Laughter, Smiling and Their Pragmatic/Interpersonal Functions: An Interactional Linguistic Account

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Based on 495 minutes of audio- and video-recorded data from television variety shows, this paper intends to illustrate and discuss the pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling from an interactional linguistic perspective. Laughter and smiling are not only expressions of emotion or subconscious responses to stimuli (Van Hooff 1972, Kendon 1975, Ekman & Friesen 1982, Glenn 2003, Holt 2011, Bavelas, Gerwing & Healing 2014, Warner-Garcia 2014). While laughter can show appreciation of another one’s humor/teasing, it can also be used as a prompt, indicating that the utterance is laughable, thereby inviting others to join in. Laughter can also be faked, produced by imitating the sound of natural laughter that displays pleasure and happiness. This type of laughter is often used for showing disagreement. Smiling, on the other hand, can be used to politely reject another one’s humor/teasing. It can also be used to mark non-verbal sarcasm. Its sarcastic nature results from the listener’s attempt at suppressing the desire to mock the current speaker while at the same time showing it in a passive-aggressive manner. Finally, smiling can also be used to show contempt. This type of smiling is produced by slightly raising one corner of the mouth and is characterized by looking somebody up and down, accompanied by different forms of verbal aggression and hand gestures.

Key words: conversation analysis, interactional linguistics, laughter, multimodal discourse analysis, smiling

1. Introduction

“Laugh, and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone.”
—Ella Wheeler Wilcox “Solitude” 1888

Traditionally, laughter has been viewed as a non-lexical component in an interaction. Laughter, according to O’Donnell-Trujillo & Adams (1983:175), “is not a linguistic construction but an acoustic one, with no readily apparent semantic or syntactic features.” Smiling, on the other hand, has tended to be regarded as a facial gesture triggered by pleasure or happiness, or a means to show friendliness. Van Hooff (1972:234) has compared laughing and smiling from an anthropological perspective in terms of the “two dimensions of variation of the smile-laughter continuum,” and observed that smiling with increased baring of the teeth shows a
positive effect of non-hostile or friendly attitudes. Laughing with increased mouth opening and vocalization, on the other hand, shows a positive effect of playfulness. To put it more specifically, a broad smile can be used as an indicator of a highly friendly attitude but not necessarily of a high degree of playfulness, and vice versa for laughter.

Laughing and smiling are also considered to be affected by a speech participant’s gender role. Mehu & Dunbar (2008), for example, have applied the power asymmetry hypothesis to analyzing spontaneous smiles, deliberate smiles and laughter, which they have described as three affiliative human behaviors. According to their observations, while age is not a main factor in affecting women’s affiliative behavior, young men show higher proportions of deliberate smiles (in comparison to laughter) when interacting with people of a different age than with people of their own age. That is, as age could influence one’s social status, deliberate smiles play a significant role for men when they try to maintain their hierarchical relationships in society.

However, there used to be a tendency to “treat laughter simplistically as a response to humor and thus to imply a casual, stimulus-response relationship from humorous event to perception of humor to laughter” (Glenn 2003:24). Treating laughter as only a response to humorous events/remarks, however, is questionable and improper, as laughter conveys different socio-pragmatic meanings. Holt (2011), for example, has argued that laughter is not simply a reaction to the perception of humor, as it should be considered as an action in its own right.¹ In addition, while laughter is very often unplanned and produced subconsciously, it can also be produced strategically to cope with face-threatening aspects of disagreement. Warner-Garcia (2014) calls this type of laughter coping laughter, which has four interactional functions: face-threat mitigation, face-loss concealment, serious-to-nonserious frame switch and topic transition facilitation. In other words, laughter can be used consciously for different communicative purposes.

Similarly, smiling is no longer considered a subconscious facial expression of emotion triggered by pleasure or happiness. Many studies on facial gestures have found that facial expression can be used to regulate social interaction. Kendon’s (1975:330) pioneering work, for example, illustrated how facial gestures serve as a “delicate tuning device.” Ekman & Friesen (1982) have distinguished three types of smile based on functions: a felt smile (showing positive emotion), a false smile (intending to appear as if a positive emotion was felt) and a miserable smile.

¹ According to Holt (2011), laughter is an action which in and of itself shows that the recipient is willing to bring the topic closer. Its presence arises from incongruity, as there are various candidates to which the recipient orients in laughing, which may include figurative expressions that are exaggerated, dramatic or overdone. The recipient may also orient to other properties, such as the laughter or smile voice (i.e., talk produced while smiling) in the preceding turn.

According to the above, laughter can briefly be defined as an acoustic construction that apparently lacks semantic or syntactic features. While laughter is often triggered by humor, it can be used for different communicative purposes. Smiling, on the other hand, is not only used for showing pleasure, happiness or friendliness. Like laughter, it can be used consciously to regulate a face-to-face interaction. Whereas laughter can be regarded as an extension of smiling—as laughing very often triggers smiling, smiling is not always accompanied by laughter. In other words, smiling may be used alone as a single facial gesture in interaction.

Based on 495 minutes of audio- and video-recorded data from television variety shows in Taiwan and Poland, this study intends to analyze the pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling from an interactional linguistic perspective. As the analysis will show, laughter cannot only be used to show support of another one’s humor/teasing; it can be further employed for other communicative purposes. Smiling also has different pragmatic/interpersonal functions other than a reaction to a joyful event.

In the following, Section 2 describes the research procedure. Sections 3 and 4 present a qualitative analysis of the pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling, respectively. Finally, Section 5 discusses the implications and concludes the findings of the present study.

2. Research procedure

In this section the background information of the television variety shows used for analysis is provided. In addition, the transcription system and the methodological approaches used for analysis are introduced.

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2 In González-Fuente, Escandell-Vidal & Prieto’s (2015) study, laughter is also an ironic gesture used during the production of verbal irony.
2.1 Database and transcription

The data used in this study come from two television variety shows, one in Taiwan and one in Poland. I chose Kāng Xī Láiile and Kuba Wojewódzki for analysis as many instances of laughter and smiling can be observed in them, thanks to the entertaining effect of the programs.

*Kāng Xī Láiile* was a late-night variety show in Taiwan, which is structured like a talk show. This program was first broadcast in 2004 and went off the air in January 2016. It was conducted by pairing two hosts with completely different interviewing styles. While Cài Kāng-Yòng is quiet, straightforward and likes to ask serious questions, Xú Xī-Dì is an unruly, sexy woman, who frequently jokes about her guests or does things to embarrass them. Each 45-minute episode features celebrity interviews with entertainers, politicians, sportspersons, Internet celebrities and other invited guests. The examples examined in this study come from six episodes randomly selected in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

*Kuba Wojewódzki*, on the other hand, is an entertainment talk show in Poland, first aired in 2002. It was broadcast on Polsat, Poland’s second biggest television channel until June 2006. Since September 2006, it has been broadcast on TVN (TV Nowa), another Polish commercial television network. This show is, as its name suggests, hosted by Jakub Władysław Wojewódzki, a Polish journalist, television personality, drummer and comedian. On *Kuba Wojewódzki*, controversial issues are explored in an entertaining way, and therefore instances of laughter and smiling can be observed. The examples examined in this study come from five episodes randomly selected from the 2006 seasons, each episode lasting for about 45 minutes.

