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ON THE FUNCTION OF IRONIC CRITICISM

By

Chun Huang

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

ON THE FUNCTION OF IRONIC CRITICISM

By

Chun Huang

This study is a quest for the pragmatic function of ironic criticism. According to Dews and Winner's (1995) proposal of tinge hypothesis, ironic criticism should be less offensive than literal or direct criticism. However, Okamoto's (2002) study in Japanese and my pilot study in Taiwan's Mandarin Chinese indicate that East Asian people in effect consider ironic criticism more insulting than direct criticism. In search for an answer to the reported cultural difference, I borrow the insights of Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]), Ghita (2001), Kinnison (2000), and O'Driscoll (1996), proposing an offset face analysis with an interactive viewpoint. It is found that the opportunities for compensating the loss of face-wants in a given irony interaction are not equally available for the Americans and for the East Asian people. The inequality in negotiating face-threatening acts contributes to the disparity between the American perception and the East Asian perception of ironic criticism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Studies on verbal irony

As a manifestation of non-literal use of language, VERBAL IRONY draws attention from linguists who are interested in pragmatics and psycholinguistics¹. Over the past few decades a considerable number of studies have been made on how the ironic intention of the speaker is conveyed. Among them, the most famous are Grice's treatment of verbal irony as a violation of his conversational maxim of quality (Grice 1975, 1978), Sperber and Wilson's echoic mention theory (Sperber and Wilson 1998, Wilson and Sperber 1992), and Clark and Gerrig's pretense theory of verbal irony (Clark and Gerrig 1984). Psycholinguistic experiments conducted to test these proposals are plenty, with suggestions of modification (Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989, Kreuz and Link 2002, Gibbs and O'Brien 1991, Kumon-Nakamura et al. 1995, Giora et al. 1998).

While verbal irony is widely acknowledged as a means of expressing the speaker's evaluative attitude toward the addressee or toward a certain state of affairs, there are various forms with which it is performed. For example, an insincere request such as "Would you like another piece of pizza?" addressed to someone who just gobbled up a whole twelve inch pizza, or an exclamation such as "Oh, that's great!" shouted out toward someone who just poured a cup of hot coffee on the speaker's new pair of shoes, could be perceived as ironic. In my opinion, this multi-incarnation nature of verbal

¹ Verbal/conversational irony is distinguished from situational irony or irony of fate. While the former refers to a figure of speech that appears in natural language, the latter refers to a state of the world that is perceived as ironic. Further distinction of different types of situational irony has been made; for reference, see Attardo (2000).

irony contributes to the controversy among the scholars who claim their theories to be general enough to cover all situations where irony is observed. The fact is, while the echoic theory seems to be capable of dealing with certain typical situations where the ironist speaker obviously echoes or copies an expression that was previously produced by someone else, the pretense theory is more suitable for other cases, e.g., Jonathan Swift's ironic essay "A Modest Proposal" which does not seem to echo anyone's previous thought, and yet problematic for the rest. Therefore, I suggest that, before reaching a comprehensive linguistic theory of verbal irony that is applicable to all types, we should set limitations for ourselves, tackling one type at a time. Hence, in this study, I confined myself to one single type of verbal irony, that is, ironic criticism.

1.2 Definition of Ironic Criticism

Before we move on, the definition of IRONIC CRITICISM has to be examined. Ironic criticism has been considered as the canonical type of (Kreuz and Link 2002), or as the prototype of (Utsumi 2000) verbal irony. It consists of an intention of criticism on the underlying level and a compliment on the surface. For example, a husband who does not like his wife's taste of style might ironically say, "Look at you, what a beautiful dress!" Note that the reverse order, i.e., surface-criticism-plus-underlying-compliment, is not inconceivable: a tourist who is visiting the notorious Detroit downtown for the first time but surprisingly finds it extremely clean and orderly might ironically exclaim, "Wow, Detroit is really in chaos!" However, although empirical data is still lacking, researchers have agreed that compared to the frequently encountered criticize-by-praise type of irony (or ironic criticism), the praise-by-criticism type is much less observed. For detailed discussion on the so-called "asymmetry of affect of verbal irony," see Dews

and Winner (1995), Dews et al. (1995) and Kreuz and Link (2002). From now on, we will only focus on ironic criticism that is directed toward the addressee who is also the target of the ironist's critical evaluation.

1.3 Studies on the function of irony

Although the studies mentioned above shed light on the mental processing of verbal irony, and, as a consequence, enhance our understanding on human cognition, they often ignore another important question: *why* do people choose to use verbal irony? Why would a person, who already decided to make a criticism toward another person, not make his/her statement directly or literally, but, instead, make it indirectly in the form of irony? There must be some function inherent in the use of verbal irony that overrides one's demand of efficient communication. Such a function must be significant, so much so that the speaker cares about it to the extent that the explicitness of his/her expression can be sacrificed. Unfortunately, there have been only a few attempts made on the function issue.

Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]), in their book on linguistic politeness, first conceive of ironic criticism as an off-record politeness strategy that functions to save face. By "off-record" they mean that while the intention of criticism is meant to be recognized, the speaker does not commit him/herself to it. A direct criticism would be a kind of bald on-record expression; but an ironic criticism, on the other hand, offers the speaker an opportunity to retreat. Brown and Levinson(1987[1978]: 212) maintain: given the fact that the speaker has paid polite lip service, the speaker and the addressee may walk away from the situation without facing a serious conflict.

Notice that the above argument bears one implication, that is, ironic criticism, thanks to its function of face-saving and its attendance to politeness, should be less offensive than literal criticism. Dews and Winner (1995) and Dews et al. (1995) extend this implication to their own proposal: the TINGE HYPOTHESIS. Admitting that “lessening the threat to a face and reducing further conflict seem plausible functions of irony,” Dews et al. suggest “a more general hypothesis”: “the positive, literal meaning of an ironic criticism colors [tinges] the interpretation of the speaker’s intended meaning, resulting in a decreased negative tone” (Dews et al. 1995: 349).

The tinge hypothesis, however, is untenable owing to an experimental finding from Okamoto (2002). In his study where ironic criticism is contrasted with literal criticism to test the participants’ attitudes, Okamoto indicates that the Japanese participants in effect perceive ironic remarks as being more offensive than their literal counterparts, contrary to the findings from some similar experiments conducted by Dews and Winner (1995) and Dews et al. (1995) where the American participants perceive ironic criticism as less critical and less insulting.

1.4 Objectives and framework of the study

My overall goal is to answer the question: what is the function of ironic criticism? However, it will become clear that such a goal is too huge for a preliminary study like this one. This study, nevertheless, is kept on the track of pursuing the ultimate answer by leaving the following traces. First, in Chapter 2, literature regarding irony interaction, linguistic politeness, and the function of ironic criticism will be reviewed. Secondly, in Chapter 3, I will discuss the results of a pilot study on Taiwan Chinese speakers’

perception of ironic criticism. The findings will be compared with the American pattern reported in Dews and Winner (1995) as well as Dew et al. (1995) and the Japanese pattern reported in Okamoto (2002). I will point out that the Taiwan Chinese pattern agrees with the Japanese pattern, considering ironic criticism to be more offensive than literal criticism, and so it also undermines the tinge hypothesis. Later on, I will show that Brown and Levinson's thesis, with some modification, can provide an explanation for the discrepancy between American and East Asian cultures. The modification of Brown and Levinson's face proposal as well as a revision of their analytical methodology is introduced in Chapter 4. Then, in Chapter 5, a new offset face analysis, the substitution for Brown and Levinson's off-record analysis, will be applied to the two earlier observed cultural patterns, indicating a promising alternative. Conclusion of the study is made in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Irony interaction

Not only the linguistic form of verbal irony varies, as has been mentioned in 1.1, the situation where irony is involved also varies. For example, a person may cry out, “Oh, great!” while stepping on a bubble gum on the sidewalk when no one else is present; in a one-on-one and face-to-face situation, a person’s ironic remark may be made toward the other person, an absent third party, or a state of affairs that is present or not present; still, an ironic remark may be observed in situations with more than two participants, such as a small group meeting, or a public speech. This paper is devoted to the one-on-one and face-to-face interpersonal communication of ironic criticism where *the addressee is the target*. In this section, we will study the literature that deals with one-on-one “irony interaction.”

First of all, we shall always be aware that irony cannot exist out of context. A mere sentence such as “Look at you, what a beautiful dress!” does not make itself ironic. We have to be provided contextual information indicating that this sentence is delivered by a husband who in fact does not like his wife’s dress, that he has employed some kind of linguistic clue such as intonation to make the remark sound insincere or pretending (Clark and Gerrig 1984, Kumon-Nakamura et al. 1995) before we judge the remark as an ironic one.

Another important point here is that the addressee has to recognize the speaker’s ironic intention. Moreover, as an interpersonal interaction, the addressee has to show

his/her recognition to the speaker:

- (1) Unlike other standard indirect acts, irony cannot be ‘perlocutionarily’ validated by an actual fulfillment of the speaker’s intention. In using irony, a speaker does not intend to make his/her addressee DO something, but UNDERSTAND something concerning attitudes, personal feelings, ideas, beliefs – what is called cognitive environment. The only validation of the communicative success of irony is [therefore] the immediate verbal response to it.

(Ghita 2001: 143-144)

In the previous example, if the wife does not give any response to her husband, he would not be able to know whether his intention has been conveyed or not. Therefore, as Ghita (2001: 143) points out, “the conversational complicity needed for an ironic transaction of meaning requires not only a mere *understanding of irony*, but also an *appropriate responding to irony*” [italics added].

Now that we have identified the two constituents of an irony interaction with regard to the addressee, i.e., the recognition of the ironic intention and an appropriate response, we shall further inspect what kind of response makes the interaction successful. Leech (1990[1983]: 82) first proposed an IRONY PRINCIPLE (IP): “if you must cause offense, at least do so in a way which doesn’t overtly conflict with the PP [Politeness Principle], but allows the addressee to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature.”² Following the irony principle, Ghita (2001:142) claims that in a successful irony interaction, “[the addressee] must avoid any overt conflict with the ironic speaker.” As a result, if an addressee takes an ironic remark too seriously so that his/her reaction might potentially induce an overt conflict with the speaker, the interaction is spoiled. Put differently, only if the addressee recognizes the speaker’s

² The Politeness Principle (PP): “minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs”; “maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs” (Leech 1990[1983]: 81). Leech contends that this Politeness Principle sometimes overrides the Quality Maxim of Gricean Cooperative Principle (CP), i.e., “try to make your contribution [to a conversation] one that is true”(Grice 1975:46), as in situations where expressing one’s true thought may be considered as impolite and hence hampers the smooth flow of a conversation. Irony and “white lies” are among the situations where PP overrides CP. For detailed discussion, see Barbe (1995: 89-91).

ironic intention and cooperates with the speaker in keeping the intended offense on the underlying level while superficially maintaining a peaceful flow of conversation will the irony interaction be considered as a successful one. The following examples help to illustrate this point:

- (2) A: [ironically] That dress is really nice!
- a. B: Do you want to start a row?
 - b. B: Just say if you like it or not, but do not talk ironically to me.
 - c. B: Don't worry, darling, I will wear it anyway!
 - d. B: If you don't like it, I will not wear it.
 - e. B: [Thank you.] I am glad you like it.
 - f. B: [Thank you.] I bought new shoes for it, too!
 - g. B: It's not as 'nice' as your green jacket!

(Ghita 2001: 145-146)

In (2) a., B literally invites A to a fight. B informs A that she is taking A's remark as a direct criticism instead of an indirect one, and that she is angry because of that.

Similarly, in (2) b., B refuses taking A's remark as an irony by using a meta-communicative expression. She attempts to violently force A to withdraw the ironic rhetoric. Therefore, B's responses in (2) a. and b. are not considered appropriate for the reason that they overtly cause a conflict and hence spoil the peacefulness of the interaction. On the other hand, in (2) c. and d., while B indicates to A that A's underlying *critical* intent is recognized, B also points to A that his *ironic* rhetorical effort is useless; hence, the full range of A's ironic intention is not respected. In either case, B tells A that "[A's utterance], although implicit, [is to] be simply understood as non-ironic" (Ghita 2001:146). Although (2) c. may induce a potential conflict while (2) d. does not seem to trigger one, both responses ignore the ironic tone in A's expression, treating it as a plain indirect speech act. They immediately lead the irony to an end and therefore interrupt the irony interaction.

Then, let us continue with (2) e. and f. We shall notice that if these two responses

are taken as indications of B's complete ignorance of A's ironic intention, that is, as indicating that B simply misinterprets A's remark as a sincere compliment, they surely do not count as parts of a successful irony interaction. It is only on the grounds that B actually recognizes A's ironic intention that we conceive of (2) e. and f. as strategic responses that contribute to successful irony interaction. In this case, B in effect *pretends* to take A's remark as if it is a literal compliment, and B has to employ some kinds of verbal or non-verbal clues, such as exaggerative intonation, smirking, etc., that enable A to notice B's non-seriousness. By doing so, B indirectly informs A that she is not taking deep offense from A's underlying criticism, that she can pretend there to be no such criticism, and hence that no conflict is to be caused. "[B] ... invites [A] to join in the conversation, peacefully forgetting the hostile meaning [of underlying criticism]..." (Ghita 2001: 145). For this reason, (2) e. and f., respectively, paired with A's remark, are considered as examples of successful irony interaction. I will refer to this kind of pretended compliment response as "take it literally" strategy in the later discussions.

