Original Paper

Interruption Elicits Laughter: Cooperative and Intrusive Interruptions in a Chinese Talk Show Host's Conversation

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Abstract

This study is designed to examine how the secondary/subordinate host under institutional obligations and restrictions employs the interruption mechanism to supplement the dominant host's narrative and elicit an audience's laughter. Ten episodes totaling 239 minutes of the popular Chinese TV talk show Jinxing Show were selected, focusing on the "monologue" narrative section in which the interruption mechanism is given its best play. The data encompass 288 interruption turns and 80 non-interruption turns. Conversation Analysis is used to analyse the type of interruptions and the relation between interruptions and laughter. It is found that interruptions adopted by the assistant host can be analysed according to two aspects: rapport and intrusion, with the former consisting of backchannel and progression, while the latter is characterized by tease, disagreement, and pick-up. Backchannel and pick-up scarcely produce laughter from the audience, while progression and disagreement result in around half of the interruption that embodies laughter, and tease causes the strongest reactions. It is also argued that the interruption-laughter correlation is determined by the role identification and institutional obligations, which are primarily aimed at complementing the storytelling of the dominant host and enliven the atmosphere in the studio. Through administering quantitative and qualitative analysis, this study is expected to develop studies of institutional interruption by displaying how the secondary characters in institutional contexts (talk shows) full of dominance and restrictions exert resistance (interruption), while also accomplishing institutional responsibilities. Helping the audience and viewers appreciate the discursive skills of the talk show hosts is also likely.

Keywords

talk show, institutional obligations, interruption, power, laughter, storytelling

1. Introduction

Interruption has been repeatedly regarded as the indicator of dominance and power, either in casual talk (Teasta, 1988) or in institutional contexts, such as during medical interviews (Buttny, 1996; Menz & Al-Roubaie, 2008; O'Reilly, 2006, 2008), parent-child talks (Lu & Huang, 2006), courtroom examinations (Liao, 2009, 2013; Ng, 2015), phone-in talks (Hutchby, 1992; Lee, 2002; Li & Lee, 2013), and television interviews (Aznarez-Mauleon, 2013; Beattie, 1982; Hutchby, 1991, 1996, 2013; Song, 2016; Thornborrow, 2007, 2014; Zhao & Gantz, 2003). The dominant party designated with institutional power tends to practise interruption in interactional conversations, while this is not always the case with institutional settings. For instance, Beattie (1981) found students interrupt their tutors more often than vice versa. In a group tutorial, students are prone to promote themselves to make a good impression on their tutors. For this reason, they have to take initiative to speak adjacent to the tutor's turn-relevance place. Starting from this point, this paper uses *Jin Xing Show* as a case to show that even the dominated side can elicit interruption. Previous research has not fully considered the interaction between the hosts since the overwhelmingly large amount of literature is restricted to interruption between the host and the guest. Moreover, studies on Chinese TV talk shows in the field of Conversation Analysis is slight, let alone the discursive interruptions within two hosts with different institutional powers and obligations. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate how the secondary/subordinate host resorts to interruption to fulfil his institutional obligations and role definition in televised talk shows. Two questions are addressed: 1) What types of interruptions do the subordinate host employ in talk shows? 2) What is the relationship between laughter and different types of interruptions? Interruption in institutional locus is not necessarily initiated by the dominant side, and even the dominated side can elicit. In so doing, it is proposed that the interruption mechanism in institutional locus is activated not as much by power and dominance as by institutional obligations and role positioning.

This paper begins with the literature survey of interruption in talk shows and laughter in general, followed by elaborating on the research material and data collection. Results will be analysed and presented from two aspects: types of interruptions, and the relation between types of interruption and laughter.

2. Interruption

Research on interruption has multiplied in two major areas. One is in its classification, and the other concerns influential factors, including gender differences, dominance, and power. Schegloff (1987, 2000) regarded interruption as a violation of the one-at-a-time turn-taking model stipulated by Sacks et al. (1974). Previous to this perception of interruption, Ferguson (1977), based on spontaneous conversations, distinguished four types of interruptions from the sequential angle, including simple interruptions, overlaps, butting-in interruptions, and silent interruptions. In contrast to the sequential criteria, Goldberg (1990) lists six norms proposed that listeners may fall into, which are differentiated

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forms of interruption from relationally neutral, rapport-oriented and power-oriented acts. In so doing, Goldberg adopted a functional and interactional viewpoint of interruption frame. Similarly, Hutchby (1992) approached interruption as an interactional and moral deed, rather than a mere sequential phenomenon.

The classification either from sequential or interactional perspective is intrinsically linked to how researchers define interruption, which in turn contributes to differing and even conflicting findings on interruption research (Roger et al., 1988; Zhao, 2003). The domineering interest concerning interruption "demonstrates how interruption works technically and how they may convey power and dominance" (O'Reilly, 2008, cf. Ekström, 2009; Farley et al., 2010; Rees et al., 2013) as well as gender differences (Robinson & Reis, 1989; Zimmerman & West, 1975). Zimmerman and West (1975) first proposed that in ordinary conversations men interrupt women more often than vice versa. However, they noticeably warned that not all "male-female conversations invariably exhibit the asymmetry pattern reported in this paper" and "a challenging task for further research is the specification on conditions under which they (conversations) occur" (p. 125). Whether interruption is closely related to gender difference should be examined in the specific context.

Given a context introduction (courtroom, family therapy, classroom, workplace, radio phone-ins, political interview whatsoever), interruption is interwoven into complex relationship that includes the elements of power, dominance, and social relations. The principal proposition holds that the predominant party often exercises more interruption than the dominated party does. For instance, as O'Reilly (2008) pointed out, children in family therapeutic conversations in comparison to parents only are often interrupted without there being any apology by the home therapist, and they are treated as "less competent and their contributions to the therapy as less valuable" (p. 521). In doctor-patient exchanges, "physicians use more non-supportive interruptions than patients; patients failed to interrupt physicians more frequently than vice versa, even more so with senior physicians than with doctors-in-training" (Menz & Al-Roubaie, 2008, p. 645). As is the same case in the criminal courtroom, Liao (2009) investigated the number, functions, causes, and distribution of interruption in a Chinese criminal courtroom and found that prosecutors interrupt the most often, the defence lawyers the least, while the defendant is the most frequently interrupted party.

