

**Mock Impoliteness: The case of A  
Chinese Online Talk Show—  
*Roast!***

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## Abstract

Mock impoliteness, a term encompassing a wide array of phenomena (e.g., banter, teasing, mocking, jocular mockery, jocular abuse/insults, humour, etc.), has long been grounded in the framework of (im)politeness. It has also been studied under terms such as “anti-normative politeness” (Zimmerman, 2003), “sociable rudeness” (Kienpointner, 1997) and “ritual abuse” (Parkin, 1980). Having attracted a plethora of scholarly attention for several decades (Leech, 1983; Culpeper, 2005, 2011; Culpeper et al., 2017; Mills, 2003; Grainger, 2004; Terkourafi, 2008; Haugh, 2010; Haugh & Bousfield, 2012), the heated debates of mock impoliteness center around (1) its theoretical grounding, (2) its definition, and (3) its relationship with genuine impoliteness, mock politeness and politeness. This thesis contributes to such debates by investigating mock impoliteness in the context of a Chinese game show featuring “roast”, which is of particular relevance to mock impoliteness, focusing on (1) *How is mock impoliteness constructed?*; and (2) *How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?*. In investigating the construction of mock impoliteness, this thesis adopts Culpeper (2011) and Culpeper et al. (2017)’s mixed messages and Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2005)’s rapport management as its theoretical frameworks (modification was made when necessary), following a general integrative pragmatics approach (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014; Haugh and Culpeper, 2018), which also takes multimodality and metalanguage into consideration. Evidence shows that mock impoliteness is constructed dynamically, and different types of mock impoliteness show a strong preference for targeting at hearers’ quality face. In investigating the evaluation of mock impoliteness, a specific feature of this data, that is, Danmaku, an online commenting system imbedded in the video frame, allows the access of a large amount of metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness. An effective coding scheme that captures many dimensions of Danmaku data was created for analysis. Then an unusual approach to the data (at least in the field of pragmatics), a machine learning technique — conditional inference tree model (Hothorn et al., 2006; Tagliamonte and Baayen, 2012; Tantucci and Wang, 2018) was adopted to answer the research question. This method generates clear data visualization based on statistical significance. The results demonstrate that Funniness and Impoliteness are the two most statistically significant factors of evaluations of mock impoliteness. With modification of the theoretical framework and investigation of a rather new type of data, the Danmaku data, this thesis

makes both theoretical and methodological contribution to the field of (mock) (im)politeness while redressing the possible Anglocentric bias by offering solid empirical evidence in Chinese data.

## Declaration

I, Shengnan Liu, hereby declare that this thesis is completed solely by myself, and that it has not been submitted in the same form for the award of a degree elsewhere. Where others' ideas or words have been included in the thesis, all the sources of information have been duly referenced or acknowledged.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Mock Impoliteness

Mock impoliteness, a term encompassing a wide array of phenomena (e.g., banter, teasing, mocking, jocular mockery, jocular abuse/insults, humour, etc.), has long been grounded in the framework of (im)politeness. It has also been studied under terms such as “anti-normative politeness” (Zimmerman, 2003), “sociable rudeness” (Kienpointner, 1997) and “ritual abuse” (Parkin, 1980). The sometimes heated discussions about mock impoliteness centers around its theoretical grounding, its definition and its relationship with genuine impoliteness, mock politeness and politeness through various approaches to various datasets. The following paragraphs will briefly introduce these issues accordingly.

Despite having attracted a plethora of scholarly attention (Leech, 1983; Culpeper, 2005, 2011; Culpeper et al., 2017; Mills, 2003; Grainger, 2004; Terkourafi, 2008; Haugh, 2010; Haugh & Bousfield, 2012), for several decades, the conceptualization of mock impoliteness is still in dispute and requires further investigation. This is not a surprise, because “the field of (im)politeness has soaked up concepts and approaches from other disciplines, especially social psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and anthropology, all of which has enhanced the kaleidoscope impression”, as Haugh and Culpeper (2018) point out.

Although being grounded in the framework of (im)politeness, mock impoliteness does not receive much attention in Brown and Levinson (1987), except a brief mention of joking which is related to mock impoliteness as a positive politeness strategy. Banter, which is held by most scholars as equivalent to mock impoliteness, is not treated at all in B&L (1987) (see also Culpeper, 2011). Having its root in Leech’s Grice-based irony principle, the term mock impoliteness was coined by Leech (1983) to refer to the verbal behavior of “banter”, “an offensive way of being friendly”, as opposed to irony or mock politeness which is “an apparently friendly way of being offensive”. Culpeper (1996) also intends mock impoliteness as a form of banter and defines it as “impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence” (Culpeper, 1996: 352).

Other scholars studied the phenomena of mock impoliteness under labels such as teasing (Eisenberg, 1986; Drew, 1987; Norrick, 1993; Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997; Partington, 2008; Dynel, 2010); jocular mockery or jocular insults/abuse (Labov, 1972; Hay, 1994; de Klerk, 1997; Kienpointner, 1997; Coates, 2003; Zimmermann, 2003; Bernal, 2005, 2008; Albelda Marco, 2008; Fuentes and Alcaide, 2008; Mugford, 2008; Schnurr and Holmes, 2009; Haugh and Bousfield, 2012; Maíz-Arévalo, 2015; Chen, 2019), ritualised insults (Eder, 1990; Kochman, 1983; Labov, 1972), and kidding and joking (Haugh, 2016; Goddard, 2018). Not surprisingly, these different labels focus on different aspects of mock impoliteness where contradictions regarding its definition can be found. One issue with the current scholarship in this field is that the majority of the aforementioned research focuses on English with only a small portion of exceptions involving Spanish and/or other languages. Therefore, whether the phenomena studied are generalisable and whether the conclusions drawn therein also apply to other languages in other social cultural settings need further investigations. Another issue is that the general meanings of the English-specific labels such as joking, teasing and kidding may colour our understanding of the phenomena of mock impoliteness. Moreover, such labels also cause terminological chaos in the investigation of mock impoliteness in other languages (Goddard, 2018) because there is hardly agreement on the terminologies of these first-order labels even inside the English scholarship. Recently, there are some studies tackling this issue. Chang and Haugh (2020) examine metalinguistic labels, such as cháoxiào (嘲笑), cháofèng (嘲諷), fèngcì (諷刺), tǔcáo (吐槽), tiáokǎn (調侃), and kāiwánxiào (開玩笑) used by Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin Chinese when talking about what is broadly termed “teasing” in English, which avoids bleaching out “potentially important culturally salient meanings” of these phenomena (2020:25). Zhao’s (2020) uses an original Chinese term “*hudui*” (reciprocal jocular abuse) to study mock impoliteness, which also raises awareness of the values of cultural specific practices of mock impoliteness.

Therefore, two prominent issues lay ahead for the further investigation of mock impoliteness. The first one is which term should a researcher adopt at the starting point of the investigation. In this case, for a study focusing on Chinese, adopting mock impoliteness *as a second-order term* is more appropriate, as it counteracts the

anglocentric bias of these English-specific first-order labels, and also helps the furthering of (im)politeness in general.

The second issue is which definition of mock impoliteness should a researcher adhere to. Culpeper (2011) and Culpeper & Haugh (2014) view mock impoliteness as the opposite of genuine impoliteness and defines it as consisting “of impolite forms whose effects are (at least theoretically for the most part) cancelled by the context” (Culpeper, 2011:208). Note that he also points out that this distinction between genuine and mock impoliteness is not straightforward but scalar. Haugh and Bousfield (2012) hold that “mock impoliteness is evaluations of potentially impolite behaviour as non-impolite, rather than politeness or impoliteness per se.” As for research discussing related phenomena using more everyday labels such as banter, teasing or sarcasm, the focus is often oriented to the distinction between mock impoliteness and mock politeness (cf. Norrick 1993; Boxer and Corté’s-Conde 1997; Plester & Sayers, 2007; Plester, 2016; Dynel 2016a; among many others). Although generally mock impoliteness is associated with banter and teasing, and mock politeness with sarcasm, many studies argue or provide evidence that such distinction is not straightforward. Culpeper et al. (2017: 334) argues that “mock politeness and mock impoliteness are not limited to sarcasm and banter respectively, as they can arise through a range of different actions or practices”. Taylor (2015a:76) also points out that “the sub-types of mock impoliteness may also be seen to overlap with those of mock politeness” (see also Beal and Mullan, 2017). Moreover, mock impoliteness is even understood as “overtly pretended politeness” in Dynel’s (2016a) study. This complex position mock impoliteness stands regarding its relationship with impoliteness, mock politeness and politeness raises obstacles for identifying a working definition for proceeding research, thus requiring further investigation.

Besides the aforementioned issues, multimodality, humor and evaluation are closely related to the study of mock impoliteness surveying the literature. Multimodal cues such as gestural cues and/or tones of voice, are often present in the evaluation of mock impoliteness (cf. Attardo et al., 2003; McKinnon and Prieto, 2014; González-Fuente et al., 2015)). Much research also explored the relationship between humor and mock (im)politeness (Plester and Sayers, 2007; Dynel, 2016a; Dynel and Poppi, 2019, among many others). Such issues contribute to the methodological approaches to mock

impoliteness across various datasets. In this research, the investigation of the dynamics of mock impoliteness in a Chinese online talk show requires detailed analysis on such matters and relevant discussion will be covered in the literature review.

## 1.2 *Roast!* and Danmaku

*Roast!* (吐槽大会 Tu Cao Da Hui) is an online comedy talk show exclusively aired on <https://v.qq.com/detail/5/50182.html> by Tencent Video, a major Chinese video streaming website. Similar to Comedy Central Roast in America, each episode of *Roast!* invites several celebrities to roast each other. A roast is defined as “a humorous interaction (private or mass-media) in which one or more individuals is/are subjected to jibes, i.e., disparaging remarks, produced by roasters with a view to amusing themselves and others, including the target (the roastee)” by Dynel and Poppi (2019: 3), which demonstrates a feature of “benevolent humorous abuse” (Oring, 2003:80) or “good-natured jokes” (Rossing, 2016:168). The high frequency of teasing and banter in the show provides a great opportunity for an investigation of mock impoliteness in depth.

The show uses an imbedded commenting system—Danmaku. Danmaku is a commenting system that has been widely applied to video websites in Asian countries, especially in China and Japan (Wu & Ito, 2014). This system was created by Niconico, an ACG (animation, comic, game) video website in Japan in 2006 (Hsiao, 2015). In Japanese, the term Danmaku means barrage, or “bullet strafe” (Lin et al., 2018:274). In Chinese, it is also called “danmu” (弹幕) since its introduction in China around 2010 (Hsiao, 2015). As a pseudo-synchronous, horizontal, and text-based display of comments floating in the forms of subtitles at the top of the video frame, Danmaku is rich in metapragmatic comments on the mock impoliteness speech events appeared in the show and can be viewed as an anonymous dynamic focus group, shedding light on the evaluations of mock impoliteness speech events from the third-party participants’ perspective.

## 1.3 Research Questions and Aims

This research aims to investigate the following two research questions regarding the dynamics of mock impoliteness speech events. In the data chosen for this research, there are multi-parties involved in a mock impoliteness event. The speaker initiates mock impoliteness speech acts targeted at a hearer. However, since the data of this study is an online talk show, the hearer is not allowed to answer back, being subjected to the rules of the show but reacts non-verbally in most cases. Besides the targeted hearer, there are also other hearers involved in the speech event, including the invited guests, live audiences and online audiences who can express their evaluation through different ways, which in turn contribute to the construction of the dynamics of the mock impoliteness speech events.<sup>1</sup> The online audiences, in particular, can express their evaluations of the mock impoliteness speech event via a commenting system — Danmaku, which offers an invaluable opportunity to investigate the third-party participants' metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness.

Therefore, the first research question focusses on both the linguistic construction and the multimodal construction of mock impoliteness, while the second one focuses on its evaluation by the third-party participants, thus overall aiming at a holistic view of the dynamics of mock impoliteness in the chosen data.

- (1) How is mock impoliteness constructed in the show *Roast!?*
  - (a) How is mock impoliteness linguistically constructed?
  - (b) How is mock impoliteness multimodally constructed?
  
- (2) How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?

#### 1.4 Thesis Contributions

This thesis contributes to research on mock impoliteness, and (im)politeness more broadly both theoretically and methodologically. Theoretically, the modifications to Culpeper et al.'s (2017) model of mixed messages is firstly data-driven by solid empirical evidence in Chinese. Secondly, such modifications to the theoretical framework can account for a broader range of mock impoliteness speech events, which

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<sup>1</sup> The guests' and live audiences' evaluations are taken into consideration through the analysis, although not analysed particularly in a section.

increases the explanatory force of the model of mixed messages (see 5.5). Methodologically, there are several aspects of contribution: i) a rather novel type of data, Danmaku, is chosen which will not only be of descriptive interest in its own right but will also stretch both theory and method; ii) a data-driven coding scheme of Danmaku data is created, which can be adopted for future research (see 5.6); iii) the method of quantitative analysis— conditional inference tree model (cf. Hothorn et al., 2006; Tagliamonte and Baayen, 2012; Tantucci and Wang, 2018) demonstrated solid empirical evidence in the investigation of pragmatic phenomena, which not only informs the theoretical underpinning of mock impoliteness, but can also be applied in future research in pragmatics in general (see 7.3).

### 1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of 8 chapters. Chapter 1 briefly introduces the pragmatic phenomena of mock impoliteness, the data, research questions, contributions and outlines the thesis structure.

Chapter 2 and 3 reviews the literature on (im)politeness and mock impoliteness sequentially as it is impossible to discuss mock impoliteness before understanding (im)politeness. Chapter 2 provides a review of various approaches to (im)politeness, beginning with how face, a notion originated in Chinese has evolved into an approach to linguistic (im)politeness. Face-based approaches, discursive approaches, neo-Brown & Levinson approaches and many other alternative approaches are reviewed, and a comprehensive overview of such approaches will be provided. Chapter 3 first of all tackles the theorization of mock impoliteness, then the relationship between mock impoliteness and humour is teased out. Then I will introduce the theoretical frameworks adopted in this research — Culpeper et al's (2017) model of mixed messages and Spencer-Oatey's (2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) rapport management, which are applied to answer *RQ1—how is mock impoliteness constructed?* The final section in Chapter 3 reviews the literature on metapragmatic evaluation of mock impoliteness, which is relevant to *RQ2—how is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?*

Chapter 4 demonstrates in detail the data collection procedure of two data sets in this research: the mock impoliteness speech acts, and the third-party participants' metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness in the form of Danmaku. In Chapter 5, I will give rationale in adopting an Integrative pragmatics approach in this research. The Multimodal transcription method, modification to the theoretical framework as a result of the pilot study, and an original data-driven coding scheme of Danmaku will be introduced.

Then, RQ1 will be answered in Chapter 6 with two focal points: the linguistic construction of mock impoliteness (in 6.2 and 6.3) and the multimodal construction of mock impoliteness (in 6.4). I will evidence how rhetorical questions and imperatives become conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in *Roast!*, and how non-conventionalized mock impoliteness is constructed. The multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness will be showcased through two case studies on an eye gesture specific to Chinese culture—"白眼" (bai yan, show the white eye), and the multimodal realisation of a conventional mark of dismissal "qie" in Chinese. A further study of the prosody of mock impoliteness results in findings that contradict previous studies. In addition, a phenomenon which emerged from the data, self-directed mock impoliteness, will be analysed.

Chapter 7 answers RQ2. A novel method of quantitative analysis will be used to provide clear visualisations and solid empirical evidence of how mock impoliteness is evaluated via the form of Danmaku. The quantitative results will be interpreted in combination with qualitative analysis on the data.

Finally, Chapter 8 will revisit the research questions and draws the conclusion. Limitation and future research will also be discussed.



## Chapter 2 (Im)politeness

### 2.1 Introduction

In order to study mock (im)politeness, it is important to start with a review of (im)politeness. This chapter begins with the origin of the notion of face (2.2), which is the basis of face-based approaches to (im)politeness (2.3). With the development of (im)politeness scholarship, criticisms of the face-based approaches inspired discursive approaches to (im)politeness (2.4), mixed models (2.5) and other approaches (2.6). All such approaches, depending on their theoretical foci, could be positioned along two scales of first-order/second-order and pragmatic/social distinctions. Thus, an overview of various approaches to (im)politeness (2.7) along the two scales will provide a clear theoretical map of the interrelationships among such approaches, and more importantly, it will also illustrate where the integrative pragmatics approach (Haugh and Culpeper, 2018) that this research adopts stands in relation to the other approaches.

### 2.2 Face

#### *Early beginnings of face in Chinese Cultures*

Prior to Hu's (1944) paper, which is widely referenced in the literature as the earliest attempt to explain and define the Chinese notion of face, and as an inspiration of Goffman's work on face (1955, 1956, 1967) (He & Zhang, 2011; Culpeper, 2011; Hinze, 2012; Haugh, 2012; among many others), there are actually a handful of discussions on face which date back to the 19th century. The following review in this section follows a chronological order of the discussions on face from both western and Chinese authors.

According to St. André's (2013) article exploring the origin and development of the term "face", the earliest use of face in English was documented in John Morrison's Chinese Commercial Guide (1834), with the phrase "to lose face" as a word-for-word translation from the Chinese "diu lian" (2013:69). Considering the historical background of that time, when numerous Chinese terms were introduced into English often through Portuguese as a result of the language contact which happened in Macao

and Canton (Guangzhou), this phrase was deemed to be part of the peculiar “jargon spoken at Canton”, and thus “not a phrase in general circulation”. The meaning of face in English is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “reputation, credit; honour, good name” with an attribution to the English community trading in China and is linked to the expression “to lose face” (St. André, 2013:69).

St. André (2013) examined many publications on China in between 1834 and 1895. Some of them observed character, manners and customs of Chinese, describing “excessive” politeness at banquets and linking it to “lying and deceit” (Gutzlaff, 1838: 504-505), “the upper class’s sense of honour and preference for death over capture by the aristocracy” (Sirr, 1849: 416-423, v.2), and “how the Chinese have a sense of dignity which is different from Western honour” (Medhurst Jr, 1872) without using the term “face” (St. André, 2013: 69). In other works where the term “face” was explicitly mentioned, “to lose face” was explained as “dishonoured” in parentheses (Huc, 1855: 382, vol. 1) and thus St. André concluded that the term “was not deemed current” (St. André, 2013: 69). In Cooke’s book (1859), face appeared twice in quotation marks as part of the indirect reported speech of a Chinese taken prisoner by the British. The use of the quotation marks also demonstrates that the notion of face was not common to the westerners at that time. St. André (2013: 70) further points out that this “oddity” or “strangeness” of pidgin English, was “taken to be a mark of the inferiority of the Chinese”, which was directly or indirectly associated with negative and undesirable characteristics and later on became “directly associated with the concept of face in Smith (1894)”. The following quote best exemplifies such associations:

Arthur Smith seems to have done more than any single author to fix the association between face, national character, and inferiority. The first chapter of his *Chinese Characteristics* (1894) is in fact entitled simply ‘Face’, which he argues is “a key to the combination lock of many of the most important characteristics of the Chinese” (1894:17). Smith argues that face is based on a love of theatricality among the Chinese; in other words, ‘face’ is a mask that the Chinese wear, and as such it is contrasted with ‘reality’ and ‘fact’, which are associated with Westerners (1894:16-17). He draws an explicit comparison with the concept of taboo from the South Sea Islands, and claims that they both are “deserving only to be abolished and replaced by common sense (1894:17)” (St. André, 2013: 70).

According to Arthur Smith, the Chinese national character of “face” is inferior to the western value of “reality” or “fact” and is not even “common sense”. He also reinforces such prejudices by depicting Chinese as thieves in his storytelling. Such rendering of Chinese “face” is coloured by the westerners’ point of view at the specific historical background and does not do justice to what “face” is in Chinese cultures. However, the term “face” does become common with the great success of Smith’s book and was picked up by sinologists such as E. H. Parker (1903), MacGowan (1912) and Gillbert (1926) who use terms such as “save face” and “lose face” repeatedly in their works. This is how the term “face”, which originated in Chinese cultures, becomes a folk term in English. Goffman later cites MacGowan’s (1912) work, and Brown and Levinson’s notion of face is “derived from that of Goffman and from the English folk term” (1987:61).

Upon seeing the westerners’ interest in discussing Chinese “face”, Chinese intellectuals in the late Qing and May Fourth period (1895-1925) also examine the notion of Chinese “face” critically. Lu Xun, who was the leading figure of modern Chinese literature, described “face” as the “guiding principle of the Chinese mind”<sup>2</sup>, and criticizes “face” sarcastically by analyzing examples of how Chinese practice “face” in their daily lives in an essay titled *Talking about “face”* in 1934 (Lu, 1981). He criticizes that Chinese’ want of “face” sometimes means being flexible so as to abandon principles, which is actually “不要脸” (bu yao lian, not wanting face, shameless). Other intellectuals at that time, such as Lin Yutang and Hu Shih, hold similar opinions. Lin regards face as “that hollow thing which men in China live by” and argues that “to confuse face with Western ‘honour’ is to make a grievous error” (1936: 33). This view echoes with Arthur Smith’s (1894) opinion that Chinese “face” is something inferior to Western values. Lin’s (1936) book, which titled *My Country and My People* was written in English for an American audience, and is filled with criticisms of Chinese society and national characters. It is worth noting that such intellectuals’ opinions were influenced and shaped by that specific time when China had been constantly invaded by western countries and people were suffering. At the brink of a collapsing society, such intellectual’s criticisms reflect their eagerness in urging changes among fellow Chinese to save the country. However,

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<sup>2</sup> The translation is mine, and the original term he used is “中国精神的纲领” (zhōng guó jīng shén de gāng lǐng).

it is also important to note that such works are by no means academic papers that examine the notion of “face” systemically or even neutrally. Their discussion on “face” is much tied to the analysis of national characters, rather than to (im)politeness. Lin’s book does briefly mention that “not to give a man face is the utmost height of rudeness and is like throwing down a gauntlet to him in the west” (1936: 133), which is something possibly relevant to behavioral (im)politeness but not explicitly relevant to linguistic (im)politeness. The rest of his discussion focuses on how ridiculous people’s behaviors could be in the pursuit of “face” by abundant examples, supporting his criticism that “face” needs to be abandoned.