Notice that Ghita also mentions another type of response that may carry out an irony interaction, that is, response with another irony, as illustrated in (2) g. In her viewpoint, "[B] pays back irony without rejecting its effect, [and] without any feeling of revenge ... she simply entertains irony [interaction] as a playful game ... [where] the feeling of aggression is replaced by that of competition" (Ghita 2001: 145). It seems to me that this last conclusion is premature in that it presumes that irony or ironic criticism is not very aggressive or offensive. However, as we will see in 2.3.2 as well as in Chapter 3, in some cultures, ironic criticism is perceived as even more offensive than direct criticism. For people from these cultures, responding to an irony with another irony may not help to

keep the potential conflict away.

2.2 Brown and Levinson's face theory of linguistic politeness

One of the most frequently mentioned theories of irony function appears in Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) face analysis on linguistic politeness. In this section, we will first go through their general claim of face, its role in politeness, and the polite strategies in doing face-threatening speech acts. Then, in 2.2.3, we will focus on Brown and Levinson's account of irony function as a face-saving mechanism. In addition, we will examine how this face-saving account is interpreted in other researcher's works.

2.2.1 Face in interpersonal interaction

For his work on interpersonal communication, Goffman proposes a metaphorical notion of FACE which is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman 1967[1955]: 5). This face concept can hence be considered as one's self-image that corresponds to the social expectation on him/her. Moreover, "a person may be said to *have*, or *be in*, or *maintain* face when the line he effectively takes presents an image of him that is internally consistent ... [and/or] is supported by judgments and evidence conveyed by other participants ..." (Goffman 1967[1955]: 6). Therefore, besides being a self-claimed image, the maintenance of one's face requires others' recognition.

Goffman's proposal of face is later borrowed by Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]) into their thesis of linguistic politeness. According to Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]: 61), face is not only "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for

himself,” “something ... that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced” and whose maintenance depends on other participants’ recognition, but it is also endowed with predominant importance in interpersonal interactions so that each individual would usually try to attend to others’ faces in order to maintain his/her own:

- (3) In general, people *cooperate* (and assume each other’s cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the *mutual vulnerability of face*. That is, normally everyone’s face depends on everyone else’s being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others’ faces, it is in general in every participant’s best interest to maintain each others’ face, that is to act in ways that assure the other participants that the agent is heedful ... [of their faces].

(Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]:61. italics added.)

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson propose that the concept of face is a composite with two opposing desires: “negative face: the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others,” and “positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 62).

The pivotal role face plays in social interactions, and the mutual acknowledgement of the interactants’ faces, Brown and Levinson claim, are universal. As a consequence, Brown and Levinson stand for a pan-cultural applicability of their face analysis on politeness strategies that is to be discussed in 2.2.2.

2.2.2 Politeness strategies

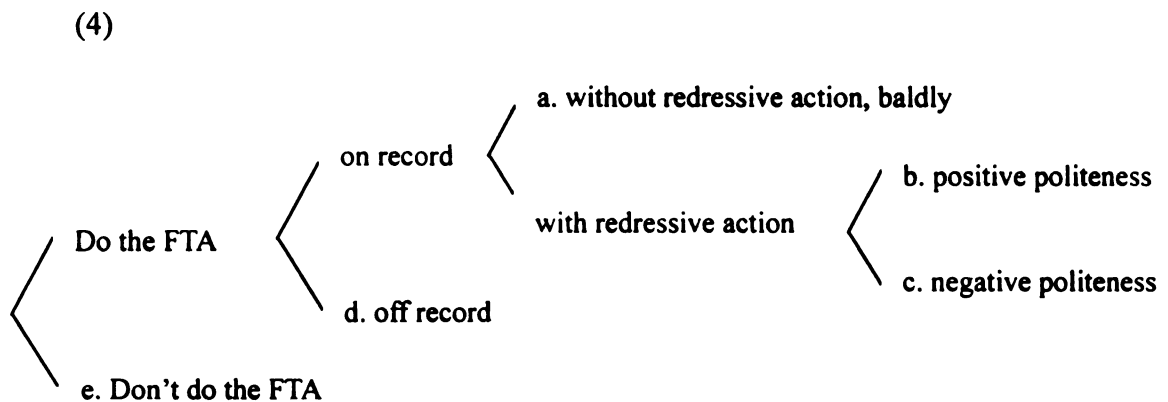
Given the assumptions of the universality of face and of the rationality held by normal individuals, Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]) claim that in social interactions, there are certain kinds of speech acts “intrinsically” threatening to face. They refer to these acts as “face-threatening acts” (FTAs). In their definition, FTAs are “those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker”

(Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 65). For example, warnings and threats are considered as FTAs that primarily threaten the addressee's negative face for the reason that the speaker reveals his/her intent to impede the addressee's freedom of actions; on the other hand, FTAs threatening the addressee's positive face include the expressions where the speaker indicates his/her strong negative emotions toward the addressee such as hatred, anger, criticism, etc. For more examples concerning the types of faces and the role of the interactant (speaker vs. addressee) whose face is threatened, see Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]) pp. 65-68.

Recall that in 2.2.1 we have seen Brown and Levinson's argument that attending to other's face is in most people's concern for the reason that it is to their own benefit. Accordingly, a person should basically want to mitigate the threats of his/her intended FTA. However, we shall also note that there are at least three conflicting thoughts converging in the speaker's mind in any given interpersonal interaction involving FTA, i.e., "(a) the want to communicate the content of the FTA, (b) the want to be efficient or urgent, and (c) the want to maintain face to any degree" (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]:68). According to Brown and Levinson, unless in the speaker's regard (b) is assigned a heavier weighting than (c), s/he will want to mitigate the threats of the intended FTA. For example, a person would normally not rudely roar out "Open the windows!" to someone standing by the windows if all s/he wants is some fresh air. Instead, s/he would probably ask gently "*Do you mind* opening the windows?" with some explanation such as "It's a little bit stuffy in here" so that s/he can minimize the damage on the addressee's negative face, i.e., the want to act freely without others' imposition. On the contrary, if the situation was concerned with emergency, say, some toxic gas

unfortunately leaking out in the room, the speaker would not hesitate to cry out “Open the windows!” as loudly as possible.

The damage on face induced by FTAs, therefore, is maneuverable rather than completely inescapable. To illustrate this point, Brown and Levinson advance a set of “strategies for doing the FTAs” that may be employed by a rational individual as the follows:



(Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 69)

First, note that, if performing the intended FTA is not conceived as a necessity, the speaker can simply choose not to do the FTA at all, as shown in (4) e. If the speaker does want to convey the content of the FTA, s/he can either go “on record” or “off record.” By “on record” Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]: 68) mean that in the situation, “there is just one unambiguously attributable intention with which witnesses would concur.” For the speaker who has decided to do an FTA on record, s/he can do it with or without redress (or “redressive action” in Brown and Levinson’s terminology) to face. If no redress is complemented, we call the act “bald on-record” as in (4) a.

Crying out “Open the windows” directly may be taken as an example of this sort. Bald on-record FTAs are observed often when emergency is involved as the gas leakage case, or when the potential damage is minor given the proper context, e.g., when a command is directed from a higher ranked officer to a lower ranked soldier. Otherwise, on-record FTAs may be accompanied by redress to either the addressee’s positive face or negative face. Brown and Levinson use the term “positive politeness” ((4) b.) to represent the on-record strategy with redress to positive faces, and “negative politeness” ((4) c.) for that with redress to negative face. Showing sympathy to the addressee is considered as an example of positive politeness since that speaker at least appreciates some of the addressee’s want, for example, “*I realize that money is tight for you recently, but, you know, the payment has been past due for over two weeks.*” On the other hand, expressions that begin with “Do you mind ...?” can often be considered as a case of negative politeness for the reason that the speaker is minimizing his/her impediment to the addressee’s freedom of actions. Still, a speaker can avoid damaging not only the addressee’s face but also his/her own face by rendering the FTA “off-record” as in (4) d. where “there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor [the speaker] cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent” (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 69). The following is an instance of off-record strategy from Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]: 69): “if I say ‘Damn, I’m out of cash, I forgot to go to the bank today,’ I may be intending to get you to lend me some cash, but I cannot be held to have committed myself to that intent.” Other linguistic realization of off-record strategies includes rhetorical questions, understatements, metaphor, irony, etc. We will focus on ironic criticism in the next section.

2.2.3 **Ironic criticism as a face-saving mechanism**

Brown and Levinson's analysis of ironic criticism has often been mentioned as an "off-record face-saving politeness strategy" (Barbe 1995, Kumon-Nakamura 1995).

Below, we will first examine the original Brown and Levinson claim, and then look at other researchers' explanations.

As previously mentioned, when an off-record strategy is adopted, the speaker cannot be held to commit to one particular communicative interpretation. In other words, the speaker provides him/herself a leeway to escape from the responsibility for doing a particularly FTA by referring to other possible interpretations (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 211). This strategy is often utilized when the potential threat to face that may be attributed to the intended FTA is serious (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 210). Ironic criticism is categorized as an off-record strategy for the reason that the speaker can always opt out from the highly threatening FTA of criticism to the interpretation of compliment, while at the same time still using some linguistic clue such as intonation or some non-verbal clue such as facial expression showing insincerity to insure the addressee receiving his/her critical message as intended. Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]: 212) conclude, "S [the speaker] and H [the addressee] could both go away from the interaction 'knowing' in their hearts that [the ironic criticism] really was sarcastic, but because face is largely a matter of surface appearance, S may well get away with his FTA."

Notice that Brown and Levinson's analysis of ironic criticism can primarily be considered as a means of saving *the speaker's* face. However, except for briefly mentioning that "face is largely a matter of surface appearance," they do not fully explain

why the addressee should let the speaker get away from the interaction given that s/he has noticed the critical intention. Kumon-Nakamura et al.'s (1995: 20) suggestion of seeing ironic criticism as a "face-saving politeness mechanism" retains the speaker-oriented perspective: "because the speaker did not commit to any particular intention to insult, at least not on the surface, the speaker can always offer the defense that no impolite act was committed." Alternatively, Barbe, while also holding the "off-record" viewpoint, takes into account the effect on addressee. She argues that "in using ... [an ironic criticism], I [the speaker] did not attack the addressee directly, thereby providing the addressee with the opportunity to ignore my remark," with the following elaboration of the face-saving function: "[Giving a compliment on the surface] provides a means to save face for *both speaker and addressee*, neither of whom has to acknowledge the possible criticism when challenged" (Barbe 1995: 10. italics added.).

2.3 The tinge hypothesis

Accepting the politeness proposal of irony function and claiming that "lessening the threat to a face and reducing further conflict seem plausible functions of irony," Dews et al. (1995: 349) advance "a more general hypothesis, one that we suggest may account for all forms of irony," i.e., the TINGE HYPOTHESIS.

The gist of the tinge hypothesis is, as Dews and Winner (1995: 4) explicate, "the evaluative tone of the literal meaning of ironic utterances automatically colors (or tinges) the hearer's perception of the intended meaning." This hypothesis is claimed to be "more general (than the face type of analysis)" for the reason that the proponents believe that it is able to accommodate not only *ironic criticism* but also the opposite, that is,

ironic compliment, the “surface-criticism-plus-underlying-compliment” form of verbal irony as has been mentioned in 1.2.

Specifically, Dews and Winner argue, “in the case of ironic insults [that is, ironic criticism], the positive literal meaning tinges the negative intended meaning, resulting in a less critical evaluation; [on the other hand,] the negative literal meaning of ironic compliments tinges the positive intended meaning, resulting in a more critical evaluation” (Dews and Winner 1995: 4). In other words, the surface compliment of ironic criticism functions to mitigate the criticalness of the underlying criticism; the surface criticism of ironic compliment functions to reduce the praise of the underlying compliment. As a consequence, the tinge hypothesis predicts: (a) ironic criticism should be perceived as less offensive than literal/direct criticism, and (b) ironic compliment should be perceived as more offensive than literal/direct compliment (Dews and Winner 1995, Dews et al. 1995).

Next, I will first introduce some experimental findings that seem to support the tinge hypothesis in 2.3.1, and then point out another experimental finding which poses a problem for it in 2.3.2.

2.3.1 Support for the tinge hypothesis: the American pattern

Several experiments have been conducted by Dews and Winner (1995) and Dews et al. (1995) to test the two predictions of the tinge hypothesis, i.e., “ironic criticism is less offensive than literal criticism; ironic compliment is less praising than literal compliment.” For the reason that our focus is ironic criticism, we will examine in detail only the two experiments that dealt with this specific kind, and briefly mention another

finding concerning ironic compliment.

