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**Chinese Culture of Social  
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Current Sequential  
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and Acceptance**

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# Chinese Culture of Social Interactions: Current Sequential Organizations in Gift Offering and Acceptance

Wang Weiyi<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This paper is closely related to the study by Zhu *et al.* (2000). The purpose of the present study is to explore and discover whether the sequential organizations of gift offering and acceptance (G.O.A.) have changed in China today and what the changes are. Zhu's Observation Sheet is adopted. 108 informants in two coastal cities in China have attended the investigation. The most significant findings in the present corpus of the data are the sequential structure without "seesaw" (38% of the instances) and more occasions of G.O.A. than the ones defined by Zhu *et al.* (2000). These phenomena are analyzed and interpreted by means of ethnography of communication combined with Chinese concept of "Mianzi" (face-saving) and "Guanxi" (relationship). It concludes that the sequential structure of G.O.A. can be influenced not only by the intimacy of "Guanxi", but also by the other relevant factors like age, personal likings, and the value or amount of gifts, and that G.O.A., as a daily communicative and social event, can be more widely applied than it used to be.

## 1. Introduction

In the paper of "The Sequential organization of Gift Offering and Acceptance in Chinese" by Zhu Hua, *et al.* (2000), an empirical study was conducted on the sequential organization of G.O.A. in Chinese from ethnographic perspective in which they classified the occasions of gift exchanges between the Chinese people into six categories (i.e. for thanking, seeking favor, attending special celebrations; attending dinner, visiting the sick; and visiting friends and relatives) and then the data were processed and analyzed in detail by categorizing the phenomena into 7 strategies of gift offer and 4 strategies of gift acceptance. They argued that the cultural context in which G.O.A. occurs has a fundamental impact on the organization of the event and concluded that the Chinese *Li* (rites) differs significantly from the western concept of "politeness" in both content and structure.

However, Zhu *et al.* (I.B.D) conducted their study in such a circumstance that Chinese culture is supposed not to be influenced by foreign cultures. In fact, G.O.A., as a daily communicative event and social phenomenon, is not unique to

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the Chinese culture, especially in the present time of globalization and cross culture. Therefore their conclusion is limited. Secondly, they analyzed the data only by means of “communication analysis” which they think most effective in analyzing the sequential organization of G.O.A., but the data concerned with the age, sex and occupation were ignored. They failed to explore and discover the impact from these factors in the data. Finally, they also discussed and explained G.O.A as a politeness phenomenon only in the Chinese concept of “Li” (rites). Chinese culture is profound and prolific. G.O.A in China, as a daily communicative and social event, is closely related to politeness or “Li” as well as “Mianzi” (face-saving) and “Guanxi” (relationship). “Mianzi” (face-saving) and “Guanxi” (relationship) are so important that they can, to some extent, decide not only the sequential organization of G.O.A, but also the success of G.O.A practices.

Based on the aforesaid, the present research is the replication of Zhu’s (2000) study by adopting the same “Observation Sheet”, aiming to investigate the *current* sequential organization of G. O. A. in China. This study tends to explore and discover *if things have changed* and *what the changes are*. More than 100 participants of different age, both sexes and various occupations from two coastal cities in China have attended this investigation. The data are processed and analyzed. The phenomena are explained in terms of ethnography of communication combined with Chinese “Mianzi” (Face-saving) and “Guanxi” (Relationship) by exploring the sequential organization of the informants’ speech interactions in G.O.A practices.

The present paper consists of the following parts: a) a brief introduction of “*Mianzi*” (Face-saving) and “*Guanxi*” (Relationship), letting the readers have a clear picture in mind to understand G.O.A. in China; b) the data including method and procedure to explore and discover what has happened in sequential organizations of G.O.A in Chinese nowadays; c) a detailed analysis and discussion of the findings by means of ethnography of communication together with Chinese “*Mianzi*” and “*Guanxi*”, in order to explicitly explain why things have changed; and d) a summary of the key findings of the study and the theoretical and methodological issues emerging from it.