As neatly summarized by St Andrés, “In English, then, the term ‘face’ bifurcated into two colloquial expressions with opposite meanings, but both having negative connotations” (2013: 72)<sup>3</sup>. However, biased with prejudices and criticisms, the previously mentioned western authors and Chinese intellectuals approached the notion of face to serve their various intentions. Such works did not examine the notion of “face” from a linguistic perspective or study the notion as a universal across different cultures (not that they should). The change began with Hu (1944), who distinguishes two sets of criteria of the concept of “face” with reference to “prestige”, one is “mien-tzu”, which “stands for the kind of prestige that is emphasized in this country: a reputation achieved through getting on in life through success and ostentation”; and the other is “lien”, which “is the respect of the group for a man with a good moral reputation” (1944: 45). Hu’s approach to the notion of “face” is rather etymological. She examined a lot of everyday terms related to “mien-tzu” and “lien”, but without solid support from empirical data, the distinctions between these two terms are vague and idiosyncratic. This echoes Ho’s criticism that “the meaning of *lien* and *mien-tzu* vary according to verbal context and are not completely differentiated from each other in that the terms are interchangeable in some contexts” (Ho, 1976: 868). Other scholars also examined related notions in Chinese, such as “renqing” (human emotions) (King, 1980; Hwang, 1987; Chang and Holt, 1994a), “mianzi” (same as *mien-tzu*) (Ho, 1976; King and Myers, 1977), “qingmian” (a combination of *emotion* and *face*) (Ran and Zhao, 2018; Zhao and Ran, 2019), “guanxi” (relations) (Chiao, 1982; Jacobs, 1979; Standifird and Marshall, 2000), “bao” or “pao” (reciprocity) (Yang, 1957; Wen, 1982), and human

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<sup>3</sup> The two colloquial expressions are “save face” and “lose face”.

emotional debt (a combination of renqing and pao) (Chang and Holt, 1994b). However, many of such works follow a similar etymological approach, mainly explain the related notions and their usage in Chinese without offering theoretical grounding or analytical frameworks. One exception is Ran and Zhao (2018), in which they propose a Qingmian-Threat Regulation Model (QTR) to analyse the qingmian-oriented relationship management in Chinese context.

### *Goffman's face*

Although the notion of face originates in Chinese, the wide scholarly attention on face in linguistics or pragmatics and much more in (im)politeness later owes much to Goffman (1955, 1956, 1967). Goffman (1955: 213) defines face as:

The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes—albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself.

Goffman's notion of face, thus, involves social interdependence, which blends two aspects together — one aspect is the positive values a person wants, the other is the attributes that others assume about this person.

### *Brown and Levinson's face*

Another significant literature that builds on the notion of face is Brown and Levinson's (1987) work on politeness. B&L's notion of face is "derived from that of Goffman and from the English folk term", which is something that "every member wants to claim for himself", that is, universal (1987: 61). B&L (1987) distinguish two components of face, one is "positive face", which is defined as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others...in particular, it includes the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired"; and the other is "negative face", which is defined as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his [sic] actions be unimpeded by others" (1987: 62). This dyadic distinction between positive face and

negative face has inspired many works in the field of (im)politeness. However, in comparison to the Goffmanian face, this notion is “very reductive” in that the “social interdependence has been stripped out of B&L’s definition” (Culpeper, 2011: 25). It’s also criticized for neglecting “various other forms of facework and presentational rituals” (Haugh, 2013: 5) and emphasizing the “‘self-claiming’ part at the expense of the ‘other-assuming’ and ‘particular-contact’ parts” (O’Driscoll, 2007: 467). Another strand of criticism of B&L targets the universality they claimed for face and politeness. Scholars from non-western cultures, especially from Asian cultures, pointed out that B&L’s notion of face is not as universal as they claimed it to be. Ide (1989) and Matsumoto (1989) argue that “discernment” rather than face is the motivation behind Japanese politeness, Gu (1990) and Mao (1994) point out that the negative face is incompatible with face in Chinese, and Nwoye (1992) also provides evidence that certain speech acts may not be treated as FTAs at all in Nigerian culture (see also Ji, 2000; Chen, 1993 and Ting-Toomey, 1994).

### *Spencer Oatey’s face*

Different from Brown and Levinson’s face, Spencer Oatey’s (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) notion of face in her rapport management framework brings back the focus to the social interdependence of Goffmanian face. Goffman (1972: 5) defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”. Spencer Oatey (2002) follows this definition verbatim with the emphasis on “value”. She contributes two interrelated aspects of face, that is:

1. Quality face: We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities; e.g., our competence, abilities, appearance etc. Quality face is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of such personal qualities as these, and so is closely associated with our sense of personal self-esteem.
2. Social identity face: We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g., as group leader, valued customer, close friend. Social identity face is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of social or group roles, and is closely associated with our sense of public worth.

(Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540)

Later on, Spencer-Oatey (2008: 15) proposes that “sometimes there can also be a relational application; for example, being a talented leader and/or a kind-hearted teacher entails a relational component that is intrinsic to the evaluation”, thus adding another category, relational face, to her notion of face. The term “relational” refers to “the relationship between the participants (e.g., distance–closeness, equality–inequality, perceptions of role rights and obligations), and the ways in which this relationship is managed or negotiated” (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 647).

These three interrelated aspects of face, compared with Goffman’s (1972) rather abstract notion of face, are more specific and dissect a person’s value in terms of personal qualities, identities held in society and interpersonal relationships. Thus methodologically, Spencer-Oatey’s notion of face is easier to be operated on data analysis than Goffman’s face. Theoretically, it captures a rather comprehensive picture of face compared to Brown and Levinson’s positive and negative face.

### 2.3 Face-based approaches to (im)politeness

The notion of face, at its early stage is not necessarily connected to (im)politeness. As a matter of fact, Goffman’s concern for face is in the presentation of “self” in everyday interaction. It is Brown and Levinson’s (1987) work that dedicates to approach politeness with positive and negative face. Assuming “the universality of face and rationality”, Brown and Levinson further propose the notion of FTA (face threatening acts), that is, “certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face, namely those acts that by their nature contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker” (1987: 65). Accordingly, doing politeness is employing strategies to minimize the threat. There are 5 politeness strategies: (1) Bald on record; (2) Positive politeness; (3) Negative politeness; (4) Off record strategy and (5) Don’t do the FTA (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 69). Positive politeness and negative politeness are oriented toward hearer’s positive face and negative face respectively; bald on record strategy is used when doing an act “in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible”; and off record strategy is used when “there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 69).

As mentioned in the previous section, B&L's approach has inspired many works in the field of (im)politeness research. For instance, Culpeper's (1996) anatomy of impoliteness is based on the B&L's notion of positive face and negative face. Opposing B&L's 5 politeness strategies, he proposes 5 impoliteness superstrategies, namely (1) Bald on record impoliteness; (2) Positive impoliteness; (3) Negative impoliteness; (4) Sarcasm or mock politeness and (5) Withhold politeness (Culpeper, 1996: 356). On the contrary to minimizing FTA, impoliteness strategies are employed to attack the hearer's face wants.

Accompanying of the criticism of B&L's notion of face, their approach to politeness is criticized for presenting that "speakers are only polite in order to realize their personal goals" (Eelen, 2001: 128) and that "all speech acts are seen as potentially face-threatening while inherently polite or face-enhancing speech acts receive very little attention" (Ogiermann, 2009: 14). Subsequently, criticisms on B&L's theory have "prompted two important moves in the field" (Haugh, 2013: 5), which is quoted as follows:

First, Brown and Levinson's notion of face has been abandoned by many, in pragmatics at least, in favour of Goffman's original approach to conceptualising face. Second, the focus has shifted from a narrow analytical focus on politeness to facework - and one might add presentational rituals - more broadly.

The first move contains proposals to revisit Goffman's face (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003) as it is much more rich and nuanced, and some recent studies further proposed to treat the notion of face independently from (im)politeness (Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010; Haugh, 2013; O'Driscoll, 2011). Unsurprisingly, there also emerged extensions of Goffmanian face, such as Locher's (2008) "positive social value" drawing from social identity theory, and Bravo's (1993, 1996, 2008a, 2008b) re-conceptualisation of face as two basic universal wants, that is, autonomy and affiliation. Arundale (1999, 2006, 2010) proposes an alternative theory to approach face, Face Constituting Theory (FCT); Archer (2015) recently put forward a theory of Facework Scale; and Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2005, 2007, 2008) Rapport Management theory has incorporated face with sociality rights and will be introduced in detail in 3.6 as one of the theoretical frameworks adopted in this research.



An interesting situation worth noting here is that Goffman's notion of face was also picked up on by some American scholars and was adapted to the study of interpersonal relationships and communication (Cupach and Metts, 1994; Domenici and Littlejohn, 2006). However, such research received little attention from the aforementioned mainstream literature, with only a few exceptions (Culpeper, 2011; Parvaresh and Tayebi, 2018; Bargiela-Chiappini and Haugh, 2009; O'Driscoll, 2017).

The second move mentioned above by Haugh (2013: 5) sees a shift of the focus from "a narrow analytical focus on politeness to facework more broadly". This observation, indeed, captures a current tendency of separating facework from politeness. Haugh (2013:5) points out that "it is now widely acknowledged that politeness constitutes just one form of facework (or relational work) among a range of various kinds of interpersonal phenomena, including impoliteness, mock impoliteness, and self-politeness/self-facework (Bousfield, 2008; Bravo, 2002, 2008a, 2008b; Chen, 2001; Culpeper, 1996, 2011; Hernández-Flores, 2008; Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003)". However, this tendency will not be discussed in detail as the focus of this chapter is on (im)politeness, instead of on facework. Acknowledging this tendency is to clarify that there is scholarly discussion on the relationships between (im)politeness and facework, and one should not equate one with the other.

#### 2.4 Discursive approaches to (im)politeness

The criticisms on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory also witnesses the rise of discursive approaches to (im)politeness, with representative works such as Eelen (2001), Locher and Watts (2005), Locher (2006, 2012, 2015) and Mills (2003).

Eelen (2001) criticizes the ambiguity in politeness theories and supports Watts et al.'s (1992) argument for distinguishing between first order politeness (politeness 1) and second order politeness (politeness 2). This distinction is also known as the emic/etic or user/observer distinction. Watts et al. (1992: 3) defines that first-order politeness as

encompassing commonsense notions of politeness, while second-order politeness as a theoretical construct. In other words, while the first-order approach provides user based, metalinguistic insights and lay understandings that might be oblivious to researchers, the second-order approach offers theoretical generalization and systematicity in explaining (im)politeness phenomena. Therefore, face-based approaches to (im)politeness are built on a second-order notion of “face” without acknowledging the distinction between politeness 1 and politeness 2. Eelen (2001: 31) warns that “if the distinction is not properly made and politeness 1 and politeness 2 are simply equated, the epistemological status of the theoretical analysis becomes blurred”, pointing out that this is a major problem in much theorizing at that time.

Accordingly, a key proposal of the discursive approach is that the way researchers underpin face or (im)politeness does not capture the whole picture of (im)politeness phenomena, rather, (im)politeness emerges through the discursive struggle among participants. Locher and Watts advocate to “take native speaker assessments of politeness seriously and make them the basis of a discursive, data-driven, bottom-up approach to politeness” (2005: 16). In this way, they argue that politeness cannot be simply equated with FTA-mitigation because politeness is a discursive concept in which the relational work is an important aspect (Locher and Watts, 2005). As Locher outlines, “the discursive approach to politeness recognizes the evaluative and norm-oriented character of politeness by claiming that politeness belongs to the interpersonal level of linguistic interaction” (2006: 253). Indeed, for the discursive approach to (im)politeness, the diverse factors that contribute to the interpersonal discursive struggles should also be accounted for. While most of Locher’s and Watts’ works focus on relational work,

Mills (2003) takes the impact of a range of social dimensions on politeness into consideration, such as class, race, and gender in particular.

In comparison with the face-based approaches to (im)politeness which are from a second-order perspective, the discursive approach to (im)politeness emphasizes much more (im)politeness 1. While the merit of discursive approach to (im)politeness is recognized, the emphasis on (im)politeness 1 has also been challenged for a lack of theorization and systematicity (Terkourafi, 2005a; Holmes and Schnurr, 2005). Furthermore, the focus on participants' understandings may raise a danger "that lay understandings will be reified in such approaches as if they constituted a (formal) theory in their own right" (Haugh and Culpeper, 2018: 4).

## 2.5 Neo Brown & Levinson approaches

Facing the problems with the face-based approach and discursive approach to (im)politeness, there appears a middle ground of bringing the merit of two approaches together, that is, mixed models such as Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008), Culpeper (2011), Culpeper and Haugh (2014), neo-Politeness by Holmes, Marra and Vine (2011, 2012) (see also Grainger 2013), and Kárdár and Haugh (2013).

Previously in 2.2, Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) notion of face was introduced, as a matter of fact, face is just one aspect of her rapport management framework. The other aspect of rapport management is sociality rights, which are "the fundamental personal/social entitlements that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others" (2002: 540). Two types of interrelated sociality rights, namely equity rights and association rights are further distinguished (see 3.6 Mock impoliteness and Rapport Management for a detailed introduction). For Spencer-Oatey, this model of managing relations is the starting point of approaching

interpersonal communication, which is different from politeness theory that focuses on language use primarily.

Spencer-Oatey's (2002) rapport management framework is a mixed model by its nature, as it originates from authentic report data by participants, which is a data-driven and bottom-up approach, on the other hand, it also incorporates second-order generalizations of face and sociality rights, which is from the analyst's perspective and a top-down approach. It is worth mentioning here that the rapport management framework is not limited to (im)politeness research, because what Spencer-Oatey focuses on essentially is "the motivational concerns that underlie the management of relations" (2002: 529). In this sense, it has a much broader explanatory force in a range of phenomena concerning the management of interpersonal relations, compared with Brown & Levison's theory of equating face with politeness. On the contrary to the criticism against the discursive approach that it lacks theorization and systematicity (Terkourafi, 2005a; Holmes and Schnurr, 2005), rapport management is a systemic conceptual framework.

Culpeper's (2011) approach to impoliteness also incorporates both first-order data (e.g., corpus and report data), and second-order theoretical accounts (e.g., an integrated socio-cognitive model). Upon acknowledging that tacking the notion of impoliteness on to the notion of "face-attack" simply transfers the explanatory load on the notion of face which is controversial itself and "may not cover all cases of impoliteness" (2011:23), Culpeper's (2011) definition of impoliteness compared to his (1996) and (2005) definitions has evolved into:

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and /or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered 'impolite' – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence. Various factors can exacerbate how offensive an impolite behaviour is taken to be, including for example whether one understands a behaviour to be strongly intentional or not.

This theorization (impoliteness 2) incorporates the participants' expectations, desires and/or beliefs (impoliteness 1), thus bringing the merit of the two approaches together. Although Culpeper (2011) does not abandon the notion of face, he takes a modified view of face and adopts Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) rapport management for data analysis. Through the course of Culpeper's (2011) book, impoliteness metadiscourse and corpus-methodology have proven to provide deep insight into understanding impoliteness. It is also through such data and methodology that the distinction of conventionalised formulaic impoliteness and non-conventionalised impoliteness are expounded, and a theoretical model of analyzing non-conventionalised impoliteness is put forward (see 3.5 Mock impoliteness and Mixed Messages for detailed review).

Similarly, Holmes, Marra and Vine (2011, 2012) adopt a neo-Politeness approach, which "combines some of the insights and concepts from Brown and Levinson with insights from social constructionism to provide a more dynamic, context sensitive and discourse-oriented framework" (2012: 1064). Compared to the discursive approach, this neo-politeness approach recognizes the role of analyst, in the meantime, it also adopts an emic approach with the focus on the interactions among participants. This approach is also known as the interactional sociolinguistics approach (see Haugh and Culpeper, 2018).

Indeed, as Kárdár and Haugh (2013: 3) claim, "politeness can be analysed from the perspective of both participants (versus metaparticipants) and emic or 'insider' (versus etic or 'outsider') understandings (which are both first-order user perspectives), as well as from the perspective of analysts (versus lay observers) and theoretical (versus folk-theoretic) understandings (which are both second-order observer perspectives)". (Im)politeness, as a social practice, is practiced by participants, and it is also a focus of pragmatics study. Excluding either insight would result in a limited understanding of the many faceted phenomena of (im)politeness. It is for this reason that this research also draws on insights from both first-order and second-order approach, aiming to offer a holistic view of mock impoliteness in the Chinese talk show *Roast!*.

## 2.6 Other approaches

So far, the previous literature review focuses mostly on the debates between first-order and second-order approach, however, that is not the whole picture of (im)politeness research. Leech (1983, 2003) firmly grounds politeness within linguistic pragmatics by proposing a set of politeness maxims following a relatively formal approach (Haugh and Culpeper, 2018). In other words, Leech's politeness maxims are not related to the notion of face at all. For Leech, abstractions such as "face" or "culture" are not helpful in studying politeness, and politeness is essentially a pragmatic phenomenon, thus should be approached with the primary focus on language itself. For phenomena such as mock (im)politeness, Leech also approaches it by proposing Banter Principle and Irony Principle (see 3.1). Facing the debates between the first-order and second-order approach to (im)politeness, Leech (2014) advocates bringing politeness theory back to pragmatics, and argues for the necessity to study both pragmalinguistic politeness and sociopragmatic politeness, as two aspects of politeness.

Terkourafi (2001, 2005a, 2005b, 2015) on the other hand, suggests a frame-based approach to politeness that focuses much on conventionalization. For Terkourafi, frames, as "structures of implicit real-world knowledge", are the default context for speakers to act in (2001: 184). An expression "used frequently enough in that context to achieve a particular illocutionary goal to that speaker's experience" is considered conventionalized (Terkouraki, 2015: 15)<sup>4</sup>. Terkourafi's approach, thus challenges the connection between politeness and indirectness (see Leech, 1983; 2014), and argues that "it is the regular cooccurrence of particular types of context and particular linguistic expressions as the unchallenged realisations of particular acts that create the perception of politeness" (2005a: 248), which links politeness to conventionalization. However, this approach faces some problems in studying impoliteness, as Culpeper argues that "If impoliteness is merely an irregularity, a deviation from a norm, then impoliteness can never be conventional" (2011: 35). On the contrary of impoliteness being an irregularity, Culpeper (2010, 2011) has offered much evidence of conventionalized

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<sup>4</sup> Note that Terkourafi (2015) uses the term "illocutionary goal", which is of course relevant to J.L. Austin's speech act theory (1962, 1975). The notion of speech act is important in analysing mock impoliteness and its evaluation, which will be discussed further in section 4.3 and 7.2.2.

impoliteness formulae, which proves that impoliteness can be conventionally achieved. Metalinguistic data, which is from a first-order approach, has proven to be prolific in understanding impoliteness (and mock (im)politeness) by offering participants' perspective (Culpeper, 2011, Sinkeviciute, 2017a; Taylor, 2017 etc.).

There are, of course, other approaches to (im)politeness, such as genre approach by Blitvich (2010, 2013) and an alternative theory of face, Face Constituting Theory by Arundale (1999, 2006, 2010) and Facework scale by Archer (2015) (although the latter two are not necessarily limited to (im)politeness). However, such approaches will not be discussed in further detail because the aim of this Chapter is not to introduce every approach to (im)politeness, rather, the aim is to critically review theories/approaches of central debates, and most importantly, the ones that connect to the focus of the thesis, that is, mock impoliteness.

## 2.7 Overview of approaches to (im)politeness

After reviewing the major approaches to and debates in (im)politeness research, it is this section's aim to provide a clear overview of them and demonstrate their interrelationships.

The (im)politeness approaches reviewed previously can be summarized into three waves of (im)politeness research, according to Culpeper and Haugh (2018). The first wave is built on the formal approach by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983), which takes language as the starting point of (im)politeness research. The second wave is constituted by the "discursive approaches" (2.4). And the third wave appears to be shifting towards the middle ground between classic (the first wave) and discursive (the second wave) approaches to politeness (Haugh and Culpeper, 2018; Locher and Bousfield, 2008; Locher 2012, 2015; Kádár and Haugh, 2013).

Furthermore, building on points made in the discussion above, there are mainly three ways of distinguishing (im)politeness approaches. One is from the perspective of whether the focus is on the participants (first-order) or the analyst (second-order) as discussed in previous sections. The second way is from a more theoretical basis, that is, whether the approach is pragmatic or social. Looking back at the three waves of (im)politeness research, the first wave is rather pragmatic, the second wave is rather social, and the third wave is heading towards the middle ground in between these two ends. Another way is essentially based on the contents and proposals of different approaches, as listed in Haugh and Culpeper (2018: 4):

There is now an increasingly diverse range of theoretical accounts of (im)politeness on the market. These include: (a) the discursive-materialist approach (Mills 2003, forthcoming 2017; van der Bom and Mills 2015); (b) the discursive-relational approach (Locher 2006, 2012, 2015; Locher and Watts 2005; Watts 2003); (c) the interactional pragmatics approach (Haugh 2007b, 2013, 2015); (d) the genre approach developed by Blitvich (2010, 2013); (e) the interactional sociolinguistics approach (Holmes, Marra and Vine (2011, 2012), to which Grainger (2013) also broadly subscribes; (f) the socio-pragmatic approach of Culpeper (2011a, 2016), which builds on the broader rapport management framework developed by Spencer-Oatey (2005); (g) the frame-based approach (Terkourafi 2001, 2005a, 2005b); and (h) the revised maxims-based approach proposed by Leech (2007, 2014), among others.

