

Generating applause and laughter: A study of rhetoric and response in the 1998 Taipei mayoral debates*

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Based on video-taped data from two televised 1998 Taipei mayoral debates, this study identifies and analyzes the points at which there is applause or laughter from the audience, with a particular focus on the message content and the rhetorical devices that are used by the debaters to elicit such responses. My analysis has found that the occurrences of applause are much more likely to be influenced by *what* rather than *how* a speaker has just said, and position-taking statements, self-directed praise, and opponent-directed criticisms are types of messages that most frequently generate affiliative responses from the audience. In addition, the speaker with a more relaxed conversational style, which is characterized by direct reported speech, heart-warming anecdotes, and self-deprecating jokes, tends to elicit the highest rate of applause and laughter from the audience.

Keywords: political debates, applause, laughter, message content, rhetorical devices

1. Introduction

Previous studies of political speeches and political events (e.g. Atkinson 1984a, 1984b, 1985; Heritage & Greatbatch 1986; Kurzon 1996) have pointed out that there is a great deal of regularity in the way audiences co-ordinate their behavior with that of public speakers. For instance, the audience do not just clap and cheer whenever they feel like it, but do so only at specific points in the course of the proceedings. While the audience are continually on the look-out for suitable completions in the talk where applause can occur, the speakers can design their utterances to provide prominent and recognizable places for conjoined response.

Drawing on the research tradition of conversation analysis (CA), Atkinson (1984a, 1984b, 1985) pioneers the study of interaction between orators and audiences, with a

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focus on the way orators and their audiences co-ordinate their activities in the course of a speech. He has observed that there is a range of identifiable techniques or procedures recurrently used by speakers to get their audience to more or less simultaneously produce an identical next activity, such as cheering, clapping, or laughing. He further suggests that mastery of the use of these devices characterizes ‘charismatic’ speakers and that such devices are common in those passages of political speeches that are selected for retransmission, quotation, or paraphrase in the news media.

Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) analyze 476 British party political speeches and the findings of their study strongly support Atkinson’s proposal that audience responses to political speeches are influenced by verbal structuring of the political messages. Seven basic rhetorical formats were found to be associated with nearly 70% of all the applause in their data, and statements incorporating these formats were between two and eight times as likely to be applauded as those that did not. It is also found that relationship between rhetoric and response is broadly independent of political party, the political status of the speaker, and the popularity of the message.

While most researchers have concentrated on the investigation of affiliative audience response, Clayman (1992) examines how disaffiliative responses—primarily booing and derisive laughter—are organized with respect to an ongoing speech in the 1988 U.S. presidential debates. He has found that of 169 audience response episodes, only 24 (14.2%) involved some form of disaffiliation, which means that the audience were much more likely to affiliate than disaffiliate with a speaker. In addition, these disaffiliative responses were restricted to speech events that had already become explicitly adversarial. For example, booing occurred only when a candidate was overtly attacking the opposition. Correspondingly, disaffiliative laughter usually occurred only when the candidates were responding defensively to hostile remarks made earlier.

Using the seven speeches by Israeli, Palestinian, American and Russian leaders in the signing of the accord between Israel and the PLO in September 1993, Kurzon (1996) analyzes the semantic and paralinguistic strategies for eliciting applause. He has observed that a number of semantic or conceptual fields (e.g. peace, gratitude, and courage) are more likely to trigger applause. In addition, in these diplomatic speeches,

there seems to be a tendency for the speech rate to decrease as a device to elicit applause, while in political speeches, there is often an increase of speech rate before the applause.

Based on video-taped data from two televised 1998 Taipei mayoral debates, this study aims to identify and analyze the points at which there is applause or laughter from the audience, with a particular focus on the message content and rhetorical devices that are used—consciously or unconsciously—by the debaters to elicit such responses. In the following, Section 2 describes the data for the study, including the political background of the analyzed debate. Section 3 demonstrates how rhetorical devices, including the form and content of political messages, are recurrently used by speakers to elicit affiliative responses in the course of speaking. Section 4 discusses the implication and significance of my finding.

2. Background and database

The data for this study come from two televised debates among three candidates in the 1998 Taipei mayoral election. In the following I will first give an overview of the political situation of the mayoral election.