## **2. G. O. A. concerned with “Mianzi” (face-saving), “Guanxi” (relationships) in modern China**

### *2.1. Mianzi (Face-saving)*

“*Mianzi*”, face-saving, is a dominant component of the Chinese psyche. Face-saving is having a high status in society, and having a high amount of integrity. Face can be earned, lost, given away, or taken away. For example, if an individual does a favor for another individual, he/she receives the face. If he/she

gives a gift for thanking the favor, he/she rewards the face-saving. In a sense, it is almost used as a form of currency in China. This concept of “*mianzi*” serves not to hide people from the consequences of their actions, but to provide a way to protect the social system and allow people to live in harmony. All Chinese treat “*mianzi*” with great seriousness and avoid causing themselves or others to lose face. Instead, they always try to maintain face in social activities.

## 2.2 *Guanxi* “relationship”.

The term “*guanxi*” carries several different connotations. In the most general sense, “*guanxi*” simply means relationship. The second usage refers to a subset of relationships that work according to norms of reciprocity. A third usage exhibits a pejorative connotation. It refers to “the usage of someone’s authority to obtain political or economic benefits by unethical person(s)” (McInnes, 1992). “*Guanxi*” or “*guanxixue*” (study of relationship) represents a way to bypass regulations, laws, or norms through personal connections with people who control limited resources. In this paper, we focus primarily on the second usage of the term “*guanxi*”. Thus here the term refers to a special type of relationship that bonds the partners through reciprocal exchange of favors as well as mutual obligations (Alston, 1989; Hwang, 1987; Luo, 1997). The exchanges that take place among members of the “*guanxi*” network are not solely commercial, but social, involving the reciprocity of favors (“*renqing*”) and the saving of face (“*mianzi*”) or social status. Thus, if a partner receives a favor, he/she is obliged to pay back the favor in the future. Violation of this norm of reciprocity and social obligation will damage one’s reputation and will lead to “*meimianzi*” (loss of face).

## 3. Methodology

The data collected in this study is based on the same “Observation Sheet” by Zhu *et al.* (2000) (See Appendix). 200 sheets were distributed among the informants in Hangzhou and Huzhou, two famous coastal cities in China. As it is difficult for the observers/informants to audio/video tape the G.O.A practices, it is the best way to ask them to note down the exchange sequence as accurately as possible during or right after the transaction. 108 informants were deemed to effectively respond to the investigation as requested. They are of different age, both sexes, various occupations and educational levels. The occasions on G.O.A are involved in thanks, wedding, birthday, visiting the sick, and making an apology, etc. The gifts included the range from special souvenir items to cash.

## 4. Results

The data were processed and tabulated according to the basic information of the informants and the sequential organization of G.O.A with/without “seesaw”, so

that they can explicitly show the relevance to the current change of sequential organization of G.O.A. in Chinese. The tables are as follows:

**Table 1. Basic Information of the Informants**

Age				Gender		Occupation				Educational levels			
19 ↓	20-30	31-40	41 ↑	M	F	Tea.	Stu.	Entrep.	Oth.	Univ.	J.Col.	Sch.	Oth.
1.9%	65%	25.5%	7.6%	25.5%	74.5%	77.6%	1.9%	5.6%	14.9%	29.7%	55.5%	12.0%	2.8%

*“Tea” is short form for teacher, “Entrep.” for entrepreneur; “Oth.” for others, referring to miscellaneous occupation, or the uncertainty of educational level; “J. Col” for junior college.*

Table 1 shows that the majority of the informants are below 30 years old (about 70%). This age indicates that the informants were all born during the time when China began to adopt the open-up policy in 1978. Second, approximately 85% of the informants have received higher education. Nearly 80% are teachers and students.

