

## Linguistic Impoliteness Strategies in Sina Weibo Comments

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### Abstract

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By applying Culpeper's anatomy of impoliteness strategies published in 1996, this study aims to explore types of impoliteness strategies used by Chinese in a computer-mediated communication context Sina Weibo. One post released by Fan Bingbing Studio Account concerning the Fan's purported tax fraud is chosen as the instrumental case. Quantitative results show that four strategies are employed in Sina Weibo context: bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness and sarcasm or mock impoliteness. Among the strategies employed, the most frequent type is positive impoliteness strategy while the least frequent type is sarcasm or mock impoliteness strategy. Withhold politeness strategy does not exist in current data pool. Qualitative analysis provides examples for each strategy presented in the data. With a data pool containing 5873 impolite utterances, this study not only provides more supports for Culpeper's anatomy in 1996 but also produces more empirical data for the online linguistic impoliteness in the context of China.

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**Keywords:** impoliteness strategies; Sina Weibo; comment; computer-mediated communication

### 1. Introduction

Computer-mediated communication is a way to communicate through Internet with computer, portable phone, or other high-tech devices (Locher, 2010). It has become a crucial part in our daily lives with the widespread use of Internet. People use all kinds of online platforms to associate with each other, to participate in discussions or to express their feelings and attitudes toward some events. To participate in these online activities, language can never be ignored as an important vehicle. Meanwhile, computer-mediated communication is different from face-to-face communication in that it can be either synchronous or asynchronous (Herring, 2007). Since language use is greatly influenced by context, it is quite necessary to examine how people use language online. One facet that requires more studies is linguistic impoliteness in this context. Although recent years have witnessed an increase in linguistic impoliteness research, the number is comparatively small, let alone studies that focus exclusively on online linguistic impoliteness in China. This study, therefore, aims to provide more insights for online linguistic impoliteness in Chinese context by examining linguistic impoliteness strategies employed by Sina Weibo users in the comment section of Sina Weibo.

Sina Weibo is a Chinese version of Micro blog. It is one of the most popular social media platforms in China. Up till May, 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018, there have been 411 million monthly active users and 184 million daily active users (see <https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/weibo-user-statistics>). Any user can communicate on this platform by releasing or commenting feeds which are restricted to 140 Chinese characters. Contents in multimedia forms or long posts can also be attached to a feed. Any user can follow any other users and is allowed to like, comment a feed or to repost a feed. In this way, any feed can become a place that allows for "a live viral conversation stream" (see <http://ir.weibo.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=253076&p=irol-products>). The comment section in Weibo is one place where linguistic exchanges occur (not including private messages due to the accessibility issue).

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For some heated topics, there might even be more than ten thousands comments below, thus providing abundant data for any research aiming to discover how language is used in this context. Despite of explicit prohibitions of any form of impoliteness (e.g., see terms 3.3.4, 4.10, and 4.11.7 in Term of Services of Sina Webo on <https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404117216005072489>), there are tons of thousands of impolite, humiliating, assaulting or threatening comments. Some of them can even bring cyber violence to the targets.

In the following sections, the author first illustrates the anatomy of impoliteness strategies proposed by Culpeper in 1996. It will be employed in current research as the analytical framework. Next, studies on linguistic impoliteness strategies in online context are reviewed. In chapter three, the author introduces research methods of this study. In chapter four, the author reports the findings and discusses them with examples. In chapter five, the author concludes this paper with a summary of findings and points out limitations and future research directions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Culpeper's Anatomy of Impoliteness Strategies

The richness of politeness research owes much to the notion of face in Goffman (1967). This notion is further developed by Brown & Levinson (1987) and has received revised definition as one type of basic desires of every social being. According to them, face can be further divided into "positive face" and "negative face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.62). Positive face refers to desires for recognition by other social beings while negative face refers to the wants of not being impeded by others social beings (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It seems that while the positive face accentuates connections with others, the negative one emphasizes independence (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Face can be damaged, maintained and enhanced during the interactions with others and speakers can assess the threatening degree in order to employ different politeness strategies accordingly to maintain, guarantee or enhance the face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

By contrast, impoliteness has long been neglected in academic field. For a long time, it is defined on the basis of politeness (Lakoff, 1989, p. 103) and is regarded as marginal in our communications (Leech, 1983, P. 105). Systematic research on impoliteness starts from Culpeper (1996). Based on previous work on politeness and face, especially on Brown & Levinson (1987), he first defines impoliteness as "the use of communicative strategies designed to attack face which cause social conflict and disharmony" (Culpeper, 1996, p.355) and builds up an impoliteness strategies' anatomy that encompasses five super-strategies of impoliteness as well as some output strategies based on his analysis of impoliteness in army training and drama dialogues. In his later research, various contextual factors such as roles of hearers (Culpeper, 2005; Culpeper, 2011), prosody (Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003) and other discourse factors (Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003) are considered and impoliteness is finally defined as "a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts" (Culpeper, 2011, p. 23). In current study, this definition is adopted as the operational definition for impoliteness. As for the definition of impoliteness strategy, the author follows Culpeper (1996) and defines impoliteness strategies as strategies used by speakers to attack face.