In presenting the data from *Kāng Xī Láiile* and *Kuba Wojewódzki*, the speech participants’ real names will be used. As they are already well known in Taiwan and Poland, and since their conversations were aired on television, there is no need to use pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

In transcribing the Mandarin data, Hányǔ Pīnyīn “Transcription of Chinese Characters” will be used. As Mandarin is a tonal language, the tone of each transcribed character will be marked on the vowel.³ For the Polish data, on the other hand, no transcription system is needed since Poles also use an alphabetic writing system. Each example in Mandarin and Polish will be accompanied by three screenshots and an English translation marked with transcription symbols. As laughter

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³ For example, *ma* marked with different tones has different meanings. *Mā* ‘mother’ is marked with a high-level tone. *Má* ‘linen’ is marked with a rising tone. *Mǎ* ‘horse’ is marked with a falling-rising tone. *Mà* ‘to scold’ is marked with a falling tone. Finally, *Ma*, a modal particle, is marked with nothing as a neutral tone.
and smiling are treated as two gestures that can be used to regulate an ongoing interaction, a detailed transcription system was adopted. For example, a lower case “h” is used for indicating audible aspiration, which can be associated with laughter. A smiling face in parentheses is used for indicating a smile on X’s face (X: a speech participant), as in “(☺: X)” In addition, to indicate the sequential structure and the exact positions where laughter and smiling occur, brackets “[ ]” are used for showing the overlapping of utterances, including laughter and smiling.

In sum, analyzing the data from Kang Xi LaiLe and Kuba Wojewódzki may reveal the pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling in interactions on television variety shows. Before moving on to the analysis of these functions, it is important to dwell briefly on the methodological approaches used in the present study.

2.2 Methodological approaches

The methodological approaches used in the present study are informed by conversation analysis, multimodal discourse analysis and interactional linguistics.

2.2.1 Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis (henceforth CA) is a methodological approach used for studying naturally occurring spoken data. According to Schegloff (1992a, 1992b), CA was first developed by Sacks and his colleagues when they analyzed audio-recorded data from telephone calls to a suicide prevention center in San Francisco, and from interactions in group therapy sessions with a special focus on turn-taking, adjacency pairs and story-telling. It is used for analyzing the structures, patterns and processes of various social interactions, which may include everyday verbal and non-verbal practices. The development of CA was inspired by Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodology and Goffman’s (1983) interaction order. Furthermore, in CA transcripts are not simply considered as “data,” but are seen as representing the data (Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998). To better illustrate the functions of laughter and smiling in talk-in-interaction, the present study, thus, has adopted the CA-based approach by using a detailed transcription.

4 The interpretive procedures of Garfinkel’s (1967) ethnomethodology underlie social action, and thus help understand how people in their everyday life use commonsense knowledge to achieve a successful interaction. Goffman’s (1983) interaction order, on the other hand, focuses on the moral underpinnings of social interactions. Although the development of CA was influenced by Goffman’s interaction order, Goffman himself was critical about CA which, according to Schegloff (1988), was due to his misreadings of the CA studies.
In addition, as CA is influenced by ethnomethodology, which uses social factors to account for different situations of talk, the CA-based approach may help better interpret speech participants’ uses of laughter and smiling in face-to-face interactions. This is because many non-linguistic factors should be taken into consideration when investigating the functions of laughter and smiling. These factors may include the context in which instances of laughter and smiling are observed, each speech participant’s socio-cultural background and the relationship between the speaker and listener. In addition, as the CA-based approach can reveal how each speaking turn is allocated in a conversation, this approach helps identify the participant role of a speech participant who produces laughter or smile.

Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998), however, argued that many CA studies were based on audio data. As the speech participants being recorded have visual access to each other, and since a face-to-face interaction also involves non-verbal communication, focusing exclusively on speech participants’ utterances might miss out on some salient features in their management of the social exchanges. While the present study has adopted the CA tools of micro-analysis, multimodal resources in an ongoing interaction will also be examined to account for the speech exchange.

2.2.2 Multimodal discourse analysis

Each individual possesses a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding language use. In social interaction, speech participants send not only verbal messages, but also non-verbal ones in a complex interplay. As Seyfeddinipur & Gullberg (2014:1) point out in the beginning of their book, “Language use is fundamentally multimodal.” That is, speakers may point to locations with their hands, position their bodies, use facial displays and engage in a mutual gaze for different communicative purposes. Knapp, Hall & Horgan (2014:12) have further listed dynamic body movements and positioning, which may include gestures, movements of the limbs, hands, head, feet, facial expressions (e.g., smiles), eye behavior (i.e., blinking, direction and length of gaze and pupil dilation) and posture. Additionally, a speech participant may use visible bodily actions to show how s/he is engaged with other speech participants in a social interaction. As argued by Kendon (2004:1), “[H]umans, when in co-presence, continuously inform one another about their intentions, interests, feelings and ideas by means of visible bodily action.” As Kendon further points out, while these visible bodily actions may be combined with spoken words, they can also be used “as complements, supplements, substitutes or as alternatives to them” (2004:1).
Similarly, a speech participant is very likely to resort to the simultaneous use of multimodal resources when s/he intends to achieve certain communicative functions by laughing or smiling. These multimodal resources can be further used as contextualization cues. As pinpointed by Kendon (2004:108), “speakers create ensembles of gesture and speech, by means of which a semantic coherence between the two modalities is attained.” Furthermore, based on Kendon’s (2004:13-14) account of gestures as having “features of manifest deliberate expressiveness,” we may expect a speech participant to intentionally use gestural action to accompany his/her laughter or smiling to regulate an ongoing interaction. It follows then that it is important to examine the multimodal resources that accompany a speech participant’s laughter or smiling as the multimodal discourse analytic approach may facilitate understanding a speaker’s intention when s/he laughs or smiles. Thus, while some multimodal resources listed by Knapp, Hall & Horgan (2014:12) will be examined when investigating the pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling, Kendon’s (2004) account of gestures will also be adopted to interpret a speech participant’s intention in laughing and smiling.

Although both approaches of CA and multimodal discourse analysis may allow us to see how laughter and smiling are presented in an ongoing talk, the meanings of laughter and smiling are shaped by interaction. How the interactional linguistic perspective sheds light on the study of laughter and smiling is discussed in the following subsection.