**Table 2. Sequential Organization of G.O.A. in Chinese with/without “Seesaw”**

With “Seesaw”	62%
Without “Seesaw”	38%

According to Zhu’s definition of “seesaw”, i.e. offer-decline-reoffer-final acceptance, we sorted out from the corpus of the present data and found that there are 62% of informants who practiced gift exchange with “seesaw” and 38% without “seesaw” as shown in Table 2. This is the most important finding in the present study. This phenomenon will be discussed in detail in the following part of this paper.

## 5. Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction part of this paper, the present study aims to explore and discover the *“current”* sequential organization of G.O.A in a broader sense of the Chinese cultural context, which is both cleaving to the traditional Chinese culture and embracing western culture. G.O.A, as a social and daily communicative event, is a manifestation of social and cultural rules as well as a reflection of linguistic norms. The Ethnography of Communication (Hymes, 1972) as one of the discourse analysis approaches concerning the relationship with language and culture, can better provide the terms and concepts which are essential for discussing how and why language is used and how its use varies in different cultures. It can also help researchers to survey the most important findings and applications of their work and draw on insights

from social anthropology and psycholinguistics in investigating the patterning of communicative behavior in specific cultural settings.

Now let us discuss the “*current*” sequential organization in G.O.A in detail by answering the two questions “*If things have changed*” and “*what they are*”.

### 5.1. The Sequential Organization in G.O.A without “Seesaw”

The most important findings in the present study are the sequential organization in G.O.A. without “*seesaw*” (about 38% of the informants). “Seesaw” as defined by Zhu *et al.* (2000) is that from the offerer’s perspective s/he must show his/her sincerity by repeating the offer again and again until the recipient accepts, while from the recipient’s perspective s/he needs to make sure that the gift offer is indeed sincere. Therefore the sequential organization forms the pattern of offer-decline-reoffer-final acceptance. However, such a pattern does not appear between the interlocutors in the above mentioned instances (38%) during their gift exchanges. When the data are further explored, we find that this phenomenon is probably caused by the relevant factors such as “*Guanxi*” (relationship), the value or amount of gift, personal likings and age. The following examples will illustrate the points.

#### 5.1.1. No “Seesaw” due to “Guanxi”

(1) (A is B’s relatives. A gave B 800 yuan for congratulation on B’s entering higher school)

A. *Jiangni yige hongbao.*

(Award you a red pack)

B. *Duoshao qian, wo kangkang.*

(How much, let me see)

A. *Buhuishaode.*

(It won’t be a little)

B. *Xiexie.*

(Thank you)

(2) (B is A’s boss. A gave B some local specialties after A came back from his hometown)

A. *Zhexie shi womenjia ziji zuode. Geinidian changchang.*

(These are home-made specialties. I bring you some for a taste)

B. *Ao, xiexie.*

(Oh, thank you)

(3) (A and B are friends. A gave B a souvenir after A returned)

A. *Zhecizai fengjingdian mailexie jinianpin. Geini ye daile yige.*

(I bought some souvenirs in the scenic spot. I also bought one for you)

B. *Hen piaoliang. Xiexie.*

(It looks very nice. Thank you)

The sequential organization in Example (1),(2) and (3), shows that the interlocutors have such close relationship that the politeness strategies can be ignored. Therefore no “seesaw” exists in their dialogues. From the concept of Chinese “*Mianzi*”(face) or “*Guanxi*”(relationship), their practice of G.O.A was done without considering “*Mianzi*”(face), which shows that they have very solid “*Guanxi*”(personal relationship). On the contrary, if they adopt the pattern of “seesaw”, it may otherwise indicate that they have loose “*Guanxi*”. Therefore, the more “sincere offer” and “kind refusal” are expressed between the interlocutors, the looser their “*Guanxi*” is. In China, the intimacy of “*Guanxi*” can affect the sequential organization like “seesaw” and decide the success of G.O.A. The following example is very typical.