Although a set of strategies is summarized in Culpeper (2011), they "can be accommodated" (Culpeper, 2011, p. 109) by the anatomy of impoliteness strategies in Culpeper (1996). Moreover, many relevant studies also rely on the anatomy of strategies proposed in Culpeper (1996) so that relying on the same framework allows comparisons among studies. Based on these two considerations, the current study adopts the anatomy of impoliteness strategies in Culpeper (1996).

In this anatomy, there are five super strategies. The first one is "bald on record impoliteness" (Culpeper, 1996, p. 356). It is a strategy that has direct, clear and unambiguous threatening effects to the hearer's face (Culpeper, 1996).

The second one is "positive impoliteness" (Culpeper, 1996, p. 356). It is a strategy that threatens hearer's positive face wants (Culpeper, 1996). For this superstrategy, several output strategies are also provided, including "ignore, snub the other" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "exclude the other from an activity" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "disassociate from the other" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "use inappropriate identity markers" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "use obscure or secretive language" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "seek disagreement" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "make the other feel uncomfortable" (Culpeper, 1996, p.357), "use taboo words" (Culpeper, 1996, p.358) and call the other names" (Culpeper, 1996, p.358).

The third one is “negative impoliteness” (Culpeper, 1996, p. 356). It is a strategy that attacks hearer’s negative face wants (Culpeper, 1996). For this superstrategy, several output strategies are also provided. They are “frighten” (Culpeper, 1996, p.358), “condescend, scorn or ridicule” (Culpeper, 1996, p.358), “do not treat the other seriously” (Culpeper, 1996, p.358), “invade the other's space” (Culpeper, 1996, p.358), “explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect” (Culpeper, 1996, p.358) and “put the other's indebtedness on record” (Culpeper, 1996, p.358). The fourth one is “sarcasm or mock politeness” (Culpeper, 1996, p. 356). It is a strategy by which the face of the hearer is threatened through the use of insincere politeness strategies (Culpeper, 1996). The last one is “withhold politeness” (Culpeper, 1996, p. 357). It is a strategy by which the impoliteness is achieved when speakers fail to express politeness as being expected (Culpeper, 1996).

Culpeper (1996) also discusses some paralinguistic aspects of impoliteness when illustrating his anatomy by resorting to the army training camp example. They are what speakers use to create impolite atmosphere for the hearer in an army training camp. However, in current study, the author will concentrate on the linguistic utterances so that any paralinguistic cues will not be discussed. However, they will be considered to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation.

## 2.2 Studies on Linguistic Impoliteness Strategies in Online Context

Investigation into strategies of linguistic impoliteness strategies in online context is gaining more attention in recent years with the spread of Internet. Various online platforms are taken as the research objects. Qualitative methods are employed to analyze data from Facebook (Akintola & Ayantayo, 2010; Mak & Chui, 2014; Hammod & Abdul-Rassul, 2017; Shinta, Hamzah & Wahyuni, 2018), Instagram (Erza & Hamzah, 2018; Indrawan, 2018), video clips (Rosanti, 2017; Xavierine & Thayalan, 2017), et cetera. Qualitative results are presented with examples and accompanied by quantitative results showing percentage of individual strategy. All except Indrawan (2018) and Xavierine & Thayalan (2017) apply Culpeper’s anatomy of impoliteness strategies proposed in 1996. Results show that netizens prefer positive impoliteness strategy over other strategies (Hammod & Abdul-Rassul, 2017; Erza & Hamzah, 2018; Mak & Chui, 2014; Rosanti, 2017; Shinta, Hamzah & Wahyuni, 2018) while negative impoliteness strategy occupies the second place (Erza & Hamzah, 2018; Rosanti, 2017; Mak & Chui, 2014; Shinta, Hamzah & Wahyuni, 2018). However, withhold politeness strategy receive less consensus. While Hammod & Abdul-Rassul (2017) reports the existence of this strategy, Erza & Hamzah (2018) and Rosanti (2017) deny this discovery.

Turning to Chinese online context, efforts have been made to describe the linguistic impoliteness phenomenon in Chinese online context (Chen, 2012), to discover the interactions between impolite language and online identity construction (Lin, 2016; Zhang & Xie, 2015), to explore the effects or functions of online linguistic impoliteness (Chen, 2016; Shen, 2016; Jiang, 2017), to look into reactions toward online linguistic impoliteness (Li, 2014; Wu, 2016; Liu, 2017; Zhou, 2016) and to analyze people’s assessment of impoliteness and reasons behind online linguistic impoliteness (Zhu, 2017). However, studies focusing exclusively on linguistic impoliteness strategies are bare. Relevant research employs qualitative methods. Xie (2012) extracts data from Tianya Society.