Therefore, various (im)politeness approaches can be roughly placed according to the extent to which they build on the scales of first-order/second-order and pragmatic/social distinctions. Haugh and Culpeper's (2018) figure vividly presents the positions of a selection of the third wave approaches to (im)politeness along the two scales:



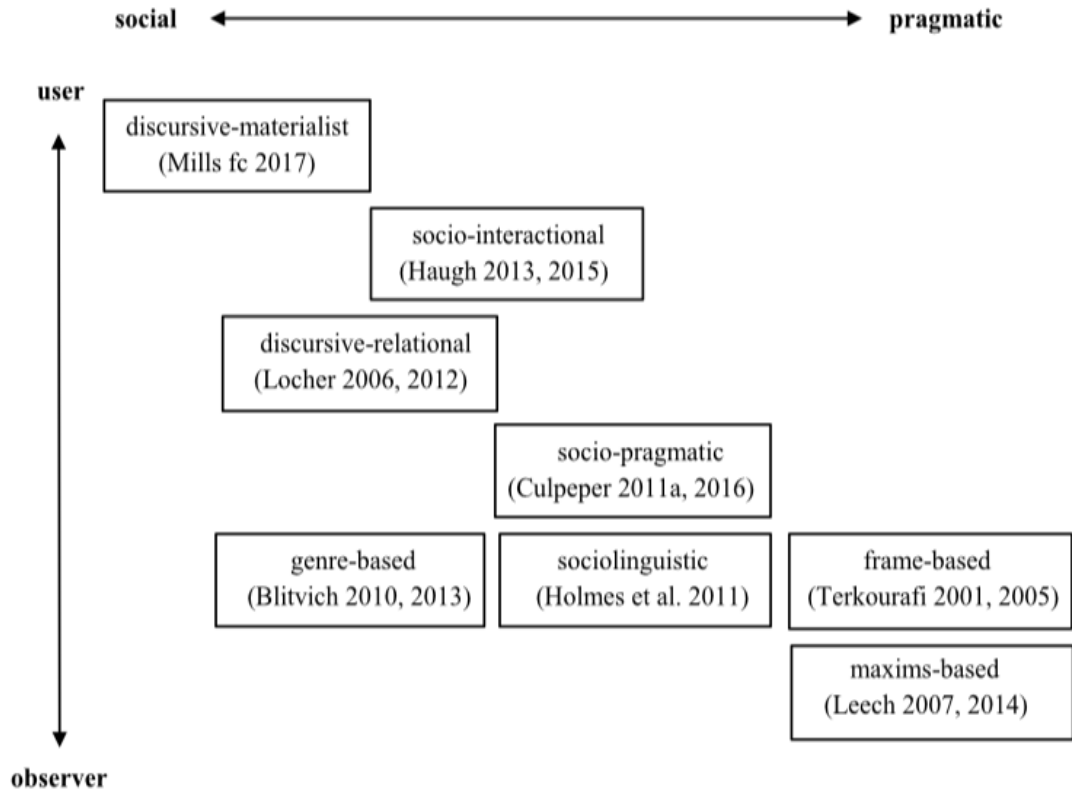


Figure 2. 1 Third wave approaches to (im)politeness (Haugh and Culpeper 2018: 5)

Following this way, approaches from the first wave and second wave of (im)politeness research can also be roughly placed in the above figure. For instance, Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory is clearly towards the pragmatic and observer end, thus should be placed at the bottom right corner. Similarly, Watts' (2003) approach should be close to where Locher's (2006, 2012) discursive-relational approach is, as it focuses more on the construction of politeness among the users and other social factors. Therefore, the following figure, building on Haugh and Culpeper's (2018), is an attempt to give a clear overview of the three waves of (im)politeness research<sup>5</sup>:

<sup>5</sup> The first wave is colour coded in yellow, the second wave green and the third wave blue.

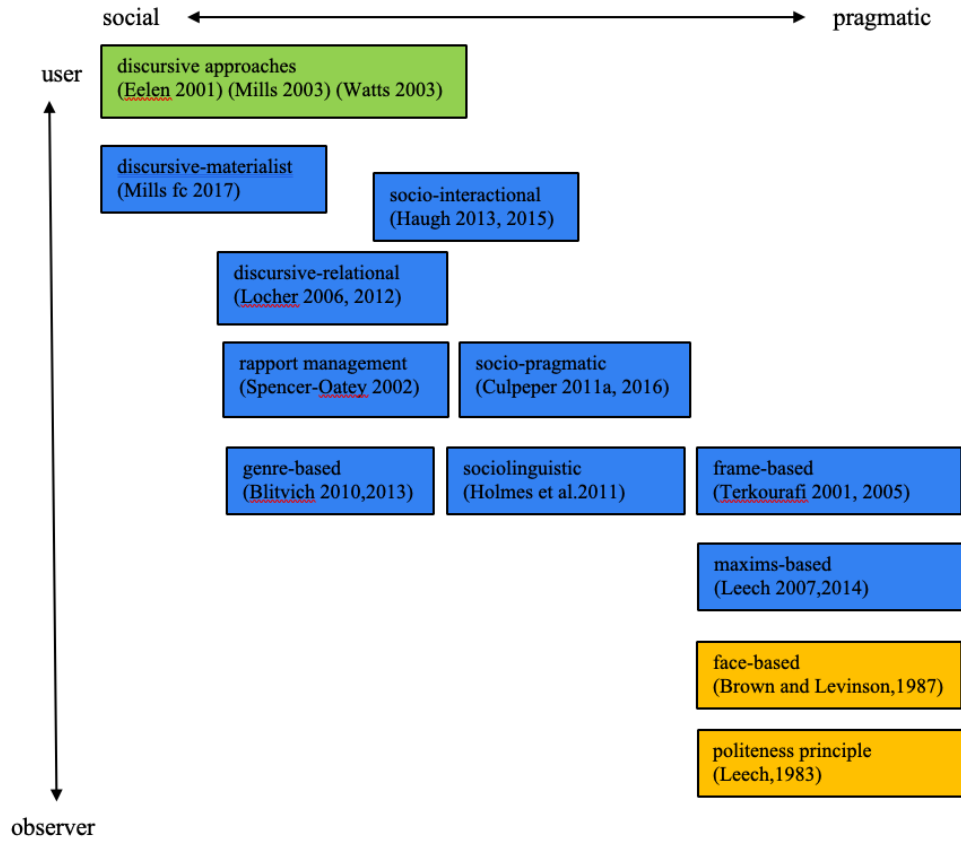


Figure 2. 2 Approaches to (im)politeness

To sum up, there are currently various (im)politeness approaches, and possibly more to come as the research in this field develops. The above summary gives a rough outline of the positions some approaches occupy in comparison to each other. As for this thesis itself, it will be evident in the following chapters that an integrative pragmatics approach (Haugh and Culpeper, 2018) this research adopts, can be best described to situate in the middle ground along both scales.

## Chapter 3. Mock (im)politeness

### 3.1 Introduction

Building on the background and overview on (im) politeness in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 focuses on the theoretical underpinning of mock impoliteness. Several key issues are examined: the distinction between mock politeness and mock impoliteness; the definition of mock impoliteness; the overlap between mock impoliteness and humour; theoretical frameworks that are suitable to study the construction of mock impoliteness, which are used to answer RQ1; and finally the theoretical underpinning of the evaluation of mock impoliteness, which is essential to answer RQ2.

### 3.2 Mock politeness and mock impoliteness

While irony is an apparently friendly way of being offensive (mock-politeness), the type of verbal behavior known as ‘banter’ is an offensive way of being friendly (mock-impoliteness).

Leech (1983:144)

The above quote from Leech suggests a clear-cut distinction between mock politeness and mock impoliteness, and also a view held by most scholars that irony is generally associated with mock politeness while banter with mock impoliteness. This view is theorized by Leech’s (1983) irony principle and banter principle as follow:

Irony Principle: If you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn’t overtly conflict with the PP<sup>6</sup>, but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature.

Banter Principle: In order to show solidarity with h, say something which is (i) obviously untrue, and (ii) obviously impolite to (h).

Leech (1983: 82/144)

This theorization positions mock politeness closer to impoliteness and mock impoliteness to politeness. As a significant theorization in (im)politeness, Leech’s view is widely accepted and has great influence on later work.

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<sup>6</sup> Politeness Principle (see Leech 1983:79-84).

Following this vein, Culpeper (1996) treats “sarcasm or mock politeness” as one of the impoliteness strategies, that is, “the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations” (1996: 357). This framework regards mock politeness as a strategy to achieve impoliteness, which strengthens the association between mock politeness and impoliteness.

Note that here Culpeper links mock politeness to sarcasm instead of irony because “I prefer the use of the term sarcasm to Leech’s irony, since irony can be used for enjoyment and comedy. Sarcasm (mock politeness for social disharmony) is clearly the opposite of banter (mock impoliteness for social harmony)” (1996:356). This view points out that irony is not limited to “a friendly way of being offensive” (Leech, 1983:144) and vaguely suggests a distinction between sarcasm and irony from a second-order perspective.

However, the relationship between irony and sarcasm is far more complicated. Attardo et al. (2003: 243) use the two terms “irony” and “sarcasm” interchangeably “because there seems to be no way of differentiating reliably between the two phenomena, and in part because a shift in meaning for the word irony seems to be taking place with “sarcasm” occupying what was previously the semantic space of “irony” (Nunberg 2001: 91–93)”. In his later work, Attardo (2007) views sarcasm as an overtly aggressive type of irony. Thus, sarcasm is considered as a subtype of irony according to Attardo. On the contrary, Lee and Katz (1998) offer experimental evidence that sarcasm is different from irony in that it includes the ridicule of a specific victim from a first-order view (see also Bowes and Katz 2011), where the two categorically contrast each other. Taylor’s (2015a) research on sarcasm and irony in English and Italian data reveals that the first-order perceptions of such terms suggest a possible cultural bias — sarcastic/ironic in English is associated with more negative behaviours than ironico/sarcastico is in Italian. English researchers’ second-order definitions might reflect such cultural bias. As Attardo (2007: 137) summarizes, “there is no consensus on whether sarcasm and irony are essentially the same thing, with superficial differences, or if they differ significantly” (see also Gibbs & O’Brien, 1991; Kreuz & Roberts, 1993).

The debate on sarcasm and irony is important to the theorization of mock politeness, which is also important to that of mock impoliteness, as mock politeness and mock impoliteness are often conceptualized as the opposite of each other (Leech 1983; Culpeper 1996). With extensive research, this view is increasingly challenged, and scholars further modify their opinions. Culpeper et al. (2017: 343) points out that “Sarcasm can also be used, similar to jocular mockery and other forms of mock impoliteness, to prompt amusement, particularly, for the (over-hearing) audience (Culpeper 2005, 2011; Taylor 2015a, b)”. Bousfield (2008) also notes that sarcasm can be applied for mock impoliteness although he equates mock politeness to sarcasm. Taylor (2015a: 76) argues that “the sub-types of mock impoliteness may also be seen to overlap with those of mock politeness”. This suggests that the boundary between mock politeness and mock impoliteness is not a clear-cut but a blurry one.

Similar to the discussion of irony and sarcasm, banter and teasing which are often held as subtypes or even equivalents of mock impoliteness, also attract heated debates. Culpeper et al. (2017) differentiate “ritualised banter” from “teasing”, pointing out that “ritualised banter is closely associated with positive functions such as reinforcing solidarity or creating entertainment”, while “teasing is an action that by definition involves mixed messages, specifically, the mixing of elements of (ostensible) serious provocation with (ostensible) non-seriousness” (2017: 328-331). In this view, the distinction between banter and teasing lies in the degree of provocation. Indeed, there is evidence showing that teasing can cause offence to the recipients (Drew, 1987; Young and Bippus, 2001; Alberts et al., 1996) in social psychology research. In Culpeper’s (2011) research, an informant of the diary data reports that “they were teasing me with a little sarcasm because they found it funny” (2017: 214-215), suggesting that teasing can involve sarcasm from a first-order point of view. Therefore, just as sarcasm can be used for mock impoliteness, teasing can also slide over to mock politeness.

To summarize, although researchers tend to theorize mock politeness and mock impoliteness as the opposite of each other, the real-life phenomena they operate on, such as sarcasm, irony, banter, and teasing can suggest a blurry boundary. These four labels are discussed here to elaborate the relationship between mock politeness and mock impoliteness because they are typical and receive most scholarly attention. It is worth noting that the phenomena of mock (im)politeness are not restricted to these four

labels and can be evidenced in jocular mockery, jocular insults, roasting, kidding and joking among many others.

### 3.3 Towards a second-order prototype definition of mock impoliteness

To answer the research questions, a working definition of mock impoliteness (a second-order one) is needed to identify the mock impoliteness speech events occurring in the data. Although there is hardly a widely accepted definition of mock impoliteness among scholars, some features of mock impoliteness are agreed upon and therefore are prototypical to its definition.

Reviewing the previous research, the three most prototypical features are (i) the speaker has no intention to cause offence; (ii) there is a certain degree of impoliteness in the messages communicated; and (iii) the target or hearer perceived them without taking offence.

Leech's Banter Principle explicitly emphasises that the intention of performing mock impoliteness speech acts is to "show solidarity with *h*", and Culpeper's (1996) definition acknowledges both the intention of not causing offence and the perception of not taking offence at the same time. In support of this claim, Maíz-Arévalo (2015: 291-292) defines that "jocular insults (aka jocular abuse) consist of employing insults in a playful, even endearing way to build up rapport among interlocutors" (Labov 1972; Hay 1994; de Klerk 1997; Kienpointner 1997; Coates 2003; Zimmermann 2003; Bernal 2005, 2008; Albelda Marco 2008; Fuentes and Alcaide 2008; Mugford 2008; Schnurr and Holmes 2009; among many others). Norrick (1993: 29) points out that banter is "aimed primarily at mutual entertainment". Other phenomena of mock impoliteness, for instance, *roast* or *roasting*, which is of course of particular relevance to this thesis, is defined as "a humorous interaction (private or mass-media) in which one or more individuals is/are subjected to jibes, i.e., disparaging remarks, produced by roasters with a view to amusing themselves and others, including the target (the roastee)" by Dynel and Poppi (2019: 3). This definition of roast also demonstrates a feature of "benevolent humorous abuse" (Oring, 2003: 80) or "good-natured jokes" (Rossing, 2016: 168). Dynel (2016: 135) suggests that more emphasis should be placed on the speaker's intention, "whether his/her intentions are primarily benevolent, which seems to be the

*essence* of mock impoliteness”. However, using the term “intention” is potentially problematic because we can never know what is in the speaker’s mind and what the speaker’s true intention is. Culpeper (2011: 48) examines the notion of intention and intentionality as a key concept in understanding impoliteness, and accurately uses a metaphor “battleground” to describe the scholarly debate over this issue. The two sides of the battleground, simply put, are the approaches to intentions as something either *a priori* or *post-facto*. While the Gricean notion (e.g., B&L, 1987; Leech, 1983) considers that “intentions exist as *a priori* in the minds of speakers and that it is the recovery of a speaker’s ‘polite’ intentions by hearers that leads to the understanding of politeness” (Culpeper, 2011: 48), an alternative approach considers intentions as a “*post-facto* construct that is explicitly topicalized in accounting for actions including violations of norms or other interactional troubles explicitly invoked in other subtle ways through interaction” (Haugh, 2008: 10). Although methodologically, post-facto notions are advantageous over a priori notions, “as participants in communication (very often) display their understandings in talk, using the notion of intention as an explanatory and evaluative tool. Those displays are available for analysis” (Culpeper, 2011: 49). However, such displays are not *always* available to analysts (e.g., limited context), which poses difficulty in operationalizing this prototypical feature of “the speaker has no intention to cause offence” in identifying mock impoliteness. Culpeper (2011: 52) suggests considering intentionality as a scalar point and argues that “weaker positions on the scale would involve such notions as responsibility for or control over an act, or, at an even further remove, the foreseeability of an act”. Indeed, we would always hold the speaker accountable for the utterances he or she produced. Haugh (2012: 173) is in tune with Culpeper’s view: “we are presumed to be exercising our agency in producing them. This is why we are held accountable for producing them”. Dynel (2016b: 70) also supports Haugh’s (2012) view on accountability:

Unless there are reasons to question the speaker’s intentionality in utterance/meaning/communicative effects production, accountability appears to underlie all communication, regardless of what the speaker’s intention actually is. This is something that can never be established beyond a shadow of a doubt, whether by the participants themselves or researchers”.

Therefore, considering intention as scalar and accountability as a weaker position on the scale resolves some of the difficulty in operationalizing the prototypical feature. In

other words, the prototypical feature that “the speaker has no intention to cause offence”, its operation means “the speaker has no (ostensibly accountable) intention to cause offence”.

The second feature of a certain degree of impoliteness in the messages communicated receives a broad agreement in the mock impoliteness scholarship. Both Leech’s (1983) and Culpeper’s (1996) definitions acknowledge that the form of mock impoliteness speech acts is in some way impolite. The second-order terms of jocular abuse or jocular insults used by Haugh and Bousfield (2012) also indicate that the element of impoliteness is involved with the use of “abuse” and “insults”. They highlight the central feature of impoliteness messages by defining jocular abuse as “instances where the speaker casts the target into an undesirable category or with undesirable attributes using conventionally offensive expressions, but this casting is framed by the speaker and interpreted by the target (and other recipients) as non-serious or jocular” (Haugh and Bousfield, 2012: 1108). The phenomena of mock impoliteness studied under first-order labels, such as teasing and kidding, are also connected to impoliteness messages. Haugh (2016) holds that “teasing is generally understood to involve combining elements of (ostensible) provocation with (ostensible) non-seriousness, including being framed as playful or jocular” (Drew, 1987; Haugh, 2014). Similarly, Dynel and Poppi’s (2019) definition of a roast emphasizes the role of “disparaging remarks” produced by roasters with the intention to “amuse themselves and others, including the target (the roastee)”. Culpeper et al. (2017)’s research view that mock impoliteness involves the communication of mixed messages further supports that a degree of impoliteness in the messages communicated is a central feature of mock impoliteness.

With regard to the target’s or the hearer’s perception, this last but not least crucial point is directed at the perlocutionary acts of the mock impoliteness acts. A salient feature demonstrated in the aforementioned theorisation of mock impoliteness is that there is no offence taken on the target’s or the hearer’s end. Leech (1983)’s banter principle incorporates the idea that *h* would interpret what *s* means as polite. Culpeper’s (1996) definition points out that “it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence”. Haugh’s (2010) study also emphasizes that jocular mockery is performed within a “non-serious or jocular frame” (see also Haugh & Bousfield, 2012). It seems that whether the target or the hearer takes offence is a major distinguishing feature between the



evaluation of genuine impoliteness and that of mock impoliteness. Yet, scholars hold different views regarding this matter. Culpeper (2005) defines the situations where “the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking” as genuine impoliteness. Dynel (2016a) disagrees and classifies the hearer’s misunderstanding of the speaker’s mock impolite utterance as “failed humor and failed politeness”. Since we can only observe how the target or the hearer evaluates a mock impoliteness speech event according to their ostensible reactions, such as their words, laughter, facial expressions, and other paralinguistic cues, the focus on the perception of mock impolite utterances therefore overlaps with humor study to a great extent (Norrick, 1993; Schegloff, 2001; Lytra, 2007; Dynel, 2016a; Sinkeviciute, 2017a; Beal and Mullan, 2017; among many others). Much research has been done to investigate at which point the perception of mock impoliteness slides over to that of genuine impoliteness (Alberts et al., 1996; Boxer and Cortes-Conde, 1997; Culpeper, 2011; Haugh, 2015), or when does the speaker cross “those lines” (Sinkeviciute, 2017b; Plester, 2009). However, there is still strong support in the literature that the hearer or the target taking no offence is a defining feature of mock impoliteness.

To sum up, the three features discussed above are prototypical to the conceptualisation of mock impoliteness, thus offering a guideline in identifying mock impoliteness speech events in the data for the ensuing study. Other possibly operationalizable criteria are also exploited in line with this guideline. Much research has been done on the signalling devices of mock impoliteness. Culpeper points out that “signalling devices are used to help secure politeness effects” (2011:210). These devices include “unusual vocalisations, singsong voice, formulaic utterances, elongated vowels, and unusual facial expressions” (Keltner et al., 1998:1233). Other research also demonstrates that “mockery can be framed or projected as non-serious, and thus jocular, in a number of ways by speakers, including various combinations of lexical exaggeration, formulaicity, topic shift markers, contrastiveness, prosodic cues, inviting laughter, and facial or gestural cues, as noted in relation to both teasing and non-serious talk more broadly (Attardo et al., 2003; Drew, 1987:231–232; Edwards, 2000:372, fn. 14; Jefferson et al., 1987; Keltner et al., 2001:234; Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006:56; Schegloff, 2001; Strachle, 1993:214)” (Haugh, 2010:2108). Another important criterion for identifying mock impoliteness is the engendering of humor which can be signaled by laughter. The presence of (genuine) laughter of both the speaker and the target or the hearer can

indicate that no offence is intended and no offence is taken (see 3.4 and 5.6 for more detail). These cues, together with the metapragmatic comments produced by both the participants and the third party (Danmku comments) can provide enough evidence for the researcher to identify mock impoliteness speech events in the data.

### 3.4 Mock impoliteness and humour

As pointed out in the previous section 3.2, the phenomena termed as mock impoliteness in this thesis, have been studied under terms such as “conversational joking” (Norrick, 1993), “joke” (Shegloff, 2001), “teasing” (Lytra, 2007), “conversational humour” (Dyvel, 2016a; Beal and Mullan, 2017), “funniness and jocularity” (Sinkeviciute, 2017a), etc, which suggests connections or overlap with the phenomena of humour. It is thus necessary to review the relationship between mock impoliteness and humour, in other words, to examine to what extent mock impoliteness overlaps with humour. To do so, the first question to answer is a fundamental yet extremely difficult question – *what is humour?*

Attardo (1994) gives a comprehensive survey of humour research, dating from Plato (427-347BC), who is unanimously considered the first theorist of humour in the literature, covering the Greeks, the Latins, the Renaissance to the modern approaches to humour theory, such as Freud’s and Bergson’s work. Not only does humour study has a long history of over 2400 years, but it has also been studied from a wide range of perspectives, covering disciplines “including (but not limited to) psychology, anthropology, sociology, literature, medicine, philosophy, philology, mathematics, education, semiotics and linguistics” (Attardo, 1994:15). Yet, the definition of humour is still a “myth”, so much so that Attardo’s (1994) book has a section “an impossible definition” in his introduction chapter on humour study. The following quote neatly summarises this struggle:

Humor research has seen several discussions both about the internal subdivisions of the subject matter and its definition (see Keith-Spiegel (1972)). Ultimately, it seems that, not only has it not been possible to agree on how to divide the category of "humor" (e.g., "humor" vs "comic" vs "ridiculous"), but it is even difficult to find a pretheoretical definition of "humor" in the most general sense. As a matter of fact, the claim that humor

is undefinable has been advanced several times (see Escarpit (1960: 5-7) and references therein).