In the Experiment 3 from Dews et al. (1995), thirty English native speaking Boston College undergraduates participated. The participants were given sixteen short stories where two characters interacted with each other, with endings in one of two comment types made by the speaker toward the addressee – ironic criticism or literal criticism. Furthermore, three types of the comment topic were distinguished, i.e., comment on the addressee's poor performance, comment on the addressee's offensive behavior, and comment on the situation. Three sample stories used in the experiment are shown below:

(5) Topic of Remark Is a Poor Performance

Hal and Mark were amateur golfers who often played golf together. Mark entered a tournament in which he expected to do well. Hal watched the tournament and saw that Mark played very badly and kept missing easy shots. Afterward, Hal said to Mark:

“What a great game, Mark.” (Irony)

“What a lousy game, Mark.” (Literal)

Topic of Remark Is Offensive Behavior

Harry and Joe both considered themselves handymen and often helped on another with household projects. Harry was renovating one wing of his house and he asked Joe to help him hang wallpaper. Joe agreed and said he'd be over the next morning. Harry started working by himself and had almost finished wallpapering by the time Joe arrived around noon. He said to Joe:

“You're just in time to help.” (Irony)

“You're too late to help.” (Literal)

Topic of Remark Is the Situation

Karen and Sandra were going to movie theatre to see a movie premiere when the bus they were on got stuck in the traffic. They got there a few minutes late and the movie was nearly sold out. There were only a few seats left so they had to sit in the back row and could hardly see a thing. Karen leaned to Sandra and said to Sandra:

“These are the best seats in the house.” (Irony)

“These are the worst seats in the house” (Literal)

(Dews et al 1995: 354)

The participants were asked to rate on 6-point scales including how critical the speaker

was (0 = *not at all*, 1 = *somewhat critical*, 3 = *critical*, and 5 = *very critical*) and how insulted the addressee was (0 = *not at all*, 1 = *somewhat insulted*, 3 = *insulted*, and 5 = *very insulted*). The data showed that overall, ironic speakers were rated as *less* critical than literal speakers, and ironic remarks were perceived as less critical than literal ones especially when the topic of the remark was a poor performance. Dews et al. (1995: 394) hence concluded: “These findings suggest that ironic criticism about a person’s performance may serve to *mute the level of criticism* conveyed by the remark in order for the addressee to save face” [italics added]. Also, although the addressees were rated as *less* insulted by ironic than literal criticism only when the topic was the addressee’s offensive behavior, the researchers argued that “[this result] is consistent with the finding that the ironic speaker is perceived as less critical than the literal speaker” (Dew et al. 1995: 359-360). Generally speaking, the findings were to a great extent in favor of the tinge hypothesis, especially when the addressee was the target of the ironic criticism.

While in the above experiment, the researchers were mainly looking for the impact different *topic types* of critical comments bring to the native speakers’ perception of ironic criticism, Dews and Winner (1995) conducted other experiments to test whether the *target type* of the comment and/or the *relationship* among the interactants contribute to any difference in irony perception.

In the Experiment 1 from Dews and Winner (1995), eighty English speaking undergraduates participated. Thirty two short stories consisting of three characters were designed, with either ironic criticism or literal criticism as the ending comment. The comments were made toward either the addressee or the third person (hence, “target type” as a variable). In addition, the familiarity between the characters was set as

another variable: in half of the stories, the characters were acquainted with one another; in the other half, they were strangers. Two sample stories are shown as follows:

(6) Characters Know One Another

Colleen, Anna, and Melissa had been roommates for one year. One Saturday night, Colleen and Anna were going out to dinner. Colleen needed navy shoes so she went to Melissa's closet and borrowed hers. A few hours later, Melissa was going to a friend's house and needed her navy shoes. While she searched for her shoes, she realized Colleen must have taken them. Later that night, Anna came home with Colleen who was wearing the navy shoes. Melissa said to Colleen:

"You're so considerate." (Ironic)

"You're so inconsiderate." (Literal)

Characters Just Met

Jay, Tony, and Pete were work-study students who got jobs in the library. On the first day they were introduced to one another and then were put to work. Jay and Tony worked hard and shelved books as quickly as they could, but Pete loafed around and flirted with some female students. Tony and Pete were scheduled to leave before Jay, so the books Pete hadn't shelved were left for Jay. As Tony and Jay walked by him on their way out, Jay said to Pete:

"What a good worker you are." (Ironic)

"What a lousy worker you are." (Literal)

(Dews and Winner 1995: 18)

The participants were asked to answer "To what degree is [speaker's name] comment criticism or praise of [offender's name]?" with ratings from 1 (strong criticism) to 5 (strong praise). The findings showed that the participants rated ironic criticism as carrying less criticism than literal ones *regardless* who the target was (i.e., the addressee or the third person) and/or how familiar the characters were with one another (Dews and Winner 1995: 10-11). Therefore, the researchers concluded, "irony *muted the level of criticism* equally for familiar and unfamiliar people" (Dews and Winner 1995: 11. italics added). They further argued, "these results provide support for the tinge hypothesis ... that the positive tone of the literal meaning of ironic insults [ironic criticism] mutes the negative intended meaning and softens the insult" (Dews and Winner 1995: 12). In addition, an equivalent experiment design was carried out for the test of ironic

compliment in Experiment 2 from Dews and Winner (1995: 14) where it was found that “ironic compliments were rated as significantly less praising than literal compliments”, regardless of comment target and familiarity. This finding, again, was considered as supportive evidence for the predictions of the tinge hypothesis.

In sum, although some differences in the experimental designs of Dews and Winner and Dews et al. exist, it is found that American English native speakers generally perceive ironic criticism as less offensive than literal criticism and ironic compliment as more offensive than sincere compliment. From this respect, the tinge hypothesis seems to find its theoretical validity.

2.3.2 Findings against the tinge hypothesis: the Japanese pattern

However, a similar experiment from Okamoto (2002) pointed to an opposite result. Ninety-one Japanese native speaking undergraduates of Aichi Gakuin University participated in his Experiment 1. The following are two sample stories from the sixteen used in the study³:

- (7) Junko came 30 minutes late for the meeting with her friend Tomomi.

Tomomi said to Junko:

[Ironic]

Jikan	ni	seikaku	de	irasshaimasu	nee.
time	on	accurate	are	HON.	SP.
Jikan	ni	seikaku	da	ne.	
time	on	accurate	are	SP.	

“You are punctual.”

[Literal]

Zuibun	osoku	o-ide	ni	narimashita	wa	nee.
very	late	came		HON.-PAST	FP.	SP.
Zuibun	osokatta	nee.				
very	late-PAST	SP.				

“You have come so late.”

³ Okamoto (2002) does not include glosses. I am thankful to Dr. Mutsuko Endo Hudson for her help on the morpheme-by-morpheme translation.

Ichiro Yamamoto made quite a few mistakes in preparing a document. His boss said to him:

[ironic]

Seikaku-na	shorui	de	gozaimasu	wa	ne.
accurate	document	is	HON.	FP.	SP.
Seikaku-na	shorui	da	ne.		
accurate	document	is	SP.		

“Your document is accurate.”

[Literal]

Machigai no	ooi	shorui	de	gazaimasu	wa	ne.
mistake NOM	many	document	is	HON.	FP.	SP.
Machigai no	ooi	shorui	da	ne.		
mistake NOM	many	document	is	SP.		

“Your document has quite a few mistakes.”

(Okamoto 2002: 138)

The main purpose of Okamoto was to test the influence sincere vs. insincere use of polite expressions has upon the perception of irony. He found that utterances with honorifics were considered more ironical than those without honorifics and hence claimed that this finding supported the “pragmatic insincerity” proposal of Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995). We shall, however, overlook the effect caused by insincere politeness for the reason that it is irrelevant to our current discussion. What is important to us is the Japanese participants’ perception of the offensive level regarding the ironic criticism in comparison with that of literal criticism. In the experiment, Okamoto (2002: 124) asked the participants to rate on a seven point scale “How offensive is the speaker’s remark to the addressee?” (1= not offensive at all, 7= very offensive). Interestingly, it was reported that for Japanese native speakers, ironic criticisms were 1.4 points *more* offensive than their literal counterparts, regardless of the sincerity of polite expression (Okamoto 2002: 125). This finding is inconsistent with those from Dews and Winner (1995) and Dews et al. (1995). It severely undermines the tinge hypothesis given that the prediction that ironic criticism should be less offensive than literal criticism is not held; for Japanese

speakers, the surface compliment seems not to “mute” the negative tone of the underlying criticism.

CHAPTER 3

A PILOT STUDY ON TAIWAN CHINESE

As we have seen in 2.3, Dew et al. (1995) and Okamoto (2002), while using very similar experimental designs that consist of short stories with either ironic criticism or literal criticism, present different observations of native speakers' perception of irony offensiveness. The reported cultural discrepancy prompted me to do a pilot study on my native language, Mandarin Chinese spoken in Taiwan. My goal was, by conducting a similar experiment, to examine the Taiwan Chinese speaker's perception. I wanted to know whether the Taiwan Chinese pattern accords with the American pattern, with the Japanese pattern, or neither.

A difference between Dews et al.'s and Okamoto's design, however, has to be taken into consideration: in all of the vignettes used by Dews et al., the status of characters were controlled as equal whereas in fourteen of the sixteen stories constructed by Okamoto, the speaker was of a higher status than the addressee⁴. A reasonable suspicion about the reported cultural disparity is that the speaker's high status in Okamoto's experiment might contribute to the perceived high degree of offensiveness. In order to exclude the possible impact owing to the status difference between the speaker and the addressee, my experiment consisted of an equal number of stories with same-status characters and with a higher-status speaker. Therefore, in addition to the comparison between the participants' ratings of ironic and literal criticism, a comparison

⁴ Notice that neither Dews et al. nor Okamoto uses stories that consist of a lower-status speaker talking ironically to a higher-status one. I surmise that this choice is due to the little possibility for such situations to happen in real life. For the reason that it is ideal for me to keep my experimental design as close to theirs as possible so that the reliability of comparing my findings to theirs holds, I left out the lower-status ironic speaker cases as well.

between the two types of status relations were made.

3.1 Method

Participants. Thirty-three undergraduate students (16 men and 17 women) were recruited from National Chung Hsing University and Tunghai University, both located in Taichung, Taiwan. All were native speakers of Chinese.

Materials and Procedure. Twelve brief stories were constructed. In each story, a situation consisting of two characters was described. At the end of each story, one of the characters made an evaluative comment toward the other. Either of the two types of comments, *ironic criticism* or *literal criticism*, was used as the story ending.

The story characters were acquainted with each other. The comment giver's status was either higher than (6 stories) or the same as (6 stories) the addressee's. The original Chinese version of the questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1; an English translation is shown in Appendix 2.

Stimulus Presenting. The participants were separated into three groups. A questionnaire that consists of the twelve stories was sent to each group via e-mail. The questionnaire used for each group has its own randomly chosen order of comment types as the story endings. Also, the number of comment types was balanced so that a half of the stories ended with ironic criticism, and the other half ended with literal criticism.

Following each story were two rating scales. Participants rated the offensiveness of the evaluative comments on the following 7-point scales: (a) "How critical was the speaker's remark?" (0 = not critical at all; 3 = so so; 6 = extremely critical). (b) "How insulted was the addressee?" (0 = not at all; 3 = so so ; 6 = very insulted).

Participants were asked to read the stories and then to rate on the scales the degree of offensiveness of the speaker's remark according to their intuition. Participants were asked to send their answers back to the investigator via email. A debriefing process was performed after the e-mail correspondence was fulfilled.

3.2 Results

Before moving on, it has to be mentioned that although participants' sex was treated as an independent variable, no significant effect involving sex were observed. In other words, male participants and female participants did not perform differently on their ratings of the offensiveness of criticism. Owing to the lack of interest of these results, the sex factor is excluded from our following discussion.

How critical was the speaker's remark? A paired *t* test performed on ratings of speaker criticalness showed that ironic criticism was rated as more critical than literal criticism, $t(32) = 5.587, p < .001$. Means for this and all the other measures are reported in Table 3.2-1.

How insulted was the addressee? A paired *t* test performed on ratings of the seriousness of insult on the addressee showed that the addressees was considered as more insulted in ironic criticism situation than in literal criticism situation, $t(32) = 7.345, p < .001$.

In same-status situation, how critical was the speaker's remark? A paired *t* test performed on ratings of speaker criticalness when the speaker-addressee relation was same-status revealed that ironic criticism was rated as more critical than literal criticism, $t(32) = 3.836, p < .01$.

In unequal-status situations, how critical was the speaker's remark? A paired *t* test performed on ratings of speaker criticalness when the speaker's status was higher than the addressee's revealed that ironic criticism was rated as more critical than literal criticism, $t(32) = 5.261, p < .001$.

In same-status situations, how insulted was the addressee? A paired *t* test performed on ratings of the seriousness of insult on the addressee when the speaker and the addressee was of the same status showed that the addressee was considered as more insulted in ironic criticism situation than in literal criticism situation, $t(32) = 5.477, p < .001$.

In unequal-status situations, how insulted was the addressee? A paired *t* test performed on ratings of the seriousness of insult on the addressee when the speaker's status was higher than the addressee revealed that the addressee was considered as more insulted in ironic criticism situation than in literal criticism situation, $t(32) = 0.013, p < .001$.