(4) (A and B are colleagues. A gave B two T-shirts for A’s help)

A. *Zhexietian ni xinkule. Duokui nide bangmang.*

(These days you are working hard. Thank you for your help)

B. *Ao, yinggaide.*

(Oh, It’s my pleasure)

A. *Jintian wo pengqiao kangdao lianjian T-xushan, tingshihe nide.*

(Today I happened to see two T-shirts. They fit you)

B. *(Jingyazhuang) Bu, wo buxuyao.*

(To his surprise) (No, I don’t need them)

A. *Ni kebuyao rangwoshiwang a.*

(You should not let me down)

B. *(Chenmo)*

(Fall in silence)

A. *Nandao ni buyuanyi jieshou wode liwu?*

(Why are you so unwilling to accept my gift?)

B. *Bu, wo bushizhegeyisi. I meiyouxiangdao.*

(No, I don’t mean it. It’s beyond my expectation)

There are turn-takings between the interlocutors in Example (4). The offerer intended to express his thankfulness for the recipient’s help, but the latter thinks it’s unnecessary. The offerer tried to persuade the recipient into acceptance by even using some special expressions to show his sincerity, but the latter still declined regardless of what the former said. The “seesaw” is obvious in this example by defining their verbal or nonverbal communication. This phenomenon shows that their personal relationship is loose no matter they are colleagues.

Another interesting phenomenon we have detected in the following example is that the interlocutors did not mention anything about the gift during the gift

exchanges, which may indicate that they have very solid personal relationship or that the gift is too small to be mentioned regarding their closeness.

(5) (A and B are friends. A brings B some cigarettes and wine for seeking favor)

A. *Jintian neng jiandaoni zhenshi hengaoxing.*

(Today I am very pleased to see you again)

B. *Nali nali, feichang huanying ni de daolai.*

(So am I. You are welcome)

A. *Jintian tedi lai mafan ni, zhenshi buhaoyisi.*

(Today I come to you for your help. I am very sorry)

B. *Biekeqi, yinggai, yinggai.*

(Oh, it's my pleasure)

A. *Zuijin wo pengdaole yixie mafan...*

(Recently I have been in trouble...)

B. *Haitingfuzade.*

(It sounds very difficult)

This example also proves the importance of “*Guanxi*” in China. If you set up a good social relationship network, you will feel easier to seek help from others. In China, gift exchange without mentioning gifts often shows the intimacy of “*Guanxi*”. In Chinese, it is termed as “*Guanxitie*”, meaning the personal relationship is as strong as iron.

#### *5.1.2. No “seesaw” due to age because of the greater influence of western culture among the younger generation*

As ethnography of communication (Hymes 1972) states that language varieties are concerned with different factors including setting, role-relationship, age, social class, ethnicity and region etc., the statistical findings in the present corpus show that among the instances without “seesaw” about 90% of the informants are below 30 year old. The younger the informants, the more direct their G.O.A practices. The reason is probably that they were born in the time of China's reform and open-up to the world (since 1978), during which Chinese culture is heavily influenced by western culture. Speech and behavior of young Chinese are significantly affected. They would rather treat G.O.A as a common social event to express their feelings like thankfulness, friendliness and affectiveness than as a means of “*La Guanxi*” (meaning “pulling side of someone who is more powerful). Therefore they consider little about “*Mianzi*”(face). The sequential organization is more direct. Example (6),(7) and (8) can explain the point explicitly.

(6) (A and B are friends. B gave A some Chinese tea. They are in their twenties)

A. *Nihao! Ni hechama?*

(Hi, Do you like tea?)

B. *He, niyao songwo?*

(Yes. Do you want to give it to me?)

A. *Shiya, wo buhecha. Chen xinxian ni heba.*

(Yes, I don't like tea. You try it when it is fresh)

B. *Najiu xiele.*

(Ok, thank you very much)

(7) (A and B are relatives. A gave B a pair of watches for congratulation on their wedding. They are in their twenties)

A. *Zhen xianmu nimen. Shibushi henxingfu?*

(I am envious of you. Are you happy?)