Attardo (1994: 3)

Thus, instead of taking on the “impossible” task of defining humour, perhaps a more appropriate question to ask is - *what is conversational humour?* However, this is not an easier task. In the literature, many authors actually use the term *conversational humour* without offering a clear definition first. Dynel (2016a:117) starts the introduction of the paper with “conversational humour forms (such as joking and banter) tend to be viewed as politeness-orientated strategies...”. In this sense, we can view joking and banter as forms of conversational humour, but we do not know what conversational humour is exactly. Sinkeviciute (2017b:1) adds one more form to the category of conversational humour by starting the paper with “teasing, a form of conversational humour that flirts with the fine line between what is socially appreciated and what goes too far”. However, as established in the previous section 3.2, phenomena such as *teasing*, *joking* and *banter* overlap with *mock impoliteness*, would this mean that *mock impoliteness* and *conversational humour* are essentially the same? Even when conversational humour is defined, the definition is more about conversation than it is about humour, for instance, Dynel defines conversational humour as “an array of semantic-pragmatic categories, such as lexemes, phrasemes, witticisms, retorts, teasing, banter, putdowns, self-denigrating humour and anecdotes” (2009:1296). The problem with this definition is that there is a mix of first-order terms such as teasing and banter, with a list of second-order terms such as lexemes, phrasemes, and self-denigrating humour, without acknowledging the overlap among such terms. More importantly, humour is used to explain what humour is, which is, needless to say, circular. In addition, Dynel (2009) distinguishes conversational humour from jokes, but groups them together under a larger category of *verbal humour*. However, Norrick (2003) uses *conversational joking* and *conversational humour* interchangeably, and categorizes *jokes*, *anecdotes*, *wordplay* and *irony* under the term *conversational humour*. Such circular (and sometimes conflicting) definitions are not helpful in teasing out the relationship between *mock impoliteness* and *humour*.

It seems that within the literature on conversational humour, the definition of humour has been taken for granted as something intuitive. Admittedly, defining humour is an

extremely complex task if we have yet to reach consensus after more than 2400 years of research. However, a working definition is still needed for further discussion. In this review, I adopt the Cambridge Dictionary's definition of humour – “the ability to find things funny, the way in which people see that some things are funny, or the quality of being funny”. This dictionary definition loosely corresponds to the first two of the three different phenomena discussed within humour literature, as summarized by Roberts (2008: 7-8): 1) the mental state and/or mental process of perceiving or experiencing humour, 2) the stimuli that cause such a mental state and 3) the behavioural responses to humour (such as smiling or laughing). As for the latter, from a pragmatic perspective, one can argue that finding something funny (which may manifest through behavioural responses, such as laughter) is the perlocutionary effect of humour (see also Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1981; Roventa-Frumusani, 1986; Mizzau, 1982, 1984 as cited in Attardo, 1994). It is important to admit that this definition may well be criticised by linguists, psychologists and scholars in other disciplines from different angles, but it suffices for the purpose of discussing to what extent *humour* overlaps with *mock impoliteness*.

Previously in section 3.2, a second-order prototype definition of mock impoliteness identified three features (i) the speaker has no (ostensibly accountable) intention to cause offence; (ii) there is a certain degree of impoliteness in the messages communicated; and (iii) the target or hearer perceived them without taking offence. Each feature has the possibility of overlapping with humour. The following paragraphs examine to what extent the prototypical features of mock impoliteness overlaps with humour. I will start with the overlap between the prototypical feature (i) and (iii) with laughter, and then explain the overlap between the prototypical feature (ii) with “the quality of being funny” through three major humour theories, the Superiority theory, Incongruity theory and Relief theory.

The close association among laughter, humour, and mock impoliteness is a major reason of the significant overlapping between mock impoliteness and humour. Laughter, which has (sometimes) been seen as interchangeable with humour, could also accompany mock impoliteness speech events. This is where the prototypical features (i) and (iii) of mock impoliteness overlaps with a perlocutionary effect of humour — laughter, i.e., the perlocutionary effect of finding something funny. The confusion comes from a *plausible* corollary: If humour is something funny, one is likely to laugh; if one is

laughing at something (potentially) impolite, it is likely that one does not seem to be causing or taking offence, thus this “something (potentially) impolite” is funny or humorous.

This corollary is problematic. Attardo (1994:10) points out that humour (a mental phenomenon) and laughter (a complex neuro-physiological manifestation), has been incorrectly considered symmetrical by a lot of a researchers including Bergson (1901), Freud (1905), and Lewis (1989). He then referenced Olbrechts-Tyteca’s (1974) research in which 5 reasons why laughter does not equate to humour are listed:

- i. Laughter largely exceeds humour.
- ii. Laughter does not always have the same meaning.
- iii. Laughter is not directly proportionate to the intensity of humour.
- iv. Humour elicits sometimes laughter, sometimes a smile.
- v. Laughter or smiling cannot always be observed directly.

(Olbrechts-Tyteca,1974: 14-15 as cited in Attardo, 1994:11-12)

Indeed, one can laugh from being tickled, but this does not mean that tickling is humorous. One could also find something humorous or funny but may not laugh because it might be considered inappropriate in certain contexts. In terms of mock impoliteness, laughter can be a strong indicator of the speaker or hearer not causing/taking offence, which is important evidence for researchers to distinguish mock impoliteness from genuine impoliteness, as it indicates funniness (Sinkeviciute, 2017b), or non-serious intent (Haugh, 2016). However, this does not equate mock impoliteness to laughter or humour. Culpeper (2011: 208) rightly points out that mock impoliteness consists of impolite forms whose effects are (at least theoretically for the most part) cancelled by the context. While laughter could be one of the contextual factors that cancels the effects of the impolite forms (e.g., speakers’ laughter accompanying their potential impolite messages in *Roasts!*), there are many other factors carrying out the same function, such as prosody, body gestures, polite messages/behaviours, etc. The incorrect symmetry between humour and laughter is one reason why the phenomena of mock impoliteness, when studied under terms such as *teasing*, *banter*, *joking*, or *conversational humour* overlap significantly with humour. The situation is not helped by such terms that focus much on the humorous effects, especially when laughter could

be one strong indicator of the speaker/hearer not causing/taking offence (feature (i) and (iii) in the prototype definition) in mock impoliteness events.

A second reason for the overlap between mock impoliteness and humour is that the entertaining function of impoliteness (Culpeper 2011) could involve humour. This is where the prototypical feature (ii) of mock impoliteness, that a certain degree of impolite message is communicated, overlaps with “the quality of being funny” in the above Cambridge dictionary definition of humour.

Culpeper (2011) proposes that there are five sources of pleasure that can be involved in entertaining impoliteness, which are listed briefly below:

1. *Emotional pleasure*. Observing impoliteness creates a state of arousal in the observer, and that state of arousal can be pleasurable.
2. *Aesthetic pleasure*. Outside discussions of banter, little attention has been given in the literature to socially negative uses of verbal creativity. In fact, much impoliteness has elements of creativity, not least of all because of its frequently competitive nature: if one is attacked, one responds in kind or with a superior attack. And to achieve a superior attack requires creative skills.
3. *Voyeuristic pleasure*. Observing people reacting to impoliteness often involves the public exposure of private selves, particularly aspects that are emotionally sensitive, and this can lead to voyeuristic pleasure.
4. *The pleasure of being superior*. ‘Superiority theories’ (e.g., Bergson 1911 [1900]), developed within humour theory, articulate the idea that there is self-reflexive pleasure in observing someone in a worse state than oneself.
5. *The pleasure of feeling secure*. Compare, for example, witnessing an actual fight in a pub, in which case you might feel insecure and wish to make hasty exit, with a pub fight represented in a film.

(2011: 234-235)

The fourth source, the pleasure of being superior, is of particular relevance to humour, and this is one reason why mock impoliteness could cause humorous effects. The fact that *Roast!* becomes a very popular show that has attracted millions of audiences could be explained by the Superiority theories of humour. Audiences could easily enjoy the humour when the guests are roasting each other on the stage, while they feel secure watching them, which also manifests the fifth source, the pleasure of feeling secure. However, note that the 5 sources of the pleasure go far beyond humour. While there

might be something funny about the potential impolite messages in mock impoliteness, humour does not incorporate all the entertaining functions. Again, the terms such as *teasing*, *banter*, *joking*, and *conversational humour* focus primarily on the humorous effects. However, as such terms have been widely circulated, it is sometimes mistakenly assumed that they and humour are essentially the same.

In addition, mock impoliteness essentially is a mix of something polite and something impolite (Culpeper et al. 2017). This mixture might be the source of humour, which fits the Incongruity theory, the dominant theory of humour in philosophy and psychology, which explains that humour/laughter is a perception of something incongruous (Morreall, 2009:10). Morreall (2009:11) explains that “incongruity” means “some thing or event we perceive or think about violates our normal mental patterns and normal expectations”. In this sense, the mixture of something polite and something impolite violates normal expectations of either a polite or impolite context, which could explain why mock impoliteness has been seen overlapping significantly with humour. However, just because mock impoliteness has humorous effects does not entail that mock impoliteness is humour.

Lastly, the Relief theory brings the focus back to laughter again, as it views humour as a pressure valve, and the physical phenomenon of laughter is the relief (Morreall, 2009: 15). Freud (1905) is widely considered the representation of the Relief theory, although Lord Shaftesbury, John Dewey and Herbert Spencer individually has formulated similar theories (Morreall, 2009: 17). As previously mentioned, if we consider laughter as the perlocutionary effect of humour, then all five sources of pleasure of entertaining impoliteness in Culpeper (2011) could manifest through laughter. However, as I have explained previously that reducing humour to laughter brings confusion, further discussion on Relief theory would be unnecessary.

Therefore, all three prototypical features of mock impoliteness have the possibility of overlapping with humour. However, it is clear that laughter could accompany mock impoliteness speech events but does not equate to humour (despite the fact that Relief theory argues otherwise); the entertaining function of impoliteness might involve humorous effects, but far exceeds humour; the incongruity of something polite and something impolite within mock impoliteness might be a source of humour, but this does not mean mock impoliteness and humour are the same. In this thesis, indeed the

laughter or smile of the participants is sometimes used as an ostensible signal to identify and analyse mock impoliteness speech events, and humorous effects are also taken into consideration in analysing the participants' evaluation of mock impoliteness. However, the focus of the thesis is always on the pragmatics of mock impoliteness, while humour is viewed as a perlocutionary effect of mock impoliteness. By using the term mock impoliteness, it takes different perspectives from research which studies the phenomena under terms such as *teasing*, *joking*, *banter*, and *conversational humour*, as they tend to view humour as the function, or the goal of such phenomena.

### 3.5 Mock impoliteness and Mixed Messages

Under the frame of (im)politeness research, most research so far focused on either the interactions of politeness or impoliteness. Yet there is “a notable proportion of interpersonal work does not in fact straightforwardly fit politeness or impoliteness”, such as mock politeness and mock impoliteness which involve mixed messages (Culpeper et al., 2017:323).

Culpeper et al. (2017) define mixed messages as “mismatching *interpersonal* messages in interaction that are incongruous on at least one level of interpretation or generate a sense of interpretive or evaluative dissonance” (2017:324). To put it simply, mixed messages “contain features that point towards a polite interpretation mixed with features that point towards an impolite interpretation” (Culpeper et al., 2017:324; see also Culpeper, 2011; Rockwell, 2006). As discussed in 3.2, the prototypical mock impoliteness has three features, (i) the speaker has no (ostensibly accountable) intention to cause offence; (ii) there is a certain degree of impoliteness in the messages communicated; and (iii) the target or hearer perceived them without taking offence. The impolite interpretation might come from feature (ii), while contextual evidence of feature (i) and (iii) might suggest polite interpretation. In the case of mock impoliteness, it is within this mixture of polite interpretation and impolite interpretation that an interpretation of mock impoliteness is generated. Therefore, the model of mixed messages is helpful in answering the RQ (1) – *How is mock impoliteness constructed in the show Roast! ?*



Originated in Culpeper's (2011) classification of implicational impoliteness, the model of mixed messages proposed in Culpeper et al. (2017) contains two ways in which interpersonal messages can be mixed:

Convention-driven:

- (a) Internal: the context projected by part of a behaviour mismatches that projected by another part; or
- (b) External: the context projected by a behaviour mismatches the context of use.

Context-driven:

- (a) Unmarked behaviour: an unmarked (with respect to surface form or semantic content) and unconventionalised behaviour mismatches the context; or
- (b) Absence of behaviour: the absence of a behaviour mismatches the context.

(Culpeper et al., 2017:336)

In the following paragraphs, I will explain the above types of mismatches in detail.

### 3.5.1 Convention-driven mismatch

The core of the convention-driven mismatch is conventionalised (im)politeness formulae (see Culpeper 2011). Conventionalisation, according to Terkourafi (2005b: 213; see also Culpeper, 2011:126), is:

a relationship holding between utterances and context, which is a correlate of the (statistical) frequency with which an expression used in one's experience of a particular context. Conventionalisation is thus a matter of degree, and may well vary in different speakers, as well as for the same speaker over time. This does not preclude the possibility that a particular expression may be conventionalised in a particular context for virtually all speakers of a particular language, thereby appearing to be a convention of that language.

In Terkourafi's (2001, 2002, 2005a, b) frame-based approach to politeness, frames are co-constituted by the *concrete linguistic realisations* and *particular contexts of use*, such as the expression "thank you" used in a context of gift receiving. Terkourafi argues that "it is the regular co-occurrence of particular types of context and particular linguistic expressions as the unchallenged realisations of particular acts that create the perception of politeness" (2005a: 248). Culpeper (2010, 2011) adopts Terkourafi's notion of conventionalization and asks whether there exists conventionalised impoliteness. By collecting impolite utterances through 100 diary-reports and then

checking their robustness in the Oxford English Corpus (OEC), Culpeper (2011: 135-136) offers a list of conventionalized impoliteness formulae in English. There are particular linguistic expressions regularly used in particular contexts that creates perceptions of (im)politeness — conventionalised (im)politeness formulae. Convention-driven mismatch is about how such conventionalised (im)politeness formulae are internally or externally mismatched.

#### (a) Internal mismatch

Within the subtype of internal mismatch, there are further two types of mismatch, that is, verbal formula mismatch and multimodal mismatch (Culpeper, 2011: 169-178). Verbal formula mismatches are “created out of a conventionalised politeness formula in the context of either a conventionalised impoliteness formula or a behaviour that otherwise expresses impoliteness” (Culpeper, 2011: 174). Culpeper provides many examples to illustrate this type of mismatch, but for the purpose of concision, I hereby quote the paradigm example “*Could you just fuck off?*” (2011: 174). A question leading with “Could you” is a conventionalized way in British English of politely asking for something, such as “Could you (please) pass the salt?”, here it is juxtaposed with a conventionalized impoliteness formula “fuck off”, thus creating a mismatch of interpersonal messages via verbal formulae.

Another way of internal mismatch is multimodal mismatch, where verbal, oral and visual elements can be mismatched (Culpeper, 2011: 169). An example provided by Culpeper (2011: 169) is the host Anne Robinson’s most famous catchphrase “you are the weakest link goodbye” in the quiz show *The Weakest Link*. Through an instrumental analysis of the prosodic feature of this utterance, Culpeper concludes that the use of the conventionalised politeness formula “goodbye” is mismatched with the prosody of “you are the weakest link goodbye”, thus giving the impression of being “contemptuous and dismissive” (2011: 171). Obviously, there are many other ways where multimodal features can be mismatched with the conventionalised (im)politeness formulae (see discussions in 6.3 and 6.4).

#### (b) External mismatch

For external mismatch, Culpeper (2011: 179) uses an example of sarcasm, where a car owner sarcastically said “have a good day” to a traffic warden who just clamped his car when he was obviously upset with the clamping. Here, the conventionalised politeness formulae “have a good day” mismatches the context.

### 3.5.2 Context-driven mismatch

While the convention driven mismatch captures the cases where conventionalised (im)politeness formulae are involved, the context-driven mismatch captures the mixed messages where “the utterance or behaviour is not conventionalised for politeness or impoliteness (Culpeper et al, 2017:339). There are two kinds.

#### (a) Unmarked behaviour

This type of mismatch, theoretically<sup>7</sup>, is very rare, as Culpeper (2011: 180) predicts:

In fact, very few behaviours can be described as neither marked nor conventionalised. This is not surprising: language users rely on regularities to facilitate the cognitive pressures of real-time language processing, and they also use deviations from regularities to help signal to other users particular pragmatic meanings.

According to Culpeper et al. (2017: 339-340), Brown and Levinson’s (1987) bald-on record strategy involves unmarked utterances in a Gricean sense, and the kind of mismatch in discussion is when “such unmarked utterances are used in such a way that they mismatch the context”, such as a child using imperative commands to a parent — “hurry up”, “eat your food”, “Be quiet”, etc. (Culpeper, 2011: 181-182).

#### (b) Absence of behaviour

This type of mismatch occurs where the absence of a behaviour (which is expected in a context) leads to an interpretation of impoliteness, such as when a teacher did not comment to a student’s answer to her [sic] question when she expected so, and thus leading to the student taking offence (Culpeper, 2011: 182-183).

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<sup>7</sup> Actually, this type of mismatch is the second most frequent type of mismatch in *Roast!* (see 6.3).

As the model of mixed messages is initially proposed (Culpeper, 2011) to account for non-conventionalised impoliteness, all types of the above mismatches are oriented towards interpretation of impoliteness. When applied in analysing mock impoliteness in *Roast!*, needless to say, the focus is on how interpretation of *mock impoliteness* is reached via such types of mismatches.

This model offers great explanatory force in analysing how mock (im)politeness is triggered or constructed because it takes both linguistic forms of an interaction and its context into consideration. Taylor (2015a, 2015b) and Wang and Taylor (2019) apply this model to their analysis of mock politeness in English, Italian and Chinese. Chen's (2019) research also adopts the concept of mixed messages to investigate "patch-up" jocular abuse, which is a type of mock impoliteness in Chinese.

Considering that the notion of mixed messages is rather recent, and that the research on mock impoliteness is far more limited compared to that of (im)politeness, the application of this model is still scarce. However, the above-mentioned research has proven that it is worth testing its feasibility of adopting the model of mixed messages in this research as one theoretical framework on mock impoliteness in Chinese.

### 3.6 Mock impoliteness and Rapport Management

In this section, I will focus on Spencer-Oatey's rapport management (2000, 2005, 2007, 2008), and explain why it is chosen to analyse mock impoliteness.

While face is a central notion of (im)politeness research, it is impossible to discuss the construction of mock impoliteness without discussing the role face plays. Previously in 2.2 and 2.3, proposals and criticisms of various face-based approaches to (im)politeness have been reviewed, such as Brown and Levinson (1987) and revisiting Goffman's face advocated by Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; Watts, 2003, etc. That being said, face alone (be it whichever version) is not enough to explain (im)politeness, as Culpeper shows that violation of social norms not obviously involving face could also cause offence (2011: 31-43). Spencer-Oatey's rapport management (2000, 2005,

2007, 2008) incorporates both face and sociality rights, thus is a broader framework than those which focus solely on face.

Spencer-Oatey's rapport management (2000, 2005, 2007, 2008) consists of 3 types of face and 2 types of sociality rights. In section 2.2, I have reviewed all 3 types of face, and I will focus on the sociality rights.

Spencer-Oatey (2008:13-14) defines sociality rights as:

The management of sociality rights and obligations . . . involves the management of social expectancies, which I define as 'fundamental social entitlements that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others'. In other words, face is associated with personal/relational/social value, and is concerned with people's sense of worth, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on. Sociality rights and obligations, on the other hand, are concerned with social expectancies, and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration and behavioural appropriateness.

Note that there is a distinction between face and sociality rights, which is something that other face-based approaches to (im)politeness do not cover. Spencer-Oatey's sociality rights focuses on "social expectancies" or "social entitlements", which is closely related to both experiential and social norms (Culpeper, 2011:39). Spencer-Oatey (2002: 541) clarifies that:

The notion of sociality rights relates partly to Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) concept of negative face but is not synonymous with it, in that it is broader in scope and is not limited to autonomy–imposition issues. It includes concerns about association as well as cost–benefit issues, and does not assume that autonomy/independence is always the preferred option.

Spencer-Oatey discusses two subcategories of sociality rights: equity and association, which she termed "interactional principles", but here I shall follow Culpeper's (2011) clarification and refinements to her work, using the term "rights"<sup>8</sup>. Equity rights is defined as:

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<sup>8</sup> Culpeper (2011:26) points out that "Spencer-Oatey's definitions of the various categories of her framework tend to be somewhat brief, and not always quite up to capturing the kind of variety one finds in a large dataset or solidly guiding the analyst". As the coding categories in 5.3 follows Culpeper's (2011)

people have a fundamental belief that they are entitled to personal consideration from others and to be treated fairly; in other words, that they are not unduly imposed upon, that they are not unfairly ordered about, and that they are not taken advantage of or exploited. (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 100)

There are three components of the equity rights: cost-benefit considerations (the principle that people should not be exploited or disadvantaged), fairness and reciprocity (the belief that costs and benefits should be “fair” and kept roughly in balance), and autonomy-control (the belief that people should not be unduly controlled or imposed upon) (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 100).

As for association rights, it is defined as:

people have a fundamental belief that they are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that they have with them. This principle helps to uphold people’s interdependent construals of self, and seems to have three components: involvement (the principle that people should have appropriate amounts and types of “activity” involvement with others), empathy (the belief that people should share appropriate concerns, feelings and interests with others), and respect (the belief that people should show appropriate amounts of respectfulness for others). (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 100)

It is clear to see that sociality rights is a broader dimension that face alone could not cover in analysing (im)politeness. By incorporating both face and sociality rights, Spencer-Oatey’s rapport management thus is broader than the previous face-based approaches to (im)politeness. In addition, it incorporates both politeness and impoliteness, as people can hold rapport-enhancement orientation (a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors), a rapport-maintenance orientation (a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations), a rapport-neglect orientation (a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations, perhaps because of a focus on self), or a rapport-challenge orientation (a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations) (Spencer-Oatey, 2005:96). For the purpose of analysing mock impoliteness, where there are elements of both politeness and impoliteness, this framework is especially useful. More importantly, this framework is developed from empirical data on Chinese, which spares the risks of western cultural bias, which is one

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refinement of Spencer-Oatey’s framework, here for congruity, I shall adopt the term Culpeper (2011) used.

major criticism of B&L's (1987) theory. Thus, it is suitable for analysing mock impoliteness in *Roast!* in Chinese.