On December 5, 1998, Taiwan held a 'three-in-one' election, in which a total of 12 parties competed for 225 seats in the Legislative Yuan and the 2 mayoral and 96 city council seats in Taipei and Kaohsiung. Despite being a local election, the Taipei mayoral race was raised to national importance and it even overshadowed the more important legislative election.

The Taipei race drew island-wide and even international attention not only because of its implication for the 2000 presidential poll but also owing to the fact that this was a neck-and-neck race between the incumbent mayor Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou, who was nominated by the ruling Kuomintang (KMT). Chen, who is from the opposition Democratic Progress Party (DPP), has earned a reputation as one of the island's foremost heroes in the struggle for democracy. When serving as Taipei City councilor and legislator, Chen was renowned for his efficiency and eloquence. His political career came to its apogee when, in 1994, he defeated nominees from the KMT

and the New Party (NP) and became Taipei's first non-KMT mayor in a generation. Mayor Chen became wildly popular with his crackdown on traffic, trash, and prostitution. Many viewed Chen as the most likely opposition candidate for the 2000 presidential election. With his pro-independence stance, Chen would evoke strong reaction from the PRC if he was re-elected. Apart from his political position, Chen was also severely criticized for his 'dictatorial and oppressive' leadership style, even though the approval rating of his administration was over 70%.

Chen's major challenger Ma is a second-generation mainlander. A Harvard graduate, Ma was considered one of the most promising young KMT politicians and earned a reputation for being not only tough on crime but also effective in combating it when he was the Minister of Justice. However, despite winning popular support for fighting corruption, Ma made numerous enemies in the KMT establishment and resigned from his post in 1997. Viewed as the only KMT elite with the charisma to challenge and beat Chen, Ma finally accepted the KMT's nomination, although he had repeatedly declared that he would never enter the race. Ma's turnaround decision, however welcomed by his supporters, damaged his credibility, which was repeatedly questioned by both his rivals during the debates.

Wang Chien-shien, the New Party candidate who was running a distant third in the polls and had a slim chance of victory, has a political record no less impressive than either Chen or Ma. A devout Christian, Wang was considered one of the most capable government officials when he served as Finance Minister. His honesty and outspokenness won him the nickname *xiaogangpao* 'little steel cannon'. However, like Ma, he was forced to leave his job in the early 1990s, after which he established the New Party with a group of KMT breakaways. In the 1992 election, Wang won the highest number of votes in Taipei City and became a legislator. In this mayoral election, Wang strongly advocated a clean election campaign, which involved not only avoiding verbal abuse but reducing trash from left-over campaign flags and publications. Although Wang was widely praised by voters and observers for his good character and puritan-style campaign, his support rating in opinion polls climbed no higher than 10 percent throughout the campaign, which is low compared with the 30 percent plus

garnered by both Ma and Chen. Many even suspected that Wang would give up his mayoral bid since there was an overlapping between his and Ma's votes--both Ma and Wang advocate Taiwan's eventual unification with mainland China--and his NP supporters might shift to vote for Ma, who was much more likely to win the race.

Five televised public debates were held during the period from October to December 1998, when the campaign was in progress. The five debates were composed of two three-way debates, each lasting about 160 minutes, and three one-on-one debates between individual pairs of the three candidates, each lasting about 120 minutes. Each debate started with the candidate's statements on the policy platform, which were then followed by a question-answer session in which each candidate responded to queries posed by three pre-selected media representatives. The debate ended with candidates' concluding statements. Unlike ordinary conversation, the organization of debate is characterized by preallocated turn and turn length. Moreover, instead of debating each other directly, the candidates had to debate through the panelists' questions.

Although the much-watched televised debates were considered one of the positive changes in the campaigning process, the fiery campaign was dominated by exchanges of malicious accusations and verbal abuse between Chen's and Ma's camps. The over 80 percent turnout rate on Dec. 5 also evidenced the strong passion and enthusiasm of the electorate. Garnering more than 51 percent of the total vote, Ma toppled Chen and returned control of the capital city to the KMT after four years of DPP rule. As Wang only received 3 percent of the vote, many attributed Ma's hard-earned victory to the New Party supporters' strategic voting. It was also believed that the endorsement of the conservative Ma and the rejection of the sometimes provocative Chen reflected the residents of Taipei's preference for maintaining the status quo in cross-strait relations (*Free China Review*, February 1999).¹

3. Analysis

The analysis in this section contain two parts: (1) strategies for inviting applause;

¹ Although Chen was defeated in the mayoral race, he won the 2000 presidential election.

and (2) the elicitation of affiliative laughter.