Table 1 Means for Ironic and Literal Criticism by Status Relation

	Overall		Same status		Unequal status	
	Ironic	Literal	Ironic	Literal	Ironic	Literal
How critical was the speaker?	4.41	3.00	3.80	2.51	4.85	3.53
How insulted was the addressee?	4.80	3.15	4.11	2.64	5.31	3.71

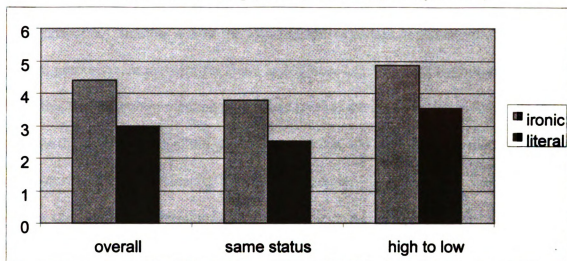
3.3 Discussion

The above data show that the state of the characters' status relation did not contribute to any significant discrepancy among the participants' decisions: in either case, equal-status or unequal- status, ironic criticism was more critical and more insulting than literal criticism. In addition, from Chart 1 below we can see that status relation did not affect participants' perception of how much more offensive ironic criticism was than literal criticism. In other words, participants did not feel a greater degree of difference between the offensiveness of ironic criticism and that of literal criticism in high-to-low-status situation than in equal-status situation. This conclusion is also supported by Table 3.2-1 which shows that in both status relation types, the means of speaker criticalness were rated 1.3 points higher when ironic criticism was used than when literal criticism was used, and the means of addressee insult were 1.5-1.6 points higher when ironic criticism was used than when literal criticism was used. The only difference due to status relation was that the overall rating of offensiveness is greater in high-to-low than in same-status situations. This result can be understood as resulting from the possibility that when the speaker is in a higher status, his/her possession of power made the evaluative judgment a more severe one.

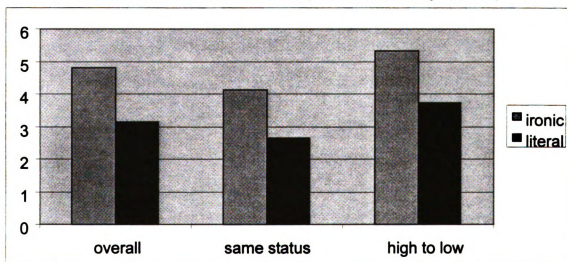
Chart 1

Mean rating scores for the degree of criticism and the degree of insult

How critical was the speaker? (0-not at all; 6-very critical)



How insulted was the addressee? (0-not at all; 6-very insulted)



In sum, whether the speaker was equal or superior to the addressee in social status, Taiwan Chinese native speakers found ironic criticism less polite and more hurtful than literal criticism. This observation accords with Okamoto's (2002) report in Japanese. However, it also differs from Dews and Winner's (1995) and Dews et al.'s (1995) findings that for American English native speakers, ironic criticism is less offensive than literal criticism. In other words, the Taiwan Chinese pattern, together with the Japanese pattern, pose a severe problem for Dews and Winner's (1995) tinge hypothesis which maintains that the compliment on the surface level of the ironic criticism functions to mitigate the negative tone of the underlying criticism and accordingly predicts that ironic criticism should be less offensive than literal criticism. In addition, the East Asian pattern also seems to undermine Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) off-record account for the reason that it implies that ironic criticism should not be a very offensive form of critical expression since ironic criticism functions to "save face."

CHAPTER 4

MODIFICATION OF BROWN AND LEVINSON

Thus far we have seen that the tinge hypothesis is too strong: while it succeeds in offering an explanation for American English speakers' perception of ironic criticism, it is unable to accommodate the Japanese and Taiwan Chinese data. In the next two chapters, I will argue that although Brown and Levinson's original off-record explanation of irony function seems to be equally unsuccessful in dealing with the East Asian pattern, it is certainly more flexible than the tinge hypothesis. In 4.1, I will first provide a defense, and some modification of Brown and Levinson's thesis. Then, in 4.2, a revision of the off-record face analysis will be introduced. In Chapter 5, I will demonstrate how the modified notion of face and the revised version of face analysis can work together to explain the observed cultural difference.

4.1 Defense and modification of Brown and Levinson

Before moving on to the discussion of Brown and Levinson's account of the function of ironic criticism, I will first provide a defense as well as a modification of their notion of face in order to clarify some points as a response to the critics.

4.1.1 Cultural elaboration of face

Referring to two Chinese language words which correspond to English 'face,' *lian* and *mianzi*, Yu (2003: 1684-1686) examines the connotations of these two words, pointing to the concepts of communal harmony in Confucian morality, and contends that

Brown and Levinson's "universality claim of face" is inapplicable when confronting cultural specificity.

However, Brown and Levinson never claim an absolute universality for their notion of face; in fact, their central notion of face calls for cultural elaboration:

- (8) Central to our model is a highly abstract notion of 'face' which consists of two specific kinds of *desires* ('face-wants') ...: the desire to be unimpeded in one's action (negative face), and the desire ... to be approved of (positive face). This is the bare bones of a notion of face which (we argue) is universal, *but which in any particular society we would expect to be the subject of much cultural elaboration.*

(Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978]: 13. italics added.)

Face is central to politeness: a polite person always pays attention to others' faces. This awareness of face in polite interactions is claimed to be universal; nevertheless, what consists of a good or bad face certainly depends on cultural definitions. In Kinnison's (2000: 17) words, "while the desire for a good face is universal, the constituents of a good face culturally vary"

What needs to be specified here is that the word "face" in Brown and Levinson's sense should be considered as a technical term that is used metaphorically to portray human politeness behaviors. It does not necessarily correspond to any specific word in any particular language. It is true that, in Chinese, *lian* and *mianzi* do bear some sense that concerns politeness and social etiquette, which is doubtlessly idiosyncratic to the culture and is well covered by Brown and Levinson's claim of cultural elaboration; whereas, it would be fallacious to pick out the disparity between the Chinese lexical meaning and the implemental notion of Brown and Levinson and then accordingly argue that the latter fails to accurately capture the former. Yu's reference to Confucian morality in the connotations of Chinese *lian* and *mianzi*, therefore, does not constitute a legitimate argument against Brown and Levinson.

Now, due to the fact that we will later re-examine the discrepancy between the American pattern and the East Asian pattern of ironic criticism that has been mentioned previously, it is desirable to consider their cultural elaborations here. First, given that a person's face is a self-image that corresponds to the expectation of the society to which this person belongs, as we have seen in 2.2.1, I propose that we take Kinnison's (2000:144) suggestion, incorporating the Confucian notion of "subordinate self" into the Chinese notion of face. Consequently, we can account for the core concept of Confucian politeness, that is, modesty. As Gu (1990) states, one should always denigrate self and respect others. Note that although this approach also takes into account the Confucian morality, it differs from Yu's proposal in that the Confucian notion of subordination is identified as a cultural elaboration that is added on the universal concern of face in polite interaction, not as an absolute substitution for the definition of face. More specifically, while Yu's strenuous emphasis on cultural specificity may lead to the inability to account for the "general shared concepts and dimensions of politeness [across cultures]" (Yu 2003: 1704), this approach, by acknowledging the universal part of Brown and Levinson's face thesis, preserves for the face analysis a pan-cultural validity.

As far as Japanese face is concerned, I suggest that we can as well borrow in the notion of subordinate self for the following reasons: first of all, Japan, like other East Asian countries, has long been recognized as under major influence of Confucianism⁵; in addition, modesty is also claimed to be attached with high value in Japanese morality (Leech 1983:136-138). Following Kinnison (2000) as well, we incorporate the concept

⁵ In Cheng's (1990) psychiatric paper, he points out that Confucianism, as a socio-political ideology, is a shared heritage of the so-called Pan-Confucian region in East Asia which includes Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. He examines several shared psychological characteristics among people from these cultures that can be attributed to Confucian morality such as the relation-based ethic, the lack of assertiveness, etc. and suggests a new perspective on which we can base our understanding of certain mental disorders that are specific to East Asian people.

of “independent self” into the American notion of face on account of the primary influence of individualism in the US.

4.1.2 Negative and positive faces as wants

We now turn to the main concept of Brown and Levinson’s thesis: negative face and positive face.

- (9) (a) negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, right to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition.
- (b) positive face: the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

(Brown and Levinson 1987[1978]: 61)

The concept of these two types of faces, they maintain, is universal; it should be applicable to every culture in the world. This claim, however, has been placed under careful scrutiny and received serious attacks from East Asian scholars. Matsumoto (1988, 2003), though accepting positive face, argues that the notion of negative face is not found in Japanese societies where one’s action always takes into consideration his/her relation with other interactants in the situation and hence is never really free from imposition. Yu (2003: 1698) also contends that negative face, which seems to be derived from the emphasis on individualism in Western culture, is irrelevant to “collectivist cultures” such as Chinese and Japanese.

I believe that this controversy arises on account of Brown and Levinson’s misuse of terminology as well as their muddling up the relation between “face” and “want.” As we have seen in (8) from the previous section, Brown and Levinson actually attribute the origin of negative face and positive face to two “basic desires”: the desire to be unimpeded and the desire to be accepted by others. However, if, as Brown and

Levinson earlier proposed, these two desires are constituents inseparable from the notion of face, which asks for cultural elaboration, the notion of positive face and negative face cannot be truly universal such that one definition always applies. To solve this confusion, I will first, taking Kinnison's (2000) and O'Driscoll's (1996) suggestion, separate the two basic desires out from the notion of face and argue for universality only on this stage. O'Driscoll's term "wants dualism" will be used to refer to these two kinds of basic wants. In addition, I will use the term "face-wants" to refer to the embodiment of wants dualism within the concept of face where cultural elaboration matters.

4.1.2.1 Basic desires: the wants dualism

O'Driscoll (1996) proposes that there are two basic desires shared by human beings and primate animals that are submerged in our BACKGROUND CONSCIOUSNESS⁶. One refers to the wants to protect self territory or to be unimpeded by others, which we may call *negative wants*; the other refers to the wants to feel in-group or to be accepted by others, which we may call *positive wants*. To clarify his point, O'Driscoll(1996: 11-12) takes a pathological viewpoint, referring to the desert traveler Michael Asher's personal experience when he and his wife were held in a prison in Chad, and the mind-control strategies that are utilized by the Moonies cult. Below, I would like to add some ethological as well as anthropological evidence to further support O'Driscoll's claim.

Ethology is a science that, by observing animal behaviors, finds evidence of evolution and of animal instincts as well as human nature. From observation of pigeons,

⁶ O'Driscoll (1996:9) borrows the notions of "consciousness" and "self-awareness" from Schumacher (1972) and replaces them with "background consciousness" and "foreground consciousness," respectively. Background consciousness refers to the basic ability to respond to stimuli, which is shared by human beings and other animals; Foreground consciousness, on the other hand, refers to the human-only ability to be conscious about consciousness.

Atlantic salmon, rats, wolves, monkeys, chimpanzees, among other animals, and archaeological findings about early human species, Ardrey (1966) and Lorenz (1966) conclude that “aggression” is among the instincts shared by animals and human beings⁷. One not only fights with other animals or species but also kills members within the same group.

- (10) There is evidence that the first inventors of pebble tools, the African Australopithecines, promptly used their new weapon to kill not only game, but fellow members of their species as well. Peking Man, the Prometheus who learned to preserve fire, used it to roast his brothers: beside the first traces of the regular use of fire lie the mutilated and roasted bones of *Sinanthropus pekinensis* himself.

(Lorenz 1966: 239)

Ardrey believes that this kind of aggressive behavior is owing to our “imperative instinct of territorial defense,” or in Lorenz’s terminology, “territoriality.” In his book “Human Territoriality,” Malmberg (1980) cited an observation performed by Hutt and Hutt (1970: 150-154) on children between 3 and 8 years of age, who were asked to stay together in open rectangular rooms, to illustrate the point: “The normal children ... spend 14 and 17 percent of their time in trying to prevent any encroachment or intrusion upon the area of which they were in possession.” Bakker and Bakker-Rabdau further argue that due to our inclination of territoriality and the subsequent aggressive behavior, an individual has a basic desire for “private domain,” that is, “the specific area which an individual stakes

⁷ In the 1970’s, a group of scholars, including Leakey and Lewin (1977) and Montagu (1976), had argued against Lorenz’s and Ardrey’s “instinct claim” on the ground that if we endorse aggression as an imperative human instinct, we seem to ignore the also important asset of human beings, that is, the learning ability. They contended that aggression is not an ineradicable instinct for the reason that human beings are able to learn from their past experience and accordingly find ways to prevent the same mistakes that have been caused by aggressive behaviors toward fellow members. Although it seems to be correct that most human societies do acknowledge the importance of peace and cooperation, those against the “instinct claim” still need to provide explanations for modern wars and massacres. In my opinion, the debate between these two camps is basically a political one: while seeing that the “aggression instinct” argument may very possibly be deliberately utilized to justify some people’s misbehaviors as the Social Darwinism case, Leakey, Lewin and Montagu’s intention was to reduce such a risk. However, even on Montagu’s perspective, “aggression” as well as “territoriality” is seen as a “potential” or “inclination” of human nature. Therefore, their arguments should not be viewed as damaging to our proposal of basic negative wants.

out in order to insure his privacy and security” (Bakker and Bakker-Rabdaou 1973: 270). They also propose two aspects of private domain: a physical “personal space” and a psychological “privacy retreat.” From an anthropological viewpoint, Malinowski (1944, 1962) also argues that first and foremost, a person has to satisfy all the needs of his organism. Among several basic needs mentioned by him, one is “[the need] to protect himself ... against external enemies and dangers, physical, animal, *or human*” (Malinowski 1944:37. italics added). In sum, the above arguments lead us to conclude that people have such basic desires or negative wants for self territory and for the protection of their own privacy.