In the context of media discourse, interruption likewise, often occurs on the side of power and status, including discourse in political interviews (Beattie, 1982; Loeb, 2017; Sample, 2015), press conferences (Ekström, 2009), medical interviews (Menz & Al-Roubaie, 2008), television dramas (Song, 2016), and talk shows (Len et al., 2013; Lorenzo-Dus, 2008; Lundell, 2009; Thornborrow, 2001, 2014). In contrast to the first-cum-interrupter angle, Li and Lee (2013) focus on the triadic conversation on a Hong Kong radio talk and elaborates on the important roles played by the second host who corrects the simple mistakes made by the first host and the callers, and acts as the moderator between the first host and the callers.

What remains largely unexamined is how the dominated members in dyadic conversations discursively

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construct their role identity and fulfil their institutional obligations through interruption. In addition, previous research on interruption has concentrated on its classification and relation to its determinant factors, including gender, power and dominance, and social status, while overlooking its generation mechanism and functions. Under what kind of circumstances the interrupter elicits interruption and what effects the deeds achieve are worthy of further investigation. Lastly, research on Chinese TV talk shows via conversation analysis is understudied, along with discursive interruption within two hosts with different institutional powers and obligations. In short, three problems stated here determine that this paper is going to cast light on the types and effects of discursive interruption between the first and the second host. Before introducing the method, literature of laughter as the outstanding effect of interruption will be surveyed first.

3. Laughter

Laughter in conversation and discourse analysis has often been investigated in relation to humour (Attardo, 1994; Eksrom, 2009; Sacks, 1989; Vettin & Todt, 2004). According to Attardo (2015, p. 170), laughter is seen as one of the manifestations of humour. Laughter can be spontaneous and uncontrolled (Attardo, 2015, p. 170; Lavan et al., 2015), but also involuntary. Jefferson (1972, p. 300) claims that laughter shows comprehension of the humour but also signals the "termination of talk", as shown in *Jin Xing Show* (see below). Interruption in the guise of teasing often invites loud laughter from the studio audience, and is also associated with the ending of the first or the second host's turns at talk. Moreover, the communicative and interactional functions of laughter have also been intensively investigated (Adelsward, 1989; Beattie, 1989; Glenn, 2003; Holt, 2012; Jefferson, 1985). Ekstrom (2009) suggests that the joke and laughter pair is predominantly viewed to be interactionally associated with shared feelings and friendship. In contrast, as Glenn (2003) argues, jokes and laughter in multiparty interactions can be hostile on the one hand, and affiliative on the other. Laughing at somebody is deemed as hostile, while laughing to show the listenership and involvement in the ongoing talk is seen as being affiliative. Whether affiliative or not is determined by motivation behind the elicitation of laughter. The *Jin Xing Show* demonstrates how laughter is spontaneously elicited from the studio audience as a positive recognition and response to interruption exercised by the second host. Enlivening up the studio atmosphere constitutes one of institutional obligations; laughter-eliciting is the most prominent effect that the second host can achieve.

4. Research Design

The definitions of interruption have been approached both from sequential (Beattie, 1982; Ferguson, 1977; Liao 2009; Schegloff, 2000) and interactional perspectives (Coon & Schwanenflugel, 1996; Goldberg, 1990; Hutchby, 1992;). In this instance, due to the institutional power entitled to the first host, it is by default that the turn floor is under the control of the first host, and any attempt to prevent her from talking is regarded as interruption. Nevertheless, there are occasions when the subordinate

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host is nominated to answer questions or voice his opinions on the episode under scrutiny. In such cases, the subordinate host is offered his turn on the floor, while his discourse is not seen as interruption. Therefore, interruption in this study is perceived from the following two aspects:

1) The second host cuts in as the first/dominant host arrives at her turn-relevance place, and proceeds with the next turn.

2) The second host cuts in before the first/dominant host arrives at her turn-relevance place to finish the local turn.

The point where the second host exercises an intervention without the first host's endorsement is focused on here.

4.1 Database

The present research uses *Jin Xing Show* as a case study. Aired by Dragon Television since 28 January 2015, this program is the most prominent public affair talk show in China. It is a nearly live show, hosted by Jin Xing (the dominant host) and assisted by Shen Nan (the dominated host). Each episode consists of three parts: the Jin Xing narrative section (Jing Xing narrates a couple of stories connected by one topic), the question-and-answer (Q&A) section, and the interview section. The monologue section lasts nearly 25 minutes in each episode.

Jin Xing, the first host, is regarded as the predominant participant who enjoys the absolute power to control and direct the proceedings throughout the program. The second host, Shen Nan, primarily serves the purpose of supplementing the narrative and triggering laughter from the audience.

In the narrative section, the first host, standing at the centre of the arena, delivers a theme topic of public concern, such as someone's first love, job hunting, blind dating, migration, plastic surgery, superstars, among other random topics. The second host, sitting in front of the studio audience, faces the first host and catches the right time to inset his discourse by various discursive strategies, including asking questions, making suggestions and evaluations, and adding to the narrative. These verbal interruptions serve to trigger laughter in the studio, among other functions. Besides, the second host is occasionally asked to co-play the scene accounted in narrative with the first host and/or the studio audience to enliven the atmosphere.

Additionally, the Q&A section and the interview section see the discursive interruption done by the second host, yet the frequency and the effect are not as desirable as that in the narrative section. In the instance of a selected interview, the interaction between the first host and the guest are examined to reveal more about the guest to the overhearing audience. Under such circumstances, the second host turns into what is called a "less involved participant".

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Based on the popularity rate provided by *Baidu Baike* (Note 1), 10 episodes were selected, within which the monologue section was chosen. All of the episodes will be viewed from *Youku* (Note 2), a major online video and streaming service platform in China. The transition from voice to the subtitle texts is primarily assisted by the application of *Xunfeiyuji* (讯飞语记) (Note 3), assisted with a double

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check by the author afterwards to remove the incorrectness of spellings, nonverbal interactions, and unrecognised sounds, including laughter, applause and other reactions. The performance delivered by both hosts in order to contextualise the narrated scenes will not be considered in view of extracting interruptions. Therefore, the real time-span for each episode in the narrative section varies, lasting for less than 25 minutes, as the overall time-span of the chosen program totals less than 250 minutes. Ten episodes of data have been conducted, and the interruption template goes as follows.