3.1 Strategies for inviting applause

According to Atkinson (1984a), applause is the most usual way of showing collective approval in public speaking, and this is reflected in the regularity with which it is used, and in its capacity to drown out and take over from other types of responses that may have started up at about the same time.

My analysis has found that, while there are altogether 52 instances of applause in the first three-way debate, no applause occurred in the second one. This number, however, does not include that which occurred at the ends of speeches, for such applause is to be expected in every case when formal speeches are being given. The rate at which the 52 occurrences of applause were produced in the first debate is summarized in Table (1), which shows that among the three candidates, Wang was applauded at a much higher rate (25; 48.08%) than both Chen (11; 21.15%) and Ma (16; 30.77%).²

Table 1
Distribution of applause
in the 1st 1998 Taipei mayoral debate

Speaker	N.	%
Chen	11	21.15%
Ma	16	30.77%
Wang	25	48.08%
Total	52	100%

In the following, I will examine these 52 instances of affiliative applause based on their (1) rhetorical form and (2) message content.

3.1.1 The rhetorical devices

Previous studies of response-elicitation sequences in public speaking have focused on the role rhetorical forms play in the generation of audience response, and a number

² This number does not include the 11 occurrences of applause preceded by laughter.

of rhetorical formats (e.g. three-part lists, contrasts, ‘puzzle-solution’ statements) are found to be regularly associated with applause (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Heritage & Greatbatch 1986). However, there are almost no such patterns of rhetorical construction in my data, and (1) can be considered a combination of contrast and list. In this example, Wang is attacking Chen for taking advantage of the ethnic tension to win support from native Taiwanese. Chen’s slogan during the campaign ‘Taiwan first, Taipei first’ emphasized his priority in the election and his love for the 21 million people on Taiwan. In this example, Wang claimed that Chen’s words were in contradiction to his deeds, and that such a person is nothing but wily politician. Although the target of his attack is implicitly referred to as *youren* ‘someone’, since Chen, the only native Taiwanese among the three candidates, has been criticized for stirring up ethnic discord between mainlanders and native Taiwanese by urging that ‘Taiwanese vote for Taiwanese’ during the campaign, Wang’s intention is understood by both Chen and the audience.

(1) 1-22-8

1 Wang: *Youren yong shengjide wenti lai huoqu geren xuanpiao de liyi,*

2 A--->① *zhezhong ren bushi Taiwan youxian,*

dec

3 ② *zhezhong ren bushi Taipei diyi,*

dec

4 ③ *zhezhong ren bushi aihu liangqian yibaiwan tongbao de ren,*

5 B--->④ *zhezhong ren shi zhengke*

--->6 Aud: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

I------(5.4)-----I

7 Wang: |
-----women dajia...

Translation

1 Wang: Someone takes advantage of the ethnic issue to win votes,

2 A--->① this kind of person is not ‘Taiwan first’,

dec

3 ② this kind of person is not ‘Taipei first’,

6 *gao hao le ma?*
 7 *nandao bu yao huan ren zuozuokan ma?*
 ---> 8 Aud: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx
 I-----|------(5.0)-----I
 9 Wang: |
 | *Zhe shi hen qingchu de shiqing.*

Translation

1 Wang: Let me ask you,
 2 if we want to renovate sidewalks,
 3 does this take high technology?
 4 Those KMT mayors failed to understand this after 30 to 40 years.
 5 The DPP mayor has ruled the city for four years,
 6 has he solved the problem?
 7 Shouldn't we elect someone else?

---> 8 Aud: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx
 I-----|------(5.0)-----I
 9 Wang: |
 | The answer is very clear.

In this example, Wang addressed the audience directly (i.e. ‘Let me ask you’ in line 1). After questioning the former and incumbent mayors’ ability to improve the city’s sidewalks in line 6, Wang asked another question ‘Shouldn’t we elect someone else?’, which triggered applause from the audience. The applause signaled a positive answer to Wang’s question; that is, since neither the KMT mayors in the past nor the DPP mayor in the present were capable of solving the problem, voters should elect someone from the New Party, that is, Wang himself. This example illustrates that a question, as the first part of an ‘adjacency pair’ (Schegloff & Sacks 1973), is an effective device for eliciting applause, which constitutes the second part of the pair.