### 3.7 Theoretical frameworks

This research adopts Culpeper (2011) and Culpeper et al. (2017)'s mixed messages and Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2005)'s rapport management as its theoretical frameworks, and follows a general integrative pragmatics approach (Culpeper and Haugh 2014; Haugh and Culpeper 2018). Culpeper (2011) argues that "mock impoliteness relies on some degree of mismatch between conventionalised impoliteness formulae and the context, along with additional signals (e.g., laughter) that the impoliteness is not genuine". The framework of mixed interpersonal messages offers a great explanatory force in accounting for mock impoliteness by identifying how it's triggered. As for Spencer-Oatey (2002)'s rapport management, it can "encompass both politeness and impoliteness", to both of which the phenomena of mock impoliteness is closely related, and "offers the most promising way forward, since it has sufficient sophistication to accommodate both, yet is also supported by solid empirical work" (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1576). This framework consists of three types of face, quality face, social identity face and relational face, and two types of sociality rights, namely equity rights and association rights, altogether 5 categories, and thus offers a comprehensive view of what factors are salient in the constructions and evaluations of mock impoliteness in my data.

These two frameworks, mixed messages and rapport management, are closely related to each other by the presence of a potential impolite interpretation of a certain act, which lies at the heart of mock impoliteness. Moreover, both frameworks are in congruity with an integrative pragmatics approach which is "strongly empirical, both informing and being informed by data" (Haugh and Culpeper, 2018) (see 5.2). Indeed, to account for mock impoliteness in Chinese public discourse, such an interaction-based approach which can incorporate two theoretical frameworks is highly appropriate and feasible.

### 3.8 Mock impoliteness, evaluation, and metapragmatics

Terkourafi's (2001, 2002, 2005a, b) work on a frame-based approach to politeness and Culpeper's (2010, 2011) conventionalized impoliteness formulae have offered solid evidence that some linguistic forms are more polite or impolite than others, which suggests that (im)politeness can be inherent in language to some degree. However, there are many unconventional contexts or usage of unconventionalised language where the (im)politeness involves the participants' judgement or evaluation. The case of mock (im)politeness is more so considering the mix of potential polite and impolite messages as its characteristic feature. Yet the notion of evaluation itself has not been carefully theorized in politeness research as pointed out by Kárdár and Haugh (2013: 60). Recently a few empirical studies have started to investigate people's evaluative judgements of (im)politeness (Chang and Haugh 2011; Fukushima 2013; Haugh and Chang 2018; Kárdár and Marquez-Reiter, 2015), and some researchers have focused on the theorization of the evaluation process (e.g., Culpeper 2011; Davies, 2018; Haugh 2013b; Spencer-Oatey and Kárdár 2016; Spencer-Oatey and Xing 2019).

Not surprisingly, within this rather recent scholarly attention, the work related to the evaluation of mock impoliteness is scarce with only a few exceptions. Mckinnon and Prieto's (2014) experimental study investigates the role of prosody and gesture in the perception of mock impoliteness. And Sinkeviciute's (2017a) work focuses on the evaluations of jocular behaviours from a metapragmatic approach. However, these studies do not offer analytical frameworks. In addition, Haugh and Bousfield (2012) briefly mentions that the evaluations of mock impoliteness are evaluations of potentially impolite behavior as non-impolite, rather than politeness or impoliteness per se (2012:1109). This argument focuses on the evaluation on the producer's part or at least one hearer's part. It is clear that this area requires further theoretical and empirical research. The RQ2—*How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?* of this thesis aims to address this issue.

Indeed, evaluation as a highly subjective matter, is difficult, but not impossible, for the researchers to access without the help of metalanguage from the participants or other not strictly ratified participants (Goffman 1981). The study of metalanguage can be traced back decades ago to at least Jakobson's metalingual function of language (1960, 1985). However, as Sinkeviciute points out, the term *metapragmatics* “appears to be somewhat new” (2017a: 42). *Metapragmatics*, as ‘the study of the metalinguistic



dimension of language”, has recently received more attention since Verschueren’s call that it is not only merely interesting and useful, but also “absolutely necessary if we want to understand language use” (Verschueren, 2000: 441-442).

Jaworski et al. (2004:3) accurately put the function of metapragmatics:

Metalinguistic representations may enter public consciousness and come to constitute structured understandings, perhaps even ‘common sense’ understandings – of how language works, what it is usually like, what certain ways of speaking connote and imply, what they ought to be like.

Such structured understandings offer invaluable insight to understanding mock impoliteness, which is essential to answering the RQ2—*How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?* Culpeper (2011:74) makes a clear distinction between metapragmatic comments and metalinguistic expressions: a metapragmatic comment is an opinion about the pragmatic implications of utterances, their functions, indexical relations, social implications, and so on (e.g., “That’s rude”); while metalinguistic expressions are the linguistic expressions conventionally understood within a speech community to refer to such metapragmatic evaluations (e.g., “rude”). The focus of answering RQ2 is understanding how mock impoliteness is evaluated via metapragmatic comments, though of course, metalinguistic expressions are important parts of the metapragmatic comments.

Although metapragmatics is important in understanding pragmatic phenomena, ‘it is not necessarily something they can articulate’ (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014: 258). In other words, it is not always accessible to researchers. In previous research, data source of metapragmatics includes questionnaires (Ide et al., 1992), corpus analysis (Culpeper, 2011), reports (Pizziconi, 2007; Culpeper, 2011) and interviews (Obana and Tomoda, 1994; Spencer-Oatey, 2011; Fukushima and Haugh, 2014; Sinkeviciute, 2017). Such data (except for corpus data) may take much effort to collect, and the amount of data collected is also limited to the number of participants that a researcher could recruit. However, the emergence of Danmaku System offers abundant metapragmatic data from thousands of Danmaku users with much easier access, which significantly adds to the data source of metapragmatics investigation (See 1.2 and 4.5 on introduction of

Danmaku). More importantly, understanding mock (im)politeness through investigating metapragmatic evaluation also resonates with the discursive approaches to (im)politeness, which advocate first-order understanding of (im)politeness interactions (Eelen 2001; Locher and Watts 2005; Locher 2006, 2012, 2015; Mills 2003). Such discursive approaches, in return can provide solid theoretical underpinning of (im)politeness.

### 3.9 Summary

This chapter has examined key theoretical issues in mock impoliteness. Section 3.2 has demonstrated that the relationship between mock politeness and mock impoliteness is not clear-cut but fuzzy, such confusion are especially reinforced by the circulation of first-order terms such as irony, sarcasm, teasing and banter in the literature. Thus, I propose that using a second-order term — mock impoliteness, is theoretically more beneficial to this research. Following this proposal, section 3.3 has developed a second-order prototype definition of mock impoliteness from the common features of mock impoliteness in the literature. This prototype definition will be used to identify mock impoliteness speech events in the later course of the thesis. In section 3.4, an important issue, that is, the overlap between the phenomena of mock impoliteness and humour has been carefully examined. It is worth emphasizing the distinction between this thesis and previous studies on this matter. Studies which use terms such as teasing, joking, banter, and conversational humour, tend to focus on the humorous function of such phenomena, or even equate them with humour. On the contrary, the focus of this thesis is always on mock impoliteness, while humour is viewed as a perlocutionary effect of mock impoliteness. Section 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 addresses the theoretical frameworks adopted to answer RQ1—*How is mock impoliteness constructed in the show Roast!?*, that is, Culpeper et al.'s (2017) model of mixed messages, and Spencer-Oatey's rapport management (2002, 2005, 2007, 2008). How to operationalize such theoretical frameworks in data annotation will be covered in section 5.3, and relationship between the two theoretical frameworks will be further discussed in section 5.5, where modification of the theoretical frameworks will be proposed in order to cover issues occurred in the pilot study. Finally, to answer RQ2—*How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?*, theoretical underpinning of evaluation and metapragmatics has been discussed in section 3.8.

## Chapter 4. Data and methods

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces two types of data selected to answer the two research questions. Section 4.2 introduces the show *Roast!*, in which the participants' contribution features mock impoliteness. Thus the participants' speech is the data for answering RQ1—*How is mock impoliteness constructed in the show Roast! ?* (section 4.3). Since the show is aired online, a particular commenting system, Danmaku, offers abundant third-party participants metapragmatic comments on the participants' interactions, which is the data for answering RQ2—*How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?* (section 4.4). The data retrieval process is explained in section 4.5, and ethical issues in collecting such data is then discussed in section 4.6.

### 4.2 Chinese online talk show *Roast!*

*Roast!* (吐槽大会 Tu Cao Da Hui) is an online comedy talk show exclusively aired on Tencent Video<sup>9</sup>, a major Chinese video streaming website. Similar to Comedy Central Roast in America, each episode of *Roast!* invites several celebrities to roast each other. A roast is defined as “a humorous interaction (private or mass-media) in which one or more individuals is/are subjected to jibes, i.e., disparaging remarks, produced by roasters with a view to amusing themselves and others, including the target (the roastee)” by Dynel and Poppi (2019: 3), which demonstrates a feature of “benevolent humorous abuse” (Oring, 2003:80) or “good-natured jokes” (Rossing, 2016:168). The high frequency of teasing and banter in the show provides a great opportunity for an investigation of mock impoliteness in depth.

After having been premiered in July 2016, the first episode of *Roast!* gained its vast popularity with 10 million views within just 20 hours. However, it was taken off the air by the National Radio and Television Administration three days later because some content was deemed inappropriate for online programs. In January 2017, the revised

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<sup>9</sup> <https://v.qq.com/detail/5/50182.html>

version of Season 1 was aired by Tencent Video again and gained more success this time with 1.3 billion views by April 2017. Having gained great popularity among netizens for its witty humour, the show was awarded the most valuable online variety show of 2016-2017 by ENAwards. The censorship of the show indicates to some extent that for some people, the jokes in the show appeared to be crossing the line. A few paragraphs in an online article (Li, 2016) summarizes this issue neatly:

The challenge in bringing foreign formats to a wider Chinese public, He said, is to come up with jokes that are funny but still palatable to more conservative tastes.

Stand-up comedy is still a niche pastime in China, whose humor is usually low on irony or mockery — the latter especially running counter to the traditional notion of saving face.

“Roast Convention” also green-lighted other taboo subjects for derision, including sex.

The punchline of one of Zhang’s jokes, for example, was that his girlfriend was really his right hand. Another masturbation-related joke by actress Wang Lin had netizens feeling she had gone too far. “Wang Lin’s erotic joke embarrassed me,” read one comment.

Indeed, despite its great success, the show also received negative reviews. “Most net users enjoyed the show’s first episode, though some were left a little disappointed that the end product bared fewer teeth than the Western original<sup>10</sup>. ‘I felt like they hadn’t even started roasting, and then the show was over,’ said one net user. Another complained that the jokes were too long and the laughs too few” (id.)

According to such reviews, the phenomena of mock impoliteness in a Chinese cultural setting seem different from that in a western cultural setting from the way it is presented to the evaluations it receives. By looking into the mock impoliteness in Chinese public discourse, this research contributes to the understanding of mock impoliteness and redresses the imbalance of the focus on western cultures/languages in (im)politeness research in general.

The show ran for 3 seasons, altogether 30 episodes (10 episodes each), up to the time of the beginning of this research in 2018. Each episode of the first and the second season invites a celebrity as the major guest (主咖 Zhu Ka) and then the major guest invites his/her friends, partners, colleagues and/or staff as “minor” guests (副咖 Fu Ka) for

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<sup>10</sup> The western original is mostly likely to be the *Comedy Central Roast* in America.

the show. The host, also called “Captain Roast”(吐槽队长 Tu Cao Dui Zhang), roasts each guest as he introduces them, and makes comments on each guest’s performances afterward as well, where many metapragmatic comments can be observed. The “minor” guests take turns to roast every person on stage, leaving the major guest the opportunity to roast them and the host at last. At the end of the show, the major guest nominates one minor guest as the Talk king of that episode according to his/her performance. As for the third season, a new section was added, where the friends of the major guest and some online or live audiences pre-recorded roast videos that are played on the screen on stage before the major guest roasts the minor guests and the host. At the end of the show, the live audiences, instead of the major guest vote for the Talk King of that episode. To avoid any influence on the data caused by the different forms of the show, this research collected data only from the first season and the second season.

#### 4.3 Identification of mock impoliteness speech events

The identification of mock impoliteness events is important because it groups single mock impoliteness acts into a larger unit which connects the mock impoliteness speech acts and the evaluation of mock impoliteness speech events together. This aids the further quantitative studies and connects the two research questions. The following paragraphs explains how this is conducted.

Based on the prototype definition of mock impoliteness in 3.3, along with other signaling devices of mock impoliteness, I was able to identify mock impoliteness speech acts in the show. I acknowledge that the term *mock impoliteness speech acts* ties mock impoliteness to the speech act theory (Austin J. L., 1962), which is something that not everyone would agree with. Even Brown and Levinson have acknowledged this problem of basing their FTA framework on the notion of the speech act theory, because “speech act theory forces a sentence-based, speaker-oriented mode of analysis, requiring attribution of speech act categories where our own thesis requires that utterances are often equivocal in force” (1987:10). This link with speech act theory could undermine the discursive nature of instances of mock impoliteness to some extent. However, Brown and Levinson (1978: 11) also acknowledge that “the speech act categories that we employed were an underanalysed shorthand, but one which, were we

to try again today, would still be hard to avoid”. Grainger (2013:31) “would even go so far as to say that interpersonal pragmatics *needs* this concept in order to account for why certain forms of words should be associated with certain meanings and acts of politeness” (emphasis mine). Indeed, Austin (1962) rightly observes that we *do* things with words. All utterances are doing something, and so do the sequences of *roast*. The undeniable relevance between speech act theory and (im)politeness is laid out neatly in Culpeper and Terkourafi (2017:13)<sup>11</sup>:

Firstly, the notion of an utterance ‘doing an action’—the precursor to the notion of speech act—offered a contextually sensitive unit of analysis. Secondly, it offered the possibility of shifting the focus from language as a tool for exchanging information about the world to a tool for building and maintaining human relationships (i.e., a shift from transactional to interactional). Thirdly, the idea that utterances could vary in terms of how explicitly they performed actions, what later scholars would refer to as (in)directness, was to become an important dimension of politeness theory.

Therefore, the notion of speech act is still necessary to employ in studying mock impoliteness, despite the caveat acknowledged above. This notion is also important in analysing the evaluations of mock impoliteness (RQ2) and will be revisited in relation to metapragmatic evaluations in section 7.2.2. The way I use “act” is in tune with Brown and Levinson’s explanation — “by ‘act’ we have in mind what is intended to be done by a verbal or non-verbal communication, just as one or more ‘speech acts’ can be assigned to an utterance” (1987:65). In addition, in order to analyse the patterns of the mock impoliteness instances, each instance needs to be isolated so that they can be counted. Therefore, using the term mock impoliteness speech act is also out of methodological consideration.

Building on mock impoliteness speech acts, a larger unit is called mock impoliteness event. In the show *Roast!*, mock impoliteness speech acts often appear in clusters within a short period of time, which leads to the related evaluations by different participants pointing to such clusters instead of a single act (mostly). In this research, these clusters of mock impoliteness acts are called mock impoliteness speech events. As described in the section 4.2, the structure of the show requires each roaster to roast other participants

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<sup>11</sup> Culpeper and Terkourafi (2017) discuss the relevance of speech act theory for *politeness*, but of course this is also relevant for impoliteness.

in a “monologue” manner. This makes it very clear to see how mock impoliteness speech acts cluster together and form a mock impoliteness speech event. Therefore, a mock impoliteness event is defined as a group of mock impoliteness speech acts produced by one speaker during his/her turn of roasting.

#### 4.4 Danmaku data and its selection criteria

Danmaku is a commenting system that has been widely applied to video websites in Asian countries, especially in China and Japan (Wu & Ito, 2014). This system was created by Niconico, an ACG (animation, comic, game) video website in Japan in 2006 (Hsiao, 2015). In Japanese, the term Danmaku means barrage, or “bullet strafe” (Lin et al, 2018:274). In Chinese, it is also called “danmu” (弹幕) since its introduction in China around 2010 (Hsiao, 2015).

As a rather new field, a few studies on Danmaku focus on the system itself within the discipline of informatics and media studies (Wu and Ito, 2014; Liu et al, 2016; Chen et al., 2017; Lin et al, 2018).

Not surprisingly, as Danmaku is also a means of communicating, it has also attracted scholarly attention within Computer-mediated communication (CMC). Hsiao (2015) studies *tuciao* (roasting, see 4.2) and face-threatening acts in *danmu*; Zhang and Cassany (2019a) explore multimodal humor in Danmaku; Locher and Messerli (2020) investigate a similar system of timed comments (Vicki’s timed comments) in communal TV watching of Korean TV drama.

As a pseudo-synchronous, horizontal and text-based display of comments floating in the forms of subtitles at the top of the video frame, Danmaku is rich in metapragmatic comments on the mock impoliteness speech events appeared in the show and can be viewed as an anonymous dynamic focus group, shedding lights on the evaluations of mock impoliteness speech events from the third-party participants’ perspective.

In the Chinese show *Roast!*, the Danmaku comments are displayed from right to left at the top of the video frame as presented in the following screenshot (Figure 4.1). The

numbers follow the comments automatically counts how many likes each comment gets, thus providing a possibility for a further quantitative study.



Figure 4. 1 The display of Danmaku comments

The Danmaku comments can vary from the discussion of the guests' appearance to seeking information from other audiences and many other irrelevant things to mock impoliteness. In this thesis project, only those pertaining to the evaluations of mock impoliteness speech events identified in the previous section are collected. This step is crucial in that it assures that all the evaluative comments collected can be attributed to the mock impoliteness events studied in the first research question, while excluding other comments of irrelevant matters.

There are two methods to select the Danmaku comments pertaining to a specific speech event:

1. When the Danmaku comments refer to the roaster, the roastee or a phrase uttered in a speech event, such comments are collected.
2. The second method is relevant to the features of Danmaku:



- Time delay - Danmaku comments in this show often appear in clusters and there is a time delay between the speech event the comments are talking about, and the comments themselves. For example, a cluster of comments appear at the 10<sup>th</sup> minute of the show could be talking about the event happened at the 5<sup>th</sup> minute of the show.
- Relativity of Time - The Danmaku system shows Danmaku sent from different dates. For example, viewer A commented at the 10<sup>th</sup> minute of the show on 08/05/2019, and viewer B commented at the 10<sup>th</sup> minute of the show on 09/07/2019, when a viewer C watches the show in another time (after B's time of course), he/she can see both A and B's Danmaku comments around the 10<sup>th</sup> minute of the show, possibly with some delays. Thus, some comments can appear right after/during or even before an event should a viewer decide to watch a video again and leave a comment about what is going to happen in the video.

Thus, a comment such as “hahaha” in a cluster of comments referring to a specific event is likely to also refer to that same event. A comment such as “this is so mean” that appeared during or right after an event is likely to refer to that event. Such comments are also collected, although comparing to method 1 there's a lack of certainty of such data as one can never be 100% sure of which event a comment refers to. But it would also be a huge waste to cast all such potentially valuable participants' evaluations in the bin. Furthermore, minor inaccuracies will not affect the effect sizes and the statistical significance of the study.

It is worth noting that the feature of “relativity of time” of Danmaku is also shared by other timed commenting systems. In Locher and Messerli's (2020) research on Vicki's timed comments, this feature is referred to as “pseudo-synchronicity” (Johnson, 2013:301, see also Chen et al., 2017: 2; Zhang and Cassany, 2019a, b: 2). Locher and Messerli explain this feature neatly: “The collection of comments that appear as automatically and dynamically as the next image in the streamed episode itself may seem to be contemporaneous communicative acts by members of the viewing

community, but they are in fact the written statements of past viewers who shared their thoughts at the same moment in what in narratology is sometimes called text-time (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002: 45e48), but not the same moment in real time.” (2020: 23-24).

Based on such Danmaku selection criteria, an initial 1467 and 942 Danmaku comments for the randomly chosen episodes of *Roast!* - S01E08 (season 1 episode 8) and S02E08 were collected respectively and further analysed (see 7.2.1).

#### 4.5 Data retrieval

Two episodes of *Roast!* — S01E08 (season 1 episode 8) and S02E08 (season 2 episode 8) were randomly chosen as the data set. S02E08 was first randomly selected for the pilot study (see 5.4). When the full transcription of S02E08 was finished, 145 mock impoliteness speech acts were collected. Then another episode from season 1 of *Roast!* was randomly selected, which was S01E08. This way, the data set was representative of the show *Roast!*, rather than a particular episode of the show where findings might only occur within particular contexts. While the Tencent Video allows users to download videos of the show *Roast!*, Danmaku comments are not embedded within the downloaded files. However, as previously introduced in section 4.4, the intertextuality between Danmaku comments and the content of the show is crucial to this research. Thus, screen recording is needed in order to capture the Danmaku and the show at the same. A software, Snagit 2019 was used to screen record the two episodes, which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019 (S02E08), and 10<sup>th</sup> May 2019 (S01E08). Since the Danmaku system accumulates users’ comments over time, it is important to note that the Danmaku comments collected in this research are the comments captured by the screen recordings up to the above dates. More Danmaku comments may have been contributed to specific mock impoliteness speech events since then, but they are beyond the scope of this research.

#### 4.6 Ethics in researching on public discourse data

*Roast!* as an online talk show aired on Tencent Video falls within the domain of Public Discourse data. Ethical issues in research on such public discourse data is considered and discussed in this section. This section discusses ethical concerns at various stages of the research — data collection, analysis, and presentation, following Locher and Bolander’s (2019:83) proposal of “adopting an understanding of ethical-decision making as a process” rather than “a single decision made at the outset of research”. This is because ethical concerns might not always be straight forward and may face dilemmas at various stages.