Table 1. Interruption Information in Each Episode

No	Frequency	Overall Turns	Time (min)	Characters in Interruption	Overall Characters
EP.20150729	34	43	34	373	5735
EP.20151021	22	38	27	260	5514
EP.20160217	24	34	21.5	333	4769
EP.20160406	19	28	24.5	262	4945
EP.20160713	20	22	19	220	3534
EP.20160914	24	26	24	336	4520
EP.20170125	15	27	20	113	4523
EP.20170329	21	30	19	338	4785
EP.20170705	41	48	25	501	5552
EP.20170712	20	23	25	323	4447

Types of interruption

Based on the research framework, adoption and adaptation is made for institutionality consideration, and hence cooperative interruption (backchannel, progression) and intrusive interruption (tease, disagreement, and pick-up).

The relationship between interruption and laughter

Laughter is detected by the spontaneous reaction of the studio audience at the sound of various types of interruption.

5. Interruption VS. Non-interruption

Interruption in *Jin Xing Show* refers to the turns that are gained via self-selection by Shen Nan, rather than handed over from Jin Xing, or acting as the second pair of the question-answer adjacency pair. Accordingly, the non-interruption mostly goes to answering questions or responding to naming by Jin Xing.

A total of 244 interruptions and 80 non-interruptions in Shen Nan's turns at talk, and 714 turns at talk by Jin Xing are obtained. The average number of interruptions by Shen Nan totalled 0.75 per turn, and the number in Jin Xing's interactions was 0.34. Table 2 shows that Shen Nan's turns in the talk show fall into two categories, interruption and non-interruption, the former accounting for three fourths of all the turns at talk.

Table 2. Occurrence of Interruptions

Host	Number of Interruptions	Number of Non-interruptions	Number of Interruptions Per Turn Unit
Shen Nan	244	80	0.75
Jin Xing	ø	ø	0.34

Shen Nan as the assistant host claims his floor either by self-selecting or the-current-selecting-the-next rule. The latter offered by the dominant host Jin Xing makes a small number. It is due to the fact that Jin Xing's way of presenting stories—narrative requires that turns at talk should be in a relatively larger size and length, which prevents the second host from giving his full play, especially during the talking process. Furthermore, since the second host is institutionally positioned and identified as an assistant to Jin Xing, the first and dominant host, Shen Nan's primary purpose is to support Jin Xing's storytelling, verifying the details in her relating when necessary, promoting the story progression by various kinds of avenues, such as actively responding to the speaker, proposing and answering questions, visualizing scenes delineated in the narratives, and expressing his opinions in a short time. The assisting task, however, is anything but easy, for it is urgently accompanied by the mission of blurting out punchlines and triggering laughter from the studio and television audience. With all these purposes, instead of waiting there to catch the "ball" of turns offered by his superior, Shen Nan reaches for it at the right time, at the sight of the turn-relevance place. That is why interruption appears so often in Shen Nan's attempt at the turn floor, as shown in Table 2, in which 75% of turns are attributed to interruptions. Besides, the interruption occurrence accounts for 34% (as weighed against Jin Xing's turns). Overall, the data shows that the great majority of the second host's turns contribute to interruption, and thereby claiming the turn floor for the constraints of the institutional obligations and role definition.

6. Types of Interruption

The classification of interruption follows what was probed by Murata (1994) in contrasting different interruptions in conversations conducted by native Japanese and English speakers. Cooperative and intrusive interruptions are demarcated. The grouping of sub-branches regards the interrupting effect as a form of measurement. Problems arise where the form of interruption in the course of action and the mental reaction afterwards may not coincide. As stated by Hutchby (1992, p. 367), "their failure to explicitly differentiate between incursive utterance which are 'interruptive', sequentially speaking, but which may well be in some way cooperative interactionally speaking". The sequential and interactional dilemma in interruption can be addressed by focusing on the effects of this deed.

6.1 Cooperative Interruption

As Goldberg (1990, p. 894) noted, cooperative or rapport interruptions "encourage and contribute to the development of the (speaker's) talk by inserting (short) informative or evaluative comments or by requesting the speaker to supply evaluative or informative remarks". Here in the talk show under our scrutiny, its cooperative interruption is divided dichotomously into backchannel and progression.

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6.1.1 Backchannel

"Back-channel" entails the listener (the second host)'s response to the speaker (the first host) with no intention to compete for speakership, such as the discourse marker/continuers "哦哦" (*o o*, hmm, huh), or empty assessment "太厉害了" (*tai lihai le*, fantastic) and "够狠的" (see extract 1).

Extract 1 EP. 20160217

53	S		怎么个坚决法
			zenme ge jianjue fa?
			How merciless is he?
54	J		他带着他的新女朋友来机场接我
			ta daizhe tade xin nvpengyou lai jichang jie wo
			He picked me up with his girlfriend at the airport.
55	S	⟶	够狠的
			gouhen de
			Merciless, indeed.

Extract 2 EP. 20170329

77	J		实际上他是通过直播扔车
			shijishang ta shi tongguo zhibo reng che
			Actually, through the live
			在网络上获得关注
			zai wangluo shang huode guanzhu
			they get netizens'attention,
			从而带来个人的利益。
			cong'er dailai geren de liyi
			which can bring personal benefits.
			当然了，这两个男子最终被处拘留和罚款。
			Dangran le, zhe liangge nanzi zuizhong bei chu juliu he fakuan
			Eventually, the two men were detained and fined.
78	S	⟶	该
			gai
			They deserved it.
			(观众鼓掌)
			(applause from the studio audience)

Figure 1 shows that backchannel totals 11% of the interruptions, ranking the third after progression and tease. The employment of backchannel is of institutional concern. Shen Nan is granted the institutional obligations to complement and cooperate with Jin Xing on the narrative. On the one hand, it demands a continuous flow of presentation allowing little space for intrusion; on the other hand, it demands instant response from the recipient (Shen Nan). Based on audience's positive or negative reactions to the ongoing storytelling, Mandelbeaum (2013, pp. 500-501) discovers two types of recipient responses: continuers such as "嗯" (*mm, hm, huh*) and assessments like "哇" (*oh*, *wow*, *God*), the former being "passive", while the latter providing an indication of the recipient's understanding. The second host's

backchannel type fits the proposition. Nine of the 28 backchannels go to continuers that mostly appear in the form of interjections, and nineteen are assessments, with more *affiliation* (Stivers, 2008, p. 35) than resistance in his stance (towards the story being told). Therefore, backchannel on the one hand satisfies the need to not interrupt the continuous speech flow of the main speaker while displaying the recipient's interested involvement in the telling discourse. The use "该" (*gai*, someone asks for/deserves it) in extract 2 is a useful example. In line 77, Jing Xing describes two young men making a live video streaming online on vandalism and finally receiving a severe penalty. Upon the revelation of the penalty, Shen Nan responds instantly with his negative appraisal—a criticism for the two characters alongside Jin Xing's narration.