B. *Shi a, Nixiangdehua, yekuaizhao yigeba!*

(Of course. If you are thinking about it, you can find one for yourself)

A. *Song nimen yiduiqinglubiao, jilunimen meihaoshiguang.*

(I give you a pair of watches. They can record your happy time)

B. *Xiexie.*

(Thank you)

(8) (A and B are classmates. A and B exchange gifts for their farewell. They are teenagers)

A. *Mingtian women jiuyao gebendongxile, zhenshebude.*

(Tomorrow we will say goodbye to each other. I will miss you very much.)

B. *Shi a. Yihou chang geiwo dadianhua.*

(Yeah, please call me often)

A. *Zheshi songgeinide jinianpin. Yao haohaozhenxi. Chuangshang ta jiuyao xiangqiwo.*

(This is my gift for you. I hope you will value it and think of me when you wear it)

B. *Wa, zheyifu zhenpiaoliang. Wo henxihuan. Zheshi wosongni de liwu.*

(Wow, it's very beautiful. I like it very much. This is my gift for you)

A. *Ao, wo yehenxihuan. Wohui haohao zhenxide. (Ku...)*

(Wow, I like it very much. I will surely value it) (Crying)

### 5.1.3. No "seesaw" due to personal likings

(9) (A and B are friends. A gave B a bottle of perfume as Christmas gift)

A. *Wo zheyopingxiangshui. Pingzi henqiguai. Niyinggaixihuan. Zuowei shengdanliwu songgeini.*

(I have a bottle of perfume. The bottle is very peculiar. You will like it. I give it to you as Christmas gift)

B. *Haode. Xiexie.*

(OK. Thank you)

(10) (A and B are relatives. A gave B some cosmetics)

A. *Wo maile yihe huazhuangpin geini. Xiwang ni huixihuan.*

(I have bought a box of cosmetics for you. I hope you will like it)

B. *Shi shenmepaizide?*

(What's the brand name?)

A. *Nashi womennalide techan. "Oushiman zhenzhu huazhuangpin", bijiaohaode.*

(It's our local famous brand named "Oushiman" made of pearl powder. It's good)

B. *Zhende a! Na wode pifu shibushihe?*

(Really ! Is it fit for my skin?)

A. *Woshi gengju nide pifu maide, yinggaishiheni.*

(I bought it according to your skin. It must be fit for you)

B. *Nahao, wo xianshishikan. Xiexie.*

(OK, Let me try it. Thank you)

Example (9), (10) show that both the offerers and recipients have good relationship so that they pay little attention to the politeness strategies and "Mianzi" (Face), hence there are no "seesaw" battles in their gift exchanges. On the contrary, the recipients' acceptance of the gifts mainly depends on their personal likings. Example (10) is most typical. The recipient didn't accept the gift until she made sure that the cosmetics was fit for her skin. The communicative sequence is organized by their personal likings rather than the G.O.A. strategies.

#### 5.1.4. No "seesaw" due to the value or amount of gifts

In the present corpus another finding is detected that the value or amount of the gifts can affect the sequential organization of G.O.A. Examples are as follows:

(11) (A is a student's parent. B is a teacher. A gave B some gifts for thankfulness)

A. *Zhang Laoshi. Zheshi wode yidian xinyi, qingwubi shouxia.*

(Teacher Zhang, These are my small gifts for you. I hope you will accept them)

B. *Li xiansheng, nide xinyi wolingle, xianhua woshouxia, dan qitadou daihuiqu.*

(Mr. Li, thank you for your kindness. But I will accept the flower and you take back the rest)

(12) (A and B are student and teacher. A gave B some fruits and cards as Teacher's Day gift)

A. *Laoshi, zhuni jierikuaili. Zheshi wo geinide liwu.*

(Sir, Happy Teacher's Day. This is my gift for you)