2.2.3 Interactional linguistics

As pointed out by Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (2001:4), linguistic studies inspired by the Chomskian paradigm are more likely to treat what happens in a talk-in-interaction as “merely a contextual, real-time application of structures whose well-formedness is determined out of context by the linguistic system.” However, this viewpoint is questionable from an interactional perspective. As Couper-Kuhlen & Selting put it:

Rather than conceptualizing language as an abstract and balanced system of pre-established discrete elements which are combined with one another into “sentences” that are then realized in speech, interactional evidence suggests that language forms and structures must be thought of in a more situated, context-sensitive fashion as actively (re)produced and locally adapted to the exigencies of the interaction at hand. (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2001:4-5)
Different from formal linguistics, interactional linguistics is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language structure and use in social interactions. It is used in the fields of linguistics, anthropology and the sociology of language. As stated by Li (2014), interactional linguistics has been developed from three research approaches of British CA-informed phonetics/phonology (cf. Local, Wells & Sebba 1985, Local, Kelly & Wells 1986), interactional prosodic study (cf. Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 2001) and discourse-functional linguistics (cf. Ford, Fox & Thompson 2002). More specifically, this research approach draws upon Gumperz’s (1982, 1992) interactional sociolinguistic theory, focusing on language in its social context, and at the same time adopts CA methodology to study how grammatical structures and recursive patterns contribute to a talk-in-interaction.

Ford & Wagner (1996) have claimed that language should be closely and carefully studied at the interactional level as it is impossible to fully understand its mechanism without examining its interactional functions. As concluded by Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (2001:3), the goal of interactional linguistics is to better understand “how languages are shaped by interaction and how interactional practices are molded through specific languages.” As laughter and smiling are no longer considered simply as subconscious responses to stimuli or as expressions of pleasure or happiness, their meanings should be determined at the interactional level. More specifically, the meaning of a speech participant’s laughter or smiling is determined by interaction.

In sum, the three methodological approaches of CA, multimodal discourse analysis and interactional linguistics focus on how language is used from an interactional perspective. Adopting the three methods, thus, helps us understand how laughter and smiling contribute to a talk-in-interaction, as well as how the participants’ speech meanings are shaped by interaction. The following two sections present my qualitative analysis of the data by adopting an analytic framework informed by CA, multimodal discourse analysis and interactional linguistics.

3. Laughter and its pragmatic/interpersonal functions

In analyzing the data from the two television variety shows, I observed three major pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter. More specifically, laughter can be used by a listener to show his/her appreciation of humor/teasing, by a speaker to invite his/her listener(s) to join in the laughter, or by a listener to show disagreement to a proposition made in a prior speaking turn. In the following, all these functions will be illustrated and discussed.
3.1 Laughter used for showing appreciation of humor/teasing

Jefferson (1979) has observed three possible responses to an invitation to laugh. Listeners may accept the invitation by laughing together with the invitation offerer, remain silent, or even decline the invitation, perhaps by speaking seriously on a certain topic. I have observed similar responses in my data. While listeners may reject humor/teasing by smiling (see Section 4.1), they are found to show appreciation of humor/teasing by laughing. Before going any further, I would like to spend some time on teasing, an aggressive type of humor.

Teasing, to borrow Drew’s (1987) definition, can be regarded as mocking or playful jibing produced with a twofold intention, both malignant and benevolent. That is, teasing can be the teaser’s benign attempt to joke about others, or can be produced intentionally to hurt the teased target’s feelings. As Dynel (2008) argues, despite the fact that teasing is apparently aggressive, it is oriented towards rapport or solidarity building. Teasing, therefore, can be regarded as a type of humor used for reinforcing solidarity in many interactions. On television variety shows, moreover, teasing helps elicit a humorous effect. Extract (1) contains a dialogue among three speakers, Billie, Cāi Kāng-Yǒng and Xú Xī-Dì on Kāng Xī Láile on January 5th, 2010. The dialogue, in which the hostess, Xú Xī-Dì, is teasing Billie, illustrates the point that this creates humor. In response, Billie shows her appreciation of Xú Xī-Dì’s humor/teasing by laughing.

(1) ((BL is Billie; CKY is Cāi Kāng-Yǒng; and XXD is Xú Xī-Dì.))
1 BL: 嗯，第三胎的時候以為是胖了，因為我也不曉得說，好幾個月那個沒有來，就去看醫生，醫生說：「欸，妳懷孕了。」我好害怕，我那時候高齡產婦耶。天啊！=
   En, dì sāntāi de shìhòu yǐwéi shì pàngle, yīnwèi wǒ yě bù xiǎodé shuō, hǎo jīge yuè nàge méiyǒu lái, jiù qù kàn yīshēng, yīshēng shuō, “È, nǐ huái yùn le.” Wǒ hǎo hàipà, wǒ nà shìhòu gāolíng chǎnfù yě. Tiān a! =
   ‘Well, I did not realize that I was pregnant with my third child. I thought I had simply become fat. I had not had my period for several months, so I went to see a doctor. The doctor told me, “Hey, you are pregnant.” I was very afraid, because I was a woman of advanced maternal age. Oh, my God! =’
   (See Figure (1a))

2 CKY: = 她說她不曉得她，好一陣子沒有來嗎？
   = Tā shuō tā bù xiǎodé tā, hǎo yīzhènzi méiyǒu lái ma?
   ‘= Did she say that she did not know she had not had her period in a while?’
3 XXD: (☺: XXD) 妳感情生活到底是有多亂啊？=
(☺: XXD) Nǐ gǎnqíng shēnghuó dàdù shì yǒu duó luàn a? =
‘(☺: XXD) How complicated was your love life? =’

4 CKY: → 哈[哈哈哈哈。 = ha[hahahah.
‘= ha[hahahah.’ (See Figure (1b))

5 XXD: [哈哈哈哈。 [hahahahah.
‘[hahahahah.’

6 BL: →[哈哈哈哈。 [hahahahah.
‘[hahahahah.’ (See Figure (1c))

Figure 1. A sequence of Kāng Xī Lǎile on January 5th, 2010 with translation in Extract (1)

At the beginning of the sequence, BL shares her experience of being a pregnant woman of advanced maternal age. Her fear of such an experience is evidenced in her frowning during narration (Figure (1a)). Without showing concern for BL, the host, CKY, focuses on BL’s mention of not realizing that she had not had her period in a while (line 2). Building on CKY’s question, XXD further teases BL by implying that being unaware of her pregnancy is a result of her complicated love life (line 3). Upon hearing XXD’s teasing remark, CKY bursts out laughing (line 4, Figure (1b)), followed by BL (line 6, Figure (1c)). XXD also laughs, as can be seen in line 5. While XXD’s laughter may frame her teasing remark as play, CKY’s and BL’s laughter possibly signals their understanding and even appreciation of XXD’s humor/teasing. As observed by Jefferson (1979), while a listener’s silence may indicate his/her rejection of something funny, laughter perhaps indicates acceptance of humorous remarks.

Interestingly, laughter used for showing appreciation of humor/teasing is always accompanied by a specific type of smiling, which typically consists of an open mouth,
bared teeth and narrowed eyes. As these facial expressions are frequently used for displaying pleasure or happiness, laughter accompanied by such a smile can therefore be used as a cue to show acceptance and even appreciation of X XD’s humor/teasing. BL’s smiling continues even after her laughter has faded away. Ruusuvuori & Peräkylä (2009) have observed that facial expressions can stretch the temporal boundaries of an action. In light of this, smiling produced in prior speaking turns is very likely to continue in following speaking turns. This phenomenon is evidenced in the above sequence.