She contends that her findings not only support Culpeper’s anatomy in 1996, but also illustrate certain Chinese specific impoliteness strategies which Culpeper’s anatomy fails to incorporate. However, the conclusion is dubious. She makes reference to “小强” (cockroach) and “方舟子” (Fang Zhouzi, a celebrity famous for anti-fraud conducts) as the examples of Chinese specific impoliteness strategies since these terms can only be understood in Chinese context. However, what she notices should be better regarded as the impolite phenomenon instead of impoliteness strategies. Besides, since both terms are used to refer to the addressees in a derogatory sense, they can be categorized into the “call the other names” output strategy. A problematic analysis is also presented in Wu (2012). That study takes text messages in Tencent QQ as the research object. Different from Xie (2012), Wu (2012) analyzes impoliteness strategies in instant online communications. However, findings are confined to the introduction of the impoliteness anatomy by listing examples from QQ without any detailed discussion.

While neither of the two studies above explores the relative frequency of individual impoliteness strategies, Zhu (2017) merits in this respect. It explores impoliteness strategies in comment sections of several Chinese news websites. Comments are collected and classified. The percentage shows that “using taboo words” (Zhu, 2017, p.88) is the most frequent strategy exploited while “hindering” (Zhu, 2017, p.88) and “being unconcerned” (Zhu, 2017, p.88) are the least frequent ones. Overall, direct impoliteness is favoured. That study has advantages in empirically driven classification since it ensures the accommodation to Chinese data to some extent.

However, no discussion is provided on how this classification is different from or related with previous classifications. From the viewpoint of author, that classification looks rather similar with Culpeper's anatomy in 1996. Studies centering on Sina Weibo are also scarce and none of them concerns the linguistic impoliteness strategies used by Weibo users in the comment section. Zhang & Xie (2015) analyzes several examples from Sina Weibo to discuss the pragmatic functions of impolite utterances and identity construction in cyber-context. They find that identity is closely related to the way, the aim and the effects of using impolite language. Jiang (2017) addresses functions of impoliteness by examining comments toward 30 pieces of hot Chinese news on Sina Weibo. He identifies emotional, coercive, entertaining, solidary and supervision functions. Liu (2017) adopts impoliteness framework of Bousfield (2007) to explore what strategies are used to end impoliteness on Sina Weibo. He finds that in Chinese online context, most impolite communications end with one party withdrawing from the communication. Besides, the more controversial a topic is, the more frequent the withdraw strategy will appear. While Liu (2017) touches upon strategies, it concerns the strategies to end the impoliteness while those strategies do not necessarily have to be impolite. More research is therefore required to examine strategies in impolite utterance in online context exclusively.

Since impoliteness is closely related with specific contexts (Culpeper 2011), different online platforms and different topics under discussion can greatly influence what linguistic impoliteness strategies are used in impolite utterances. Moreover, problems of previous relevant studies and the scarcity of related research further protrude the necessity of more research. Therefore, this study will analyze linguistic impoliteness strategies used in comment section of Sina Weibo to address research gaps and problems mentioned above. The research question is, based on the anatomy of impoliteness strategies in Culpeper (1996), what are the linguistic impoliteness strategies used by Weibo users in the comment section of Sina Weibo?

### **3. Research Method**

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

Comments were taken from Sina Weibo. The feed released by the account Fan Bingbing Studio was selected. It was a response to a feed released by the account of Cui Yongyuan (a famous television host and producer in China) concerning certain celebrity's twin-contract and tax fraud. Although Cui did not mention Fan Bingbing in that feed at all, Weibo users predominantly believed he was talking about Fan. The reason for such a choice is that the purported tax fraud of Fan has attracted enormous attention from the public as can be seen from public participation of the studio's feed: it has have been commented, liked and forwarded by tens of thousands of Weibo users, thus ensuring the data size is large enough for any statistic significance to be made. The feed was released on 13:53, 29<sup>th</sup>, May on Fan Bingbing Studio's account. By the time the data was collected (1<sup>st</sup>, August), there had been 78735 comments and 182870 likes and had been forwarded 17163 times. All comments were extracted for further analysis.

#### **3.2 Data Analysis**

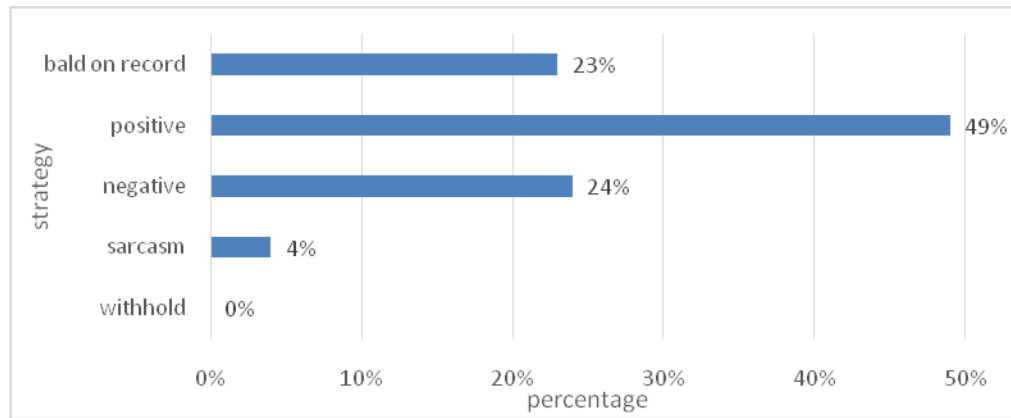
The author first read each comment and marked out impolite comments. The identification of impoliteness was carried out with discursive factors in mind since they might affect the analysis. To ensure the reliability of this study, the author repeated this step after one week and calculated Cohen Kappa coefficient. The Cohen Kappa coefficient was 9.8, thus ensuring a high level of intra-coder reliability.