B. *Xiexie, wohenkaixin shoudao nide liwu.*

(Thank you. I feel very pleased to receive your gift)

A. *Zheshi wode yidianxinyi.*

(This is only my small gift for you)

B. *Niyou zhefeng xinyi jiuhaole. Zhende xiexieni.*

(It's very kind of you. I really thank you from the bottom of my heart)

(13) (B is A's leader/boss. A gave B some gift checks as thankfulness for B's favor)

A. *Zheci duokui nide guanzhao, wocaineng zuoshang zhegeweizhi.*

(Owing to your help, I can be promoted to this position)

B. *Nali, zheshi niziji nulide jieguo.*

(No, I don't think so. It's the result of your hard working)

A. *Wo buzhini xihuanshenme, zheshi liangzhangquan, shenme doukeyimai. Ni xihuanshenme jiumaishenme.*

(I don't know what you like. These are two gift checks, You can buy whatever you like)

B. *Zhe keshi weifanjilu.*

(It is in violation of principles)

A. *Yidian xiaoyisi, bugouweifan jilu.*

(Just a little, It won't)

B. *Najiu xiele.*

(Thank you)

Example (11) and (12) obviously show that the recipients like to accept the gift but they refuse to accept the big amount of gifts. That's why the recipient of Example (11) told his student's parent to leave the flower and take away the rest. From his view of point, flower is enough for the parent to express thankfulness or friendliness. He doesn't care how much or expensive the gift is. Example (13) indicates that the value of the gift is more important for the recipient to decide whether to accept it than the sincerity of the offerer. When he made sure that it's not violating the principles, he accepted it. Otherwise he will by any means refuse it.

## 5.2 G.O.A. on the occasion of making an apology

Another interesting finding has caught my attention is that some instances (approximately 4% out of the corpus) are excluded from the occasions of G.O.A. presented by Zhu *et al.* (2000). These instances are concerned with the occasion of making an apology. Two examples are presented as follows:

(14) (A and B's sons are classmates in an elementary school. A's son beat B's son in a quarrel. A brought some gifts to B's house for making an apology on behalf of his son)

A. *Xiaoming hai hao ma?*

(Is Xiaoming feeling better?)

B. *Meishir. Xiao haizi chaojia hen zhengchang. Bu yao fang xinli qu.*

(He is OK. It is a common thing that children have a fight. You needn't take it serious)

A. *Shi womenjia Zhang Jun buhao. Wo yijing henhende piping tale. Ta yeren cuo le.*

(It's Zhang Jun's fault. I have already criticized him. He has also admitted it)

B. *Meishir.*

(Never mind)

A. *Zheshi gei Xiaoming chide. Qing zhuan gao ta, Zhangjun xiang ta peibushi.*

(This is for Xiaoming. Please tell him that Zhang Jun is making an apology to him)

B. *Bieqeqi. Na wodaibiao Zhang Jun xiexiele.*

(Never mind. OK, I thank you on behalf of Zhangjun)

(15) (A and B are neighbors. A brings B a watermelon for making an apology for the inconvenience of electric cut caused by the ongoing party)

A. *(Qiaomen) Wo keyijinlaima?*

(Knocking at the door) ( May I come in?)

B. *(Kaimen) Shenmeshi?*

(Open the door)(For what?)

A. *Da Wei rangwo songge xigua geini, dui gangcai de duandian biaoshi qianyi.*

(I am sending you a watermelon on behalf of Da Wei for apologizing to you for the inconvenience of the electric cut)

B. *Ao. Jinlaiba. Zuo zuo, woba xigua qiele, zanlia yiqichi.*

(Oh, come in please. Sit down. Let's eat together)

Example (14) and (15) show that G.O.A can serve as one of the strategies to make an apology apart from the other occasions. The offerers in these two examples applied the strategy that s/he sent the gift on behalf of others so that s/he may not lose face if s/he encounters the recipient's refusal. Besides, making an apology by bringing a gift is also a strategy to express one's sincerity of making an apology. Therefore this strategy is now very popular in China.