Backchannel by the second host, as can be seen, enhances involvement of the audience whilst promoting progression of the storytelling flow. At the same time, the affiliation assessments, if ever, embellish the discursive turns and thus fulfill the mission to complement the first host's talk in the interaction.
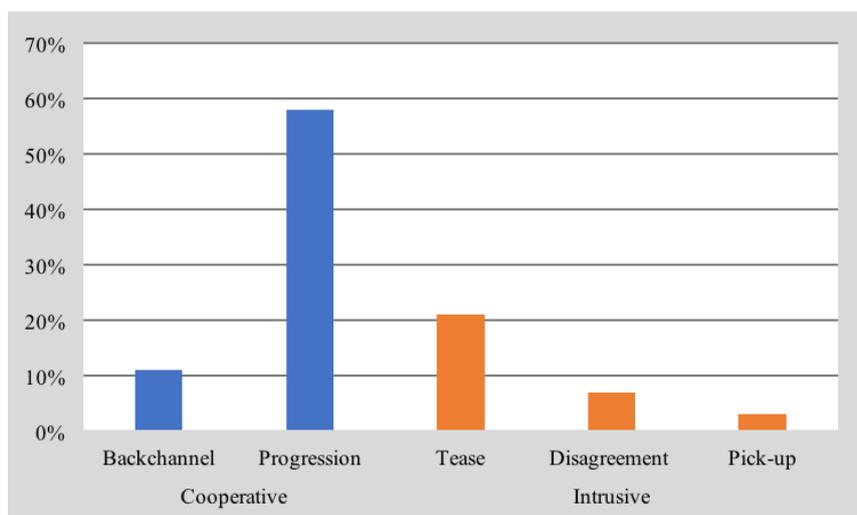

Figure 1. Types of Interruptions by Shen Nan

6.1.2 Progression

Apart from the listener's response, the second host finds the best time to squeeze into the dense turns held by the first host and inserts suggestions, complementary descriptions, informative questions, and evaluations about the story per se, or the characters involved. This is an illustrative instance of progression, as demonstrated in Figure 2. It is evident that as the sub-branch of cooperative interruption, progression contributes to more than half (58%) of all the interruptions by the second host. All the insertions serve to work together with the teller, promote the progressive realisation of the narrative, and avoid the storytelling being produced as a speaker's monologue (Schegloff, 1997). According to Tao (2018), progression falls into at least three parts, including evaluative remarks (see extract 3 and 4), questions, and descriptions.

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Extract 3 EP. 20151021

15	J		我在一匹黑马上
			wo zai yipi heima shang
			I was on the horseback,
			咚的一声摔下来
			dong de yisheng shuai xialai
			falling down,
			马东
			Ma Dong
			Hence the name Ma Dong.
16	S		哎呀 姐你这个马屁拍的太好了
		⟶	*aiya jie ni zhege mapi paide taihao le*
			Ah, you are such a self-made flatterer.

Extract 4 EP. 20160713

68	J		入团不到一年
			rutuan budao yinian
			One year after he was in my troupe,
			竟然打着我的旗号
			jingran dazhe wode qihao
			he should under the pretext of my dancing troupe,
			在外面招生招揽业务
			zai waimian zhaosheng zhaolan yewu
			opened a new training course and recruit members.
69	S	⟶	妈呀，这胆儿也太肥了
			maya zhe daner ye taifei le
			Ah, he should have the cheek to betray you.

In extract 3, the first host explains how she extols Ma Dong in the gathering by surreptitiously combining horse (*ma*) and the sound of her falling down from the horse (*dong*). She says that the moment she fell from the horse, she knew for certain that Ma Dong was going to be a super leader in China's entertainment circles. Along with audience's applause in reaction to the flattering, the second host interrupts with a playful commentary: "You are really a self-made flatterer". This incudes laughter from the studio audience, as well as responds to the first host's narrative.

Similarly, in line 69 in extract 4, the second host inserts his astonishment by the young man's selfishness and betrayal to the dancing troupe. In either case, the interrupter's contribution is hearable as a cooperative gesture as a signal of his interest in and attitudes towards the character. Both are affiliation in support of the narrator, the former constituting hilarious comments, and the latter composes direct sarcasm.

Extract 5 EP. 20160914

70	J		他们是全国首批上旅游黑名单的人
			tamen shi quanguo shoupi shang lvyou heimingdan de ren

			They are the first "honours" on the national tourist blacklist.
71	S	⟶	姐 进了这个黑名单有什么用啊
			jie jinle zhege heimingdan you shenme yong a
			Madam Jin, what on earth is this blacklist?
72	J		这份名单可厉害了
			zhefeng mingdan ke lihai le
			This blacklist is of super power.
			这个名单有效期为三年
			zhege mingdan youxiaoqi wei sannian
			It has a three-year period of validity.

Extract 6 EP. 20150729

			瘦的时候是那些年我们追过的女孩
56	J		*shou de shihou shi naxienian women zhui guo de nvhai*
			When thin and slender, she was remembered as the Goddess we pursued in the idol drama.
			胖了就变成
			pang le jiu biancheng
			Overweighed,
			那些年我们追过的包子
			naxienian women zhuiguo de baozi
			she was teased as the steamed bun,
57	S	⟶	顶上还有两鸡腿
			ding shang haiyou liang jitui
			with two drumsticks above her head.