In my data, I have also observed that laughter used for showing appreciation of another one’s humor/teasing is not only accompanied by the above mentioned facial expressions, but also by hand gestures and body movements. Extract (2) contains a conversation between Edyta Górniak and Kuba Wojewódzki on *Kuba Wojewódzki* on March 13th, 2005. In this extract, the invited guest, Edyta Górniak, further uses hand gestures and body movements to show that she really appreciates host Kuba Wojewódzki’s humor.

(2) ((EG is Edyta Górniak and KW is Kuba Wojewódzki.))

1 EG: Dobry wieczór. (☺: EG)
    ‘Good evening. (☺: EG)’ (See Figure (2a))

2 KW: (☺: KW) Tak się cieszę, (.) dziecko moje. (.)
    ‘(☺: KW) I am so happy, (.) my child. (.)’

3 EG: →hahahahah.
    ‘hahahahah.’ (See Figures (2b) and (2c))

![Figure 2. A sequence of Kuba Wojewódzki on March 13th, 2005 with translation in Extract (2)](a) (b) (c)

In the above sequence, after EG’s greeting, KW expresses his pleasure at having her as a guest. In expressing his pleasure, KW further calls EG dziecko moje ‘my child’, which makes her burst out laughing. KW’s use of this term of address can be seen as building rapport with EG, in the sense that it conveys warm intimacy in Polish...
verbal interactions. As KW and EG are known to be friends, and that the image of EG is like a smiling little girl, KW’s use of it to portray EG as a child is natural. However, as there is actually not much difference in age between the two people, KW’s use of this term of address to portray EG as his child seems awkward, which is perhaps the source of humor. We have no idea whether KW intends to entertain his guest by using this term of address, but EG’s laughter (line 3) signals that she perceives it as an expression of humor and that she is entertained by it.

As we can see in line 3, EG’s laughter is accompanied by an open mouth, bared teeth and narrowed eyes (Figure (2b)). Upon hearing KW’s term of address, EG throws her whole body backward (Figure (2b)) and uses her hand to cover her smiling mouth (Figure (2c)). These physiological changes which accompany the laughter show that EG appreciates KW’s humor. This can be seen in Sakuragi’s detailed description of the physiological changes that accompany laughter:5

Laughter begins with the widening of the mouth and pulling up at its corner accompanied by repetitive contractions of the diaphragm, continuous contractions of the facial muscles, raising corners of the eyes and eyebrows, flaring of the nostrils, elevation of the cheeks, retraction of the mandible and head, vasodilatation of the face, neck and hands, exophthalmia and tears (...). Excessive laughing would often throw the whole body backward, shake and disturb the respiration, especially in infants when sitting. (Sakuragi 2005:48-49)

Indeed, laughter very often involves a series of facial expressions and hand gestures, as well as body movements. As all these are used for displaying pleasure and happiness, they are further used for showing appreciation of humor/teasing in social interactions.

3.2 Laughter used for inviting more laughter

Zijderveld (1983) has found that laughter is not only a subconscious response to stimuli, but can also be used to constitute a comic frame. Glenn & Knapp (1987) have also found that laughter is one of the primary frame markers used for signaling playfulness. Glenn (2003) has further pointed out that a speaker may use laughter as a cue to indicate that an ongoing utterance is laughable, even before it is complete. In light of the above, we may therefore conclude that laughter can be used strategically

5 In describing the physiological changes that accompany laughter, Sakuragi (2005) cited the findings from Goodenough (1932), Black (1984) and Ruch & Ekman (2001).
to attract more laughter, perhaps by serving as a prompt. Extract (3) contains a dialogue between Xú Xī-Dì and Cài Kāng-Yǒng on Kāng Xī Làiile on January 5th, 2010. In this extract, the hostess, Xú Xī-Dì, immediately bursts out laughing upon finishing her funny anecdote. Her laughter, not surprisingly, attracts more laughter from others.

(3) ((XXD is Xú Xī-Dì and CKY is Cài Kāng-Yǒng. OSP indicates other speech participants.))
1 XXD: 可是有一些媽媽會突然沉迷於那種好萊塢式的那種推車，很大，然後輪子也很大，然後就是好萊塢明星很喜歡。你知道一邊晨跑，然後一邊這樣推嬰兒車。
Kěshì yǒu yìxiē māmā huì túrán chénmí yú nàzhǒng háoláiwū shì de nàzhǒng tuīchē, hěn dà, ránhòu lúnzi yě hěn dà, ránhòu jiùshì háoláiwū mínxīng hěn xīhuān. Nǐ zhīdào yībiān chénpǎo, ránhòu yībiān zhèyàng tuī yīngér chē.
‘But some mothers, for no reason, become fond of those Hollywood-type baby carriages, which are big, whose wheels are also very big. Hollywood celebrities like to use them. You know, they can go jogging in the morning, while pushing their baby carriages at the same time.’

2 CKY: 這
Dui.
‘Right.’

3 XXD: 像那種你在台灣就不能用，因為它太大，有時候騎樓摩托車很多你就會卡在那邊。
Xiàng nàzhǒng nǐ zài Táiwān jiù bù néng yòng, yīnwèi tā tài dà, yǒushíhou qílóu mótuōchē hěn duō, nǐ jiù huì kā zài nàbiān.
‘But you cannot use those baby carriages in Taiwan, because they are too big. Sometimes if there are many motor scooters in the arcade, your baby carriage probably will be stuck there.’

4 你就只好把小孩放在那邊，你自己先回家。=
Nǐ jiù hǎo bǎ xiǎohái fàng zài nàbiān, nǐ zìjǐ xiān huí jiā. =
‘In that case, you will have to leave your baby there and go home alone. =’
(See Figure (3a))

5 → = 哈[hahahah.
= ha[hahahah.
‘= ha[hahahah.’(See Figures (3b) and (3c))
The beginning of the sequence is XXD’s narration of her experience with other Taiwanese mothers. She argues that while the Hollywood-type baby carriages are beautiful and exotic, they are in fact not useful in Taiwan. She further gives an example, indicating that this type of baby carriage might get stuck in crowded arcades (line 3). Without offering any solutions to such a problem, XXD directly jumps to her conclusion, saying that mothers therefore have no choice but to abandon their babies and go home alone. XXD is obviously joking as no mother would abandon her child in such circumstances. Interestingly, during the whole narration (including the joking part), XXD’s facial expression remains the same (line 4, Figure (3a)). That is, she does not show any sign that she will jump to such an unexpected conclusion. Her co-host CKY’s facial expression (Figure (3a)) indicates that he is still pondering on XXD’s narration and conclusion. Upon finishing her utterance, XXD bursts out laughing (line 5, Figure (3b)), which makes CKY laugh with her (line 6, Figure (3b)). Both XXD and CKY laugh even harder, as we can see in the changes to their facial muscles (Figure (3c)). This perhaps shows that XXD (the humor producer) and CKY (the humor recipient) appreciate the unexpected but funny conclusion. As the above extract shows, while CKY is entertained by XXD’s unexpected ending, he is perhaps reminded by her laughter that the narration is intended to be humorous.