3.1.2 Message content

My above analysis does not lend support to the previous finding that rhetorical form plays a central role in the generation of the audience response. Rather, I have found that

in my data the responses of audience are directed to the content of political messages, that is, content plays the primary role in determining the character of audience response.

With respect to the specific topic of content as a device to elicit applause, previous studies (i.e. Atkinson 1984a, 1984b; Heritage & Greatbatch 1986) have observed that applause and other displays of approval in political events tend only to occur in response to a narrow range of very simple types of political message. An examination of the content of the passages that were applauded in my data shows that applause was reserved for 4 types of messages. Their distribution, disaggregated by debater, is set out in Table (2).

Table 2.
Content of Applauded Political Messages
in the 1st 1998 Taipei Mayoral Debate

Speaker Message Content	Chen		Ma		Wang		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Boast	5	45.45%	1	6.25%	5	20%	11	21.15%
Attack	2	18.18%	4	25%	4	16%	10	19.23%
Position	3	27.27%	7	43.75%	8	32%	18	34.62%
Other	1	9.10%	4	25%	8	32%	13	25%
Total	11	100%	16	100%	25	100%	52	100%

It can be observed from Table (2) that the greatest occurrence (34.62%) of applause is associated with debaters' advocacy of a particular policy or for their position on a particular issue. In (3), which is from Wang's policy statements, he said he would propose to the central government that caning be adopted as a punishment for rapists in Taipei, just like in Singapore. The two applause events in Wang's talk are a sign that the audience agreed with and supported his proposal. Note that after Wang gave a reason for his position in line 9, the audience failed to respond. After one second of silence, the overt and unequivocal position-taking comment 'and this is my personal belief' finally secured the overdue applause. In this example, Wang used the tactic of 'pursuit'

(Atkinson 1984a:78; Heritage & Greatbatch 1986:133), by which he was attempting to ‘recover’ a ‘lost’ response.

(3) 1-8-11

1 Wang: *Wo yao jianyi zhongyang xiugai xingfa,*
 2 *fanshi qiangbao funu de zhezhong zuifan,*
 3 *yilu fangzao Xinjiapo yao yong bianxing.*
 4 *Xinjiapo jiu shi yong bianxing*

--->5 Aud: xxxxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

I------(4.0)-----I

(6 lines omitted)

6 Wang: *jintian fu..funu zai women Taibeishi*
 7 *yijing meiyou mianyu kongju de ziyou.*
 8 *suoyi zai Taibeishi dui funu laishuo shi yige luanshi,*
 9 *luanshi jiu yao yong zhongdian.*
 10 *(1.0)suoyi zheshi wo gerende kanfa*

--->11 Aud: └-x-xxxxxXXXXXXXXxx-x-x

I------(3.0)-----I

Translation

1 Wang: I want to propose that the central government revise our law,
 2 all those criminals who rape women,
 3 should be caned following the laws of Singapore.
 4 Singapore is using canning

---> 5 Aud: xxxxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

I------(4.0)-----I

(6 lines omitted)

6 Wang: Nowadays women in our Taipei City
 8 do not have the freedom from fear.
 9 So Taipei is a dangerous and chaotic place for women.
 10 we have to use heavy punishments in a chaotic time.

is from Ma's concluding statements, he emphasized that it was meaningless to say who came earlier and who came later. While he has been living in Taipei longer than Chen has, he would not consider himself a more 'native' Taipei citizen and therefore a better 'qualified' mayoral candidate than Chen. Note that following his claim that 'all those who love and identify with the city are Taipei people', the audience not only applauded but also cheered.

(5) 1-45-9

- 1 Ma: *Wo jue de suiran goa si Bangkah toa han e,*
 2 *danshi wo bing bu renwei zhiyou Wanhua zhangda de caishi Taibei ren,*
 3 *wo jue de suoyou reai-Taibei-rentong-Taibei-de DOU-SHI-TAIBEIREN*
 ---> 4 Aud: cheers + xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx
 I------(6.5)-----I

Translation

- 1 Ma: I feel that although I grew up in Manga,
 2 but I don't think that only those who grew up in Wanhua can be counted
 as Taipei people
 3 I believe all those who love Taipei and identify themselves with Taipei
dec dec dec
ARE TAIPEI PEOPLE
dec
 --->4 Aud: cheers + xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx
 I------(6.5)-----I

In line 3, Ma's deliberate increase in volume, decrease in the speech rate, and a more emphatic beat of *doushi Taibeiren* 'all are Taipei people' are cues informing the audience that an affiliative response will become relevant. This example illustrates that prosodic features tend to be closely coordinated with the verbal constructions used in response-elicitation sequences.