The *primary ethical norms* - “respect for persons, beneficence, and justice” stated in the ethical guidelines of internet research by Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR, 2019:4) are observed throughout the collection, analysis, and presentation of the data in this research.

Respect for persons means that “individuals should be treated as autonomous beings, capable of making their own decisions”; respect for beneficence means that “the selection of research subjects should be fair so that not only certain select groups gain from the benefits or suffer the risks of such research”; and respect for justice means that “humans should not be harmed in the course of study” (Markham and Buchanan, 2015:607).

One key question to ask is are the individuals involved in the show *Roast!* specific personas of this research? If the answer is yes, should their consent be sought before data collection? My view is that despite that the show *Roast!* include many individuals (host and guests, live audiences, and online audiences), the collected data does not focus on the individuals per se, but on linguistic aspects of their speech which they made publicly available on their own autonomous decisions. In this regard, the individuals should not be considered as specific personas. However, this leads to another important question - if the producers of such speech are not seen as specific personas, who owns the intellectual property rights of such speech? Is it not a violation to use such data without the owner’s consent? In Tencent’s (2014) Service Agreement, the clause regarding intellectual property only stipulates that Tencent owns the intellectual property rights of their service and software, while the issue regarding the content (e.g., *Roast!*) within their software is not stated. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that it is

ethical to collect such public data. In addition, as the analysis is based on my transcription of the data, I argue that I retain the copyright on it. Pihlaja (2017:219) discussed that this was the approach he adopted in a study on YouTube videos, and argued that that his transcripts were materially different from the original videos.

During the analysis and presentation of the data, it is necessary for pragmatic analysis to consider the non-verbal cues of the interlocutors. For instance, a screenshot of facial expressions of the participants may be needed. While the focus is on the linguistic aspects, the individuals are still somewhat involved in the analysis. Would this not be contradictory to what has been established above? Markham and Buchanan (2012:6) argues that “‘human subject’ may not be as relevant as other terms such as harm, vulnerability, personally identifiable information, and so forth”. In this sense, the analysis and presentation of the data that may involve any information of the host and guests are already publicly known, as they are mainly famous figures in the show business in China. In addition, no screenshots of the live audiences (or any personally identifiable information) were presented in this thesis. Furthermore, the Danmaku contribution made by the online audiences were already anonymous, and as the comments are imbedded within the video frame, they are not searchable either. Thus, no harm was caused to any individuals involved in the collected data from *Roast!*.

In conclusion, this research is in line with the *primary ethical norms* and Lancaster University’s (2021) code of practice of research ethics and research governance.

#### 4.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the 2 types of data selected for answering the 2 research questions. In section 4.3, the definition of mock impoliteness speech events is important as it serves two functions: i) connecting the two research questions; and ii) aiding further quantitative research in Chapter 7. In section 4.4, features of Danmaku are introduced, and the method in collecting Danmaku data are tapped into, which prepares for a proposal of the coding scheme in the following chapter in section 5.6. However, two features of Danmaku — time delay and relativity of time pose some issue in coding Danmaku data, which will be further discussed in 5.7.

## Chapter 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology. First, an overarching approach of answering the research questions —integrative pragmatics approach is introduced (section 5.2). Section 5.3 focuses on how the multimodality of the show Roast! is transcribed. Then, detailed methods regarding the two data sets are dealt with. Section 5.4 and 5.5 introduces how a pilot study is carried out and, based on that, how and why modifications of the theoretical framework by Culpeper et al.'s (2017) on mixed messages are proposed. Section 5.6 introduces a data-driven coding scheme for Danmaku, and finally in section 5.7, the implication of the Danmaku coding scheme and the issue of ambiguity is discussed.

### 5.2 Integrative pragmatics approach

This research adopts an integrative pragmatics approach, first developed by Culpeper and Haugh (2014), which is best defined in the following quote:

An integrative pragmatics approach is characterised by engagement with data. It is strongly empirical, both informing and being informed by data. However, in drawing from both user (first-order) and observer (second-order) perspectives it also takes a holistic approach to data. Our view is that pragmatic phenomena, such as (im)politeness, cannot be fully explained through the lens of only one perspective or method of analysis. The key to integrating these different perspectives and methods of analysis is treating interaction as the primary locus of analysis.

(Haugh & Culpeper, 2018:7)

An integrative pragmatics approach thus allows the researcher to have a flexible and holistic perspective by combining different methods in investigating the issue in question. In this research, multimodal approach, corpus assisted approach and metalanguage approach are adopted through the process of data transcription and data analysis, as explained in the following sections.

### 5.2.1 Multimodal approach

Kress and van Leeuwen (2001:20) define multimodality as “the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined”. This broad definition of multimodality covers visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modes in human communication, which include written/spoken/sign languages, video, image, audio, etc. Within the scope of this thesis, the discussion on multimodality is limited to non-verbal cues or paralinguistic cues, such as facial expressions, bodily gestures, and prosody. Even though this thesis sets out to focus mainly on the verbal aspects of mock impoliteness, the non-verbal aspects also play important roles mock impoliteness speech events.

By adopting a multimodal approach, the context of mock impoliteness speech acts is viewed holistically. For instance, laughter or smile accompanying the utterances of impolite messages could signal mock impoliteness instead of genuine impoliteness, and the target’s loud laughter as a reaction to such impolite messages could indicate that no offence has taken, at least on the surface (e.g., Sinkeviciute, 2017b; Haugh, 2016). Throughout the thesis, the transcription and analysis of the data draw on such multimodal cues, which offers comprehensive account of the contexts. Section 6.4 is dedicated to studying the multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness, focusing on the roles of facial expression, bodily gestures, and prosody in mock impoliteness speech acts.

### 5.2.2 Corpus-assisted approach

The term corpus-assisted approach is used in the same sense as Taylor’s (2015) corpus-assisted study of sarcasm and irony, which falls within the area of CADS (corpus-assisted discourse studies), a term coined in Partington (2004). CADS covers “set of studies into the form and/or function of language as *communicative discourse* which incorporates the use of computerized corpora in their analysis” (Partington et al. 2013:10, italics in original).

In answering the RQ1-*What constitutes mock impoliteness in the show Roast!?*, a central task is investigating the linguistic constructions of mock impoliteness. It is

essential to determine if some constructions are conventionalized politeness, impoliteness or mock impoliteness formulae, which is involved in the coding and analysis of every mock impoliteness speech act. In order to determine whether certain linguistic forms can be considered as conventional, I consulted *The corpus of the Center for Chinese Linguistics (CCL)*<sup>12</sup> for verification. This approach follows Culpeper's (2011) method of identifying conventionalized impoliteness formulae, which is exemplified in section 6.2, in the identification of conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae.

In addition, a corpus-assisted approach is also adopted in understanding the roles of certain gestures, or meanings of certain linguistic forms, as exemplified through the two case studies on an eye gesture of “翻白眼 *fan bai yan* show the white eye”, and a dismissive marker of “切 *qie*” in section 6.4.

By adopting a corpus assisted approach, the data analysis is empirically verified and thus ensured the robustness of the research.

### 5.2.3 Metalanguage Approach

To answer RQ2- *How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?*, an investigation of the third-party participants metapragmatic evaluation (in the form of Danmaku comments) is conducted. As Goffman (1981) points out, as evaluation is a highly subjective matter, it is difficult but not impossible for the researchers to access without the help of metalanguage from the participants (see also section 3.8 for reviews on metalanguage and metapragmatics). Adopting a metalanguage approach allows understanding and examination of the first order evaluation of mock impoliteness, which in turn informs second order perspectives on mock impoliteness<sup>13</sup>. In 5.6 *Danmaku Coding Scheme*, the data coding scheme is first data-driven (or bottom-up), where data instead of theory is the starting point of the investigation, then a list of

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<sup>12</sup> [http://ccl.pku.edu.cn:8080/ccl\\_corpus/](http://ccl.pku.edu.cn:8080/ccl_corpus/)

<sup>13</sup> In previous literature, the term “metalanguage/metapragmatic approach” is used in a self-explanatory sense without a clear definition, such as Partington (2006), Taylor (2015a) and (2017). To be accurate, in this research, a metalanguage approach is defined as an approach to data involving analysis of metalanguage and/or metapragmatics.

metalinguistic terms (frequently occurred from the data) were adopted as indicators of attitudes towards impoliteness and funniness — which is a critical step in the present data coding — and lays solid foundation for the analysis of the metapragmatic evaluation on mock impoliteness in Chapter 7.

The above approaches are all strongly empirical, as the primary focus is the data analysis. The decision of adopting a multimodal approach, a corpus assisted approach, and a metalanguage approach is informed by the data at various stage of answering the two research questions. Such methods in turn, informs the second-order understanding of mock impoliteness, which fits the proposal of an integrative pragmatics approach. More importantly, such approaches are interwoven with each other and adopted through the process of data transcription, data coding and data analysis. For instance, the two case studies on the multimodality of an eye gesture of “翻白眼 *fan bai yan* show the white eye”, and a dismissive marker of “切 *qie*” in section 6.4 used metalinguistic evidence to investigate how they were understood empirically in corpus. Thus, with mock impoliteness speech acts as the primary locus of analysis, integrative pragmatics approach allows a holistic perspective on the data.

### 5.3 Data transcription

In consideration of the multimodal nature of the data and the contribution of the multimodality to the construction of mock impoliteness speech events, this research adopts the ELAN software (Lausberg and Sloetjes, 2009) for data transcription. ELAN is particularly effective for multimodal data transcription in that multiple tiers can be created to annotate each modality in detail.

The participants of a mock impoliteness speech event in the data can be classified into 5 categories, the roaster, the roastee, the on-stage third party, the live audiences and the online third-party participants listed below (see also 6.1).

- (a) The roaster and the roastee here refer to the roles that different participants can take, instead of a particular person. Since the host, the major guest and the “minor” guests all take turns to roast each other, they can be the roaster in one speech event and the roastee in another.



- (b) The on-stage third party refers to the participants of the show on stage when they are neither the roaster nor the roastee, i.e., the onlookers of a roaster roasting the roastee while waiting for their turns to roast someone or to be roasted. The third party sometimes interrupts the roaster's utterances and offer strong cues for the interpretation of the mock impoliteness speech events by facial expression, gestures and/or other cues.
- (c) The live audiences in this show sometimes interact with the roasters in verbal behaviours collectively as well, therefore the audiences' utterances are also annotated. Other reactions of the live audiences, such as laughter and applause, are important evidence for the interpretation of the mock impoliteness speech events to the researcher and they are coded separately.
- (d) Finally, the online audiences' participation is displayed on the screen in the form of Danmaku and is transcribed according to the selection criteria presented in section 4.4. As the Danmaku is rich in metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness, it is a major focus of this thesis (analysed in section 7.3).

According to these five categories of participants of the show *Roast!*, the annotation tiers can be grouped into 5 similar sets, each set covering the multimodality of each category. Taking the example of the roaster set, a detailed explanation of the tiers is presented below.

*Linguistic transcriptions (tier 1-5)* Tier 1 was used to transcribe the utterances of the roaster or the host in Chinese. Since the host roasts the guests as he introduces them, this tier was named as Host/Roaster-Ut. Tier 2 was the English translation of tier 1. Tier 3 was designed to detect metalinguistic expressions and metapragmatic comments in the host/roaster's utterances. Tier 4 was designed for coding the mismatching of messages that point towards an interpretation of impoliteness with that of politeness following Culpeper (2011)'s model of two ways of mixed interpersonal messages:

Convention-driven:

- (a) Internal: the context projected by part of a behaviour mismatches that projected by another part; or
- (b) External: the context projected by a behaviour mismatches the context of use.

Context-driven:

- (a) Unmarked behaviour: an unmarked (with respect to surface form or semantic content) and unconventionalised behaviour mismatches the context; or
- (b) Absence of behaviour: the absence of a behaviour mismatches the context.

(Culpeper, 2011:155-156; see also Culpeper, 2016)

Two subtypes of internal mismatch, multimodal mismatches and verbal formula mismatches, were also coded in Tier 4.

Tier 5 was used for coding which type of face or sociality rights was involved in the interpersonal messages pointing towards interpretations of impoliteness according to Spencer-Oatey's rapport management framework (2002). This framework consists of three types of face, quality face, social identity face and relational face, and two types of sociality rights, namely equity rights and association rights, altogether 5 categories. In the coding process, I followed a set of summary questions proposed by Culpeper (2011), which is very effective in deciding "whether that category is an issue for a particular interaction". These questions are listed as follows:

1. When deciding whether face is involved in a potentially impolite interaction the question to be asked is: *does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters a positive attribute (or attributes) which a participant claims not only to have but to be assumed by other participant(s) as having?*

1a When deciding whether quality face is involved in a potentially impolite interaction the question to be asked is: *does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters positive values which a participant claims not only to have as a specific individual but to be assumed by other participant(s) as having?*

1b When deciding whether social identity face is involved in a potentially impolite interaction the question to be asked is: *does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters positive values which a participant claims not only to have in common with all other members in a particular group, but to be assumed by other participant(s) as having?*

1c When deciding whether relational face is involved in a potentially impolite interaction the question to be asked is: *does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters positive values about the relations which a participant claims not only to have with a significant other or others but to be assumed by that/ those significant other(s) and/ or other participant(s) as having?*

2. When deciding whether sociality rights are involved in a potentially impolite interaction the question to be asked is: *does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters a state of affairs which a participant considers to be considerate and fair?*

2a When deciding whether equity rights are involved in a potentially impolite interaction the question to be asked is: *does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters a state of affairs in which a participant considers that they are not unduly exploited, disadvantaged, unfairly dealt with, controlled or imposed upon?*

2b When deciding whether association rights are involved in a potentially impolite interaction the question to be asked is: *does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters a state of affairs in which a participant considers that they have an appropriate level of behavioural involvement and sharing of concerns, feelings and interests with others, and are accorded an appropriate level of respect?*

Culpeper (2011: 28-30; 39-41)

*Prosodic cues (tier 6)* This tier captured the marked pitch of the speaker's utterances that pertains to the construction and evaluation of mock impoliteness, such as a sudden rising or falling pitch (compared to the preceding or following pitch contour) that is marked in the flow of speech. The annotation of the marked pitch of a segment of speech was analysed using Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2008) and then imported into ELAN.

*Visual cues (tier 7-8)* The annotation of this set of tiers followed a similar process of visual coding in González-Fuente et al. (2015) with some adjustments. Tier 7 captured the gestures observed during the speaker's utterances that contribute to the dynamics of mock impoliteness speech events. Tier 8 was used to annotate the general facial cues of the roaster, including smile, laugh and other general facial expressions.

As for other categories of participants of the show, similar annotation tiers were applied and adjusted for the purpose of capturing the salient phenomena in the dynamics of mock impoliteness speech events as illustrated in the following screenshot.

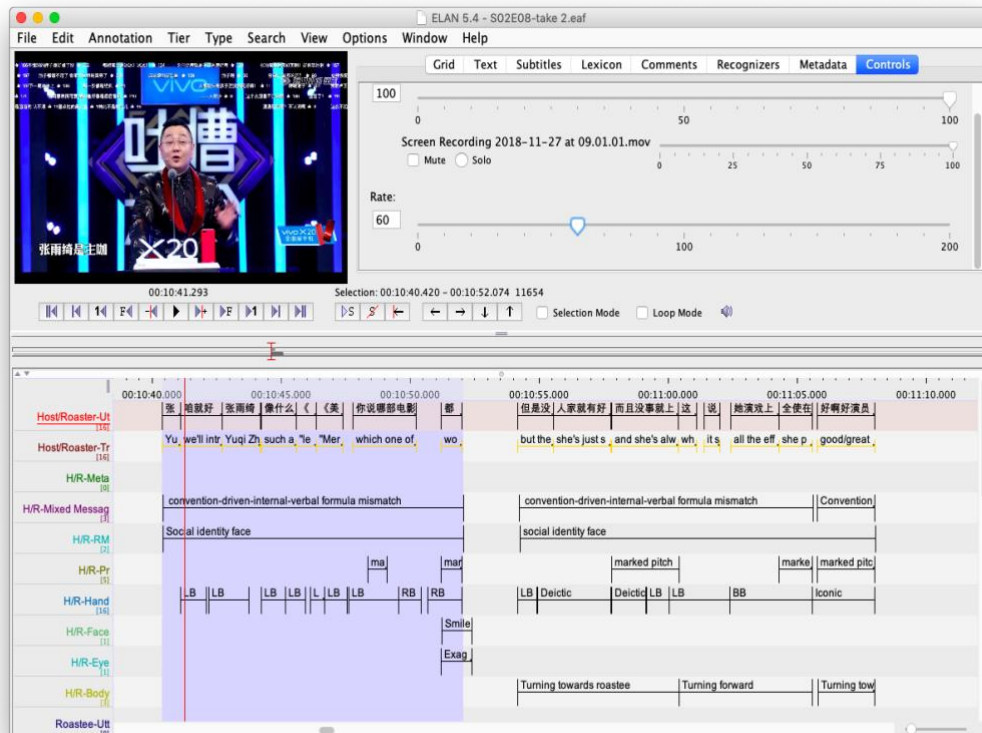


Figure 5. 1 Examples of the transcription tiers in ELAN

ELAN is particularly helpful in transcribing the utterances from multiple parties in the show, more importantly, the tiered transcription allows a clear view of the multimodality of the mock impoliteness speech events, which enables further analysis. This advantage of ELAN grants the flexibility to move beyond the technical limitations that were at play at the time when traditional transcription methods such as CA (conversation analysis) transcription conventions (e.g., Jefferson, 2004) were created. While the ELAN software was used during the process of data transcription, conventions according to (Jefferson, 2004) are used to present the data excerpts for analysis in this thesis.

#### 5.4 Pilot study

The pilot study has chosen the first 30 minutes of the 8th episode of the second season of the show *Roast!* (referred to as S02E08 hereafter) as the pilot data. By applying the data selection and transcription procedure presented above, 4 speech events consisting of 31 mock impoliteness acts were identified. During the coding of the types of mismatches (according to Culpeper's model of mixed messages) involved and rapport

management for these 31 acts, i.e., tier 4 and tier 5, there emerged a relation of co-occurrence between these two analytical frameworks.

According to the prototype definition of mock impoliteness in section 3.3, mock impoliteness acts in the show can be identified and thus be further coded. This relation of co-occurrence can be illustrated by the diagram in Figure 5.2.

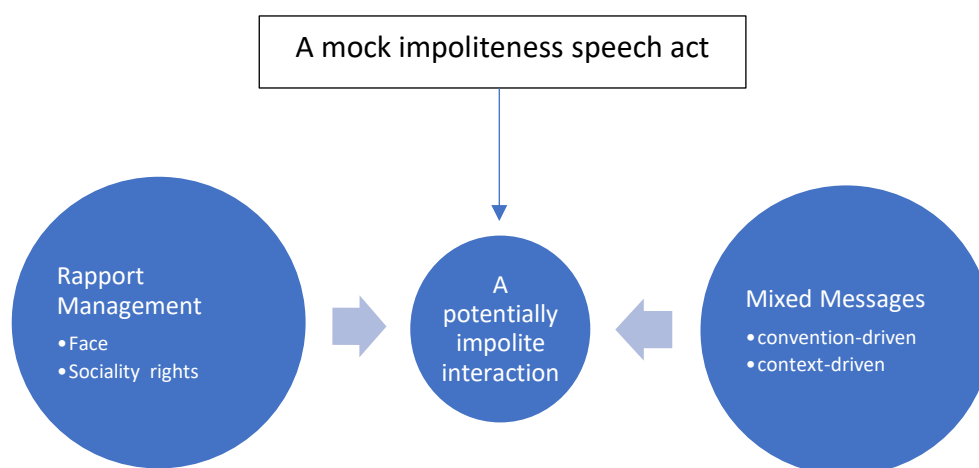


Figure 5. 2 The relation of co-occurrence of mixed messages and rapport management

As presented in Figure 5.2, a mock impoliteness act, by its definition, contains a potentially impolite interaction which can be coded according to Spencer-Oatey (2002)'s framework of rapport management, i.e., deciding which type of face or sociality right is under attack. This potentially impolite interaction can also be coded according to Culpeper et al. (2017)'s model of mixed messages by deciding which type of mismatch is involved to make the potentially impolite interaction a mock impoliteness act. Thus, mixed messages and rapport management are closely related to each other by the presence of a potential impolite interpretation of a certain act, which lies at the heart of mock impoliteness. This shows that the two theoretical frameworks chosen are applicable to this research, and it can offer deep insights in answering the research question (1a).

However, there are problems encountered in the coding of mixed messages, some examples do not fit in any category of Culpeper et al. (2017)'s model despite indicating a certain degree of mismatch. The number of these indeterminate examples are 12 out of all the 31 mock impoliteness speech acts. This situation prompts further analysis, and lead to modifications of the theoretical framework, which will be explained in the following section.

## 5.5 Modifications of the theoretical framework

In order to understand why the 12 mock impoliteness speech acts in the pilot study do not fit in the model of mixed messages (Culpeper et al., 2017), firstly, consider the following example:

[5.1] The Host of the show, Shaogang Zhang was introducing a guest, Xiao Xiao, who has been known for his excellent performance in another online talk show “奇葩说” (*qi pa shuo*, *Weirdo Talks*).

- 1 张绍刚：想象过吗  
**Zhang Shaogang:** Xiangxiang Guo Ma  
**Shaogang Zhang:** Imagine PAST TENSE PRT  
**Shaogang Zhang:** Have you ever imagined
- 2 如果没有肖骁  
Ruguo Meiyou Xiao Xiao  
If NEG EXISTENTIAL Xiaoxiao  
If it weren't for Xiao Xiao
- 3 奇葩说  
Qi Pa Shuo  
Rare flower talks  
“Weirdo talks”
- 4 只能叫说  
Zhi Neng Jiao Shuo  
Only can (be) called talks  
Would just be “talks”  
(the roastees and the audience laughed)  
...(3)
- 5 对不对

Dui Bu Dui  
 Right not right  
 Am I right?