Next, impolite comments were analyzed for content and put into different types according to Culpeper (1996) anatomy of impoliteness strategies. The classification step also took discursive factors into consideration since they might affect the analysis. When there were more than one strategies emerged in one utterance, the author balanced different strategies and favoured the most dominant strategy. To ensure the reliability of this study, the author also repeated this step after two weeks and calculated Cohen Kappa coefficient. The Cohen Kappa coefficient was 9.7, thus ensuring a high level of intra-coder reliability. After the classification was accomplished, the frequency of each strategy was calculated.

### **4. Findings and Discussions**

Among 78735 comments, the author finds 5873 impolite comments. The percentage of each strategy and each sub-strategy is presented in Bar Chart 4.1.

Bar Chart 4.1 Distribution of Strategies



This chart illustrates Weibo users' preferences for different impoliteness strategies. It shows that among five super strategies, positive impoliteness strategy is the most popular one and is followed negative impoliteness strategy. The preference for positive impoliteness strategy is also observed in other studies using the same framework (e.g., Erza & Hamzah (2018), Hammod & Abdul-Rassul (2017) and Mak & Chui (2014)) although different data are examined.

What is interesting is that the percentage of bald on record impoliteness strategy goes nearly neck on neck with that of negative impoliteness strategy. In other studies like Rosanti (2017), they are in sharp contrast in frequency. Differences can either be due to the topics under discussion or other contextual factors. For instance, while the topic in current study is Fan's purported tax fraud, those in Rosanti (2017) concern whether certain singers are excellent or not in singing or whether they are handsome looking or not. Topics in Rosanti (2017) are less sensitive compared with the one in current study so that they are less likely to embark strong grudges among public while stronger grudges might lead to fiercer language use. No withhold politeness strategy is found and this result supports findings of Hammod & Abdul-Rassul (2017) but disagrees from Erza & Hamzah (2018). The reason can be that in current data pool, the central topic of all comments is Fan's purported tax evasion. Although it does not necessarily elicit impolite comment exclusively, sincere politeness can hardly be expected. These findings suggest that the factor of topic should never be ignored as it plays a major role in providing the context for online communications. They also imply that more research can examine topics in which withhold politeness may exist.

In following sections, the author will illustrate each super strategy and each sub-strategy with examples and discussions.

#### 4.1 Bald on Record Impoliteness

Bald on record impoliteness is an impoliteness strategy that directly, clearly and unambiguously threatens the hearer's face (Culpeper, 1996). Almost no attempt is made to redress the language to reduce the threatening effects and the speakers have the intention to attack the face of the addressee (Culpeper, 1996). 1355 comments exemplify this strategy. For instance, in 264 comments, users directly remark that the addressees are “烂” (terrible). Table 4.1 shows some instances.

Table 4.1 Examples of “烂” (terrible)

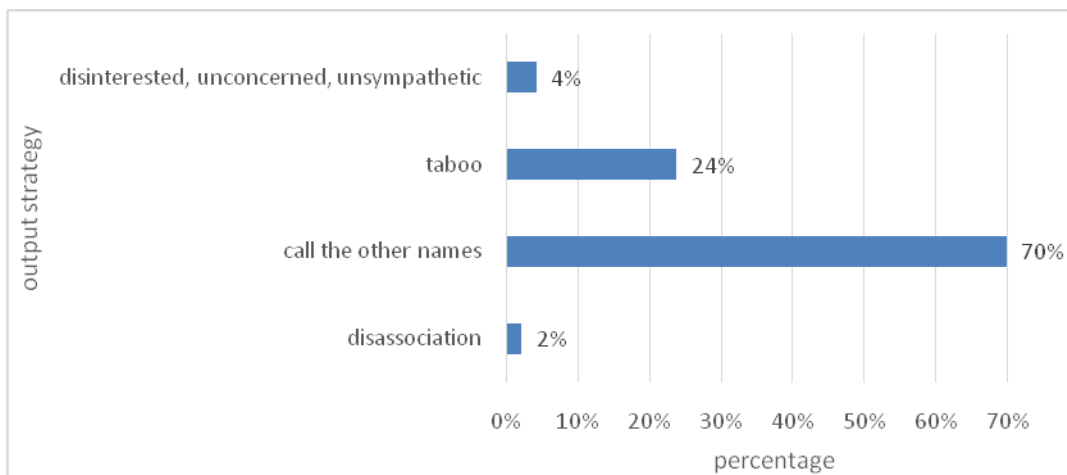
Comment	Translation
(1) 你不用演，你是真烂！	(1) You do not need to act. You are naturally terrible!
(2) 本就烂，还需要说吗？	(2) You're terrible and it goes without saying.
(3) 说实话你们公关的太烂了！	(3) To be honest your publicity work is terrible!
(4) 你们是真烂！	(4) All of you are terrible!
(5) 你的演技不是一般的烂啊！	(5) Your acting skills are strikingly terrible!