Previous studies have observed that the overwhelming majority of affiliative response involve opponent-directed criticisms or insults and self-directed praise or boasts (Atkinson 1984a, 1984b, 1985; Heritage & Greatbatch 1986). Therefore, in an

adversarial political event such as political debate, which is characterized as ‘essential instances of persuasive attack and defense’ (Benoit and Wells 1996:5), it is hardly surprising that negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation are two categories of messages that are most likely to elicit applause from the audience. As Table (2) shows, altogether these two categories of political message made up more than 40% (i.e. 40.38%) of all the applauded messages in the first debate under investigation. In the following, I will give examples from my data to illustrate how each candidate elicited applause from the audience by either attacking his opponent(s) or bolstering himself.

In these two mayoral debates, Chen, as the incumbent mayor seeking a second term, frequently recounted his administrative achievements, such as crackdowns on traffic and prostitution, to project a positive image of a competent mayor. In Example (6), he compared the numbers of impeached government officials of three areas in Taiwan during the previous year. Since there were none in Taipei City, this demonstrated his good leadership.

(6) 1-13-8

- 1 Chen: *Zai qunian Taiwansheng bei tanhe de renshu yigong you shijiugeren,*
- 2 *er Gaoxiongshi shi lianggeren,*
- 3 *Taibeishi shi.. ling.*
- 4 *meiyou renhe yige gongwuyuan bei tanhe*
- 5 *ruguo shuo jintian women Taipei shizhengfu*

---> 6 Aud: ┌ xxxXXXXXXXXxxx ─┐

I------(2.2)-----I

Translation

- 1 Chen: Last year 19 government officials were impeached in Taiwan Province,
- 2 two in Kaohsiung City,
- 3 and there were none in Taipei City,
- 4 not any government officials were impeached

5 If today our city government...
 --->6 Aud: [xxxXXXXXXXXxxx]
 I------(2.2)-----I

Example (7) is from Wang’s reply to the inquiry of his interpretation of ‘Taiwan first, Taipei first’, which both Chen and Ma claimed as the theme of their campaign. Serving as the Finance Minister in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s when he was still a KMT member, Wang was widely praised as one of the most devoted and competent government officials in Taiwan, and his outstanding accomplishments were internationally recognized as well. In (7), Wang quoted words from the international media, which voted him as the best Finance Minister in Asia, to bolster his image of courage and determination.

(7) 1-26-20

1 Wang: *Wo zai zuo Caizhengbuzhang de shihou,*
 2 *minguobashiye nian bei guowaide meiti pingwei shi Yazhou de zuijia*
caizhang.
 3 *houlai wo wen ta, wo shuo,*
 4 *‘nimen weisheme xuan wo zuo Yazhou zuijia caizhengbuzhang ne?’*
 5 *ta shuo, ‘ni you poli,*
 6 *ni zhenzheng wei guojia zai zuoshi,*
 7 *Zhonghuaminguo de guanyuan ruguo dou xiang ni zheyang,*
 8 *gueiguo jiu you xiwang le’*

--->9 Aud: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx
 I------(5.0)-----I

10 Wang: *wo gen ta jiang, ‘nali! nali! bugandang!’*

Translation

1 Wang: When I was the Finance Minister,
 2 I was voted as the best Finance Minister in Asia by foreign media in
 1992.
 3 And then I asked him. I said,
 4 ‘Why did you vote for me as the best Finance Minister in Asia?’

5 He said, 'You have courage and resolution.
6 You're really working hard for your country.
7 If all the government officials in the ROC are like you,
8 then your country's future is very bright'

--->9 Aud: xxxxxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

I------(5.0)-----I

10Wang: I told him, 'No! No! I don't deserve it!'