Question organization is the second most common technique adopted by the second host in constructing progression (see Tao, 2018). Contrary to the previous research on the relation of question-raising to power and dominance in institutional contexts (Clayman, 2013; Gill & Robert, 2013; Goldberg, 1990), it is found that the second host occasionally interrupts with posing questions, which do not claim any turn floor, but merely display the second host's involvement with and affinity to the ongoing story-telling through instant inquiries for the progression of the plot. In extract 5, Jin Xing mentions an old couple blacklisted by the national tourism management department. Immediately, Shen Nan expresses his interest in the blacklist. Subsequently, the first host postpones her topic for an explanation. In short, the listener's response to the narrative suggests indirectly his being strongly attuned to the constructed action, and in turn witnesses the promotion of the teller's continuation. Apart from this action, the question implies a hint to Jin Xing to turn to another, more interesting topic (the second host occasionally introduces on behalf of the audience).

As the third sub-branch of progression, description complements the teller's narrative, this adds hilarious ingredients and therefore creates a dramatic stage effect. In extract 6, Shen Nan picks up the description of one actress once starring as *Xiaolongnv* in *Shen Diao Xia Lv* (The Romance of the

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Condor Heroes), teasing her being overweight, especially when in a costume there appear to be two drumsticks above her head. This playful quip, reinforcing a weight-gaining expression of the female actress, sends the studio and TV audience into hearty laughter.

In terms of the recipient's reaction, *backchannel* as a discourse marker or an affiliative assessment functions as a displayer of the listener's being involved, and the feedback serves as a signal of organising the subsequent storytelling. *Progression*, on the other hand, primarily promotes and supplements the narrative by proposing questions, offering evaluative turns, and adding hilarious descriptions. Also, it elicits laughter from the crowd and more or less pins down the narrative course by highlighting interesting questions. Something that is particularly worth noting is that interruptions in *progression* may distract the display of the major host, transfer the turn floor to the less predominant host, although it is by no means intended to disturb or distract. Unhearable as "competitive or combative in tenor" (Goldberg, 1990, p. 896), they cooperate with the first host for efficient or humorous accounts. That is what differentiates between cooperative interruption and intrusive forms of interruption.

Intrusive interruption

The intrusion-oriented type of interruption, as is indicated, is a statement deixis, in addition to a posit of the positive face of the speaker. According to Goldberg (1990, p. 890), the fundamental difference between rapport/cooperative interruptions and intrusive interruptions lies "in the degree to which the positive and negative wants of the interrupted speaker are addressed". As seen in *Jin Xing Show*, the insertion of affiliative remarks, information-inquiring questions and playful quips addresses the speaker's positive wants, while the listener-cum-interrupter's cutting off the speakerhip with abrupt turns and disagreements could be relevant to the negative wants of the teller, and can be excluded from rapport. The negative dimension of an intrusive interruption can be detected in its aggressiveness or "negatively evaluated act" (Hutchby, 1992, p. 347), aiming at teasing, disagreeing, or abruptly grabbing the teller's turn.

The percentage of incursive turns in the actual talk show is not high (31%) as far as the second host's interruptions are concerned. Tease makes up 21% of the total interruption, disagreement and pick-up make a smaller proportion: 7% and 3% respectively. By teasing, I refer to the second host mentioning one-liners, quipping or bantering (to make fun of Jin Xing's questionable personal character flaws, such as being bad-tempered, and addicted to having predominance in family and work). When blurting out these teasing remarks, the second host avoids the talk show institution represented by coalition with the major host, and instead joins in the audience side or the resistance camp to call the ongoing narrative into question. Making use of the unfavourable personality of the first host's character is conducive to evoking laughter from the crowd.

Extract 7 EP.20170705

1	S		姐 你这话头一起
			jie nizhe huatou yiqi

			MadamJin, since you start it off,
			我就想问你一个专业的问题
			wo jiu xiang wen ni yige zhuanye de wenti
			I do have a serious question.
2	J	⟶	什么问题
			shenme wenti
			Which one?
3	S		接下来哪个明星要躺枪
			jiexialai nage mingxing yao tangqiang
			Which celebrity is going to be your poor target?
			(laughter from the studio audience)

Extract 8 EP.20160916

20	J		可不 她瞬间将泼妇骂街
			kebu ta shunjian jiang pofu majie
			Exactly in no time she elevated the nonsense barking
			上升到了国际矛盾
			shangsheng daole guoji maodun
			up to the international issues.
			汉斯一看就知道这不胡搅蛮缠呢
			Hansi yikan jiu zhidao zhebu hujiaomanchan ne
			Hans thought she merely made a fuss out of nonsense.
21	S	⟶	汉斯不最熟悉这一幕吗
			Hansi bu zui shuxi zhe yimu ma.
			Shouldn't Hans be most familiar with the trick?
			(laughter from the studio audience)

In extract 7, Jin Xing is going to reveal the behind-the-scene tricks used by the so-called "master" and immediately before bold disclosure, Shen Nan inserts to extract the information that everyone in the audience wants to know—who exactly Jing Xing is going to attack verbally. It is recognized that the first host is outspoken and never hesitates to open fire at public figures with inappropriate forms of conduct, despite their overwhelming popularity. Due to her making witty, piercing, and acerbic remarks, public figures, especially actors/actresses, are concerned about someday being subjected to name-calling. That is why the second host interrupts with the innuendo from the outset that she may "shoot" several persons once again by revealing the master's dark tricks. Teasing in this case takes advantage of the sharp characteristics of the major host, and as a matter of fact is not favoured by the teller. Extract 8 is a case in point. In line 20, Jin Xing tells of the terrible train adventure that her husband Hans experienced—a middle-aged woman rudely occupied Hans's seat in the thronged cabinet, refused to give it back, and even started up a quarrel to put Hans in an awkward position. Immediately after the lively narrative, Shen Nan should display his affiliation towards Jin Xing's stance to criticize the irksome woman. He then unexpectedly dismisses the comments and retorts that Jin Xing always acts like this woman in the home, which mocks the dominance and power-control wants of Jin Xing.

This innuendo is seamlessly inserted precisely at the appropriate time, and to the point. The audience instantly burst into laughter. In this case, the second moves away from assisting the first host's narrative, and instead acts as the counterweight. When the audience shows positive affiliation towards the first host's storytelling, thus creating a lack of "opposition" (Li & Lee, 2013, p. 165), the second host acts the devil's advocate to break the harmony by making fun of the first host.