Indeed, laughter is contagious. When one laughs, others are very likely to join in for no reason. According to Neuendorf & Fennell’s (1988) observation, students who watched a video accompanied by canned laughter laughed more, but they did not
regard the program as funnier. As laughter can be used to invite others to laugh, many instances are found at the end of anecdotes. Despite the fact that XXD’s unexpected conclusion is regarded by CKY (and perhaps by the other invited guests and the television viewers) as funny, XXD’s laughter serves as a prompt, indicating that her utterance is laughable, thereby inviting others to also laugh.

3.3 Laughter used for showing disagreement

Laughter can be planned and produced consciously in certain social interactions. It can be faked, produced by imitating the sound of natural laughter that displays pleasure and happiness. As such laughter is not produced naturally, listeners, upon hearing this type of laughter, might understand that the current speaker is laughing not because s/he is happy or intends to invite more laughter. On the contrary, the current speaker may be using fake laughter to show disagreement. Extract (4) contains a dialogue between Kuba Wojewódzki and Kazimiera Szczuka on *Kuba Wojewódzki* on February 26th, 2006. In this extract, the fake laughter of the host, Kuba Wojewódzki, is produced by imitating its natural counterpart. Furthermore, many gestural cues accompanying this type of laughter can be observed.

(4) ((KW is Kuba Wojewódzki and KS is Kazimiera Szczuka. SA indicates the studio audience.))

1 KW: Takiej twojej, przepraszam bo ty nie lubisz, ale takiej jędrności twojej.
   ‘Your, sorry, because you do not like your firmness.’ (See Figure (4a))

2 KS: Znaczy to jędrność to niby takie macanie.
   ‘By firmness you mean groping.’ (See Figure (4b))

3  To ma oznaczać ten gest, tak? (☺: KS)
   ‘This is what your gesture means, right? (☺: KS)’

4 KW: → To, to jest twoja interpretacja. O, hohohoho. =
   ‘This, this is your interpretation. Oh, hohohoho. =’ (See Figure (4c))

5 SA: = [hahahahah.
   ‘= [hahahahah.’

6 KS: [Ale dla[czego...
   ‘[But w[hy…’

7 KW: →[O, hohohoho, Kazia. [Nie wpuścisz mnie w to.]
   ‘[Oh, hohohoho, Kazia. [Do not set a trap for me.]’

8 KS: [Ale dlaczego ja nie lubię,] miałabym nie lubić słowa jędrność? (☺: KS)
   ‘[But why do I not like,] would I not like the word firmness? (☺: KS)’
At the beginning of the sequence, KW mentions the word *jędrności* (the possessive case of *jędrność* ‘firmness’), which is frequently used for describing a female body (line 1). As KS is a well-known feminist in Poland, KW seems to be implying that she personally has a prejudice against this word, since it can be used to objectify women. KW’s mention of the word is accompanied by a hand gesture (Figure (4a)), which is perceived by KS as groping (lines 2 and 3). In these two lines, KS also imitates KW’s hand gesture (Figure (4b)) when she says that KW perhaps intends to use the word *jędrności* ‘firmness’ to refer to a fit female body. Such an interpretation is rejected by KW, accompanied by a particularly deep-throated laugh typified by Santa Claus or the Jolly Green Giant: “Oh, hohohoho” (line 4). KW’s laughter is also accompanied by a hand gesture. He moves both hands forward and points at KS with his index fingers, no smiling face observed (Figure (4c)). When KS continues to be doubtful (line 6), KW uses the same type of laughter to interrupt her again (line 7). As suggested by KW’s utterances and other gestural cues, his laughter “Oh, hohohoho” is not used for displaying pleasure or happiness. Rather, it is used for showing disagreement.

Interestingly, speech participants in Taiwan also use the same type of laughter to show disagreement. They, however, are more likely to use this type of laughter to reject another one’s humor in a sarcastic way. This is done by distinctly pronouncing a string of *hā* or *hē*. Sakuragi (2005:48-49) has defined natural laughter as “short and broken sounds produced by an abrupt, strong expiration followed by deep inspirations of air generated by short, interrupted, spasmodic contractions of the chest and especially the diaphragm.” The production of natural laughter is therefore arbitrary, as each person has his/her own distinctive laugh. Fake laughter, however, has fixed phonetic forms. When a speech participant distinctly utters *hāhāhā* or *hēhēhē* as a response to humor, for example, one may immediately know that s/he is imitating natural laughter and thereby rejecting the humor in a sarcastic manner. This type of laughter is perhaps followed by a further comment, as in *hāhāhā, bù hǎo xiào!* ‘Hahaha, that is not funny!’
4. Smiling and its pragmatic/interpersonal functions

Smiling can also be observed to have pragmatic/interpersonal functions. While it can be regarded as part of laughing that displays pleasure and happiness, it can also be used to reject humor/teasing, to mark non-verbal sarcasm, or to show contempt. This will be illustrated and discussed below.

4.1 Smiling used for rejecting humor/teasing

While laughter can be used to show appreciation of humor/teasing, smiling is more likely to be used for the opposite purpose. As the use of it signals politeness in social interactions, it can be used to reject humor/teasing in a polite way. However, such a smiling face demonstrates power in negotiation, as can be seen below. Extract (5) contains a dialogue between Kuba Wojewódzki and Krzysztof Ibisz on Kuba Wojewódzki on April 2nd, 2006. In the following extract, host Kuba Wojewódzki’s silence accompanied by smiling can be taken as a cue, showing that he does not appreciate his guest’s humor/teasing.

(5) ((KW is Kuba Wojewódzki and KI is Krzysztof Ibisz. SA indicates the studio audience.))

1 KW: Jest nawet taki dowcip na jego temat, że przylecieli kiedyś Marsjanie i pytają: „A gdzie ja wylądowałem? Co to jest?” A, a rolnik mówi: „To jest ziemia.” A on mówi: „A to ja słyszałem, to tutaj pracuje ten Ibisz.”—Krzysztof Ibisz. Wielkie brawa! Jest!

‘There is even such a joke about him. One day, a Martian came, asking, “Where did I land? What is this?” A farmer says, “This is Earth.” And the Martian says, “I heard that Ibisz is working here.”—Krzysztof Ibisz. A big round of applause for him! Here he is!’

2 KI: No tego dowcipu nie słyszałem.

‘Well, I have not heard of that joke.’

3 KW: Nie słyszaleś tego?

‘You have not heard of it?’

4 KI: Prosty spiker, prawie jak Kuba. (☺: KI) =

‘A simple anchorman is almost like Kuba. (☺: KI) =’

5 SA: = [hahahahah.

‘= [hahahahah.’