Negative other-image construction is common in the debates. My previous analysis of (1) and (2) has shown how Wang's other-oriented attack generated applause from the audience. (8) and (9) below illustrate that a positive self-image tends to be intimately linked to an active construction of a negative image of one's opponent. In (8), when responding to the inquiry about how he was different from the other two candidates, Ma claimed that what distinguished him from the others was that he had never done things in a very dictatorial way. Since Chen has been severely criticized for his dictatorial and oppressive leadership style, Ma's comparison not only projected a positive image of himself but also, although implicitly, evoked a negative image of Chen.

(8) 1-30-7

1 Ma: *Wo juede wo zai guoqu gongwu shengya shiduo nian a,*
2 *conglai zuo shiqing buhui hen yaba,*
3 *wo xiang zhi yidian jiu shi hendade butong*

--->4 Aud: xxxxxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

I------(3.0)-----I

Translation

1 Ma: I feel that since I began working as a government official more than ten
years ago,
2 I haven't done things in a very dictatorial way,
3 I think this is how I'm very different from the others

--->4 Aud: xxxxxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxxx

I------(3.0)-----I

However, Ma's creditability has been repeatedly questioned by his rivals in the debates. Before he entered the race, Ma had firmly and repeatedly told the media that he would not run in the mayoral race as he did not believe he could heal the city's social malaise. Like what Ma did in (8), Chen in (9) made a contrast between Ma and himself, saying that Ma had eaten his own words in order to enter the race.

(9) 1-31-9

- 1 Chen: *Wo geren buhui xiang Ma Xiangsheng yiyang,*
- 2 *shuo jiang liangbai ci dou bu suanshu,*
- 3 *shuo jiang zuihou yici cai suanshu,*
- 4 *zhe yizhong meiyou chengxin de wenti,*
- 5 *wo buhui congdaofuche*

--->6 Aud: └ xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxx

I------(3.5)-----I

Translation

- 1 Chen: I won't be like Mr. Ma,
- 2 saying that what he has said for more than two hundred times didn't
- count,
- 3 and only the last time counts,
- 4 This is a problem of creditability,
- 5 I won't make the same mistake.

--->6 Aud: └ xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxx

I------(3.5)-----I

The above three categories (i.e. policy/position, boast, and attack) constitute three-fourths (i.e. 74.51%) of the message content that was associated with applause. All the other applause-generating utterances were classified as 'miscellaneous', including Ma's

commendation of President Lee Teng-hui’s contribution to the democratization of Taiwan, and Wang’s giving Chen credit for his efforts in cracking down on the sex industry and gambling video-game arcades in the Taipei City.

In sum, my analysis in this section suggests that message content, rather than message form, is a pervasive influence on whether an utterance will be applauded, and the most commonly applaudable messages are those in which a debater takes a position on issues, boasts about himself, or attacks his opponent(s).

3.2 Laughter

In addition to applause, laughter is also an affiliative response found in the two debates. In everyday conversation, laughter generally functions as a humor-appreciative display (Jefferson 1979). However, laughter may also accomplish a variety of more specific actions depending on the particular context in which it occurs (Jefferson 1984; Jefferson, Sacks, and Schegloff 1987). In addition, a given burst of laughter is not always affiliative in nature. Clayman’s (1992) study of three 1998 U.S. presidential debates has observed that laughter, outnumbering booing, is the most frequently found disaffiliative response. According to Clayman, disaffiliative laughter generally displays disbelief or derision toward a speaker’s prior talk, which are non-critical or self-congratulatory in character.

There are altogether 48 instances of laughter found in the two debates, and all of them are affiliative in nature. No instances of disaffiliative laughter are found in my data. As Table (3) shows, there are more instances of affiliative laughter in the first debate (27 vs. 21).

Table 3.
Affiliative laughter
in two 1998 Taipei Mayoral Debates

Speaker Debate	Chen		Ma		Wang		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Debate 1	0	0%	2	7.41%	25	92.59%	27	100%
Debate 2	2	9.52 %	3	14.29 %	16	76.19%	21	100%
Total	2	4.16%	5	10.42 %	41	85.42%	48	100%

Table (3) also indicates that among the three candidates, Wang generated the highest rate of laughter in both debates. Example (10) illustrates how Wang displayed his sense of humor as soon as he began his statement on the policy platform in the first debate.