In example [5.1], the roaster attacked the roastee’s face by implying that he was the weirdo in the show “weirdo talks”. In particular, the roastee’s social identity face is involved because it is his social identity that belongs to a particular group, i.e., the show “weirdo talks”, is under attack. This case is also a sequence of mock impoliteness as can be warranted by the laughter of the roastee, probably indicating that no offence was overtly taken. The roaster also uttered “没有 meiyou (negation maker)” in an exaggerating way with a sudden rising pitch (the blue line), as can be seen in Figure 5.3 showing the pitch contour of line 2-4 in Praat (Boersma and Weenink, 2008), a speech analysis software.

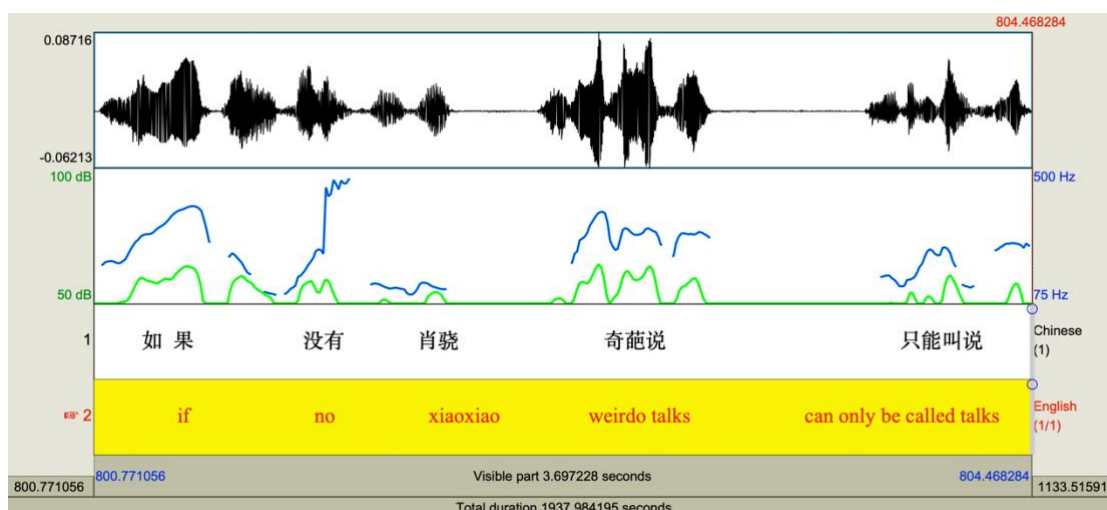


Figure 5. 3 Pitch Contour of the utterances in example [5.1]

Under the assumption that this example is a sequence of mock impoliteness, the issue in question is which type of mixed messages is involved. Since there is no appearance of conventionalized formulae, the possibility of convention-driven mismatch is excluded. However, this is not a context-driven mismatch either because the behavior matches the context of roasting. This case seems to fit the description of form-driven implicational impoliteness that is “implicit messages which are triggered by formal surface or semantic aspects of a behaviour and which have negative consequences for certain individuals” (Culpeper, 2011). The roaster’s utterance flouts the maxim of

manner because he did not say it in a clear manner and the implicature that the roastee is a weirdo rises from a further inference. That being said, technically form-driven is not a type of mixed messages in Culpeper et al (2017)'s model, as only convention-driven and context driven are "two ways in which interpersonal messages can be mixed" (2017:336). I would argue that form-driven as a trigger of implicational impoliteness in Culpeper's (2011, 2016) model, can also be a trigger of mock impoliteness when there is a strong inference that the impoliteness message delivered is evaluated as non-genuine.

By incorporating form-driven as another category of mixed messages, the number of indeterminate examples reduced to 5. There are still examples that do not fit the above-mentioned categories such as the following examples.

[5.2] The roaster, Zhengyu Lu was commenting on the roastee's (Yuqi Zhang) perceived personal trait as a loyal friend because she acted for free in the film "Mermaid", in which the director was the one she had a lawsuit with.

1 卢正雨：反正不管怎么样吧

**Lu Zhengyu:** Fanzheng Buguan Zenmeyang Ba

**Zhengyu Lu:** Anyway no matter how PRT

Anyway, no matter what

2 雨绮是个讲义气的人

Yuqi Shi Ge Jiangyiqi De Ren

Yuqi is a loyal ADJ person

Yuqi is a loyal person

3 听到这种传言呢我其实当时觉得也觉得没有什么大不了的

Ting Dao Zhe Zhong Chuanyan Ne Wo Qishi Dangshi Juede Ye Juede Meiyou Shenme Dabuliao De

Hear PAST TENSE this type PRT I actually that time feel no big deal PRT

Hearing this I felt like it was not a big deal

4 如果能让我当 星女郎的话我也可以零片酬的啊

Ruguo Neng Rang Wo Dang Xingnvlang De Hua Wo Ye Keyi Ling Pian Chou De A

If can let me be Xingnvlang PRT PRT I also can zero film pay PRT PRT

If I could be a "xingnvlang"<sup>14</sup>, I would act for free!

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<sup>14</sup> An honorable title for actresses who work with the director of "Mermaid", Stephen Chow.



In this example, there is a mismatch between a polite message that the roastee is a loyal person and an impolite message that she is overrated for acting for free. However, there are no conventionalized formulae involved. The trigger of the mismatch seems to lie in the co-text.

Similarly, consider the following example:

[5.3] The host of the show, Shaogang Zhang was introducing the above-mentioned actress, Yuqi Zhang.

- 1 张绍刚: 但是没办法人家就有好看的这个气质  
**Zhang Shaogang:** Danshi Mei Banfa Renjia Jiu You Haokan De Zhege Qizhi  
**Shaogang Zhang:** But no way she just has good-looking this disposition  
**Shaogang Zhang:** But there's nothing to do about it. She's just so beautiful
- 2 而且没事就上新闻没事就上新闻  
Erqie Meishi Jiu Shang Xinwen Meishi Jiu Shang xinwen  
And always on news always on news  
and she's always on the news, always on the news
- 3 这说明什么  
Zhe Shuoming Shenme  
This indicate what  
what does this suggest?
- 4 说明她演戏上应该使的那个劲儿  
Shuoming Ta Yanxi Shang Yinggai Shi De Nage Jiner  
Indicate she act on should use ADJ that force  
It suggests that all the efforts she should put to her acting
- 5 全使在了宣传上  
Qusn Shi Zai Le Xuanchuan Shang  
All used PREP PRT publicity PREP  
She put them all to the publicity.

In example [5.3], there is also a mismatch between the polite message that the roastee was so beautiful and so famous and the impolite message that she spent so much effort on her publicity that her acting was not as good as it should have been. Again, no conventionalized formulae are involved, and the source of the mismatch lies in the co-text.

I suggest that there could be a new category to capture these cases, that is, co-textual mismatch. Here I attempt to define the co-textual mismatch or co-text driven mismatch as such: the context projected by part of an unconventionalised behaviour mismatches that projected by another part of an unconventionalised behaviour. The condition of both parts to be unconventionalised behaviours is a prerequisite for this category, otherwise it can be captured in the category of convention-driven internal mismatch.

To add a new category to Culpeper's (2011, 2016, 2017) model, two issues need to be considered: 1) On which level should this new category be?; and 2) What's the difference between co-text and context?

For the purpose of a clear discussion, Culpeper's (2011) original model is quoted again below:

- (1) Form-driven: the surface form or semantic content of a behavior is marked.
- (2) Convention-driven:
  - (a) Internal: the context projected by part of a behaviour mismatches that projected by another part; or
  - (b) External: the context projected by a behaviour mismatches the context of use.
- (3) Context-driven:
  - (a) Unmarked behaviour: an unmarked (with respect to surface form or semantic content) and unconventionalised behaviour mismatches the context; or
  - (b) Absence of behaviour: the absence of a behaviour mismatches the context.

(Culpeper, 2011:155-156)

It can be easily noticed that the co-textual driven mismatch bears resemblance with the convention-driven internal mismatch (2a), which invokes an impression that the co-textual driven is somewhat internal as well.

Similarly, the form-driven category is also somewhat internal in that it focuses on the surface form and semantic content. Now looking back at the example 2, it could be argued that there is a degree of a multimodal mismatch as well. The implicature that the roastee is the "weirdo" is undoubtedly impolite, but then why would the roastee not take offence but replied with a seemingly genuine laugh? This is an example of "It's not what you said but how you said it" (Culpeper 2011: 150). Because the roaster used an

exaggerated tone when delivering the message (and other paralinguistic cues accompanied the speech), it indicates that it is highly likely that the roaster was just kidding and that is the reason why this sequence was evaluated as mock impoliteness. Clearly this involves a degree of multimodal mismatch. In fact, for the form-driven to be classified as a trigger of mock impoliteness, the strong inference that the impolite message is evaluated as non-genuine would rely much on multimodal cues.

Culpeper (2011) also expounds that there are two types of convention-driven internal mismatch (2a), one is verbal formula mismatch and the other is multimodal mismatch, which interestingly seems to be the matching counterparts of the co-text driven mismatch and form-driven mismatch. Thus, the co-text driven mismatch is arguably on the same level as the verbal formula mismatch that belongs to convention-driven internal mismatch (2a).

As for the second question on the difference between the context and co-text, although sometimes these two notions are used as synonyms, such as Hoover et al (2014)'s definition of co-text as "the words that appear before and after any given word of interest; the linguistic context in which a word appears." I would follow Culpeper's (2011) view that co-text is "a distinct category of context defined by the fact that it is constituted by text", i.e., a sub type of context. Therefore, the co-textual driven mismatch should be grouped under the Context-driven category as a subtype, that is, (3c). The adapted model of mixed messages is presented below.

- (1) Form-driven: the surface form or semantic content of a behavior is marked.
- (2) Convention-driven:
  - (a) Internal: the context projected by part of a behaviour mismatches that projected by another part; or
  - (b) External: the context projected by a behaviour mismatches the context of use.
- (3) Context-driven:
  - (a) Unmarked behaviour: an unmarked (with respect to surface form or semantic content) and unconventionalised behaviour mismatches the context; or
  - (b) Absence of behaviour: the absence of a behaviour mismatches the context; or
  - (c) Co-text driven: the context projected by part of an unconventionalised behaviour mismatches that projected by another part of an unconventionalised behavior.

To clarify, this is an attempt to account for the indeterminate cases in the pilot data coding. With the adapted model, the number of indeterminate cases reduced to 1. Further data coding is needed to see whether co-textual driven mismatch is frequent in the Chinese talk show data.

## 5.6 Danmaku coding scheme

This section introduces a coding scheme created for Danmaku data, which includes 6 categories that capture different aspects of information that can be textually derived from each Danmaku comment. Examples from the collected data are provided to explain each category.

### *Referent*

This category codes for the referents of the Danmaku comments, i.e, who/what they are talking about. In the collected Danmaku data, three types of referents, roaster, roastee and roasting are evident as indicated by the following example [5.4], [5.5] and [5.6].

[5.4]张绍刚太搞笑了，都返回看几遍 🍊66

Zhang Shaogang Tai Gaoxiao Le, Dou Fanhui Kan Ji Bian

Zhang Shaogang too funny PRT, even go back watch several times

Shaogang Zhang is too funny, I even went back to watch it again several times

[5.5]王岳伦被吐槽的好惨啊 🍊298

Wang Yuelun bei tucao de hao can A

Yuelun Wang PVM roast ADV very miserable A

Yuelun Wang is roasted very miserably

[5.6]这吐槽略狠了 🍊2

Zhe Tucao Lue Hen Le

This roasting rather cruel PRT

This roasting is a bit too cruel

The coding for this category operates on three conditions:

- i) when either a roaster or a roastee is mentioned in a Danmkau comment, it is coded as roaster or roastee;
- ii) when neither roaster nor roastee is mentioned, the Danmaku comment is coded as roasting. This applies to both cases where roasting is explicitly mentioned as example [5.6], or not mentioned at all in such as a comment representing a sequence of laughter “hahahahaha”. In this case the comment can only be interpreted as referring to the speech event as such, as no referential disambiguation is given by the “commenter”;
- iii) when more than one of the three types of referent (viz. roaster, roastee, and roasting) are mentioned, it is the one that occurs in a topic position that is taken into account.

As Chinese is considered as a topic-prominent language, topic-comment structures are extensively used (Shyu, 2014). It is also widely recognized that there is an “aboutness” relationship between the topic and the comment (Shyu 2014, see also Chao 1968, Huang 1994). Li and Thompson (1981:86) notes that topics “set a framework in naming what the sentence is about”. This relationship of “aboutness” is of particular interest in coding for the referent of Danmaku data, in that the aim is to see what comments have been made about what topics, i.e, what was said about which referent.

Thus, in example [5.4], the referent is Shaogang Zhang, who is the roaster as this Danmaku appeared during Zhang’s turn of roasting in the show; in example [5.5], although both roastee and roasting are explicitly mentioned, it is the roastee, Yuelun Wang that occurs in a topic position and Roastee is thus the code for this evaluation; and as for example [5.6], since roasting is explicitly mentioned, it is coded as Roasting. Therefore, each danmaku comment can be coded according to three coding values, Roaster, Roastee, Roasting for the variable Referent.

This variable is important to explore whether there is a relationship between the referents of the Danmaku comments and the evaluation they have towards mock impoliteness, and it also reveals what is “at issue” when Danmaku users make such evaluations.

### ***Speech Event***

This category corresponds to which mock impoliteness events the Danmaku comments refer to. As indicated in section 4.3, a mock impoliteness speech event, in this research, is defined as a series of mock impoliteness acts produced by one roaster in his/her turn of performance. As the format of the show *Roast!* prescribes that each guest takes turns in their performance of roasting, each speech event is thus each guest's turn of roasting. The Danmaku comments, by commenting on a specific roaster or roastee, or simply by referring to a phrase uttered in a mock impoliteness speech event, makes it rather obvious for the researcher the attribution of the Danmaku comments to a specific speech event (method 1 in 4.4). Thus, by labelling each mock impoliteness speech event sequentially such as a, b, c, etc., such Danmaku comments can be coded according to which speech event they refer to. This variable is important as the Danmaku evaluations might vary across speech events, and it is also important to analyse the Danmaku comments in relation to the specific speech events they refer to.

However, the Danmaku comments collected using the method 2 in 4.4 are different from those data collected from method 1, as such data often don't have an explicit referent which links the comments to a specific mock impoliteness speech event, such as "hahaha", and "23333" (means laughing). Such Danmaku data are likely to be attributed to particular speech events as they either appear in a cluster of Danmaku comments of certain speech events or appear during or close to certain speech events. However, strictly speaking, one can never be sure which mock impoliteness speech event such comments refer to. Therefore, in coding such data in terms of which speech events they refer to, they are coded as "0" to distinguish from other Danmaku data. A "0" coding is used to address such indeterminate cases. Such data are still included in the study as they reveal significant evaluations of mock impoliteness by third-party participants and constitute a large number of the data with 53.4% (349 out of 653) and 48.3% (252 out of 522) of the Danmaku comments respectively in S01E08 and S02E08 being coded as "0" for the category of Speech Event.

The above example [5.4] refers to mock impoliteness speech event *a*, as it refers to the roaster Zhang in the speech event *a*. Example [5.5], refers to speech event *b*, as Wang is a roastee in mock impoliteness speech event *b*. As for example [5.6], it is coded as "0" for speech event as "this roast" does not specify which speech event it refers to.

## *Impoliteness*

When Danmaku comments focus on the potential impolite meaning conveyed through the mock impoliteness speech acts, they are likely to express whether and/or how impoliteness was perceived as in the above examples [5.5] and [5.6], and the following examples:

[5.7]张老师你太能怼人了 166

Zhang Laoshi Ni Tai Neng Dui Ren Le  
Zhang teacher you too capable poking people PRT  
Teacher Zhang you are too good at jibing people.

[5.8]真的打上脸了! 160

Zhende Da Shang Lian Le  
Real slap on face PRT  
(That's) really slapping on the face

[5.9]张绍刚怎么欺负小哥 179

Zhang Shaogang Zenme Qifu Xiao Ge  
Zhang Shaogang How bully little brother  
Why is Shaogang Zhang bullying Dian Zhao (referred to by the nick name Xiao Ge)

Note that in the above examples, the potential impolite message is perceived as “cruel or harsh roasting”, “jibing”, “slap on the face”, and “bullying” through such metalinguistic terms. Although none of such metapragmatic comments explicitly used the word “impoliteness” (*Bu Limao* in Chinese), as the term has little currency in Chinese as is the case in the English language (Culpeper, 2011: 24), “impoliteness” can still be used as an umbrella term for negative attitudes towards mock impoliteness expressed in the Danmaku data (see 3.6). Such negative attitudes are sometimes expressed by metalinguistic terms such as the above examples, sometimes expressed through potentially impolite retorts (even though no metalinguistic terms are used) by the Danmaku users towards the roaster, which can be considered as responses to impoliteness (see “impoliteness reciprocity” in Culpeper, 2011: 203 and “reactive rudeness” in Keinpointner, 1997:266). Therefore, when such terms are used, it is reasonable to infer that the third-party participants are reacting to the perceived

impoliteness expressed by the roaster. In addition, there are a number of recurring (typical) terms that demonstrate negative attitudes towards what has been said which do not necessarily include metalinguistic terms but could be used in combination with the metalinguistic terms. Below is an illustrative list of terms in the data indicating a potentially impolite message.

	Original terms in Danmaku	Translation	Notes
Metalinguistic terms	过分 Guo Fen Pass limit	crossed the line	
	(挺/太/够) 狠 Ting/tai/gou hen Quite/too/enough harsh	quite harsh/too harsh/ harshly enough	
	吐槽/吐 Tu Cao/Tu roast	roast	
	讽 Feng mock	mock/tease/joke/jibe	
	贱 Jian Mean/despicable	mean/despicable	
	犀利 Xi Li Sharp/Trenchant	sharp/trenchant	
	损 Sun damage	speak sarcastically/deride	
	怼 Dui poke	diss/treat, mention, or speak to somebody rudely	
	堵 Du Block	Make someone feel oppressed/suffocated	
	蹭/消费 Ceng/Xiaofei Rub/consume	leech off	This term is very contextualized in the data, meaning to gain attention by mentioning another person, usually a celebrity
	砸(现)挂 Za (Xian) Gua	tease	A term in crosstalk, which refers to a method to create humorous effect amongst the audience by making fun of someone
	一夸一踩 Yi Kua Yi Cai One praise one trample	praise and trample	



	黑/自黑/自嘲 Hei/Zi Hei/ Zi Chao Black/self black/self mock	ridicule/ridicule oneself/mock oneself	
	敢说/不敢深吐 Gan Shuo/ Bu Gan Shen Tu Dare say/not dare deep roast	dares (not) comment/ roast	
	说/提 Shuo/Ti Speak/mention	talk/speak about/ criticize/mention	Such terms are contextualized in the data for some cases to mean criticize
	嘴好毒 Zui Hao Du Mouth very poisonous	foulmouthed	
	毒舌 Du She Poisonous tongue	foulmouthed	
	得罪 De Zui Gain crime	offend	
	冒犯 Maofan Offence	offence	
	骂街/骂 Ma Jie/ma Abuse street/abuse	Call people names in public/abuse	
	开涮 Kai Shuan start/open boil	joke/make somebody the laughingstock/make a fool of somebody	
	欺负 Qi Fu Bully	bully	
	诅咒 Zuzhou Curse	curse	
	打脸 Da Lian Slap face	Slap on the face	This terms explicitly mentions the notion of “face”
<b>Impolite retorts</b>	不要脸 Bu Yao Lian Not want face	shameless/shameful	This term explicitly mentions the notion of “face”
	忘恩负义 Wang En Fu Yi Forget grace betray righteousness	ungrateful	Such words focus on moral orders, which indicates a certain expectation of social norms, which is relevant to (im)politeness (See Culpeper 2011:36-39).
	欺师灭祖 Qi Shi Mie Zu Trick teacher destroy ancestor	extremely disrespectful and sinful	
	不知道感恩 Bu Zhidao Ganen Not know grateful	ungrateful	
	小肚鸡肠 Xiao Du Ji Chang	petty/vindictive	

	Small stomach chicken intestine		
	你才 (猥琐) Ni Cai (Weisuo) You are (obscene)	You are (obscene)	This is sort of a tit-for-tat response to the roaster's comment on the roastee being obscene.
<b>Negative attitudes</b>	太能伤害了 Tai Neng Shanghai Le Too can damage PRT	Very hurtful	
	(说话) 太讨厌 (Shuohua) Tai Taoyan (Speak) too annoying	(what was said/how it was said) too annoying	
	(这句话) 有点可怕 (Zhe Ju Hua) Youdian Kepa (This sentence) quite scary	(this utterance is) quite scary	
	要被打死了 Yao Bei Da Si le Going to be hit to death PRT	(someone) is going to be hit to death (because of what was said)	
	(这句) 是暴击 (zhe Ju) Shi Bao Ji (This sentence) is great attack	(this) is a big/great/harsh attack	
	要哭晕了 Yao Ku Yun Le Going to cry to faint PRT	(roastee) is going to cry so much to cry	
	针针见血 Zhen Zhen Jian Xie Needle needle see blood	(what was said) is like a needle that makes the (hearer) bleed every time	
	好扎心啊 Hao Zha Xin A Very pierce heart PRT	(this is) very hurtful	

Table 5. 1 Indicators of Impoliteness

The indicators in Table 5.1 are used to decide whether impoliteness is perceived by the third-party participants. Thus, “impoliteness” can be operationalized as a binary variable, that is, depending on whether impoliteness emerges textually from the Danmaku comments, the variable “impoliteness” can be coded as YES or NO. For instance, example [5.5], [5.6], [5.7], [5.8], [5.9] are all coded as YES as impoliteness is perceived by the Danmaku users as evident in their use of various metalinguistic terms that is associated with impoliteness. While example [5.4] is coded as NO since there is no evidence of the perception of impoliteness in the Danmaku comment.

## *Funniness*

As shown in example [5.4], Danmaku comments are also linguistic indicators of whether the Danmaku users, i.e., third-party participants, are amused by the mock impoliteness speech events. Below is a list of indicators emerged from the data that is used as evidence of the third-party being amused.