6 KW: →[(S) (☺: KW)

‘[(S) (☺: KW)’ (See Figures (5a) and (5b))

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The above sequence occurs at the beginning of the show. KW introduces KI by telling a joke (line 1), implying that KI is so famous that even extraterrestrials from
Mars have heard of him. In response, KI tells a joke about KW (line 4). KI’s joke implies that KW is like an anchorman without elocution, who has no other skills but broadcasting. KI’s joke therefore can be regarded as teasing KW. While KI’s joke attracts laughter from the studio audience (line 5), KW falls into silence and simply smiles (line 6). KW’s silence perhaps indicates his rejection of KI’s teasing/humor (see Jefferson 1979). His smiling, thus, can be interpreted as rejecting KI’s teasing/humor, but in a polite way.

Interestingly, upon hearing the first part of KI’s joke, KW turns his head to refrain from looking at KI. As Figure (5a) shows, KW is looking at KI, who is sitting to his left. As Figure (5b) further shows, KW turns his head to the front to avoid looking at KI. As eye contact helps place one’s interactant under some obligation to interact, avoiding looking at KI perhaps shows KW’s intention of rejecting KI’s teasing, but in a polite way, as cued by his smiling. This is because eye contact can be used as a cue to start a face-to-face engagement, as observed by Goffman:

> Mutual glances ordinarily must be withheld if an encounter is to be avoided, for eye contact opens one up for face engagement (...). There is a relationship between the use of eye-to-eye glances as a means of communicating a request for initiation of an encounter, and other communication practices. (Goffman 1963:95)

KW later turns his head back to gaze at KI directly (Figures (5b) and (5c)). Gazing at KI without a word can be interpreted as facing KI’s teasing of him directly, which demonstrates power. In other words, KW is in control of the whole interaction, as his gaze places KI under some obligation to interact more, which, however, might not receive an equal response. By putting on a smile, KW also maintains his face and KI’s, as it signals politeness. However, as lines 10 and 15 further show, KW’s silence, in response to KI’s teasing/humor, is not accompanied by smiling. While smiling is generally interpreted as friendly and thus can be used to reject another one’s humor/teasing in a polite manner, KW’s silence without a smile perhaps suggests his psychological state. That is, he perhaps no longer intends to show friendliness when facing KI’s teasing. Indeed, as Wierzbicka (1999:269) has observed, “In Polish culture, the expectation seems to be that the expression on a person’s face mirrors their current psychological state.” KW’s use of sarcasm to tease KI back (line 17) perhaps further shows that he is not happy to be teased by KI, and that he does not mind showing his current psychological state.

While maintaining eye contact demonstrates power, avoiding eye contact probably shows weakness and a lack of confidence. In other words, smiling while refraining from looking at the teaser can be regarded as not knowing how to react to an
embarrassing situation. Extract (6) contains a conversation among Xù Jiàn-Guó, Cài Kāng-Yǒng, Cěng Shào-Zōng and Jiāotáng on Kāng Xī Lái on February 25th, 2011. As this extract shows, the victim of teasing, Xù Jiàn-Guó, avoids eye contact while he, at the same time, keeps smiling.

(6) ((XJG is Xù Jiàn-Guó; CKY is Cài Kāng-Yǒng; CSZ is Cěng Shào-Zōng; and Jiāotáng is JT. OSP indicates other speech participants.))

1 XJG: (☺: JT) 他還跟彥甫說，他生日的時候要叫他幫他畫一個畫像給他，[送他做生日禮物。
(☺: JT) Tā hǎi gěn Yàn-Fǔ shuō, tā shēngrì yào jiào tā bāng tā huà yīge huàxiàng gěi tā, [sòng tā zuò shēngrì lǐwù.
‘(☺: JT) He also asked Yàn-Fǔ to draw a portrait for him on his birthday, [as a birthday present.’

2 CKY: [你幹嘛那麼吃醋啊，[許建國？] (☺: CKY)
[Nǐ gànmmá nàme chǐcù a, [Xù Jiàn-Guó?] (☺: CKY)
‘[Why are you so jealous of him, [Xù Jiàn-Guó?] (☺: CKY)’

3 XJG: →[沒有，] … (S) (☺: XJG) =
[Méiyǒu,] … (S) (☺: XJG) =
‘[No,] … (S) (☺: XJG) =’ (See Figures (6a), (6b) and (6c))

4 OSP: = 哈哈哈哈哈。
= hahahahah.
‘= hahahahah.’

5 CSZ: 你們好像在熱戀喔。
Nǐmen hǎoxiàng zài rèliàn o.
‘You seem to be passionately in love. =’

6 JT: →= 哈哈哈哈哈。 (☺: XJG)
= hahahahah. (☺: XJG)
‘= hahahahah. (☺: XJG)’

7 CKY: (☺: CKY) 你在，你在製造每件事耶。
(☺: CKY) Nǐ zài, nǐ zài zhìzào měijiàn shì ye.
‘(☺: CKY) You, you are making a scandal of yourself.’
The above sequence is from a conversation on the relationship between XJG and two of his male friends (JT and Yàn-Fǔ). At the beginning of the sequence, XJG says that JT asked Yàn-Fǔ to draw a portrait for him as a birthday present. XJG’s mention of this anecdote is later commented on by the host, CKY, as chīcū, which literally means “eating vinegar” and is used for describing the jealousy caused by a third person who appears between two lovers or a couple. CKY’s use of this term can be regarded as teasing XJG.

Being teased, XJG perhaps intends to continue with his anecdote or to argue with the teaser, CKY, as we can see in his unfinished utterance and facial gesture (line 3, Figure (6a)). He, however, stops talking and turns his head away to avoid eye contact, while at the same time he still keeps smiling (Figures (6b) and (6c)). XJG’s refrainment from looking at CKY can be interpreted as his rejection of further interaction. We have no idea whether XJG appreciates CKY’s teasing of him, but it is clear that he does not know how to react. This could be because avoiding eye contact can show weakness and a lack of confidence. In other words, although both KW (in Extract (5)) and XJG (in Extract (6)) use smiling in response to teasing, they demonstrate different attitudes towards their teasers. While KW chooses to look at KI and confront him directly, XJG does not know how to react. Their different attitudes perhaps result from the asymmetrical relationship between a host (more powerful) and his/her guest (less powerful) on a television variety show. As Holmes (2000:175) has observed, “[Humor] is often used to legitimize an emphasis on power relationships; in such situations, more powerful participants tend to make fun of those who are less powerful.” It is therefore understandable why KW (in Extract (5)) is able to confront KI by looking at him, while XJG (in Extract (6)), as a guest, can do nothing but smile. Despite the different attitudes towards their teasers, smiling is used for signaling politeness in performing the act of rejection.