(10) 1-7-4

1 Wang: *wo jintian yi shanglai a,*

2 *ei, wo faxian Chen Shizhang A-bian Xiong juran gen wo zhangde*
yi yang gao

--->3 Aud: HHHHHHHHHhhXXXXXXXXXXxx

I------(5.0)-----I

4Wang: *Zhege zhuban danwei feichangde xixin,*

dec

5 *ba dixia dian gao le,*

6 *rang women sange ren cong pi..qi.cong.shangmian kan shi yiyangde*

7 *shuo zheyang bijiao gongdao yidian*

--->8 Aud: hhhh

I-(1.0)-I

9 Wang: *wo xiang zhe shi dianxingde qitoushi pingdeng,*

10 *bu shi lizudiande pingdeng, dui bu dui ?*

--->11Aud: LXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

I------(5.0)-----I

12Wang: *danshi wo hen haoqide,*

13 *zhuban danwei weisheme meiyou zao yiwei feichang gaomingde*
huazhuangshi,

14 *ba xiaodi huazhuang dao gen tamen liangwei yiyang nianqing han*
piaoliang ne?

-->15 Aud: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

I------(4.5)-----I

16Wang: |
— *ruguo banbudao dehua,*

17 *ye keyi ba tamen liangwei huade shaowei lao yidian a*

-->18 Aud: hhHHHHxxXXXXXX

I------(3.0)-----I

19Wang: *Wo xiwang women zhuban danwei xia yici nenggou shefa bujiu.*

-->20 Aud: hhhhhhhhHHhxx-x

I------(2.5)-----I

Translation

1 Wang: When I went up on the platform today,

2 gee, I found that Mayor Chen Brother A-bian has grown as tall as I am.

---> 3 Aud: HHHHHHHHhXXXXXXXXXX

I------(5.0)-----I

4 Wang: The organizers are very thoughtful,

dec

5 They have raised the podium,

6 So that we three appear to be of the same height,

7 they believe this way is fairer.

---> 8 Aud: hhhh

I-(1.0)-I

9 Wang: I think this is the typical apparent equality,

10 but not real equality, right?

---> 11 Aud: | xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

I------(5.0)-----I

12Wang: But I'm wondering,

13 why the organizers have not tried to find an excellent make-up artist,

14 to make me as young and handsome as the other two?

---> 15 Aud: xxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxx

I------(4.5)-----I

16 Wang: | Even if they cannot do so,

17 they can at least make them look a little bit older!

---> 18 Aud: hhHHHxxXXXXxx

I------(3.0)-----I

19 Wang: I hope our organizer can rectify this mistake in the next debate.

--->20 Aud: hhhhhhhhHHhxx-x
I------(2.5)-----I

Note that in this example, laughter in lines 3 and 18 dissolves gradually into applause. Unlike disaffiliative laughter, which ordinarily stands on its own, affiliative laughter tends to be followed by applause (Clayman 1992: 45). In the first debate, there are eleven cases when affiliative laughter and applause co-occur, and the onset of laughter always precedes applause. The two instances of applause in lines 11 and 15, invited by Wang's preceding rhetorical questions, are positive and affiliative responses to the questions. In general, audience laughter and applause in this example not only show their affiliation and support for the speaker but also their appreciation of good jokes.

Like applause, laughter sometimes occurs when candidates attack or criticize their opponents, and laughter that follows critical remarks are designed to be manifestly 'humorous' in tone (Clayman 1992:43). In Example (11), Wang challenged Chen, saying that since Chen had not been able to resolve Taipei's stray dog problem, how could he make the city into a leading city in the world, as Chen had claimed he could.

(11) 5-40-13

- 1 Wang: *Xianzai women Taibeishi liulang gou zheme duo,*
- 2 *women qu..dao jieshang qu sao lese,*
- 3 *yidadui goushi,*
- 4 *women jingchang dou caidao goushi,*
- 5 *ni zuole sinian ni liange goushi dou buneng jiejie,*
- 6 *ni hai yao dai Taibeishi maixiang shijie diyi ?*

--->7 Aud: hhhHHHHHHHhhh
I------(2.5)-----I

Translation

- 1 Wang: Now there're so many stray dogs in our Taipei City,
- 2 when we go..go clean streets,
- 3 dogshit is everywhere,

- 4 Inside me there're many shady things, do you know?
 --->5 Aud: └─ hhHHHHHHHHhh
 I------(2.5)-----I
- 6 It's just because education and region have put it..press them inside,
 7 and it will come out easily, do you know?!