In Chinese, using this word to describe or comment something or someone is one of the most straightforward and unambiguous ways to cause offence in most situations. In this case, many users are so angry toward Fan’s deeds and conduct of Fan’s studio that they employ this word to express their anger, hatred and dissatisfaction in a direct, clear and unambiguous way. The addressees’ faces are greatly at stake and the intention to attack their faces is obvious. Therefore, these examples are the illustration of applying the bald on record impoliteness strategy. In addition, the high frequency of this word in particular may lie in that Cui Yongyuan, the public figure who exposed the purported tax fraud on Weibo posted “你不用演, 你是真烂” (You do not need to act. You are truly terrible). As a result, many users simply follow him and remark the addressees using this word.

**4.2 Positive Impoliteness**

Positive impoliteness is a strategy that threatens hearer’s positive face wants, namely, the desires of being liked, accepted, appreciated or approved of. By posting this statement, what Fan or at least what Fan’s studio expects is the understandings, approvals, supports, praises and affections from the public. However, 2881 comments are employed by Weibo users to attack their positive face wants. As for the output strategies, the author finds the following strategies: be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic, use taboo words, call the other names, and disassociate from the other. The distribution of output strategies is presented below. The chart suggests that “call the other names” is the most popular output strategy for attacking addressees’ positive face wants.

Bart Chart 4.2 Distribution of Output Strategies of Positive Impoliteness Strategy



The following parts illustrate each output strategy presented in data with examples.

**4.2.1 be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic**

123 out of 2881 comments illustrate this strategy. Examples are given in the Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 Examples of Being Disinterested, Unconcerned, Unsympathetic

Comment	Translation
1) 支持崔老师, 偷税漏税你活该。	1) I'm in favour of Cui. Tax fraud! You ask for it!
2) 范冰冰自作自受!	2) She asks for it!
3) 馨予洗白了, 这下轮到你们。风水轮流转。也报应你俩上。	3) Xinyu has received her justice. Now it's your turn. Retribution has come to you!
4) 不管什么人, 不管它多么嚣张 不管有没有后台, 不管牵涉面多广, 只要危害人民, 我们就一定要把它绳之以法, 以平民愤, 以正国法, 不惩坏人誓不休!	4) No matter who you are or how powerful you are, once you offend the public, you will be sentenced. It is to appease the public anger and to bring law and justice to a state. We will not stop until bad guys are punished!
5) 我只关心冰冰缴税了吗。	5) All I care is whether Bingbing paid taxes or not.

In this set of examples, users comment that Fan’s current situations are due to her own faults. It suggests that they show no condolence to Fan’s situations and are unsympathetic with Fan’s encounters. They do not care who she is or what the statement has said. All they care about is whether she has committed a crime. It shows that the statement posted fails to win understandings, sympathies or supports from these users since they are not interested whether her legal rights are violated and not sympathetic with her encounters. The positive face wants of the addressees are therefore threatened, thus serving as an example of this output strategy.

#### 4.2.2 uttering taboo words

Among all comments, 686 comments demonstrate this strategy. “他妈的” is one typical taboo word utilized by Weibo users. Table 4.3 presents some examples containing this taboo word. The Chinese taboo words are in italic.

Table 4.3 Examples of “他妈的” (fuck, damn, shit)

Comment	Translation
(1) 真 <i>tm</i> 婊!	(1) Fucking slutty!
(2) <i>TMD</i> , 都是一群粪坑出来的!	(2) Damn! They are all from the same cesspool!
(3) 我 <i>他妈</i> 笑哭了! 什么商业规则!	(3) Fucking lmao! Commercial rules!
(4) <i>特么的</i> 该坐牢[怒]	(4) She should fucking goes to jail [Angry]

Taboo words listed here are all variants of “他妈的” (literally means “his mother’s”), which means fuck, damn or shit in Mandarin. It is used as an expletive to show Weibo users’ anger and despises toward Fan, toward Fan’s studio or toward what was released in the statement. For instance, in the first example, the user thinks that Fan is slutty and intensifies the anger by using “*tm*”. With this word, impolite expression is formed and the addressee’s positive face is attacked. Therefore, it functions as an instance of uttering taboo words strategy.

#### 4.2.3 call the other names

This is the most frequent output strategy of positive exploited by Weibo users: 2011 out of 2881 comments display this strategy.