The other half of our wants dualism, that is, the positive wants, is less obvious from an ethological point of view due to the fact that while territoriality can be observed in animal and human behaviors, the desire to feel in-group and/or the desire be accepted by others is often hidden in individuals’ minds. From a pathological perspective, again, O’Driscoll refers to the personal experience of Michael Asher to support his proposal of wants dualism: after being confined in an open yard under a group of soldiers’ surveillance for eight hours where no verbal exchanges were allowed, Asher and his wife’s need for satisfying their positive wants became enormous so that, “we had almost reached the stage of wishing that someone would start asking questions, no matter how brutally, to remind us that we were human beings” (Asher 1988: 216, cited in O’Driscoll 1996). We can also infer positive wants from an anthropological angle. Malinowski (1944: 39) points out that in order to satisfy various human needs, cooperation is a necessity: “In order to achieve any purpose, reach any end, human beings have to *organize*” [italics added]. The facts that cooperation or organization is essential to

human life and that solitary confinement of the kind that Asher had suffered is often carried out as one of the most severe forms of punishment, together, convince us that positive wants are basic to human beings.

Notice that constant tension exists between our negative wants and positive wants. It is hard to imagine that the needs for self territory or private domain and the needs for in-group feeling can both be satisfied to the greatest extent at once. To maintain one's territory, one may cause conflict with others and hence harm his/her positive wants; to better fit in the group, or to achieve some cooperative goal, one may be required to sacrifice his/her negative wants. However, in many situations, people are able to recognize what the most important value is at the moment, and to realize that some sacrifice is acceptable or even beneficial.

4.1.2.2 Face-wants

Let us turn to another pair of wants that concerns politeness behaviors: *negative face-wants* and *positive face-wants*. This pair of face-wants is distinguished from the wants dualism in that while the latter reflects our basic biological needs, the former represents a higher-level cultural embodiment of these needs. Malinowski's (1944: 171) "two axioms of the theory of needs" guide us to draw such a distinction: "first and foremost, every culture must satisfy the biological system of needs, such as those dictated by metabolism, reproduction, ..., safety from dangerous animals or human beings, ..." and "[secondly,] every cultural achievement ... refers directly or indirectly to *the satisfaction of a bodily need*" [italics added]. Given that politeness should be considered as a cultural rather than biological product, we treat our needs for the

satisfaction of the basic wants in polite interactions as products of culture as well.

In O'Driscoll's proposal, the wants dualism is originally submerged in our background consciousness. It is after it is spelled out within the notion of face that it emerges into foreground consciousness as positive face and negative face (O'Driscoll 1996:13). Positive face and negative face are not the basic biological desires *per se*; they are an individual's need for some "symbolic recognition" of these desires by others (O'Driscoll 1996:13; Kinnison 2000:16). Note that O'Driscoll(1996:14) also argues for a third type of face in addition to positive face and negative face, that is, the "culture-specific face" which enables every culture to encode its idiosyncratic definitions of good face and bad face. This three-way distinction seems redundant to me for the reason that since we conceive of all politeness behaviors as attendance to face, and the connotation of face is elaborated by idiosyncratic culture norms as mentioned in 4.1.1, the face-wants, being embodied within the notion of face, should have already borne the cultural specification⁸. As a result, I will leave out cultural-specific face and substitute *positive face-wants* and *negative face-wants* for positive face and negative face to refer to the two types of culturally coated wants.

To summarize, wants dualism is essentially universal, the conflict between two basic desires, while the pair of face-wants in practice shares some culturally specific connotations with the concept of face. Brown and Levinson deserve criticism from Matsumoto and Yu in that they too readily define negative face in the American sense that

⁸ Ide and Yoshida (1999) make a three-way distinction of politeness behaviors that is similar to O'Driscoll's distinction of faces. They propose that in addition to positive politeness, i.e., the attendance to interactant's positive face-wants, and negative politeness, i.e., the attendance to interactant's negative face-wants, there is a third type of politeness pattern that is called *wakimae* in Japanese, or "discernment" in English. They claim, "...[polite] language use according to *wakimae* is motivated by the observation of socially expected norms" (Ide and Yoshida 1999: 447). For the reasons that (a) politeness is attendance to face and (b) face is the self-image one wants to claim for him/herself in line with social expectation, I believe that the category of *wakimae* is redundant.

one wants to be free in action from others' impediment and argue that this notion is universal. Nevertheless, this is not equal to saying that people in collectivism-oriented societies do not possess any bit of negative face-wants as Matsumoto's and Yu's arguments imply⁹. For example, as mentioned in Pellow (1996: 118), Chinese do have the notion of *yin si* (隱私) that literally means "hidden self," representing one's wants to be protected from anyone knowing; this Chinese version of negative face-wants is just less valued than their American counterpart in that it actually carries a pejorative connotation. Besides, Bakker and Bakker-Rab dau (1973) mention that even in a Kibbutz Kiryat Yeddim community where subordination of individual for the sake of group harmony has traditionally long been emphasized, the youngsters' demand for privacy had still led to the so-called Youth Movement that drew others' attention to their negative face-wants. Furthermore, I would like to stress that the morality of subordination in Kibbutz Kiryat Yeddim or modesty in Confucianism, may itself emerge from the emphasis on the attendance to the other participant's negative face-wants: by denigrating oneself, one shows his/her inability to impose on a higher-status other.

On the other hand, the fact that Brown and Levinson's definition of positive face, that one wants to be approved of by others, has seldom been attacked should not lead us to conclude that there is no cultural difference in the elaboration of positive face-wants.

Baba (1996) mentions cultural specification regarding the topic of compliments:

⁹ I replace the traditionally-defined "collectivist cultures" with "collectivism-oriented cultures," and "individualistic cultures" with "individualism-oriented cultures," respectively. This replacement is inspired by a report by Bower (2004: 412) in *Science News* indicating that "Emerging evidence suggests that all societies groom people to adopt both collective [collectivist] and individualistic values." That is, collectivism and individualism both exist universally in any given culture; "cultures differ primarily in the number ... of opportunities provided for expressing each tendency" (Bower 2004: 412). Hence, we should consider cultural variation of this sort as difference in the degree of tendency instead of difference in types.

“complimenting someone so explicitly on his/her graduation from a certain school and on being well-bred is unique to Japanese society....Some American compliments on clothes may annoy French ESL learners” (Baba 1996: 4). This difference in favored compliment topic may come from the nuance among each culture’s detailed elaboration of positive face-wants.

Still, as has been mentioned in 4.1.1, there is tension between negative wants and positive wants. The same sort of tension could also be found between our dual face-wants. However, the tension is more controlled given that each culture prescribes its own value system of ethics. Therefore, as we have seen earlier, claiming *yin si* in Chinese culture is less encouraged than claiming privacy in American culture; conversely, subordination is esteemed more highly in collectivism-oriented societies than in individualism-oriented societies.

4.1.3 Face model revised

In this section, we compare our new face model with Brown and Levinson's in a graphical way. Below, Chart 2 indicates that while Brown and Levinson require cultural elaboration for the politeness concept of face, they also subsume into it two universal components, positive face and negative face. How can some kind of universal notion fit in a concept that asks for cultural specification? This clash is pointed out with double-headed arrow.

Chart 2
Brown and Levinson's face model

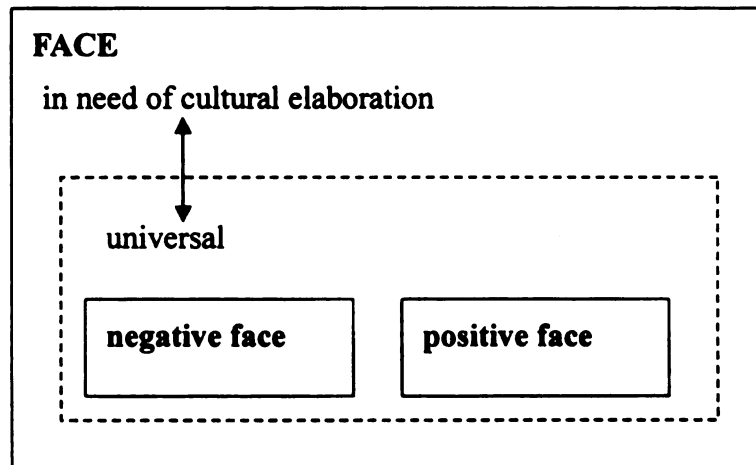
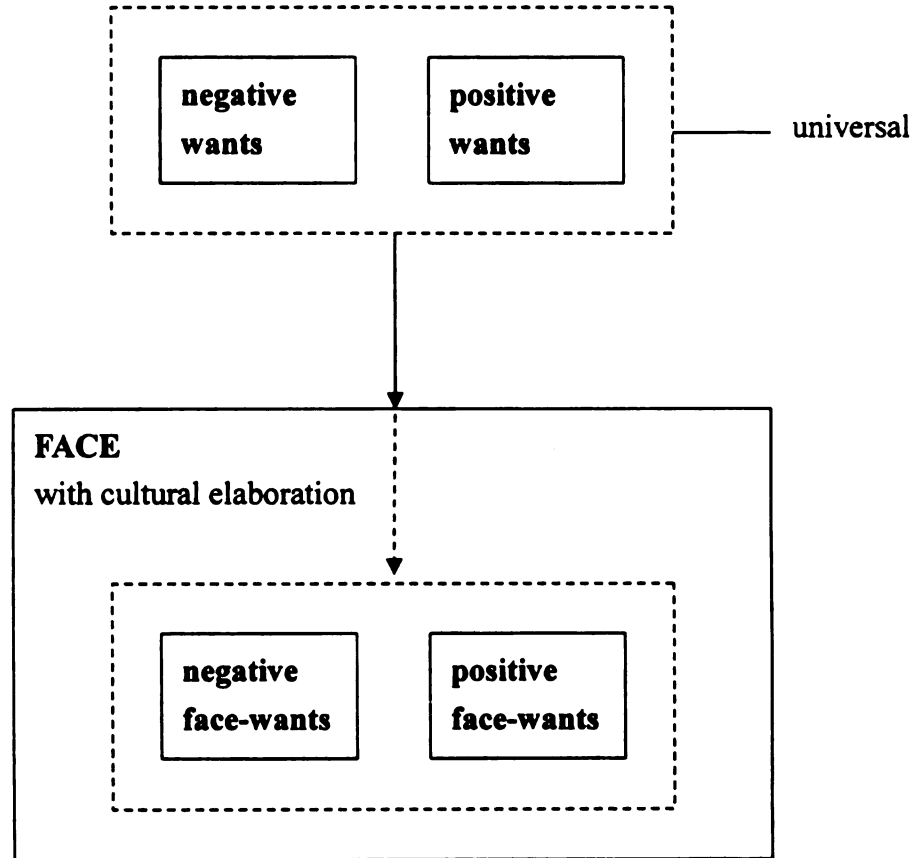


Chart 3 is an indication of our face model where the dual universal basic wants, the needs of territoriality and the needs of in-group feeling, are separated from the symbolic face-wants that bear idiosyncratic cultural traits. In addition, it also shows the relation between basic wants and face-wants: while the former is seen as the origin of the latter, the latter is considered as the incarnation of the former within the concept of face.

Chart 3
Huang's face model



4.2 Face analysis revised

Here, we return to the function of ironic criticism. Note that, as discussed in 3.3, our finding that Taiwan Chinese speakers perceive ironic criticism as more offensive than literal criticism, together with the Japanese pattern, pose a problem not only for the tinge hypothesis but also for Brown and Levinson's off-record face-saving proposal.

Additionally, I argued that while the tinge hypothesis is too restrictive, the face type of analysis remains adjustable. Before we move on to Chapter 5 to reexamine both of the American pattern and the East Asian pattern, a revision of the off-record method is suggested and will be introduced in the next two subsections.

4.2.1 From ironist's viewpoint to interactive perspective

First, let us review Brown and Levinson's analysis. Ironic criticism is claimed to help both the speaker and the addressee to save face for the following reasons: (a) The speaker does not display his offensiveness baldly on record; instead, s/he hides the criticism on an underlying level and goes off record by giving a (insincere) compliment on the surface. By doing so, the speaker reserves for him/herself a retreat. The speaker can always decline that s/he has committed an offensive behavior and hence save his/her face. (b) The addressee may appreciate the fact that the speaker has made effort of being polite at least superficially. Thus the addressee may feel that his/her face was taken care of and therefore does not fight back. Again, this is beneficial to the speaker for the reason that s/he may well get away from a potential conflict.

A problem for this analysis is that it is tilted toward the speaker's end. The addressee *may* appreciate what the speaker has done superficially, but also may not. It is

very possible that the addressee is hurt deeply by the speaker's critical intent and hence does not want to let the speaker walk away easily. Except for the uncertain appreciation of the speaker's superficial politeness, what else the addressee may do in order to mitigate the damage on his/her own face remains unexplained by Brown and Levinson.

To solve the problem, our first step is to move from the speaker's/ironist's viewpoint to an interactive viewpoint. We have seen in 2.1 that a successful irony interaction requires (a) the speaker's ironic intention is recognized, and (b) no further conflict between the interactants is aroused. The fulfillment of (a) and (b) depends not merely on what the speaker has done but also on how the addressee responds, namely, how the addressee cooperates. As Ghita (2001) has shown us, the most useful strategy in replying an ironic criticism is "take it literally." In other words, when the addressee responds to the insincere compliment as if it was a literal one, s/he is showing the speaker that "I can handle the situation. See, I am not taking deep offense and we can play a pretense game."