While both KW and XJG use smiling to reject teasing, their smiles are also a source of entertainment for the audiences, and perhaps also for other speech
participants, the entertainment value being caused by the embarrassing situation. As indicated by Weisfeld & Weisfeld (2014), an embarrassing situation may be amusing and is not always accompanied by anxiety. Frequent and distinctive smiling and laughter accompanying embarrassment may signal the humorous aspect of such embarrassing incidents. While smiling can highlight the embarrassed individual’s emotional state, which appears amusing to others, other speech participants’ laughter frames the embarrassing incident as something laughable. In other words, embarrassment consists of two universal emotions (i.e., shame and humor appreciation) experienced by the victim and other speech participants.

4.2 Smiling used for marking non-verbal sarcasm

While laughter may signal that something is funny, people sometimes attempt to suppress laughter due to social norms. For example, laughing at another one’s lack of intelligence is regarded as ethically wrong in many cultures, and therefore speech participants might attempt to repress the urge to laugh so as to appear polite. Repressing such a feeling, however, might consequentially result in a specific smile. When a speaker says something funny that is, however, perceived by the listener to be inappropriate, such a smile can be observed. This smile is used for marking non-verbal sarcasm. The most obvious aspect of this facial gesture perceived of as a sarcastic smile is that the lips are pressed tightly together. While the listener is very likely to be silent, the speaker would know that something had gone wrong in the prior turn(s) of speaking if s/he is sensitive to the listener’s expression. In addition, in such situations the listener often uses eye contact to look for support from other speech participants.

In a nutshell, the sarcastic nature of this type of smiling results from the listener’s attempt to resist mocking the speaker, while s/he at the same time shows it in a passive-aggressive manner. Extract (7) contains a conversation among Kuba Wojewódzki, Michał Koterski and Jacek Poniedziałek on Kuba Wojewódzki on May 21st, 2006. The following extract, in which host Kuba Wojewódzki’s smiling shows the above mentioned features that are used for marking non-verbal sarcasm, illustrates this point.

(7) ((KW is Kuba Wojewódzki; MK is Michał Koterski; and JP is Jacek Poniedziałek.))

1 KW: Masz dysleksję i dysgrafię?
   ‘You have dyslexia and dysgraphia?’
2 MK: Dokładnie.
   ‘Exactly.’
3 KW: Co to znaczy?
   ‘What does that mean?’
4 MK: Nie wiem. (☺: MK)
   ‘I do not know. (☺: MK)’
5 [hahahahah.
   ‘[hahahahah.’ (See Figures (7a) and (7b))
6 JP: [hahahahah.
   ‘[hahahahah.’(See Figures (7a) and (7b))
7 KW: →[(☺: KW)
   ‘[(☺: KW)’ (See Figures (7a), (7b) and (7c))

![Figure 7. A sequence of Kuba Wojewódzki on May 21st, 2006](a) (b) (c)

In the above sequence, KW asks his guest, MK, whether he has dyslexia and dysgraphia. After receiving a positive answer, he asks MK to explain why he thinks he has these learning disabilities. MK, however, simply says that he does not know, which echoes his previous response to KW’s question. That is, MK’s nie wiem ‘I do not know’ (line 4) perhaps indirectly proves that he has dyslexia and dysgraphia.

While MK’s smile (line 4) and laughter (line 5) might signal “playfulness” in his self-disclosure, his simple response greatly entertains KW and the other guest, JP. This is probably due to his successful role in a 2002 Polish comedy-drama, Dzień Świria ‘Day of the Wacko’. As MK successfully played the role of a dopey son in the movie, people might make a connection between him and his role in the movie. In other words, MK’s simple response echoes his role in the movie. In enacting the role of a stupid son in the movie, MK has come to be regarded by many Poles as the same in real life. That is, he is probably not a smart person, as can be seen in his many inappropriate words and behavior in public places, including those said in his current guest appearance in the studio. While JP laughs, KW simply smiles (line 7, Figures (7a) and (7b)). Wojewódzki’s smile, formed by pressing his lips tightly together (Figure (7c)) marks non-verbal sarcasm, as he can be regarded as managing not to laugh at MK’s funny response, which is considered not intelligent.
During the whole program, KW is frequently amused by MK’s interactional style, which consists of two features: smiling foolishly and talking straightforwardly without considering the appropriateness of the utterance. For example, MK is observed to be overly joyful or overexcited in answering questions. In addition, he frequently uses swear and curse words throughout the interview, which are regarded as improper in a televised interview. Also, KW frequently uses this type of smile as a response to MK’s funny behavior or remarks. While he chooses not to express any opinions, he frequently makes eye contact and smiles at JP to look for support. As this type of smiling marks non-verbal sarcasm, getting positive feedback from someone else rationalizes its sarcastic nature. In so doing, solidarity is established.

4.3 Smiling used for showing contempt

A smile can also be used to show contempt. As defined by Kendon (2004:310), facial gestures include “eyebrow movements or positionings, movements of the mouth, head postures and sustainments and changes in gaze direction.” The facial gesture of contemptuous smiling is characterized by slightly raising one corner of the mouth and by looking somebody up and down. It is very often accompanied by different forms of verbal aggression and hand gestures that are used for picking a fight.

In the data drawn from Kǎng Xī Láiile, I have observed many instances of this type of smiling, all used by the hostess, Xú Xī-Dì, to attract laughter. Extract (8) contains a conversation among Cài Kāng-Yǒng, Chén Hàn-Diǎn, Billie, Liú Zhēn and Xú Xī-Dì on Kǎng Xī Láiile on December 29th, 2010. The following extract, in which Xú Xī-Dì’s smile is accompanied by hand gestures and is synchronized with her deprecation of the invited guest, Liú Zhēn, in timing and meaning, illustrates this point.

(8) ((CKY is Cài Kāng-Yǒng; CHD is Chén Hàn-Diǎn; BL is Billie; LZ is Liú Zhēn; and XXD is Xú Xī-Dì; and ASP indicates all speech participants.))

1 CKY: 好，在介紹大家帶來的配件之前呢，劉真又要惹妳生氣了。= Hǎo, zài jièshào dàjiā lāi lái de pèijīàn zhǐqián ne, Liú Zhēn yòu yào rě nǐ shēngqì le. = ‘Okay, before I show you our guests’ accessories, I have to remind you that Liú Zhēn probably will irritate you again. =’

2 CHD: = 噢，來了。 = O, lái le.
‘= Oh, it is showtime.’
3 BL: [哈哈哈哈。]

'hahahahah.'

4 LZ: [哈哈哈哈。]

'hahahahah.'

5 X XD: 不是，因為這個商品。你們大家評評理。(renc: CKY) 有這個必要嗎？

'Búshì, yīnwèi zhège shāngpǐn. Nimen dàjiā píngpínglì. (renc: CKY) Yǒu zhègè biyào mà?'

'No, my anger results from her product. Everyone can judge whether I am wrong. (renc: CKY) Is it proper to have this product?'

6 CKY: 請說。

'Qǐng shuō.'

7 X XD: 女講講看這個內容。

'Nǐ jiāngjiāng kàn zhège nèiróng.'