The most frequent nomination given to Fan Bingbing is “戏子” (actor or actress in Mandarin) (around 29%). Examples are listed in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Examples of “戏子” (actor or actress)

Comment	Translation
(1) 戏子误国。	(1) Actors jeopardize a state.
(2) 崔永元! 国之栋梁! 你个范戏子! 什么东西!	(2) Cui Yongyuan is the pillar of China! You, Fan the Actress, what are you?!
(3) 戏子就是戏子。	(3) Actress is actress.
(4) 戏子无情, 在过去戏子是九流现在把地位抬太高了。	(4) Actors are ruthless. In the past, they were at the bottom of the society. Now, their social status is too high.
(5) 冰冰就是戏子。	(5) Bingbing is just an actress.
(6) 戏子就是一份职业, 应该好好管管了。像邻国韩国一样, 别把戏子捧得那么高。该查查, 该坐牢的坐牢。	(6) Actor is just one profession and should be better regulated now. Learn from South Korea and stop boosting them. Investigations and sentences should be carried out as normal.
(7) 中国的科技人员宇航员, 甚至是中国军人们, 这些真正为国家作出贡献的人们, 过得没戏子好, 到死都没多少人记得他们! 真是时代的悲哀!	(7) Chinese scientist, astronauts and even generals who make real contributions to the state still live a worse life compared with actors and actresses and are forgotten by most people once they pass away! What a shame!
(8) 支持正义, 打垮违法戏子!	(8) I support the justice. Crack down those criminal actors!

“戏子” in Mandarin is a derogatory nomination for addressing an actor or an actress. As the comment (4) mentions, its derogatory usage has the root in Chinese history. In Chinese feudal society, actors and actresses functioned as the tools for the entertainment of the officials. They were at the bottom of the ranking system of profession and had the same social status as prostitutes, beggars, thieves, et cetera. Despite of the abandon of this ranking system, this term is preserved and is used when people intend to express negative feelings toward actors or actresses. This derogatory address explicitly shows the speakers’ disgusts and despises toward the actress Fan Bingbing and therefore, the positive face of the addressee is attacked.

#### 4.2.4 disassociation from the hearer

This strategy is achieved by denying the common ground with the addressee (Culpeper, 1996). 61 impolite comments contain this strategy. Relevant examples are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Examples of Disassociation from the Hearer

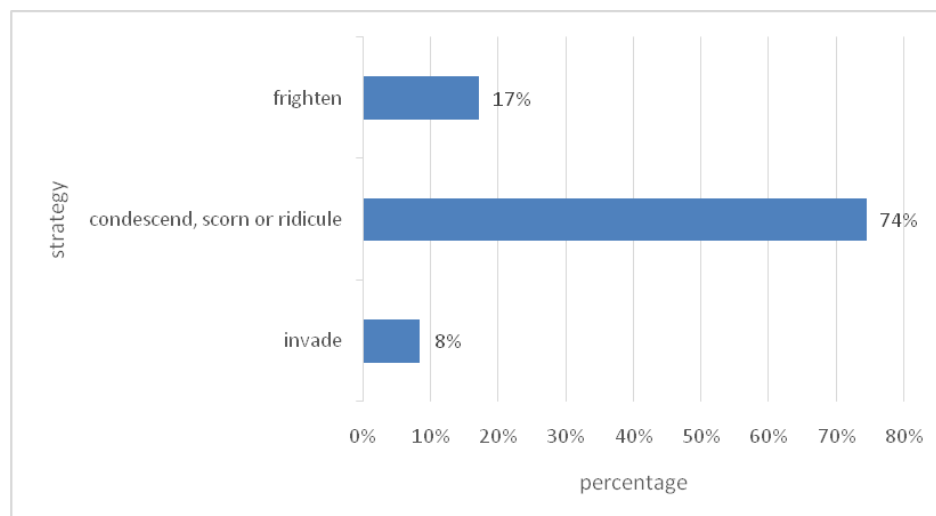
Comment	Translation
(1) 粉转黑。886!	(1) From fan to hater. Goodbye!
(2) 皮包公司?我真是粉转黑了。说崔永元公开涉密?公众人物了还有啥商业密可让人泄,岂不是证实了合约的存在。发声的是工作室么?	(2) Bogus company? Totally from fan to hater. Cui has leaked the secrets? What commercial secrets are there to be leaked for public figures. Hasn't this statement substantiated the contract? Was it really the Studio that released this statement?
(3) 维权是每个公民的权利,但我还是支持小崔,从那次对冰冰粉转黑。	(3) It is every citizen's right to protect the legal rights. Still I'm for Cui. Have transferred from fan to hater.
(4) 我虽然喜欢你,但我这次选择站在崔老师这边。	(4) Although I like you, this time I'm for Cui.
(5) 路转黑。	(5) From onlooker to hater.
(6) 我真的不知道范冰冰是谁。	(6) I really do not know who is Fan Bingbing.

In this set of examples, some users were once fans of Fan Bingbing. Nevertheless, in their comments, they express that they are no longer in her league. Instead, they now loathe Fan for her conduct. They deny their association from Fan by no longer supporting her and by joining the opposite camp. In example (5), the user further increases the distance between him or her and Fan: while onlooker maintains a neutral stance, hater upholds an opposite stance. It is in this way that this strategy is realised. Lastly, example (6) claims that (s)he does not know Fan Bingbing at all, further increasing the distance. All these examples show that speakers intend to disassociate from the addressee.