Therefore, I suggest incorporating "take it literally" into irony interaction as a responding move of the addressee. In addition, on account of the fact that in such an interactive scene each interactant has his/her own move, I will refer to them as IRONIST and RESPONDER. The effect of taking this interactive perspective will become significant when I demonstrate how different cultural conventions of compliment responses contribute to different perceptions of ironic criticism in Chapter 5.

4.2.2 From off-record to offset

Our second step toward a more comprehensive face analysis is to replace the off-record method with a calculation of offset effects. While the off-record analysis does not explicitly mention what kinds of face-wants are damaged and/or paid off through the course of an interaction, I believe that these details are worth examining for the reason that when we look into the face-works done by both interactants we find balance of effects on face in certain cultural patterns while unbalance in others. More importantly, these findings may provide us explanations for cultural differences.

Each and every aspect listed below is to be checked when we apply the offset analysis:

- (11) (a) the kind(s) of face-wants of the addressee that is/are damaged and/or attended to due to the speaker's face-work
- (b) the kind(s) of face-wants of the speaker that is/are damaged and/or attended to due to the speaker's face-work
- (c) the kind(s) of face-wants of the speaker that is/are damaged and/or attended to due to the addressee's respondent face-work
- (d) the kind(s) of face-wants of the addressee that is/are damaged and/or attended to due to the addressee's respondent face-work

Then, with these effects on face at hand, we look for potential offsets. For example, a threat to the addressee's positive face-wants and an attendance to his/her positive face-wants are, together, considered as an offset of effects; on the other hand, an attendance to the addressee's negative face-wants is not taken to offset the damage on his/her positive face-wants.

I believe that this kind of offset analysis can apply to interactions involving not only ironic criticism. Let us look at an example from Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]: 69) that is also categorized as off-record politeness: A wants to borrow some money from his friend B. Instead of making a direct request for money, he says, "Damn, I'm out of cash.

I forgot to go to the bank today.” Note that what A really wants is B’s knowing A’s true intent of getting money from him and therefore if B does not react to A’s intent, the interaction is interrupted. Therefore, A would employ some method such as winking to insure his intent being conveyed. Now, what kind(s) of B’s face-wants is/are damaged and/or attended to due to A’s face-work? Underlyingly, A wants B to do something B might not be willing to do, i.e., lending money to him; hence, A’s intent presents a threat to B’s negative face-wants. Superficially, however, A does not make the request; therefore, he avoids the possibility of intruding B’s freedom of action and by doing so attends to B’s negative face-wants. These two effects on B’s face are considered as reaching a state of offset. Still, A’s intent of borrowing money induces a potential threat to his own positive face-wants: given that A truly wants B to take out some money, A would worry if B might think of him as an annoying person. Now, let us turn to B’s face-work. Still, remember that our working premise is that the interaction has to progress smoothly, but not that B must agree to lend money to A. Underlyingly, B feels the threat to his negative face-wants when he recognizes A’s request. B may respond to A by saying “Well, if you want, I can lend you some”; by doing so, B indicates that his decision is of his own volition (attendance to B’s negative face-wants) and hence offsets the threat. Also, B is not showing any resentfulness toward A and therefore relieves A from the worry about the potential damage to his positive face-wants. Alternatively, B may say, “Oh, that’s too bad. I am really sorry and I hope you’re doing ok” to show his sympathy toward A and hence offset the threat to A’s positive face-wants. B’s response also helps him to reduce the threat to his own negative face-wants since B’s freedom of not giving money away is protected.

So far, two points have been stressed: (a) language use should be examined from an interactive point of view, and (b) effects on interactants' faces/face-wants need to be examined more carefully. Accordingly, an interactive offset face analysis is proposed. We will see how it works for ironic criticism in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESOLUTION: OFFSET OF FACE-WANTS

We have seen in 2.3 that while Dews et al. (1995) find that American English speakers perceive ironic criticism as less offensive than literal criticism, Okamoto (2002) indicates that Japanese speakers' perception actually points to the opposite direction. Our pilot study on Taiwan Chinese, which was discussed in Chapter 3, accords to the Japanese pattern. In addition, I have argued for a revision of Brown and Levinson's (1987[1978]) face analysis that can help us explain the observed cultural difference. As a result, an interactive offset face analysis was introduced in 4.2. In the following two sections, I will illustrate how this new analysis is applied to the American pattern and to the East Asian pattern, respectively.

Before we move on, one more implemental point needs to be added: in the following discussions, I will use *I* to represent the ironist, the first speaker who delivers an ironic criticism, and *R* to represent the responder, the target of *I*'s critical intent who is also the one who responds to *I*'s remark.

5.1 The American pattern

5.1.1 The American ironist's face-work

What *I* does with ironic criticism is, as has been reiterated in this paper, to hide his/her criticism toward *R* on the underlying level, and to speak out an insincere compliment on the surface level. Unlike Barbe (1995), Brown and Levison

(1987[1978]), and Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995), however, we are not satisfied with mere consideration of this maneuver as an off-record politeness strategy. We want to understand what types of face-wants of *R* is affected by *I* on each level, as mentioned in (11) a. In addition, we also want to find out what effects on *I*'s face have been brought about with his own act as pointed out in (11) b.

First, recall that positive face-wants refers to an individual's wants for his/her needs of in-group feeling or of acceptance to be recognized by others, that is, for this individual to feel approved of or appreciated by others. We find that, on the underlying criticism where *I* expresses a derogatory attitude toward *R*, a major damage on *R*'s positive face-wants is induced¹⁰. However, on the surface level, a compliment that attends to *R*'s positive face-wants is observed. Therefore, we may surmise that the superficial attendance to *R*'s positive face-wants quite possibly functions to counteract the underlying damage on it. In other words, from *I*'s stance, the malign and benign effects on *R*'s positive face-wants reach the state of offset.

The above argument may seem very similar to the claim of tinge hypothesis, on the one hand, for the reason that we talked about the "tinge" function of the compliment on the surface, and to Brown and Levinson's analysis, on the other, for the reason that we looked for the benefit from *I*'s point of view. However, my argument does not stop here. We still want to know what effects on *I*'s face have been induced. First of all, we can observe a potential damage on *I*'s positive face-wants: since what *I* truly wants is *R*'s recognition of *I*'s negative evaluation of *R*, *I* has to worry about the fact that *R* may hate *I*

¹⁰ It is acknowledged that other than the positive face-wants, the negative face-wants of *R* may also be threatened given that *I*'s personal evaluative judgment may interfere *R*'s freedom of action. However, I still consider the major damage on *R*'s face to be a threat to the positive face-wants that directly emerges from *I*'s attitude of unappreciation or disrespect.

because of this recognition. The fact that *R* may take deep offense and does not appreciate so much whatever *I* has done superficially presents a threat to *I*'s positive face-wants of being approved of by others. Also, since what really concerns *I* is his/her intended criticism being taken, we do not have to worry about what effects on *I*'s face regarding the surface compliment may be given that it is just a tactical maneuver whose meaning is not to be taken truthfully. Secondly, we have to recognize the major satisfaction of *I*'s negative face-wants. After all, if *I* does not want to hurt *R*'s feeling, s/he can simply hold the FTA, namely, the criticism, back. The reality is: *I* does let go the criticism, although indirectly. Therefore, *I*'s negative face-wants of acting without others' hindrance has to a great extent been satisfied.

5.1.2 The American responder's face-work

Here, let me emphasize again the point that irony only exists in interaction, not in a mere individual's intention. Ghita (2001: 143-144) mentions two levels of cooperation that consist of an irony interaction: one is "illocutionary cooperation," i.e., the addressee has to correctly recognize the speaker's ironic intention; the other is "perlocutionary cooperation," i.e., the two interactants have to cooperate with each other in keeping the interaction progressing, or, more specifically, they have to cooperate in avoiding conflict. From this interactive perspective, we exclude from our analysis of irony function cases where the addressee does not receive the critical intent and/or mistakes the speaker's superficial compliment as a sincere one, where the addressee initiates a conflict, as has been shown in (2) a. and b. in 2.1, and where the addressee ignores the speaker's ironic maneuver, as examples (2) c. and d. Excluding these cases, then, we have to ask: what

kind of response is effective for the addressee to keep the irony interaction going? From Ghita (2001), we have found that “take it literally” seems to be the most useful. Therefore, in this section, we will examine the effects on face that have been brought about when *R* pretendingly takes *I*’s superficial compliment as a literal one and accordingly responds to it in a conventional way.

Before moving on, we shall first examine the American norm of compliment response. Many scholars on compliment response mention *acceptance* as the norm for American English speakers (Chen 1993, Fukushima 1990, Leech 1983, Shih 1986, Yu 2003, Yuan 1996). However, these accounts are mostly based on intuition and with little support from empirical data. Baba (1996), on the other hand, does provide statistical figures behind others’ intuition. She found that while *positive polite strategies*, where the responder attends to compliment giver’s positive face-wants, constitutes 78% of all the American compliment responses, *acceptance* contributes 49% of the positive politeness category (Baba 1996: 83 & 89). Therefore, we can safely conclude that Americans normally respond to compliments with positive polite strategies, and, often in particular, with acceptance¹¹.

Back to our model, we first notice that the starting point for *R* is the awareness of a lurking threat to his/her positive face-wants attributing to *I*’s true intent, namely, the criticism. In addition, *R* should also be able to notice *I*’s polite effort of pressing down the criticism to the underlying level. Therefore, when searching for a proper response, *R* may possess an uneasy feeling: on the one hand, *R* knows that had *I* let go a direct

¹¹ When accepting or agreeing with other’s compliment, one basically expresses that “I know what you have done to me is meant to let me feel good. I *appreciate* your effort by showing you that I do feel good because of it.” This appreciation is considered as attendance to the compliment giver’s positive face-wants.

criticism a much more serious confrontation is to be ignited, and hence s/he feels the need to appreciate the face-work *I* has done; on the other, given that *I*, for satisfying his/her own negative face-wants, has still expressed the negative thought toward *R*, *R* may not feel like to let *I* escape so easily. By pretending to take *I*'s compliment at its face value, an American *R* may respond with a simple acceptance such as "Thank you. I am glad you like it," or with a compliment to *I*, "You look terrific, too." In either case, *R* shows to *I* his/her appreciation, and hence attends to *I*'s positive face-wants. Notice that in the previous section we have mentioned *I*'s recognition of a threat to his/her own positive face-wants due to the uncertainty of whether or not *R* may appreciate his/her face-work. In light of this, *R*'s positive feedback can be considered as offsetting *I*'s worry.

Now that we have examined (11) c., "the kind(s) of face-wants of *I* that is/are damaged and/or attended to due to *R*'s respondent face-work," and found *R*'s attendance to *I*'s positive face-wants, we can switch to the next item, i.e., (11) d., "the kind(s) of face-wants of *R* that is/are damaged and/or attended to due to *R*'s respondent face-work." What seems especially interesting is that although *R* has shown his/her appreciation toward *I*, *R* is actually agreeing with *I* on *I*'s superficial compliment, not on the underlying critical intent. We can also think of the American *R*'s insincere compliment response as an off-record polite strategy: while *R*'s true intention, i.e., refusal to accept *I*'s criticism, if exercised badly on record, would become a serious FTA that may cause conflict and hence spoil the peacefulness of their interaction, it sneaks through safely off record with the help of *R*'s obvious pretending in the compliment response. This enables *R* to avoid being victimized by *I*'s criticism and therefore offsets the damage to *R*'s positive face-wants. In addition, if *R* has chosen to respond to *I*'s compliment,

which is an *approval* of *R*'s deed, with acceptance, *R* can even further fortify his/her positive face-wants.

5.2 The East Asian pattern

5.2.1 The East Asian ironist's face-work

The East Asian *I*'s face-work is basically the same as the American *I*'s. On the one hand, *I* hides his/her critical intent on the underlying level while still wanting it to be recognized and hence presents damage to *R*'s positive face-wants. On the other, *I*'s pretended compliment on the surface level is hoped to offset the underlying damage. This maneuver works for *I* only if *R* highly appreciates *I*'s fake politeness to the extent that *R* is willing to accept the whole concept of *I*'s ironic criticism without hesitation, which is not very likely to happen; therefore, the possibility that *R* may more or less still have some hurt feeling contributes to a potential threat to *I*'s positive face-wants, namely, to be appreciated by others.

To summarize, it is *R*'s positive face-wants that have been threatened due to the underlying criticism hidden within *I*'s face-work; conversely, *R*'s positive face-wants are also paid attention to by *I*'s superficial compliment. On the other hand, *I*'s negative face-wants are satisfied given the fact that his/her critical intention has been expressed without others' impediment; *I*'s positive face-wants, however, confront a potential threat owing to his/her awareness of *R*'s possible disagreement. Still, the overall smoothness of their interaction has to depend on *R*'s next move.

