
7 Therefore, tonight’s schedule will be fast-paced.
8 OK?
9 Also, you look good.
10 You have a good figure.
11 You look very OK standing beside me.
12 OK, that’s for sure.
13 OK?
14 A: Thank you!
Compliment exchanges in Taiwan TV programs

Extract 3

1 A: 我還要講一個，
2 就是不管你今天有沒有得獎，
3 都不重要，
4 B: 不重要了。
5 A: 對，
6 因為你是我心目中最佳女主角。
7 B: (微笑)。
8 A: 唉唷，
9 是不是?

1 A: I also want to say one thing.
2 Whether you get the award this evening or not,
3 that’s not important.
4 B: Not important?
5 A: Exactly.
6 Because in my mind you are the best actress.
7 B: (laughter).
8 A: Yah,
9 Is that right?

Speaker A and B, serving as presenters of an award, were acquaintances because they had worked together in a movie before. At that moment, speaker B was nominated for the year’s Best Leading Actress. Speaker A mentioned this before the outcome was revealed. Although it is up to the judges to make the final decision, speaker A indeed expressed his admiration of the actress’ excellent acting. After speaker A expressed that no matter whether speaker B got the award or not, she would always be the best actress in his mind, the complimentee did not say anything but simply respond with laughter, a signal of her embarrassment (speaker B blushed at that moment and she patted speaker A) and gratitude.
3.3 Bribery

In the following examples, the interactions between the complimenter and complimentee are considered to be flattery or bribery. Generally speaking, this kind of condition can be seen in the situation where the complimentee has a higher status than the complimenter. In order to achieve some purpose, the complimenter may try to make the complimentee “happy” or try not to upset them, so that the complimenter can get what he or she wants or prevent something bad from happening.

Extract 4 is an example showing flattery in the situation when the complimentee has a higher status than the complimenter.

Extract 4
1 A: Andy (speaker D) has ever arrived at work looking ugly?
2 B: Yes.
3 Well, actually... he never looks any different.
4 C: You know,...
5 He... actually... he looks no different.
6 A: Okay...
7 B: You know, we're actually always praising his appearance...
8 C: And...
9 B: For some reason we're always praising his appearance...
10 D: No.
11 E: Handsome.
12 F: Super handsome.
13 E: Handsome.
14 C: And... he... he's... he's really handsome.
15 A: Okay...
16 He's really handsome.
Here is a conversation among six male performers. Speakers C and D were partners, who were invited to the talk show to share their experiences of investing in a record company. Speaker B, E, and F were artists of a three-person group in the record company. Speaker B was more popular than speakers E and F; therefore, he had received more invitations to perform than the other two.

First, the host (speaker A) asked about the partnership between speaker C and speaker D, then he focused on the interactions between speaker D and other colleagues in the record company. It seems that the host knew that some members of the audience might like to know more about speaker D, who seldom appeared on a TV program; thus, the host switched his focus to speaker D in order to let the audience know more about him. Therefore, the host asked the guests about the appearance of speaker D when he came to work on a given day at the record company. Speakers B, E and F were competing to win the heart of speaker D or to get more opportunities to perform by complimenting his good-looking appearance. Although they might have truly believed their boss, speaker D, was really handsome, their utterances were interpreted as flattery or bribery because of their relationship with him. Speaker A quickly sensed the brown-nose behavior and commented
on that (lines 8-9), but speaker D rejected this interpretation to alleviate potential embarrassment. Moreover, speaker C also made an effort to compliment speaker D, his partner, by shifting the compliment from “beauty is skin deep” to focus on his kind heart, another example of bribery to win his trust or to strengthen their cooperation.

Extract 5 is another example of bribery in which the male complimenter (speaker A) flattered the female complimentee (speaker B) for his own purpose.