8 LZ: 這個就是那個我最新出的舞蹈教學 [DVD, 然後還有…]

'Zhège jiùshì nàge wǒ zuìxīn chū de wǔdǎo jiāoxué [DVD, ránhòu hái yǒu…'

'This is my latest ballroom dancing instructional [DVD, and also…’

9 X XD: [OK, 好，舞蹈教學 DVD，這個部分都還很合理喔，[對不對？]

'[OK, hǎo, wǔdǎo jiāoxué DVD, zhège bùfèn dōu hěn hělǐ o, [duibúduì?]

'[Okay, good, a ballroom dancing instructional DVD. So far it is still reasonable, [right?'

10 LZ: [嗯。]

[En.

'[Yes.'

11 X XD: 因為舞蹈本來就需要教學。

'Yīnwèi wǔdǎo běnlái jiù yào jiāoxué.'

'It is because ballroom dancing needs to be taught.'

12 LZ: 對。

'Duì.'

'Correct.'

13 X XD: 可是重點是你又不厲害。=

'Kěshì zhòngdiǎn shī nǐ yòu bú líhài. ='

'But the point is, you are not good at all. ='
The above interaction is from the opening of the program. Before the program begins, host CKY directs everyone’s attention to one of the invited guests, LZ. CKY’s
co-host, XXD, subsequently takes the speaking turn and directs everyone’s attention to LZ’s latest ballroom dancing instructional DVD. While XXD agrees that such a product is necessary since ballroom dancing must be taught, she immediately deprecates LZ by claiming that LZ is not qualified to release such a product, as she is not good at dancing (line 13). As LZ is a famous ballroom dancer in Taiwan, it is clear that XXD’s words are not meant to be taken literally. The laughter, triggered by XXD’s deprecation, signals the other speech participants’ (including LZ’s) understanding of XXD’s deprecation as play, as evidenced in lines 14 and 15. XXD’s laughter (line 16) also signals a playful frame. As Bateson (1987) suggests, when a hostile phrase is cast with a metamessage that signals a frame as play, this hostile phrase should not be taken literally.

Building on everyone’s understanding that she is simply joking, XXD dramatizes her deprecation of LZ. This is done verbally and non-verbally (line 18, Figures (8a), (8b) and (8c)). As the above figures show, XXD’s smile is produced by slightly raising one corner of her mouth. While joy can be expressed by a smile, which involves raising the corners of the lips by the zygomatic major (see Ekman, Friesen & Ancoli 1980, Ekman & Friesen 1982, Messinger, Fogel & Dickson 2001), XXD’s smile is produced by raising only one side of her mouth. Clearly, her smile is not used for showing joy, but is a mocking smile used for showing contempt. She also looks LZ up and down and speaks in a sneering manner, while she at the same time leans to one side and flips her hair to show that she is sexier than LZ. This can be regarded as teasing LZ in a theatrical way. Her verbal and non-verbal behavior perhaps shows her intention to provoke a conflict between her and LZ, but in an imagined situation, in which she dances better than LZ and thus looks down upon her. As observed by Kotthoff (2007), teasing can be fictional, in the sense that it can be a provocation without any underlying real event or critical attitude. In other words, while XXD’s smile shows contempt, it can help provoke conflict in an imagined situation. The dramatic nature of her facial and hand gestures, as well as body movement, has a humorous effect.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, I have illustrated and discussed different pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling from an interactional perspective. The conduct of this study is based on the notion that laughter and smiling are not simply subconscious responses to stimuli. Inspecting data drawn from two television variety shows in Taiwan and Poland, I have observed various pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling. Laughter, for example, can be used to show one’s appreciation
of humor/teasing, as an invitation to laugh, or to show disagreement. Smiling, on the other hand, can be used to reject humor/teasing, to show sarcasm or to show contempt.

The results of the present study are significant in that the observed patterns of laughter and smiling partially support previous work. My findings agree with the viewpoint that laughter is not simply a reaction to humor (Van Hooff 1972, Ekman & Friesen 1982, Glenn 2003, Holt 2011, Warner-Garcia 2014). As the qualitative analysis has shown, laughter and smiling have various pragmatic/interpersonal functions that can be used to regulate an ongoing interaction. Additionally, there are grounds to claim that certain types of smiling can result in an entertaining effect on television variety shows. Recall that in Extracts (5) and (6), KW and XJG use smiling to reject teasing. Their smiling may further be perceived by the audience and perhaps by other speech participants as funny. In Extract (8), moreover, the hostess, XXD, also uses smiling to show contempt, which is framed as play. Her smile, produced by slightly raising one corner of her mouth, also results in a humorous effect, as signaled by laughter from the other speech participants.

Previous studies (e.g., Gibbs 2000, Smoski & Bachorowski 2003, Bryant 2010, 2011, González-Fuente, Escandell-Vidal & Prieto 2015) have also shown that laughter and smiling can be used as ironic gestures during the production of verbal irony. This study goes a step further in arguing that smiling alone can be used to mark non-verbal sarcasm. That is, smiling can be used passively as a sarcastic response to an interactant’s “foolish” verbal/non-verbal behavior.

In addition, laughter and smiling share similar patterns with humor as humor also has pragmatic/interpersonal functions (see Franzén & Aronsson 2013, Reichenbach 2015). While humor is culturally shaped, the present study is in favor of the viewpoint that the pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling are universal. That is, the same pragmatic/interpersonal functions of laughter and smiling can be seen in both cultures, as evidenced in the data of the present corpus. However, as the goal of a television variety show is to entertain its audience to attract high viewing rates, more instances of laughter and smiling can be expected than in everyday linguistic practices. A further investigation needs to be conducted to prove this hypothesis.

To sum up, a speech participant may laugh or smile to cope with different situations in a talk-in-interaction. On television variety shows, moreover, smiling further results in an entertaining effect. By adopting the methodological approaches informed by CA, multimodal discourse analysis and interactional linguistics, the mechanism of laughter and smiling is better understood.
Appendix

Transcription symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[</td>
<td>A left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>]</td>
<td>A right bracket indicates the point at which two overlapping utterances end, if they end simultaneously, or the point at which one of them ends in the course of the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hhh</td>
<td>Lower case “h” indicates audible aspiration, which can be associated with laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(☺: X)</td>
<td>A smiling face in parentheses indicates a simultaneous smile on X’s face while X or others are speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>→</td>
<td>An arrow indicates the line to be analyzed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Equals sign indicates no break or gap. A pair of equals signs, one at the end of one line and the other at the beginning of the next, indicate no break between the two lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>Three dots indicate unfinished sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>A dot in parentheses indicates a short pause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(S)</td>
<td>An upper case “S” in parentheses indicates long silence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


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6 Some of the transcription symbols were adopted from Jefferson (2004:24-31).


Messinger, Daniel S., Alan Fogel, and K. Laurie Dickson. 2001. All smiles are positive, but some smiles are more positive than others. *Developmental Psychology* 37.5:642-653.


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出聲笑、微笑及其語用人際互動功能：
一個互動式語言學分析

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關鍵詞：會話分析、互動式語言學、出聲笑、多元模式言談分析、微笑