

煥然一新

huan4 ran2 yi4 xin1

Lawmakers Ann Chiang Lai-wan and “Long Hair” Leung Kwok-hung were at it again. The run-in this time took place in the corridors of the Legislative Council. Actually it was more like Chiang dressing down Leung and the latter flippantly defending himself.

In the news footage, a fuming Chiang talked about how “I was wearing make-up then, and not wearing make-up now,” and Leung retorted he was just telling Chiang that she was pretty.

It sounded really confusing, so Leung explained afterward.

He said he saw Chiang’s picture in her new pamphlet in which “she looks pretty and young.” Her appearance was “煥然一新” (*huan4 ran2 yi4 xin1*) and “basically to the point of being unrecognizable.” And when he saw Chiang, he told her “with a face like that” people might confuse her with another younger candidate.

“煥然” (*huan4 ran2*) means “shining,” “brilliant,” “glowing,” “lustrous,” “一” (*yi4*) “one” and “新” (*xin1*) “new.” “煥然一新” (*huan4 ran2 yi4 xin1*) means “to take

Idiom by Lon Yan

on an entirely new look,” “to look brand new,” “to look completely new,” “having a bright, new look,” or “changed beyond recognition.”

The idiom is more often used these days to describe a place instead of a person. For example, when a restaurant has been redecorated, it would look “煥然一新” (*huan4 ran2 yi4 xin1*).

Chiang said Leung’s remarks were disrespectful, and she could hardly be blamed for having that feeling. Words like “unrecognizable” and expressions like “with a face like that” are far from the right choices as a compliment. And Leung should have known that the looks of a woman, or for that matter a man, are not something that you should joke about.

Terms containing the character “新” (*xin1*) include:

新聞 (*xin1 wen2*) – news

新奇 (*xin1 qi2*) – novel; new

新鮮 (*xin1 xian1*) – fresh

新娘 (*xin1 niang2*) – a bride