As Sacks (1974) stresses, the performance of a joke critically depends on laughter for successful completion. In the above examples, Wang's sense of humor, displayed in his attacks on opponents and deprecation of self, generates appreciative laughter from the audience. Laughter in these examples acts as the second part of an adjacency pair, offering the audience as co-author an opportunity to affect Wang's performance. In this sense, audience laughter not only demonstrates understanding but at the same time ratifies and evaluates the speaker's verbal performance.

4. Discussion

One essential quality for political leaders in the world is the ability to speak effectively in public so that they can not only hold the audiences' attention but also generate positive response. According to Atkinson (1984a), favorable audience responses are almost always prompted by politicians themselves, who use a limited number of verbal and non-verbal techniques to package and deliver their political messages effectively. Moreover, Atkinson also suggests that the same types of messages and the same packaging techniques work equally well for all politicians. However, Atkinson himself also raises the question as to whether his observation is valid in languages other than English, although preliminary evidence from some European languages (e.g. French, German, and Dutch) suggests that applause-elicitation sequences work in much the same way.

The results of my analysis of two 1998 Taipei mayoral debates conducted in Mandarin, however, have not lent support to Atkinson's claim. In the first place, those recurrently used rhetorical formats (e.g. name-projecting, three-part lists, contrastive pairs) which tend to be associated with applause were rarely found in my data. On the

contrary, the occurrences of applause are much more likely to be influenced by *what* rather than *how* a speaker has just said, and position-taking statements, self-directed praises, and opponent-directed criticisms are types of messages that most frequently generate affiliative responses from the audience. In addition, the average length of applause in the present study is 4.2 seconds, which is only half of what Atkinson has observed as the mean length of applause (i.e. 8.0 seconds + 1.0). Therefore, an adequate answer to whether Atkinson's observations have cross-cultural applicability beyond the English- or European language-speaking world will have to await the results of further research from non-western languages.

Another interesting finding of my study is that instances of applause and laughter are not evenly distributed between the two debates and among the three debaters, with more positive audience responses concentrated in the first debate and in the New Party candidate Wang. It has been found that while there are 52 occurrences of intra-speech applause in the first debate, there are none in the second and that affiliative laughter occurred not only more frequently (27 vs. 21) but also much more enthusiastically in the first than in the second debate. These differences, I believe, mainly lie in the fact that the two debates were organized in very different ways. The much anticipated and watched first televised mayoral debate, which was organized by the *China Times*, was held on October 24, Saturday afternoon, at the Taipei Municipal Social Education Hall amid media fanfare. On the other hand, the second three-way debate, which was also the last debate, finally was held only four days before the election owing to difficulties for the three camps in working out a mutually convenient time. Even the organizer, the Taiwan Journalists Association, was informed of the finalization of the debate a few days before. Broadcast from the studio of Public Television on December 1, Tuesday afternoon, the final debate was not only missed by many television viewers but also lukewarmly received by the studio audience, although all the three debaters did as well as, if not better than they did in their previous debates. In addition, sitting in a TV studio rather than an auditorium, the audience in the final debate might be more aware of the existence of the video camera and therefore were acting less naturally.

Both the post-debate assessments from the commentators and the highest rate of

affiliative responses from the audience (48.08% of applause and 85.42% of laughter) indicate that Wang was the winner of the two debates, although these positive evaluation did not help his support rating in opinion polls. Wang's successful performance is mainly attributed to his quick wit and sense of humor (*China Post*, Oct. 25, 1998). In contrast to his two rivals, who spoke in a much more formal way, Wang's more causal, spontaneous, and audience-involving conversational style, which is characterized by heart-warming anecdotes, self-deprecating jokes, and direct reported speech, enables him to build and enhance solidarity with the audience. The intonational, gestural and rhythmic shifts that are so regularly used in his speech also help in generating positive responses from the audience. Wang's success also supports Atkinson's (1984a) observation that whereas in the past, mastery of the traditional techniques of oratory was essential for anyone hoping to get to the top in politics, less formal behavioral and conversational styles of speaking create favorable impressions with modern audiences, particularly television viewers.

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