Extract 5
1 A: 其實小 S 有到我們店裡面消費過。
2 B: 真的?
3 C: 你是說醫學美容嗎?
4 A: 不是,
5 小 S 這麼漂亮,
6 天生麗質,
7 當然不需要。
8 C: 我覺得今天這一集煙硝味太重。

1 A: Actually Xiao S has been to our store.
2 B: Really?
3 C: Do you mean medical cosmetology?
4 A: No.
5 Xiao S is so beautiful.
6 You’re a born beauty.
7 Of course you don’t need it (medical cosmetology).
8 C: I think something stinks in here today.

This extract is selected from one episode of the talk show, in which guests were invited to the program to share their experiences of starting an enterprise. Speaker A was one of those guests. Speaker B was the host and speaker C was the hostess (Xiao S), two of the most popular TV stars in Taiwan.
When the host asked speaker A about his experience in starting an enterprise, speaker A mentioned that he had a medical cosmetology business before he had other businesses. After that, the guest suddenly commented that the hostess had been to his store, which of course caught the host and the hostess by surprise. Without a doubt, speaker A intended to create suspense and get the hosts’ attention, to provide an opportunity for him to say something else. In other words, the guest applied communication accommodation theory (Giles, 2009) because he knew that the host liked to hear gossip. As gossip is often realized through storytelling (Coupland, 2009: 657), the host would have more chances to interview the guest, so the content of the program would be more attractive.

As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the guest’s intention of making this comment was to provide an opportunity to compliment the hostess’ appearance. However, the “compliment” was immediately interpreted by the hostess as “flattery” and manipulative as it was used both to cash in on the hostess’s appearance and to attract the audience’s attention for marketing his own business in medical cosmetology.

3.4 Sarcasm

In addition to the examples that illustrate Rau’s (2012) three metaphors of compliment exchanges, we also found another type of “compliment,” which is actually sarcasm. The reason these compliments are interpreted as sarcasm is that the complimenter intends to express a deeper meaning through the surface form of a compliment. In other words, the complimenter would actually like to scoff at the complimentee, but uses the giving of a compliment as a disguise, as shown in the following extract from a talk show, where speaker A is the host and speaker B the guest. The topic is the quarrels between the guest and her husband. The host supposed that when she had a quarrel with her husband, she was definitely the winner. However, she retorted that her husband was more eloquent than she was, and thus she almost never had a chance to win a quarrel.
Extract 6
1  A: 寇乃馨這對不用講，
2       就是她(寇乃馨)就很愛吵架，
3       所以就...
4  B: 什麼話？
5  A: 你(寇乃馨)口才超流利，
6       你根本就是無法對抗啊！
7  B: 可是我跟你講，
8       在我們家吵架的時候，
9       我都是被逼到牆角的那個，
10      你不要以為我說得過他，
11      我真的說不過啦。
12  A: 不可能。
13  B: 我真的說不過。

1  A: Needless to say, this couple (referring to Naixin Kou & Guolun Huang)…
2  She (Kou) enjoys fighting (with her husband).
3       So…
4  B: What?
5  A: You (Kou) are so eloquent.
6       No one can beat you in argument.
7  B: But let me tell you,
8       when we have an argument at home.
9       I am almost always the loser.
10      You can’t suppose that I am more eloquent than he is.
11      I’m really not.
12  A: Impossible.
13  B: Indeed, I can’t beat him.

In this case, the host offered “a seemingly positive compliment” (lines 6-7) to praise the
Compliment exchanges in Taiwan TV programs

female guest’s eloquence, referring to her victory in a quarrel. The female guest did not directly accept the compliment, but brought up another argument, which could possibly be interpreted as the metaphor of gift exchange. The seemingly positive compliment spoken in lines 6-7 was used by the host to express an ironic meaning. The host praised the female guest for being so eloquent in speech that no one could beat her in a quarrel. Nevertheless, what the host meant to say sarcastically was that the female guest often provoked her husband to a quarrel (line 2) and would never admit to being defeated.

The next extract is another example of a surface compliment that is actually sarcasm. Speaker A explicitly attributed positive traits to speaker B, but actually had negative implications.