A couple of times, Shen Nan resists the teller's overt stance towards the recounted episode and starts with mild disagreements, such as "姐你可别这么说" (Madam Jin, you might be wrong), or rhetorical questions to show his resistance and repulsion to being teased for being short and plain-looking (see extract 9). It can be noticed that every time the second host is going to display his opinion contrary to the first host's, he refers to the initiator as "姐" (*Jie*, Madam Jin) to get her attention and to mitigate the possible abruptness resulting from disagreement. In EP.20170125 for example, when Jin Xing says that the youngsters are doing nothing but idling away their life by photographing celebrities and selling photos to make a living. Instead of responding to her, the second host instantly adds: "Madam Jin, you might be wrong. They DID NOT waste their time or life. The truth is that since Lady Hongqiao (Note 4) is a well-known public figure, 7,000 RMB is the starting price for her to post ads on her Weibo account". The use of address-term initiator here, "Madam Jin", and the modal verb "might" jointly gently express his rejection to the affiliation to her stance. By displaying different propositions on the event, Shen Nan's disagreement refuses the assumption that his verbal interjection is nothing but provision of affiliation to Jin Xing's storytelling. Therefore, by illustrating disagreement, the interrupter conveys the message that he holds the critical thinking towards the ongoing talk and occasionally acts as the agent of the other camp as well. Despite its small proportion, this disagreement is of great importance to the diversity of opinions. For the interruptee, her dominance is challenged, and hence there is an interruptive interference.

Extract 9 EP.20160713

7	J		我往那儿一站妈呀
			wo wang na'er yizhan ma ya
			When I stood in the crowd of men with bulging muscles
			就像沈南在人堆里一样一样
			jiuxiang Shen Nan zai rendui li yiyang yiyang
			I felt it is like the way Shen Nan was immersed in the crowd (Note 5).
8	S	⟶	姐你就不能换个好点的比喻吗?
			Jie ni jiu buneng huange haodian de biyu ma
			MadanJin, can't you just speak nice?

Being Slightly different from challenging the speaker's opinion, pick-up is the attempt to trespass on the speaker's territoriality to cut off the otherwise smooth utterance while inserting his own discourse before the first host, and also eliciting the second half of utterance, which usually constitutes the punchline. An abrupt pick-up can often result in disliking or repulsion on the part of the interruptee. In extract 10, Jin Xing says that during the critical diet stage, her husband Hans once asked their nanny to

cook a sumptuous dinner before she came home from work. Xing outrageously declares that the moment she saw the feast, she was shouting at her nanny when Shen Nan seamlessly squeezed into the dense turn and blurted out rapidly—"throw the dishes away", which, if ever enacted, is the only relevant expectation of Jin Xing (considering her habitual irascibility). The ensuing reaction of Jin Xing knocked down the audience—"serve me the dish". The abruptness and unexpectedness jointly worked out by the two hosts renders the audience to burst out laughing. Something worth noting is that although the interruptee might laugh along with the audience, the intrusiveness and blatant intervention arrived at before the turn completion is not welcomed by the speaker-cum-interruptee. It is therefore deemed "intrusive interruption".

Extract 10 EP.20150729

117	J		我当时气得我头发都竖起了
			wo dangshi qide toufa dou shuqi le
			I was so outraged
			我一拍桌子
			wo yi pai zhuozi
			that I couldnot help but slap the table
			大声呵斥那个阿姨
			dasheng hechi nage ayi
			and shouting at the nanny
			阿姨去
			ayiqu
			"You,
118	S	⟶	把菜给我倒了
			ba cai geiwo daole
			throw away the dishes
119	J	⟶	把筷子给我拿来
			ba kuaizi geiwo nalai
			bring me the chopsticks
			(观众笑声)
			(laughter arising from the studio audience)

Teasing, disagreement, and pick-up function jointly in the intrusion-oriented interruption performed by the second host. Each item, in spite of the smallness of the percentage, assumes an irreplaceable duty: to illustrate one profile of the disruptive turns. Teasing is for revealing the pointy character of the dominating host and thus eliciting laughter. Pick-up, however, creates the laughing point by a stark contrast and the abruptness through the seamless co-work of the two hosts. Disagreement, on the other hand, provides different opinions on the recounted events and shows the variety of interruptions in Shen Nan's turns-in-interaction.

Intrusive interruptions with their unique functions do not occur frequently, while rapport and cooperative interruptions complementing the teller's narrative through evaluative turns, informative

questions, and supplementary depictions, occur far more often.

7. Correlation between Interruption and Laughter

All of the interruptions, collaborative or intrusive, aim at the facilitation of storytelling progression and the elicitation of laughter. Cooperative interruptions contribute to 46.1% of all the laughter, and the rest relates to intrusive interruption. That is to say, the intrusion-oriented interruption with disproportionate turn share even outnumbers the rapport type that accounts for nearly 70 percent of the turns. As shown in Table 3, cooperation type *progression* contributes to all the frequency of laughter, and *backchannel* contributes to none. In terms of intrusive type, all three sub-branches of interruption contribute their share to laughter elicitation, and more noticeably, teasing. The stark contrast reveals cues of correlation between the interruption type and laughter. Below is a correlation test (with Chi-square test in SPSS 23.0). Backchannel, progression, tease, disagreement, and pick-up under conditions of laughter and non-laughter are counted respectively, and typed into the form and the result is shown thereafter. The data figure shows that the eliciting of laughter and interruption type are definitively correlated.
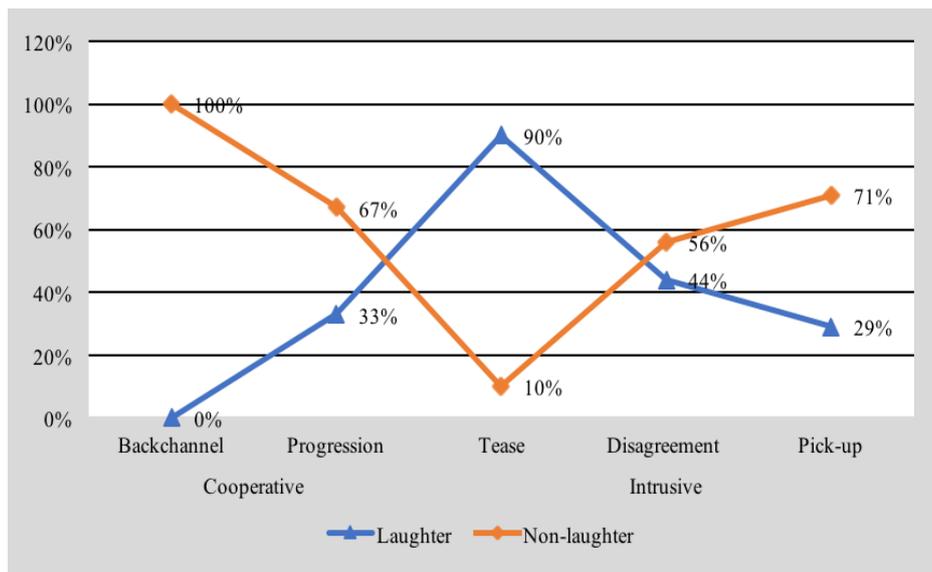