## 6. Summary and conclusion

From the above mentioned data analysis and discussion, it is obvious that the sequential organizations between the interlocutors have changed in the present corpus of the data. The most significant changes are about 38% of the informants have no "seesaw" in their sequential structure during the gift exchanges, which is new evidence different from the findings in Zhu's empirical

study (2000). From the surface of the sequential structure, we can see that these phenomena are closely connected with the relationship, age, personal likings and the value or amount of the gift. But for better understanding, we have to employ the ethnographic approach, which can extend our understandings of language related to cultural systems and social organization. As Troike (1989) holds that ethnography of communication contributes to the study of cultural maintenance and change, including various acculturation phenomena in contact situation, and may provide important clues to culture history. Hence, we can consider the sequential organization without “seesaw” in a broader sense of cultural and social context in modern China.

First, China has enjoyed a heritage of Confucius’s teachings (551-479BC). According to it, all relationships are dictated by five major relationships: emperor-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger brothers and friend-friend. To ensure social harmony, order and stability, appropriate behaviors are needed. The practice of G.O.A , as one of the appropriate behaviors to maintain the relationship in harmony, is prevalent in all walks in China. In this study, the relationships between the interlocutors are mainly friends, relatives, or leaders/bosses. The sequential structure without “seesaw” indicates that their bonds are equally based rather than hierarchally although their real social status is probably unequal but the solid relationship makes them think little about the G.O.A. strategies.

Second, “*mianzi*”, as a dominant component of Chinese psyche, is very important in Chinese daily life. G.O.A. is one of the good ways for Chinese to show and maintain face in social activities. G.O.A strategies are designed to some extent for keeping faces. The core of the “seesaw” battle is to stop losing faces between the offerer and recipient. However, in this study, the sequential structure without “seesaw” suggests that the interlocutors consider more about “*Guanxi*” than “*mianzi*”. From their point of view, the better “*guanxi*” is, the less their “*mianzi*” is threatened. On the contrary, if a “seesaw” battle occurs, they probably think their personal relationship is not strong enough and they can’t give each other “*mianzi*”, which clearly means to lose their “*mianzi*”.

Third, just as ethnography of communication suggests that social changes are bound to manifest themselves in all areas of social life, including the way people communicate (D. Cameron 2001), G.O.A., as a manifestation of social rules as well as a manifestation of social rules as well as linguistic norms, is inevitable to change. The sequential structure without “seesaw” found in this study all belong to the informants below 30. This age is just in the time of China’s reform and opening-up to the outside world since 1978. They have grown up in the cultural context that Chinese culture is heavily influenced by the western culture. Their language and behavior are significantly different from the aged. From the

sequential organization of G.O.A. in the present corpus, we can find that their gift exchanges are more open and direct and infer that they pay more attention to the emotional feelings than materiality.

In sum, it may conclude that the sequential organization of G.O.A. in Chinese can depend on the intimacy of relationship between the interlocutors regarding the Chinese concept of “Guanxi” and “Mianzi”. The more solid their “Guanxi” is, the less they consider “Mianzi”, and hence there being “no seesaw” in their sequential structure. If we put the sequential organization in a broader sense of culture and society, we may infer that young people below 30 in China today, who are influenced by western culture, tend to practice G.O.A. more openly and directly. No “seesaw” battle occurring is quite normal.

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## Appendix

### Observation Sheet (English translation)

	Gift Offerer (A)	Gift recipient (B)
Sex		
Age		
Education background		
Occupation		
Relationship between A and B		
Occasion for the gift offer		
Setting for the gift offer		
Type of Gift		
Exchange sequence		
(Please note down, as accurately as you can, what the participants say. Pay special attention to what they say before the gift is offered, when the offer is made, and after the gift has been offered.	A: B: A: B: A: B: A: B:	
Observer's comments		

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