Extract 7

1 A: 因為像你們(speaker C)都要跟陳漢典(speaker B)學習耶，
2 他很會借力使力啊。
3 B: 怎麼說？
4 A: 因為罵他幾句，
5 他馬上就是在回那個微博上面大哭特哭啊，
6 C: 真的假的？
7 A: 然後就順便把我塑造成一個大壞人，
8 然後他是一個弱者。

1 A: You (speaker C) should learn from Handian Chen (speaker B).
2 He is good at making use of the available resources to achieve his personal goals.
3 B: What do you (speaker A) mean by that?
4 A: I just scolded him slightly,
5 And then he immediately complained (about me) like a crybaby on Twitter.
6 C: Really?
7 A: Meanwhile he is portraying me as a bad guy.
And that he is the weak one (that I am picking on).

In this extract, taken from one episode of the talk show “Kang-Xi Lai Le”, speaker A was the hostess and speaker B was the assistant to the host; therefore, she is superior to him. Speaker B mentioned on his Twitter that speaker A often made fun of him, or even hit him. Sometimes when his mother saw he was mistreated on the TV program, she would ask him after he went home if he was OK. However, speaker B always told his mother that he was OK because the bullying behavior of speaker A was just to make the show funny to watch.

In this case, the hostess happened to read what speaker B had written on his Twitter page. As a result, the hostess used a kind of ironic manner of speaking to compliment the assistant (lines 1-2) by saying that everybody should learn from his good example because he knew very well how to use the available resources to achieve his goals. She went on by saying that when he complained about his poor condition on the Internet, many of the audience would think that he was pitiable. Whereas speaker B was portrayed as a weakling, speaker A was regarded as a bully. Since speaker A was not happy with the image presented by speaker B, she offered a “compliment” to speaker B that was actually intended to be sarcastic. Sarcasm is like a candy which tastes sweet at the beginning, but the aftertaste becomes sour. As Toplak and Katz (2000) mentioned, in some contexts, a person makes a seemingly positive comment that can be regarded as making an indirect criticism.

Extract 8 is our last example containing gift exchange and sarcasm. The two speakers were preparing to present the award in the 49th Golden Horse award ceremony. Speaker A is 36 years old, a famous singer, actress, and producer. Speaker B is an actor, 28 years old. Speaker A is senior and also is better recognized than speaker B.

**Extract 8**

1. B: 然後我要恭喜我身邊這位美女，
2. 林心如小姐，
3. 因為她的《遺忘》作品呢，
4. 今天總共呢入圍了三個獎項。
5. A: 謝謝謝謝，
Compliment exchanges in Taiwan TV programs

6 我希望等一下能夠從我手中順利地開出我們想要的獎項。
7 然後我在這邊呢，
8 我也要很…恭喜元浩，
9 因為在今年報紙、雜誌大大小小的版面都是你的新聞，
10 完全 follow 你耶。
11 B: 嗯…託你的福，
12 但是我相信呢，
13 接下來應該會有很多媒體來報導你。
1  B: I want to congratulate the beauty beside me.
2 Miss Lin.
3 Because her TV series, Forgotten,
4 has been nominated for three awards.
5 A: Thank you.
6 I hope that in a while I will be able present the award to myself.
7 Then at the same time,
8 I also want to congratulate Yuanhao (Speaker B).
9 Because your news (referring to love affairs) has appeared in all the newspapers and magazines this year.
10 You were closely followed by Paparazzi.
11 B: Yes, thanks for your concern.
12 But I believe,
13 They may be covering you very soon.