Figure 2. Percentage of Laughter and Non-laughter in Each Sub-type of Interruptions

Table 3. Types of Interruption VS. Laughter and Non-laughter

		Laughter	Non-laughter	Sum
Cooperation	Backchannel	0/0%	28	28
	Progression	47/46.1%	95	142
Intrusion	Tease	46/45.2%	5	51
	Disagreement	7/7%	9	16
	Pick-up	2/1.8%	5	7

More detailed information is illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 3. It can be inferred that in the rapport type, 28 backchannels are all related to non-laughter, while there is only 33% of progression that is connected with laughter (47 in 142). As mentioned in the previous section, the primary purpose of a backchannel is to give an instant positive response to the narrator for further storytelling. For narrative continuity, the interrupter applies minimal responses: short turns, like interjections, to be delivered in one or two seconds. The restriction on the turn size and turn length eliminates the possibility of more affective turns. Therefore, even when backchannel does not incite any laughter from the studio audience, it makes sense to the TV viewers.

As with progression, roughly two thirds of the turns are irrelevant in connection with laughter. Progression falls in three sub-branches: evaluation, question, and description. They work together to help complement the major host's account, demonstrate a strong sense of involvement, and elicit laughter from the audience. As for intrusion, 90% of turns in the form of tease generate laughter, while the opposite case is for pick-up. Turns for the great majority cannot encourage a sense of humour to the crowd. Laughter and non-laughter is roughly split half in disagreement. Based on Chi-square test and data in Figure 2, *tease* is obviously positively correlated with laughter. *Backchannel*, in stark contrast, is negatively connected with laughter. *Progression*, *disagreement*, and *pick-up* lean more towards non-laugher than to laughter.

As a response to the narrative, *backchannel* is delivered in short turn lengths and small turn sizes, without turn-floor or topic-variation orientation (cf. Murata, 1994, pp. 388-390). Ultimately, it is designed to show the teller that the narration appeals to the recipients. Therefore, it functions as a hint to spur the narrator on. In *backchannel*, the interruptee shows complete affiliative evaluations to the event expounded and without there being any differing propositions, while in *tease*, things are just the opposite. In *tease*, playful comments and questions are targeted at the first host or the characters depicted in the narration. The fire is mostly on Jin Xing's prominent personality characteristics, such as being easily offended, bad-tempered, outspoken, and caustic while making criticisms, which comprise the foundation of all the laughing-stock contents of Shen Nan's *tease* interruptions. Besides, the characters in the narrative are often the tease target, under which circumstances, the playful comments pose no harm to the narrator, but provides a channel to voice his opinion hilariously and disclosing what seem to be "ridiculous deeds". Viewed thus, teasing characters in the storytelling conforms to Jin Xing's telling, and hence rapport-oriented to some extent. For illustration, see the following example:

Extract 11 EP.20170705

82	S		但是姐你分析下嘛
			danshi jie ni fenxi xia ma
			Madam Jin how about we having a second thought
			看有没有这种可能性
			kan youmeiyou zhezhong kenengxing
			to see if it is possible that

			表面上看虽然
			biaomianshang kan suiran
			although Master Lei
			雷"大师"被打的鼻青脸肿
			leidashi bei da de biqinglianzhong
			seemed to be beaten black and blue.
			但实际上
			dan shijishang
			But actually,
			雷"大师"是暗暗地使了内力
			leidashi shi anan de shi le neili
			Master Lei did exercise his internal power
83	J		怎么讲
			zenme jiang
			How come?
84	S	⟶	实际上徐晓东
			shijishang Xu Xiaodong
			Actually, XuXiaodong
		⟶	五脏六腑已经被震碎了
			wuzangliufu yijing bei zhensui le
			was badlly hurt inside.
			（观众笑声）
		⟶	再过一百年可能就挂了
			zaiguo yibainian keneng jiu gua le
			He would kick his bucket in 100 years
			（观众大笑）
			(laughter from the studio audience)

Extract 11 tells about Master Lei's boasting about his kung fu skill—he was overcome when he was beaten up in only a few seconds in an awkward situation by an amateur wrestler. Shen Nan interrupts in time to assume that although he is superficially beaten badly, Master Lei may have exerted his internal force into the veins of the wrestler, and was therefore probably badly hurt within and was going to expire in 100 years. Shen Nan's quip comes at the last clause: "kick his bucket in 100 years", for one hundred years of age is widely believed to be the ideal longevity for most people. By pretending to be ignorant about having common sense, Shen Nan indeed sarcastically gave a verbal punch in the so-called master's face.