### 4.3 Negative Impoliteness

The statement given by this feed also expresses Fan Bingbing's negative face wants since it literally demonstrates her desires of protecting her freedom of action and her own rights. Several parts in that statement mention that the leaked contracts are commercial secrets under protection and it is Fan's own business to sign whatever contracts she selects. Moreover, this statement also blames Cui Yongyuan, maintaining that what Cui has said is simply defamation and infringement on Fan's legitimate rights and has violated commercial rules. In the comment sections, 1391 comments exemplify negative impoliteness strategies and output strategies including frighten, condescend, scorn or ridicule and invade the other's space are found. The distribution of output strategies is presented below. It suggests that Weibo users prefer "condescend, scorn or ridicule" strategy over other two output strategies.

Bart Chart 4.3 Distribution of Output Strategies of Negative Impoliteness Strategy



The following parts illustrate each output strategy presented in data with examples.

#### 4.3.1 frighten

This strategy is used to scare the addressee that some misfortunes may happen to him / her. 238 out of 1391 comments serve as the examples of this strategy. Several examples are given in the Table 4.6 below.



Table 4.6 Examples of Frighten

Comment	Translation
(1) 不管是饭 bb 还是饭 jj, 等着国家的制裁吧, 啊哈哈!	(1) Just wait to be punished by the state, Fan bb or Fan jji, don't care! Ahaha!
(2) 等着进监狱吧, 范夜!	(2) Just wait to be sent to prison, Fan!
(3) 等着完蛋吧!	(3) Just wait for your own doom day!
(4) 你们就等着失业吧。。。某工作室的朋友们!	(4) Just wait to be fired... friends from certain studio!

What the statement intends to prove is that Cui's actions are illegal and wrong and Fan is right to protect her legitimate rights. However, in example (1)-(3), users instill the belief to the addressee that she will be sent to prison, or will receive punishments from the state, or will be doomed. In this way, they instill the belief that something terrible may happen to the addressee, thus attacking the addressee's negative face wants. In example (4), the user posts that staff at Fan's studio will be fired by having posted an awful statement, thus serving as an example of frightening the addressees.

### 4.3.2 condescend, scorn or ridicule

Among all comments, 1035 comments are illustrations of this type. Some examples are listed in Table 4.7 below:

Table 4.7 Examples of Condescend, Scorn or Ridicule

Comment	Translation
(1) 先看看自己干不干净再来严正声明吧, 呵呵。	(1) Check if you are stainless yourself before posting this statement, heh heh.
(2) 维权? 根本不存在的吗!	(2) Protect legal rights? Non sense!
(3) 偷睡漏税还能维权?	(3) Tax fraud but still can protect legal rights?
(4) 告他呗! 声明有什么用! 坐等结局。	(4) Go to court with him! What's the sense of posting a statement! Waiting for the results.
(5) 偷税漏税声明下啊! 缴税凭证拿出来证明下!	(5) What's the point of posting an statement? Show your tax voucher!
(6) 要维权早维权了, 不要玩文字游戏, 行动才是硬道理。	(6) Would have done so million years ago! Stop playing with the words! Action speaks louder than words!
(7) 声明无效, 没盖公章。	(7) The statement is not valid without an official seal.
(8) 这声明漏洞百出, 你这其实已经承认了!	(8) Full of loopholes! You have actually admitted it!
(9) 冰冰的这个声明感觉有点底气不足啊。。。应该说明自己没签过大小合同吧。	(9) This statement is weak... she should have claimed the non-existence of twin-contracts.
(10) 你们的商业规则就是阴阳合同吗?	(10) Are your commercial rules the twin contracts?
(11) 你们管偷税漏税叫商业秘密????????、哦打错, 商业规则?????????	(11) You call tax fraud commercial secrets????????? Oh typos, commercial rules?????????

The first three comments suggest that Fan is simply unqualified to protect her so called rights since she has committed tax fraud in the first place. While it is every citizen's rights to protect their legitimate rights, these users believe she does not deserve such basic rights and therefore illustrate their contempt toward her. Other comments like example (4)-(6) reveal the contemptuous attitudes toward the statement by suggesting that posting such a statement is useless and she'd better either to go to court with Cui or publicize the tax voucher. However, they simply do not believe that Fan has the nerves to prosecute Cui or to publicize the tax voucher. Comments (7)-(9) instead ridicule the usefulness, reliability and validity of the statement since there is no official seal on it and it is full of loopholes. The users also believe that the statement fails to answer the tax fraud and twin-contracts issues. Finally, they question the rights claimed for protection. Comment (10) scorns the so called commercial rules and suggests that they are merely unwritten rules for tax evasion. Comments (11) and (12) further question whether their commercial secrets and commercial rules are legal or not. All these comments suggest that users do not treat the statement, Fan's studio or Fan's claimed rights seriously, thus serving as the examples of this strategy.