This extract is from the 49th Golden Horse award ceremony. Speaker A and speaker B served as the presenters of the awards. As usual, they had an interaction with each other in order to mitigate the nervous atmosphere at the award ceremony. At the beginning, speaker B offered a compliment to congratulate speaker A on her TV series, Forgotten, being nominated. Speaker A accepted the compliment, followed by some small talk (lines 5-6) with speaker B. The initial part of extract 8 (lines 1-6) was considered as gift exchange, as acceptance of gift is usually followed by small talk.
In this case, when they talked to each other about what they had done recently, a thought came to speaker A and she said lines 7-10 to speaker B. At first sight, it seems that speaker A offered a return compliment to speaker B because many reports about him had appeared on the newspapers and magazines, showing how famous speaker B was at that time. However, if the hearers considered more deeply, they would realize that the seemingly positive compliment was not really sincere, because speaker A was making fun of speaker B for his affairs with two female artists. In other words, speaker B became “very famous” not due to his excellent achievements in show business but his scandalous love affairs.

As for the utterances of speaker B (lines 11-13), he first embarrassingly responded to the sarcastic compliment of speaker A (lines 7-10) by accepting it, but quickly added he believed the media might be covering speaker A very soon. This part of extract 8 (lines 11-13) has two possible interpretations. It could be interpreted as a real compliment, if he were speaking about reports on her upcoming TV series, a way to distract the audience’s attention from his own love affairs. Alternatively, lines 11-13 could also be interpreted as return sarcasm as he expected that she would also be involved in some similar scandal and making news in the future.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated compliment exchanges on talk shows as well as in award ceremonies. We found that the spoken data could be accounted for by the three metaphors of compliment exchange (gift exchange, giving a trophy, and bribery). Sarcasm posing as a compliment was also observed in the spoken data.

Over 50% of the occurrences could be considered to fit in the category of the first metaphor, gift exchange. The second metaphor, giving a trophy, accounted for 21% of the data, with 13% for bribery and 9% for sarcasm.

The reason the first metaphor, gift exchange, was the most common type in the collected spoken data may be related to the fact that Chinese tend to be aware of connections with other people in a social group. That is, through interactions or creating small talk when
Compliment exchanges in Taiwan TV programs

giving compliment exchange, interpersonal relationships with people can be established. For cases of the metaphor of giving a trophy, the compliment exchanges were found not last too long; the complimentee simply receives the acknowledgement and ends the interaction.

Bribery often happens in the situation where the complimentee has a higher status than the complimenter. Usually, the complimenter wants to bribe the complimentee in order to benefit from him or her in some way. Another possibility is that the complimenter is afraid to offend the complimentee, which may bring negative consequences. Finally, sarcasm is very prominent in TV talk shows, and is worth investigating further.

Although this paper has examined compliment exchanges in natural Mandarin spoken data in award ceremonies and talk shows, the data only consisted of fifty-three examples of compliment exchange. More spoken data from other kinds of TV programs would be necessary to make our analysis more comprehensive. Finally, in addition to sarcasm, researchers could also examine whether there are other types of compliment exchange, for instance, whether a compliment may sometimes be offered as a way of giving consolation.
Works Cited


Compliment exchanges in Taiwan TV programs


臺灣電視節目之讚美行為探討*

陳泱璉** 何德華***

摘 要

本研究探討臺灣電視節目(例如頒獎典禮與訪談節目)裡的讚美行為，並且觀察這些讚美是否符合 Rau (2012)裡提到的三大讚美行為之比喻，即送禮、得獎與賄賂。除了三大比喻，另一探討重點為嘗試觀察語料中是否有其他類型之表面讚美行為。結果顯示，讚美行為可區分為四大類型，即上述所提及三大比喻與「諷刺」。 「送禮」是出現頻率最高的類型，推測這可能與華人在給予或回應讚美時，傾向透過較多互動與談以和對方建立良好關係有關。「得獎」的應對常是簡單扼要。「賄賂」則較常發生於地位低者讚美地位高者的情況，通常地位低者的目的是想從地位高者那裏得到好處。至於「諷刺」，表面上看來的確是讚美，但事實上帶有諷刺意味或言外之意。

關鍵詞：讚美行為、言語行為、比喻

* 本文承蒙 Dr.Gerald Rau 給予編輯協助，特此致謝。
** 中正大學語言學研究所碩士生。
*** 中正大學語語學研究所教授。