Opinions on the relation between power/dominance and interruption have noticeably differed. One side maintains that the dominant party tends to interrupt the less dominant one in order to display their control of the turn floor and turn exchange. While other researchers propose that correlation needs to take context into consideration, there are cases where the less predominant part interrupts more than the dominated does. For example, as stated previously, Beattie (1981) pointed out that in interactions

between students and tutors, because there is some pressure on students to make a good impression in tutorials by making contributions to the discussion, students usually interrupt their tutors more frequently than vice versa. By the same token, here on *Jin Xing Show*, as the second host as well as Jin Xing's assistant, it is Shen Nan's urgent and primary goal to help Jin Xing with the narration, giving feedback, confirming the detail that she covered, and proposing questions to facilitate the storytelling realisation. These are institutional obligations on the side of the second host to create playful and humorous turns to enliven the studio atmosphere. In order to achieve these goals, the second host has to exert interruptions for most of the time, and the laughter demands are achieved even by way of banter on part of the dominant party, which is scarcely used in the turn exchange in other institutionalised situations, such as teacher-student and doctor-patient interactions. The reference to jokes and banter on the predominant part is the outcome of institutional obligations and rights assigned to the part of the interrupter. Due to the first host's well-acknowledged fiery temper on commenting on controversial topics and public figures, the program received close-down once, and her Weibo account invited several remarks on her being too mean. The program itself chooses not to shun all of these negative experiences, and instead opens the window and proactively picks up the contents deliberately by teasing on the part of Shen Nan, as well as self-mocking on the part of Jin Xing. Therefore, hilarious teasing by Shen Nan provides an outlet for all the side effects, which is also allowed and promoted by the institution per se. Interruptions, or more precisely, intrusive interruptions, in this talk show are connected to the institutional obligations and rights entitled, and are assigned to the interrupter-cum-host with little relation to any gender differences.

As for pick-up, the great majority is in relation to non-laughter, while a cursive look at sequential turns adjacent to the pick-up will indicate that the second host in fact makes provisions for eliciting laughter in the immediate subsequent turns. In extract 12, Jin Xing mentions that his friend after returning from a therapy training center still kept the date pit that he used to smell in order to drive away his extreme hunger in the training unit. Immediately at that time, Shen Nan interrupts and adds an assumption– keeping it as a reminder to prevent from falling for the trick once again – the audience normally expect so. Unexpectedly, Jin Xing reveals that her friend is actually addicted to the smell of the date pit and cannot fall asleep without its presence. The stark contrast effected by Shen Nan's bedding and Jin Xing's final quip jointly elicits laughter within the studio audience. In short, the second host uses pick-up to cut in either with an utterance following the normal logic (see extract 11-12), or a playful quip to make a contrast to what the first host delivers in the adjacent turn(s), and laughter is normally from her side.

Extract 12 EP.20170705

129	J		说到这里
			shuodao zheli
			Speaking of it
			胖子从兜里掏出一颗枣

			pangzi cong douli taochu yike zao
			my fat buddy drew out a date,
			说姐你看
			shuo jie nikan
			And said, hey, you see,
			这玩意儿我现在都留着
			zhe wanyi'er wo xianzai dou liuzhe
			This tiny date I keep it till now.
130	S	⟶	对留在身边时刻提醒自己
			dui liuzai shenbian shike tixing ziji
			Yup of course he should, keep it with him and remind him of
			上当受骗的这种经历
			shangdang shoupian de zhezhong jingli
			the poor experience of being taken in.
131	J	⟶	他说姐你知道吗
			ta shuo jie ni zhidao ma
			Not exactly, he said you guess what,
			我现在落下病根了
			wo xianzai laoxia binggen le
			I now develop this freak habit that
			晚上睡觉前不含着
			wanshang shuijiao qian bu hanzhe
			If I have no such a date in my mouth to taste,
			我睡不着
			wo shuibuzhao
			I cannot fall asleep.
			（观众大笑）
			(laughter from the studio audience)

8. Conclusion

By choosing one prominent Chinese television talk show as an institutional locus, this work examines how the discursive interruption helps the second host establish his role identification as well as fulfilling his assigned mission. Findings show that a great majority of the second host's turns are constructed by interruption. Within the intrusive turns, nearly 70% are delivered to build up cooperative and communicative relations with the first/dominant host. Nearly 30% of the turns are regarded as intervention into the first speaker's narrative, with multiple pragmatic functions. By teasing the first host on her predominance and bad temper over a range of contents, the second host does more than enliven the studio atmosphere by arousing laughter. He acts as a "counterweight" (Li & Lee, 2013, p. 168) via teasing, either by helping the first host's narrative to add humorous element therein, or by playing the role of the "devil's advocate" to blurt out what is shared by the public to take a side with

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the audience. Therefore, interruption, as far as the J*in Xing Show* shows, more often than not orients towards *teasing*, which elicits laughter from the television studio viewers.

The role of the second host can be perceived from triple dimensions. Most importantly, as Jin Xing's assistant host, Shen Nan initiates the opening remarks, shows affiliative participation, and contributes to the realisation of storytelling by proposing follow-up questions, evaluations, comments, or descriptions. As a megaphone of the audience, the second host in a sense volunteers to participate in the sitcoms whenever the first host asks who in the auditorium would like to play a role, for interaction. Additionally, the second host occasionally throws a couple of sensitive questions at the first host that are welcomed by the inquisitive-about-trivialities audience. For instance, after Jin Xing denounces that some young and popular actors tend to be above themselves once recognised by the public, Shen Nan instantly picks up her turn and asks: "Madam Jin, have you ever been complacent since you are now a public figure in the dance circle, the film circle, and even the talk show circle?" As a harsh question to the first host, it responds to the rumour among the public to a certain extent that Jin Xing has become so arrogant that she is no longer satisfied with dancing or talk shows. Under the circumstances, the second host takes side with and therefore speaks for the audience to make the narrative audience-oriented, and thus more intriguing, which reinforces the click volume of this television program.

To conclude, this paper examines the categories and effects of interruption, which contribute to research in the discursive interruption in institutional settings. However, the generation mechanism of interruption in institutional settings neglected here is worthy of further investigation. The interactional and moral features instead of sequential aspects of interruption are to be taken into consideration in analysing the operation of interruption. The personality and response of both the interruptee and the interrupter form this talk in interaction. The combined factors of the conversationalist and the settings itself interpret the making of interruption as a whole.

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Notes

Note 1. https://www.baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%87%91%E6%98%9F%E7%A7%80

Note 2. http://www.youku.com

Note 3. *Xunfeiyuji* (讯飞语记) is a widely used tool for transcribing voice into text. The source language in the voice can be both Mandarin Chinese and English.

Note 4. Lady Hongqiao is a young girl who was waiting for years at Shanghai Hongqiao Airport to admire and take photos with various kinds of stars. For the large number of photos she has been taken with these celebrities, which was rather envious for some fans, the girl was accordingly mocked as Lady Hongqiao and became instantly in vogue in 2016.

Note 5. Shen Nan is 160cm tall, which is a cause of making fun of him frequently used by Jin Xing.