### 4.3.3 invade the other's space

By employing this strategy, the speakers either move closer to hearers more than their relationships allowed or ask for more information while the relationship between hearers and speakers are not intimate enough for such a request. Among 1391 comments, 118 comments illustrate this strategy. Some examples are given in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Examples of Incading the Other's Space

Comment	Translation
(1) 好久没有范冰冰的消息了，去哪里了？	(1) Haven't heard about Fan Bingbing for a long time. Where is she?
(2) 牛逼哄哄的严正声明，你倒是声明啊！后文那？	(2) Awesome statement! Go on! What is going on now?
(3) 取证的怎么样了？什么时候告上法庭？还是取证了半天发现崔永元说的是事实？	(3) How does the deposition go? When will you go to court? Or the deposition goes against you?
(4) 来解释一下怎么回事！	(4) Come out and explain what happened!

This set of comments reveal that users are asking the whereabouts of Fan Bingbing, the progress of her legitimate rights protection and the current situations. Although the tax fraud concerns the interests of every citizen, for the addressee, the relationship between the public and herself is obviously not intimate enough for revealing information mentioned above. Therefore, by asking information more than what is allowed by the closeness of relationship, these Weibo users invade Fan's space metaphorically.

#### 4.4 Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

This strategy is employed when the face of the hearer is threatened through the use of insincere politeness strategies. 4% of 5873 impolite comments are exemplifications of this strategy. Relevant examples are given in the Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Examples of Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Comment	Translation
(1) 支持范公交！	(1) I support Fan the public bus!
(2) 支持我冰偷税！	(2) I support her for tax evasion!
(3) 偷税和偷人是演员们的强项。	(3) Tax evasion and cheating are what actors and actresses good at.
(4) 赶快维权，看看税务局厉害还是你们厉害。	(4) Hurry up! Go to protect your legal rights! Let's see who is more awesome, you or the State Administration of Taxation.
(5) 崔说，你看你们范爷聪明吗。我不晓得你们范爷聪明不，你这个声明是真的聪明！	(5) Cui said, do you guys think your Fan is clever? I don't know whether your Fan is clever or not. All I know is your statement is really clever!
(6) 厉害了我的国，戏子天堂！	(6) My country is so awesome! The heaven of actors and actresses!

In the first two examples, the users support Fan the prostitute and the tax evasion, which are against the common sense. In the third example, what are considered as good are also against the common sense. In example (4), the user voices the support for legal rights protection while implies that (s)he does not believe Fan will win the battle. In example (5), the statement is regarded as clever while there is an obvious sarcastic tone in it. In the last example, the word "awesome" usually conveys compliments. However, in this case, it is used insincerely to convey the user's exaggerated dissatisfaction toward the tax fraud incident and toward Chinese domestic environment.

The discontent is further supported by the derogatory nomination "戏子" (actor or actress). All these examples convey a sense of irony and insincerity. The distaste and anger are expressed although on the surface politeness strategies are used to attend to addressees' face wants. Therefore, what seems to be polite actually contains impoliteness. In this way, sarcasm or mock politeness strategy is employed.

#### 5. Conclusion

Employing Culpeper's anatomy of impoliteness strategies proposed in 1996, this paper takes the comments under the Weibo feed in Fan Bingbing studio's account as the data pool and examines linguistic impoliteness strategies used in online context in China. This feed is a response to Cui Yongyuan's exposure of dual contracts of certain celebrity. Results show that Weibo users use positive impoliteness strategy most often and there is no instance about withhold politeness strategy. Among the output strategies of positive impoliteness strategy, "call the other names" is the favorite one. Among the output strategies of negative impoliteness strategy, "condescend, scorn or ridicule" is used more frequently than others. With a relatively larger data pool than many previous studies (5873 impolite utterances in total), this study provides more supports for Culpeper's anatomy and also more empirical data for the online linguistic impoliteness research setting in context of China. However, the author sometimes finds it hard to utilize the anatomy. For instance, to label an expression as an instance of bald on record impoliteness strategy, one is required to decide whether the impoliteness is expressed in a direct, clear and unambiguous way and whether the face is maximally threatened.

However, researchers are highly likely to differ in understanding, conceptualizing the adjectives and the adverb in the criterion, which can lead to great variations in both the interpretation and application of this criterion and therefore reduces the reliability of the results. Although the author has endeavoured to minimize the potential problems by conducting an intra-coder reliability check, it is suggested that further research can improve this analytical framework in this respect.

Furthermore, since impoliteness is highly dependent on context, various contextual factors such as topics, online platforms, groups of netizens and even dialectical backgrounds may influence the distribution of linguistic impoliteness strategies. Therefore, to obtain a comprehensive picture of online linguistic impoliteness strategies in China, more research is required by varying these factors.

Lastly, when analyzing the data, the author finds that while linguistic utterances play a role in achieving impoliteness, some emojis also contribute to the impoliteness realization. Although the author takes these emojis into consideration so as to deliver a more accurate interpretation, systematic investigations on how emojis interact with impoliteness strategies are desired.

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