5.2.2 The East Asian responder's face-work

Here, again, an inspection of the East Asian norm of compliment response is necessary before we move on to examine the Japanese as well as the Chinese *R*'s face-work. Fukushima (1990) and Leech (1983) on Japanese, Chen (1993), Gao (1998), Yu (2003), and Yuan (1996) on Chinese, and Han (1992) on Korean all point out that in these cultures, *rejection* is considered as the norm of compliment response. Baba's empirical findings from Japanese, however, show that while self-mockery actually occupies the highest percentage, 56%, rejection or refusal takes only 17% of all negative polite compliment response (Baba 1996: 90). Note that whether the compliment response takes the form of rejection or self-mockery, it is a means for the humble responder to reward the compliment giver with attendance to the latter's negative face-wants. As we have discussed in 4.1.2.2 on the morality of modesty, by denigrating self, one shows his/her inability to impede others' freedom of action. Still, in Baba's (1996:83) data, the negative politeness pattern resides in as high as 71% of all Japanese compliment responses. Although empirical data from Chinese and Korean are still lacking, we would consider negative politeness as the norm of compliment response shared by all of the East Asian cultures with Confucian heritage which dictates the subordination or modesty morality (see footnote 5).

What happens when the East Asian *R* takes the superficial compliment of *I*'s ironic criticism literally is thus, s/he may say *iie* ("No, no, not really!") in Japanese or *na li na li* ("Where, where, I can't see it.") in Chinese, or use certain kinds of self-mockery expressions. By doing so, *R* shows his/her unwillingness to intrude on *I*'s freedom of action. This attendance to *I*'s negative face-wants, however, not only does not help to

offset the potential threat to *I*'s own positive face-wants that was mentioned in the previous section, leaving *I* with *I*'s worry about *R*'s possible resentment toward him/her, it also helps to strengthen *I*'s negative face-wants that have already been satisfied with *I*'s letting go his/her negative opinion on *R*. In addition, the conventional negative polite compliment response also asks *R* to sacrifice his/her own positive face-wants since *R* is not allowed to accept right away the compliment that carries *I*'s (insincere) appreciation. We have to admit that given the Confucian norm of subordination which in effect encourages the sacrifice of self's positive face-wants in replacement of the attendance to other's negative face-wants, the threat to *R*'s positive face-wants might be minor. Meanwhile, we shall also remember that what concerns us now is not a situation of sincere compliment but a fake one. Hence, we have to consider the possibility for this minor damage to combine together with the damage to *R*'s positive face-wants emerging from *I*'s underlying criticism; when both threats are perceived, the damage may become huge and insurmountable. In conclusion, the East Asian *R*'s negative polite face-work brings about the following effects: (a) an attendance to *I*'s negative face-wants, and (b) a sacrifice of *R*'s own positive face-wants. While (a) does not help to offset the threat to *I*'s positive face-wants, (b) does not help to offset the damage on *R*'s positive face-wants, either.

One might wonder why the East Asian *R* does not adopt the positive polite compliment response in this particular irony situation since it works well for the Americans. The problem is, again, the cultural norm of subordination and modesty. Immediately accepting another's compliment would normally incur condemnation in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese societies. If an East Asian *R* blatantly

responds to *I*'s superficial compliment with acceptance, though as fake and untruthful as it may appear, s/he is running the risk of trapping him/herself into being further attacked by *I* as being rude, arrogant, or impolite. Already being attacked by *I*'s underlying criticism, who would like to surrender another chance for *I* to further attack? Positive polite compliment response is hence of little help for East Asian *R*.

Since "take it literally" does not seem to be an effective strategy for East Asian *R* to survive an irony interaction, one may want to argue that there must be some alternative choice. Unfortunately, the alternative is not really imaginable. The only components of ironic criticism are compliment and criticism, and nothing else. *R* cannot reply to the criticism for the reason that s/he will become the initiator of a conflict, and being condemned as invoking a conflict is not beneficial; accordingly, replying to the compliment becomes the unbearable burden that *R* must take.

5.3 Conclusion

Our discussion in this chapter is illustrated as Chart 4. The left column indicates the American pattern; the right column indicates the East Asian pattern. In each column, the upper half shows *I*'s face-work, and the lower half shows *R*'s face-work. *I*'s face-work includes the expression of the intended criticism, the use of a superficial compliment to mute the face threat caused by the criticism, and the satisfaction of *I*'s negative face-wants of free expression plus a side effect that is embodied as potential damage to *I*'s positive face-wants that comes from *I*'s worry about *R*'s feeling about the critical intent. *R*'s face-work, i.e., "take it literally" strategy, includes the effects off-record *compliment response* has on *I*'s face-wants, and that on *R*'s face-wants.

Under each face-work the effects on *I*'s face and those on *R*'s face have been sorted out separately. (a)-(d) leading these effects correspond to the items that we have proposed for offset inspection in (11) on page 46. Dotted lines with arrow indicate the offset between certain attendance to and damage on face-wants. The offset may be initiated by *I*'s face-work as well as *R*'s face-work toward certain damage on either his/her own face-wants or the other's face-wants. Also note that the term *offset* does not imply that the potential damage is completely erased; it is merely used to demonstrate either *I*'s or *R*'s effort of keeping the interaction flowing smoothly. My purpose is to provide a general picture of irony interactions, as for to what degree an interactant's perception of face damage is counteracted by his/her acknowledgement of other's effort is left open for further exploration. Finally, the squares indicate the face-wants that have not been taken care of with any offset attempt while in effect confronting certain threats.

Chart 4
Application of the offset face analysis

[Ame. Pattern] Ironic Criticism	[Ch. and Jap. Pattern] Ironic Criticism
<p><i>I's face-work</i></p> <p><u>(a) Effects on R's face</u> Underlying Criticism: Potential damage to R's <u>positive</u> face-wants</p> <p>Surface Compliment: Attendance to R's <u>positive</u> face-wants</p> <p><u>(b) Effects on I's face</u> Satisfaction of I's own negative face-wants</p> <p>Potential damage to I's own <u>positive</u> face-wants</p>	<p><i>I's face-work</i></p> <p><u>(a) Effects on R's face</u> Underlying Criticism: Potential damage to R's <u>positive</u> face-wants</p> <p>Surface Compliment: Attendance to R's <u>positive</u> face-wants</p> <p><u>(b) Effects on I's face</u> Satisfaction of I's own negative face-wants</p> <p>Potential damage to I's own positive face-wants</p>
<p><i>R's face-work (positive polite compliment response)</i></p> <p><u>(c) Effect on I's face</u> Attendance to I's <u>positive</u> face-wants</p> <p><u>(d) Effect on R's face</u> Fortification of R's own <u>positive</u> face-wants</p>	<p><i>R's face-work (negative polite compliment response)</i></p> <p><u>(c) Effect on I's face</u> Attendance to I's negative face-wants</p> <p><u>(d) Effect on R's face</u> Sacrifice of R's own positive face-wants</p>

A closer look at Chart 4 indicates that *I* from both cultures have tried to reduce the threat to *R*'s positive face emerging from his/her underlying criticism by giving an insincere surface compliment: a dotted arrow shoots from *I*'s attendance to toward *I*'s damage on *R*'s positive face-wants. However, only the American English speaking *R* has made some effort that helps releasing *I*'s worry about the possibility that *R* may dislike *I*: a dotted arrow from *R*'s attendance to shoots toward *I*'s own damage on *I*'s positive face-wants. Furthermore, the American *R* can also fortify his/her positive face-wants by pretending to accept *I*'s surface compliment: a dotted arrow from *R*'s attendance to his/her own positive face-wants, again, is aimed toward *I*'s damage on *R*'s positive face-wants. On the other side, the East Asian *R*, owing to the convention of negative polite compliment response, seems to be unable to do what the American *R* has done and, even worse, presents a new problem for him/herself: the squared positive face-wants of the East Asian *I* and that of East Asian *R* illustrate my last point.

For the following reasons, I believe that the interactive offset face analysis provides an explanation of the disparity between the American and the East Asian perceptions of ironic criticism. First, in the American column, we can hardly find any noticeable damage on face-wants that has not yet been taken care of. In addition, given that each interactant has made some efforts to assure the other that s/he does not want to provoke a serious fight, the irony interaction as a whole is not considered as a very offensive one. The negotiation between American ironist and responder might even seem to be "playful," as Ghita (2001: 142-143) surmises. On the other hand, in the East Asian interaction, not only the ironist's worry about the potential damage on his/her positive face-wants is unrelieved, the responder's negative polite compliment response also

strengthens the potential damage on his/her positive face-wants that have already been initiated by the ironist's expressing a critical judgment. Notice, it is quite possible that an East Asian responder holds a strong resentment toward the ironist for the reason that s/he might suspect that the sacrifice of his/her positive face-wants is also calculated by the ironist at the first place. Consequently, if the relationship between the two interactants is not a very solid one, this unpleasant experience of irony interaction may imperil their further connection. The uncertainty of face damage and the potential danger to the interactants' relationship, I believe, render ironic criticism a more offensive situation than direct criticism where the initiator takes the responsibility of causing a conflict and the receiver can legitimately fight back. Finally, notice that although in Chart 4 "*I's face-works*" in both columns seem quite similar, an East Asian person in real life may be much more reluctant than an American English speaker to become the *I* (ironist/ ironic speaker) owing to his/her awareness of the high offensive level of the whole irony interaction in the culture. This may account for McClain's (1994) personal observation made when he was teaching English in Japan that "irony is conspicuously absent from Japanese culture¹²." My personal experience in Taiwan also confirms that even between close friends, ironic criticism targeted toward someone present is not very welcome.

¹² Although the citation from McClain seems to imply that irony is totally *absent* in Japanese language, we shall not take the implication as a fact. After all, scholars present studies on Japanese verbal irony (Adachi 1996, Okamoto 2002). McClain's statement hence should be interpreted as an impression of how unwilling Japanese people are to talk ironically.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

6.1 Conclusion

Evidence from Japanese and Taiwan Chinese has shown that Dews and Winner's (1995) tinge hypothesis, introduced in 2.3, is untenable: while the tinge hypothesis argues that for ironic criticism the surface compliment functions to mitigate the degree of offensiveness in the underlying criticism, Japanese and Taiwan's Chinese native speakers actually perceive ironic criticism as *more* offensive than direct criticism. In addition, we also found questionable the original Brown and Levinson off-record face analysis of irony function. If, as the proponents suggest, "face-saving" is the primary function of verbal irony, ironic criticism should be considered as some kind of polite expression and hence not as hurtful as direct criticism. The inadequacy of Brown and Levinson's theory comes from their partial treatment of irony interaction that leans toward the ironist's viewpoint: ironic criticism is not brutally offensive for the reason that the surface compliment allows the speaker not to commit him/herself to the hostile comment on the underlying level, and the addressee would appreciate the superficial polite work that the speaker has just executed. However, as I pointed out in 4.2.1, that the addressee would appreciate the speaker's effort is not guaranteed. Thus, I proposed an *interactive* perspective as an alternative that encompasses the addressee's responding move, i.e. "take it literally" strategy (or off-record compliment response).

Distinguishing the ironist's face-work from responder's face-work and the moves on the surface level from those on the underlying level, this new approach further

encourages us to look into detail what threats to which interactant's face/face-wants have appeared and how they might be counterbalanced by the attendance to the face-wants.

As a result, I referred to our approach as the "interactive offset face analysis" and applied it to the earlier mentioned American pattern and East Asian pattern in Chapter 5.

Consequently, we found that while for American English native speakers the threats to faces is to a great extent negotiable and forgivable through out the course of an irony interaction, a comparable solution is hardly available for the East Asian. Put differently, while the American ironist and responder can cooperatively maintain their faces and hence render the interaction a not very offensive one, the East Asian interactants cannot find a proper antidote to each face damage popping up in an irony interaction and hence are forced to leave the unpleasant encounter with a bad taste in their mouths.

Specifically, after an irony interaction, the East Asian ironist is left with an uncertainty of how much his/her relation with the responder is damaged by the recognized critical intent, and the East Asian responder is left with an reluctant acceptance of the ironist's underlying critical judgment since s/he really could not find a decent way to retort.

Following this vein, I concluded that East Asian people conceive of ironic criticism as more offensive than direct criticism for the reason that while in the latter case a strong defense or an overt counterattack is justifiable, in the former case all hurt feelings must be pressed down deep inside the interactants' minds without comfortable release.

In sum, neither the tinge hypothesis nor the off-record face analysis succeeds in accommodating the East Asian perception of ironic criticism. However, while the tinge claim of the surface muting function is too restrictive, the distinction of the surface linguistic form from the underlying intention remains promising. The crucial

modification we need is to take into consideration both interactants' moves instead of merely sticking on the ironist's side. Once we take a closer look at the responding choice available to the irony receiver that corresponds to the idiosyncrasy of each culture, we would realize that ironic criticism does not present for East Asian people an interactive environment that is as amiable as the one it presents for the Americans in terms of the opportunity of face-saving. In light of this, I believe we find an answer to the reported cultural disparity in irony perception.

6.2 Predictions

The readers should have already noticed that the foundation of this paper is the pivotal role the metaphorical notion of face plays in human social interactions, following Goffman (1967[1955]) and Brown and Levinson (1987[1978]). If this assumption of social face remains as solid as it has been through the past decades, I would expect the interactive offset face analysis to be as general as possible whenever face-to-face communications are taken into account while recognizing some exceptions including the situations where emergency is the predominant concern and where each interactive move has been conventionally prescribed in the context, e.g., an interrogation on the court. In other words, I believe that this new face analysis is not limited in accounting for interactions involving ironic criticism but is applicable to many other social encounters. An example of the general applicability of this analysis can be found in 4.2.2 where one interactant was trying to get some cash out of the other's pocket indirectly.

In addition, I also expect my new face analysis to be more comprehensive and more fundamental than Brown and Levinson's version. Recall the five categories of

politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson mentioned in 2.2.2: bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and “don’t do the FTA.” While Brown and Levinson have to provide for each category a distinct explanation of why the situation is or is not considered to be polite, our offset calculation only requires a handy chart that is similar to Chart 4 on page 59, listing all the threats and attendance to face-wants that emerge from the interactants’ moves/face-works. Then we can inspect if there is any potential offset between the treats and attendance: the more potential offsets the more polite the interaction; the less potential offsets the less polite the interaction.

Our final prediction is particularly addressed on irony perception. Note that in Footnote 5 from 4.1.1 I have briefly introduced Cheng’s (1990) psychiatric paper which points to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore as the “Pan-Confucian Region” in view of their sharing of the Confucianism culture. Cheng’s study also appears in favor of the commonly held folk notion that people from these countries display great similarity in their social behaviors. In addition, I have mentioned in 5.2.2 that many researchers in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean coincidentally consider “rejection” as the cultural norm of compliment response for the native speakers. Although I have pointed out that Baba’s (1996) study on Japanese compliment response in effect finds a higher frequency of usage of “self-mockery” response, her study nevertheless led us to think that when responding to a compliment, East Asian people would usually choose to attend to the compliment-giver’s negative face-wants with their positive face-wants at stake, thanks to the Confucian “subordination” or “modesty” morality. This Confucian norm of compliment response, as analyzed in 5.2.2, contributes to the East Asian responders’ inability to compensate their loss of positive

face-wants in a given irony interaction and hence it furthermore contributes to their perception of ironic criticism as highly offensive. Given the shared bearing of Confucian morality, especially the subordination ethic, our interactive offset face analysis model would predict that people in Korea, Singapore, and Mainland China should display very similar perception patterns like what we have observed in Japan and Taiwan. That is, people from the Pan-Confucian region should equally perceive ironic criticism as a very offensive form of expression, quite probably more offensive than direct criticism.

6.3 Remaining problem and future research

Finally, let us pick up our initial questions in Chapter 1: “Why do people choose to use irony?” and “Why would a person, who already decided to make a criticism toward another person, not make his/her statements directly or literally, but, instead, make it indirectly in the form of irony?” It has been quite clear that ironic criticism is not meant to tone down the offensive level of the critical intention. In addition, within an irony interaction, ironic criticism does not always ensure the opportunities for the participants to save their faces. At least, the opportunities are not equally granted to American people and East Asian people. The bottom line is one can still conceive of “face-saving” as *one of* the pragmatic function of ironic criticism, in particular for the American English speakers; however, s/he will have to give up the idea that this function is universal. Otherwise, we may claim the universal function of ironic criticism to be “the avoidance of overt conflict” for the reason that even in the less pleasant East Asian irony interaction the conflict is kept low on the underlying level.

Also, while I have argued in 5.3 that the perceived high level of offensiveness in

irony interaction *may* lead to East Asian people's unwillingness of using ironic criticism, empirical data showing the frequency of irony being used in East Asian societies is in need for confirming my suspicion. In addition, it is desirable to have data that indicate how people from different cultures interact in situations involving direct criticism. If we have the patterns of "criticism interactions," we can place them into the offset face model, inspecting the offensive level of such interactions, and then compare the findings with those that we have found in "irony interactions." By doing so, we might find a clearer explanation of the perceptual difference in offensiveness between ironic criticism and direct criticism than that I have proposed with mere observation on irony interactions.

Still, surveys and researches about verbal irony carried on in other languages and cultures are encouraged. It would be interesting to see what results are to emerge from other norms of compliment responses and/or whether there exist other responding strategies than "take it literally," especially how they affect the face correlation within irony interactions. More cross-cultural comparative studies of these sorts are hoped to enrich our knowledge of the pragmatic and social function(s) of verbal irony.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

The Chinese Version of the Questionnaire

研究主題：台灣的中文使用者對評批之認知研究

謝謝您同意參與此項研究。 您將會閱讀 12 則短篇故事。 每則故事中有兩個角色。 在每則故事的最後，其中一個角色會對另一個角色的行為作出評論。 故事後的問題和這個評論有關。 請您依照直覺回答這些問題。

我們非常感謝您所貢獻的時間和精神。 如果您對本研究有任何疑問，請聯絡：

Barbara Abbott, University Professor, Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University, abbottb@msu.edu, 517-355-9739. 中文或閩南語請洽：黃駿,密西根州立大學語言所研究生, huangc20@msu.edu, 517-333-5781.

如果您對您的權利有疑問，或是對此研究有任何不滿，您可以聯絡(具名或不具名)：Peter Vasilenko, Ph. D. Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) 電話: 517-355-2180, 傳真: 517-432-4503, email: ucrihs@msu.edu, 或郵寄至: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, USA.

最後，在翻至下頁作答前，請您先提供以下的基本資料：

您的年齡：_____

您的性別：_____

謝謝！故事將從第二頁開始。

1. 阿珠和阿嬌姊妹相約參加一場模特兒選秀會。
阿嬌在走台步的時候摔了一跤。
阿珠對阿嬌說:
“妳超會走台步的!”
“妳真不會走台步。”
請問:
(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得阿珠對阿嬌的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得阿嬌受到阿珠的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
2. 好友琳琳和小凌一同拜師學舞。
小凌不但同手同腳還一直跟不上拍子。
琳琳對小凌說:
“妳的節奏感還真好!”
“妳的節奏感真差。”
請問:
(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得琳琳對小凌的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得小凌受到琳琳的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
3. 水水和阿蓮相約到荷花池畔拍照。
阿蓮擺了個 pose, 一跤跌到池子裡。
水水對阿蓮說:
“妳好會擺 pose 㗎!”
“妳真不會擺 pose。”
請問:
(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得水水對阿蓮的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得阿蓮受到水水的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

4. 阿暢和阿超是生物系新生。

阿超在上解剖課時一看到血就昏倒了。

阿暢對阿超說:

“你好勇敢喔!”

“你真膽小。”

請問:

(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得阿暢對阿超的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得阿超受到阿暢的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

5. 偉仔是阿明的拜把兄弟。

阿明日前花很多錢買到一台 CD PRO2, 哪知是個黑心商品, 什麼功能也沒有。

偉仔對阿明說:

“你的 CD PRO2 真炫!”

“你的 CD PRO2 真爛。”

請問:

(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得偉仔對阿明的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得阿明受到偉仔的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

6. 憲憲和康康一起去夜店喝酒。

康康才喝兩杯就醉得不醒人事。

憲憲對康康說:

“你真行, 酒量真好!”

“你的酒量真差。”

請問:

(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得憲憲對康康的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上, 你覺得康康受到憲憲的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

7. 慧慧掃地的時候把花瓶打破了。

她的婆婆對她說：

“妳真是個不可多得的好媳婦！”

“妳真是個差勁的媳婦。”

請問：

(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得婆婆對慧慧的批評有多嚴重？(0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得慧慧受到婆婆的侮辱有多嚴重？(0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

8. 張助教交代工讀生小英去印五十份期末考卷。

小英心不在焉，把題目印歪了，沒有一份試卷能用。

張助教對小英說：

“妳做事實在很細心耶！”

“妳做事真不用心。”

請問：

(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得助教對小英的批評有多嚴重？(0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得小英受到助教的侮辱有多嚴重？(0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

9. 妮妮是髮型師娜娜的助手。

她在調染髮劑的時候把顏色搞錯了。

娜娜對助手妮妮說：

“妳的手還真巧呀！”

“妳的手腳真鈍。”

請問：

(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得娜娜對助手妮妮的批評有多嚴重？(0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得助手妮妮受到娜娜的侮辱有多嚴重？(0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

10. 棒球隊員阿遠在一場重要的比賽中連續被對手三振，一支安打也沒有。
教練對這表現很不滿意，他對阿遠說：
“你最近的球感很好嘛!”
“你最近的球感真差。”
請問：
(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得教練對阿遠的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得阿遠受到教練的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
11. 阿德是電視台新聞主撥。
他今天在報新聞的時候吃了好幾個螺絲。
電視台主管是後對他說：
“天啊，你真是口齒清晰呀!”
“你真是口齒不清。”
請問：
(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得主管對阿德的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得阿德受到主管的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
12. 業務員小六搞砸了一樁重要的交易。
老闆對他說：
“你真的是很值得信任吶!”
“你真是不值得信任。”
請問：
(1) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得老闆對小六的批評有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)
(2) 在 0 到 6 的量表上，你覺得小六受到老闆的侮辱有多嚴重? (0-完全不嚴重, 3-普通, 6-非常嚴重)

謝謝您,您已完成作答!

請您將完成作答的問卷以夾帶檔案的形式回覆給本人(不必更改 email 的主題),並另

外在 email 本文中寫上您的組別(A,B 或 C)及您的性別和年齡。

APPENDIX 2

The English Version of the Questionnaire

Reaction to Comments: A Case Study on Taiwan Chinese

Thank you very much for agreeing on participating in this research. You will read 12 short stories consisting of two interactants. In each story, one of the participants will make a final comment on the other's performance. Please answer the questions that follow each story and base your answer on your intuition.

The investigators appreciate your time. If you have any further questions about the research, please contact: Barbara Abbott, University Professor, Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University, abbottb@msu.edu, 517-355-9739. Or, in Chinese or Taiwanese Southern Min, contact: Chun Huang, graduate student, Linguistics & Languages, Michigan State University, huangc20@msu.edu, 517-333-5781.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Peter Vasilenko, Ph. D. Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: 517-355-2180, fax: 517-432-4503, email: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, USA.

Before moving on to the next page, please identify your gender and age as follows:

My age is: _____

My gender is: _____

Thank you! The stories will begin from the next page.

1. Zhu and Jiao are sisters. They participated in a model competition.
When Jiao was performing a catwalk, she tripped and fell over the stage.
Zhu said to Jiao,
“You are so good at catwalk!”
“You are bad at catwalk.”
 - (1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was Zhu’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
 - (2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Jiao by Zhu’s remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
2. Lin and Ling are friends. They practiced dancing in the same ball room.
Ling was dancing awkwardly and could not keep up with the tempo.
Lin said to Ling,
“You really have a good sense of rhythm!”
“You have a poor sense of rhythm.”
 - (1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was Lin’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
 - (2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Ling by Lin’s remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
3. Suei and Lian are friends. They went to a Lotus pond together to shoot photos.
When Lian was posing for a shot, she slipped into the pond.
Suei said to Lian,
“You are pretty good at posing!”
“You are bad at posing.”
 - (1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was Suei’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
 - (2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Lian by Suei’s remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)

4. Chang and Chao are freshmen at the Biology Department.
When Chao saw the dead bodies of an animal in a class, he was so scared that he couldn't help but fainted.
Chang later said to Chao,
"Dude, you are so brave!"
"Dude, you are timid."
(1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was Chang's remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
(2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Chao by Chang's remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
5. Wei and Ming are close friends.
A couple of days ago, Ming spent lots of money to buy a CD player. Unfortunately it was a fake and could not perform any function.
Wei said to Ming,
"Your CD player is so cool!"
"Your CD player is a crap."
(1) On a seven-point scale, how serious was Wei's remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
(2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Ming by Wei's remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
6. Sian and Kan went to a pub to have drinks.
Kan was so drunk even after only two glasses of beer.
Sian said to Kan,
"You are pretty good at drinking!"
"You are poor at drinking."
(1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was Sian's remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
(2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Kan by Sian's remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)

7. Hwei broke a china vase when she was cleaning the living room.
Her mother-in-law was angry when she witnessed it.
The mother-in-law said to Hwei,
“My son really couldn’t find a better wife than you!”
“My son found himself a lousy wife.”
- (1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was Hwei’s mother-in-law’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
- (2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Hwei by her mother-in-law’s remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
8. Secretary Chang asked her assistant Ying to make some copies of exam papers.
Ying didn’t concentrate on working so that the copies she made were too bad to be used for the exam.
Chang said to Ying,
“You surely are careful!”
“You are so careless.”
- (1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was Secretary Chang’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
- (2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Ying by Secretary Chang’s remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
9. Nini is an assistant of hairstylist Nana.
When Nini was asked to prepare some hair-dye, she messed up the color.
Nana said to Nini
“How skillful you are!”
“How clumsy you are.”
- (1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was the manager’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
- (2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Siao by the nurse manager’s remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)

10. Yuan played for a baseball team. His performance in certain game was so bad that he not only had no hit but collected 3 consecutive strikeouts.
The coach said to him,
“Your condition has been perfect!”
“Your condition has been so bad”
(1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was the coach’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
(2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Yuan by the coach’s remark? (0- not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
11. De is a news anchor.
When he was reporting, he made quite a few mistakes.
His supervisor said to him,
“Wow! You are really articulate.”
“You don’t even know how to talk.”
(1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was the supervisor’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
(2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was De by the supervisor’s remark? (0-not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)
12. Salesperson Lio failed to earn his company an important business case.
His boss said to him,
“You are so reliable!”
“You are very unreliable.”
(1) On a seven-point scale, how critical was the boss’s remark? (0- not critical at all; 3- so so; 6- extremely critical)
(2) On a seven-point scale, how insulted was Lio by the boss’s remark? (0-not at all; 3- so so; 6- very insulted)

Thank you! You have finished all of the questions.

Please attach this questionnaire with your replying email to the researcher (the subject of the email need not be changed). And, in the text of the email, please identify your age and gender.

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