	Original forms in Danmaku	Translation	Notes
<b>Forms imitating laughing</b>	哈哈 (哈哈哈哈哈)	Haha	onomatopoeia
	Ha ha		
	嘿嘿 (嘿嘿嘿嘿)	Hehe	
	Hei hei		
	😄/😁/😂	😄/😁/😂	Emojis for laugh or smile
	😏	😏	This emoji is ambiguous as it could mean “laughed so hard to cry” or “awkward”. For this emoji in particular it is considered in the context of the comment to decide which meaning it is most likely to be. If it appears in “hahahahaha 😏😏”, then it is most likely to mean “laughed so hard to cry”.
	哈哈哈哈哈 (哈哈哈哈)hiahiahia	Haha (哈哈哈哈) hiahiahia	The use of emoticon is specific to CMC
<b>Terms describing funniness</b>	梗	joke	
	Geng joke		
	包袱	punchline	
	Bao Fu Bag		A term used in crosstalk, which is similar to the meaning of punchline in comedy.
	段子	joke	
Duanzi Joke			
笑点	Things that are considered funny/laughable		
Xiao Dian Laugh point			

喜感 Xi Gan Happy feel	funny	
(不) 搞笑 (Bu) Gaoxiao (Not) funny	(not) funny	
(不) 好笑 (Bu) Haoxiao (not) laughable	(not) funny	
好逗 Hao Dou Very amusing	Very funny/amusing	
好玩 Hao Wan Good Play	Very funny	
冷/干 Leng/Gan Cold/dry	Joke falls flat	
有意思/无聊 You Yisi/ Wu Liao Have meaning/no talk	Interesting/boring	
笑 (哭/疯/死/尿/傻/岔气) (了) Xiao (Ku/Feng/Si/Niao/Sha/Chaqi) le Laugh (cry/crazy/die/pee/silly/trapped wind) PRT	(I'm) laughing so hard that (I'm) crying/crazy/dying/peeing/silly/ (having) trapped wind	An expression where the words in the brackets could be changed to express exaggeration
尴尬地抠脚 Ganga Di Kou Jiao Awkward AUX scratch feet	(this is) so awkward that (I'm) scratching my feet	There are many Danmaku comments talking about this awkward feeling, which are considered as signs of not being amused in the coding.
尴尬死了 Ganga Si Le Awkward die PRT	(this is) so awkward that (I'm) dying	
尴尬癌犯了 Ganga Ai Fan Le Awkward cancer attacks PRT	(having an) awkwardness cancer attack (as in heart attack)	

Table 5. 2 Indicators of Funniness

In the above list of possible indicators of funniness, the forms imitating laughing and the terms describing funniness are often used in combination, such as “very funny hahaha”. As discussed in section 3.4, laughter does not necessarily equate to humour, which is a point recognized by researchers of mock impoliteness, as multiple functions can be attributed to laughter (Haugh, 2017: 209), and laughter is not an indication of the appreciation of an attempt at humour (Sinkeviciute, 2017a: 47). However, laughter is generally associated with nonseriousness (Chafe, 2007: 61-71), and is often considered as a signal indicating one being teased (Drew, 1987: 22), mock impoliteness

(Culpeper, 2011:219), jocularity (Haugh, 2013: 64), and amusement (Dews et al., 2007: 311). Sinkeviciute (2017a: 47) provides empirical evidence that interviewees tend to “immediately associate funniness with laughter” and argues that laughter demonstrates that it is “the most common, overt indicator of the presence of humour (Glenn and Holt, 2013: 2; Holt, 2013)”. Therefore, in coding the Danmaku data, forms imitating laughing are considered as potential indicators of the third-party participants being amused.

This variable is named as funniness, and it is also dichotomous with two values of YES and NO. Thus, for example [5.4], as the Danmaku comment explicitly points out Zhang is funny, it is coded as “YES”, while example [5.5] to [5.9] are coded as “NO” as there is no such evidence. It is important to note that the variables of *Funniness* and *Impoliteness* are two separate criteria, meaning that the coding of one variable does not affect the coding of the other. It is possible that one Danmaku comment does acknowledge the impoliteness aspect yet also demonstrates evidence of being amused, such as “this is so mean but it is also so funny”.

### ***Evaluation***

This variable codes whether there is a positive or negative evaluation towards mock impoliteness. It is important to note that the coding of the evaluation is not about the referent, although some referents are more relevant to the speech events, such as “roasting”. Even when the referent is the roaster or the roastee, the Danmaku comments still reveal what evaluation the third-party participants make towards the mock impoliteness speech events. This variable is essential to answer the second research question, that is, *How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the participants?* One might expect that this variable could overlap with *Impoliteness* and *Funniness* in that impoliteness seems to be more negative while funniness more positive. However, this is not the case in the Danmaku Data. There are examples where a comment positively evaluates aspects of impoliteness of a mock impoliteness speech event, and examples where the evaluation does not involve funniness at all (as demonstrated in table 5.3 below). The variable of *Evaluation* is about whether the evaluation is positive or negative, regardless of how a comment might be coded for *Impoliteness* or *Funniness*. The above example [5.4] clearly shows positive evaluations, while [5.5] and [5.6] show negative evaluations. Example [5.7] demonstrates praise to Zhang’s ability of *jibing*,

thus is coded as positive evaluation; the exclamation mark in example [5.8] seems to indicate a degree of excitement, which makes this comment more likely to be a positive evaluation; and example [5.9] is most likely to be a rhetorical question, which indicates the Danmaku user’s negative evaluation of the “bullying”.

### *Likes*

The last variable is rather recorded than coded as the Danmaku system already shows the count of likes each comment gets, which are the numbers next to the upvote symbols in the above examples. These numbers show how many people agree with certain comments and reflect the second stage of the phenomenology of Danmaku evaluations, which will be further discussed in 7.3.

In this way, the Danmaku comments can be coded according to the above 6 variables. A coding sheet comprising the variables is presented in Table 5.3:

Danmaku Comments	Speech Event	Referent	Evaluation	Impoliteness	Funniness	Likes
张绍刚还是有点坏坏的哦	a	roaster	positive	yes	no	184
心疼卢正雨吼吼吼	a	roastee	negative	Yes	no	197
有点过分了!!! 哈哈	a	roasting	positive	Yes	yes	71
绍刚好贱的感觉	a	roaster	negative	Yes	no	34
张胖子你说话小心点哦,我会打你的哦	a	roaster	positive	Yes	no	271
张绍刚这是夸人吗	a	roaster	negative	Yes	no	125
这吐槽也是绝了	a	roasting	positive	Yes	no	147

Table 5. 3 Demonstration of Danmaku coding sheet

This coding scheme thus captures different aspects of information in the Danamku data, including (i) in-text reference (*Referent* and *Speech Event*); (ii) pragmatic phenomena that is relevant to mock impoliteness (*Impoliteness* and *Funniness*), which is discussed previously in 3.3 and 3.4 and also relevant to the discussion in 7.2; (iii) metapragmatic evaluation (*Evaluation*) which is the core of investigation of RQ2; and (iv) the technical affordance of the Danmaku system (*Likes*). By exploring such factors, further data analysis is aimed to answer RQ2 in section 7.3.

### 5.7 The issue of ambiguity

By implementing the coding scheme described in 5.6, most of the Danmaku data can be coded with only a few exceptions. Such exceptions raise the issue of ambiguity of Danmaku data, which will be discussed in this section.

Firstly, some Danmaku data is ambiguous because of a methodological compromise during the process of data collection and coding. As indicated in 4.4, a mock impoliteness speech event, in this research, is identified as a cluster of mock impoliteness acts produced by one roaster in his/her turn of performance. There are two reasons why mock impoliteness speech events were identified and used as a category of analysis. One reason is that it is difficult to (if not impossible) to attribute every Danmaku evaluation to an exact speech act in the show, so a larger unit of speech event is created to enable the researcher to make correlations. The other reason is that doing so can connect the evaluations of mock impoliteness to the mock impoliteness speech events studied for RQ1, thus connecting RQ1-*What constitutes mock impoliteness in the show Roast!?* and RQ2-*How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?* together. Therefore, identifying mock impoliteness speech events is a methodological compromise, but it also has a significant advantage. The downside of this method is that the units are less consistent in their contents, which permits a degree of ambiguity in the collected danmaku comments, because some comments without a clear referent to a specific act but can be attributed to a speech event which includes moments that are not identified as mock impoliteness speech acts. Hypothetically, a roaster could accidentally pronounce a word in a funny way, this could lead to Danmaku comments such as “hahaha”, but this act itself may not be relevant to mock impoliteness.

However, such comments are still collected as there is no possible way to differentiate this type of “hahaha” to a “hahaha” that is a positive evaluation of a mock impoliteness per se.

Secondly, because of the time delay and relativity of time (see section 4.4 on these notions) features of the danmaku data, a comment such as “hahaha” in a cluster of comments referring to a specific event is likely to also refer to that same event. A comment such as “this is so mean” that appeared during or right after an event is likely to refer to that event. Such comments are also collected, although there is a lack of certainty of such data as one can never be 100% sure of which event a comment refers to.

Moreover, even when some comments have clear referents to a specific event, they might still be ambiguous for a clear coding, as is demonstrated in the following examples:

[5.10]  
厉害  
Lihai  
Amazing/fierce

This polysemous adjective “Lihai”, used as an adjectival predicate here, has different meaning in different contexts, it could mean i) the performance is amazing; ii) something being said/someone is fierce. Although in some danmaku comments, more contextual clues are offered for an unambiguous understanding of the words, such as used in “his mouth is lihai” (the meaning fierce is more appropriate in this case), when used alone, it could cause ambiguity for a clear coding.

[5.11]  
张雨绮槽点太多了  
Zhang Yuqi caodian tai duo le  
Yuqi Zhang roasting-points too much PRT  
Yuqi Zhang has a lot to be roasted



This example also could incur different readings: i) the author simply describes the fact that the roastee Yuqi has a lot of experiences that could be mocked at; and/or ii) The roastee deserves to be roasted. The former could be irrelevant to either a positive or a negative evaluation, while the later favours a positive evaluation of the speech event.

[5.12]

你死不死啊

Ni si bu si a

You die not die PRT

Are you (at last) gonna die or not?

This comment is a quote from a phrase used in the speech event. This phrase can be considered as a conventionalized mock impoliteness formula not simply because that it fits a pattern of conventionalized mock impoliteness formula found in the data, which has a form of rhetorical question. It originally comes from a celebrity's speech in an interview, later it was used as mimicry in this particular episode by the celebrity's former student who had open conflicts with him. The use of this phrase is considered very bold but also amusing according to the participants' reaction (surprised facial expressions followed by applause and laughter). Later on, in this episode, other roasters mimicked this phrase when they roasted this former student who was the host of this episode. Moments like this have given rise to a lot of danmaku comments repeating this phrase. However, there is not enough evidence provided for the researcher to judge whether example [5.12] projects a positive or a negative evaluation.

To summarise, there are danmaku comments that are indeterminate in terms of whether they are evaluations of specific mock impoliteness speech acts or events. There are also danmaku comments that are attributable to a specific event but are ambiguous in certain categories of data coding.

As such comments pose difficulties for data coding, I used the following methods to address this problem. For comments such as "haha" discussed at the beginning of this section, although it is not possible to verify whether they are a reaction to mock impoliteness per se or other incidents that happened during the course of the mock impoliteness speech events, they are still treated as evaluations of mock impoliteness

and coded accordingly since they appear in the same form and there is no other evidence to suggest otherwise. As for the fact that there is no evidence of which speech event “haha” refers to, such Danmaku comments are coded as “0” for the variable of *Speech Event*, as previously discussed in 4.4. This is a methodological compromise that is made due to the feature of ambiguity of Danmaku data. Ambiguous comments such as examples [5.10], [5.11] and [5.12], are excluded from coding since it is almost impossible to make an unbiased judgement on their meaning.

## 5.8 Summary

In this chapter, I have explained in detail the methodology adopted, modified, and developed in investigating the two RQs. The overarching integrative pragmatics approach allows flexible analysis of the data from various perspective. The multimodal approach ensures a holistic perspective of mock impoliteness, which not only focuses on what was said (the verbal mock impoliteness messages), but also takes into consideration how it was said (multimodal aspects of mock impoliteness). The corpus assisted approach ensures the robustness of the investigation, and the metalanguage approach is essential in understanding how mock impoliteness is evaluated. It is important to note that such approaches are chosen out of their advantages in solving the research questions specific to this research, obviously, when facing other questions, different approaches can and should be considered. This is a crucial element of integrative pragmatics approach as its primary locus of analysis is interaction (Culpeper and Haugh, 2014).

One important theoretical contribution of this research is the modifications to Culpeper et al.’ (2017) model of mixed messages in analysing mock impoliteness speech acts. While “form driven” mismatch is originally proposed in Culpeper’s (2011) categorization of non-conventionalized impoliteness, the pilot study has demonstrated that it can also explain mock impoliteness speech acts. The proposal of adding “co-text driven” mismatch to the model arises from the data analysis, which is a theoretic contribution to theorizing mock impoliteness. As this category arises from Chinese data in the context of an online talk show, further research in other languages and/or contexts is much needed to test how “universal” this phenomenon might be.

Another methodological (perhaps theoretical to some extent) contribution is the method in analysing Danmaku data. As Danmaku is a rather novel system, research on Danmaku is still scarce and there are yet recognitions of its potential, especially in the linguistic field. The Danamku coding schemes is data-driven, developed to analyse the third-party participants' metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness, which is an attempt for a systematic analysis on Danmaku data. The coding scheme is described in detail, which is helpful for future studies. Whilst Danmaku provides easy access to many metapragmatic comments, there is the issue of ambiguity determined by its features which I have acknowledged, but deeper understanding of Danmaku and further research around methodologies in analysing Danmaku is much needed in future research. This analysis of Danmaku data, which relies heavily on the coding scheme, will be presented in section 7.3.

In the following two chapters, I will answer RQ1 and RQ2 accordingly.

## Chapter 6. Dynamics of Mock Impoliteness

### 6.1 Introduction

This Chapter explores the dynamics of mock impoliteness, i.e., *RQ1-How is mock impoliteness constructed?* from 4 aspects. Section 6.2 deals with conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae emerged from the show *Roast!*, with validations of corpus data. Section 6.3 discusses non-conventionalized mock impoliteness, using the two theoretical frameworks (model of mixed messages and rapport management) to analyse the linguistic construction of mock impoliteness. Thus, section 6.2 and 6.3 answer the first part of *RQ1-How is mock impoliteness linguistically constructed?*. Section 6.4 then turns to the multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness, which answers the second part of *RQ1- How is mock impoliteness multimodally constructed?*. Finally, section 6.5 analyses a subgroup of mock impoliteness — self-directed mock impoliteness which emerged from the data and its function in mock impoliteness speech events.

### 6.2 Conventionalized mock impoliteness

Terkourafi (2005b: 213) defines conventionalization as:

a relationship holding between utterances and context, which is a correlate of the (statistical) frequency with which an expression used in one's experience of a particular context. Conventionalisation is thus a matter of degree, and may well vary in different speakers, as well as for the same speaker over time. This does not preclude the possibility that a particular expression may be conventionalised in a particular context for virtually all speakers of a particular language, thereby appearing to be a convention of that language.

This definition of conventionalization highlights the frequency of the co-occurrences between language forms and specific contexts, which co-constitute “frames” in her frame-based approach to politeness.

Culpeper (2010, 2011) adopts this notion in his investigation of conventionalization of impoliteness, which boils down to the expression or language forms that is conventionally associated with impoliteness, that is, conventionalized impoliteness formulae. He proposes two methods of identifying conventionalized impoliteness formulae (2011:133):

1. Study those specific contexts in which participant(s) regularly display an understanding that something impolite was expressed (what expressions were used, if any?).
2. Study the metadiscourse concerning behaviours understood to be impolite (what expressions are they talking about, if any?).

Similar to the extension from conventionalised politeness to conventionalised impoliteness, the same idea can be extended to conventionalization of mock (im)politeness. Wang and Taylor (2019) analyse two conventionalized mock politeness formulae, *hehe* (an approximation of laughter) in Chinese and *HTH* (an abbreviation of *hope that helps*) in British online forums. They envisage two key roles for conventionalization of mock politeness (2019:272):

- (a) the behaviours which are used to express the insincere politeness may involve conventionalised impoliteness formulae
- (b) the mock polite behaviour itself may be conventionalised for the expression of impoliteness

In the combination of Culpeper's (2011) methods and Wang and Taylor's (2019) key roles, the identification of *conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae* can be operationalized by searching for:

- a) the behaviours which are used to express the insincere impoliteness may involve conventionalized **(im)politeness** formulae
- b) the mock impolite behavior itself may be conventionalized for the expression of **(im)politeness**

using the following two methods:

1. Study those specific contexts in which participant(s) regularly display an understanding that something **mock impolite** was expressed (what expressions were used, if any?).
2. Study the metadiscourse concerning behaviours understood to be **mock impolite** (what expressions are they talking about, if any?).

The reason why the terms in bold in the two key roles above are (im)politeness instead of impoliteness or politeness, is that mock impoliteness is essentially a mismatch

between something polite and something impolite (*something* here encompasses language forms, context and paralinguistic cues), but interpreted as not offensive. In this sense, a conventionalized politeness formula can mismatch with a conventionalized impoliteness formula or a context and it may be interpreted as impolite, and vice versa. Thus, the term (im)politeness is more accurate and is able to account for some examples which will be evident in the following paragraphs.

From the eighth episode of the second season of the show *Roast!* (referred to as S02E08 hereafter), I collected 145 mock impoliteness speech acts. Out of these 145 mock impoliteness speech acts, two forms, that is, rhetorical questions and imperatives are relatively frequently used in 30 acts and 18 acts respectively. In annotating such data according to Culpeper's (2011) model of mixed messages, it involves the identification of conventionalized politeness and/or impoliteness formulae. This gives rise to the question: are rhetorical questions and imperatives conventionalized impoliteness formulae? A simple way of resolving this issue is to search the language forms in a corpus to see whether they are associated with politeness or impoliteness. However, this simple way appears to be rather challenging as rhetorical questions and imperatives in Chinese, do not embody a specific form, or at least do not embody a form specific to rhetorical question or imperatives.

Therefore, alternative routes need to be taken to answer the above question. I will approach the issue with rhetorical questions and that with imperatives respectively.

### 6.2.1 Rhetorical questions

There has been much discussion on the form of rhetorical questions in Chinese, some scholars hold that there's no difference between the form of a rhetorical question and a question (Lü, 1942; Ding, 2010), while others support a weaker claim that most rhetorical questions share the same surface structures as questions, but they also have some particular markers, such as “难道” (nandao, means “isn't it that”), 怎么 (zenme, means “how” ) , 岂 (qi, means “how”) and so on (Li, 1990; Yin, 2009). As mentioned above, there is a methodological problem for identifying whether rhetorical questions are conventionalized impoliteness formulae using a corpus assisted approach when there is hardly an identifiable form of them.

With this in mind, I will start from examining the rhetorical questions in my data, and then search for their forms in a large corpus to verify whether rhetorical questions are conventionally associated with impoliteness or politeness. In this way, the rhetorical questions in my data provide search terms for the corpus assisted approach, and thus solving the methodological problem.

In examining the rhetorical question which appeared in the 30 mock impoliteness speech acts in S02E08 (season 2 episode 8), there are altogether 41 rhetorical questions in 16 forms as presented in table 6.1. Such forms were used as the basis of corpus queries to verify whether rhetorical questions are conventionally associated with impoliteness or politeness in contexts outside of the show *Roast!*. The corpus of the Center for Chinese Linguistics (CCL) is chosen for this purpose, as its “modern Chinese” section (around 581,794,456 characters) includes large amount of spoken data.<sup>15</sup> Ideally, 100 rhetorical questions were to be collected from CCL to cover a fair amount of the uses of different forms of rhetorical questions in different contexts, however, 96 were collected based on the frequency of each form in 41 rhetorical questions in S02E08, as presented in table 6.1.

Rhetorical question forms in S02E08	Frequency (out of 41)	Percentage	Queries in CCL	Numbers of rhetorical questions to be collected in CCL
1. 哪。。。不是 Which...isn't	1	2.4%	哪\$10 不是	2
2. (是/能/要) 不 (是/能/要) ( is/can) negation (is/can)	12	29.2%	(V)不(V)	29
3. 不。。。吗 negation....SFP <sup>16</sup>	2	4.9%	不\$15 吗	5
4. 。。。吗/哪/啊 .....SFP	9	22%	吗? 呢? 啊?	22
5. () 什么 ()	2	4.9%	(a)什么(a)	5

<sup>15</sup> Ideally, all the corpus data should come from the spoken sub corpora in CCL, which would be more representative of the rhetorical questions in the show *Roast!*. However, when there are not enough search results for a particular query, the search range is expanded to written data as well. Altogether, 25 out of 96 rhetorical questions are written data in CCL, including newspapers, books and academic articles.

<sup>16</sup> SFP is the abbreviation of sentence final particle.

(what )				
6. 哪能。。。 how could	1	2.4%	哪能	2
7. 咋不。。。 (啊) why not (SFP)	1	2.4%	咋不	2
8. 能。。。 (吗) can...(SFP)	3	7.3%	能\$10 吗 能	7
9. 为什么 why	1	2.4%	为什么	2
10. (又) 怎么样 so what	2	5.4%	又怎么样/又怎样/怎么样	5
11. 怎么。。。呢/呀 how (SFP)	2	4.9%	怎么\$10 呢 呀	5
12. 难道	1	2.4%	难道	2
13. 。。。是吗 is it(SFP)	1	2.4%	是吗	2
14. 谁不 who doesn't	1	2.4%	谁不	2
15. 不。。。啊 Negation..(SFP)	1	2.4%	不\$10 啊	2
16. Unmarked (question mark)	1	2.4%	?	2

Table 6. 1 Forms of rhetorical questions and their search queries in CCL

Thus, 96 rhetorical questions were collected from CCL using the 16 queries in table 1. The 96 rhetorical questions were then analysed according to the contexts they occur in to verify whether they are associated with impoliteness. Altogether, there are 8 rhetorical questions (8%) associated with impoliteness, indicated by metalinguistic terms that are associated with impoliteness, negative emotions displayed by the participants of the interaction, conventionalized impoliteness formulae and other contextual cues. An example is presented below (rhetorical questions in italics):

[6.2.1] 有次，六祖惠能大师看到两个人对着一面旗幡，面红耳赤争论不休。

You ci, liuzuhuineng dashi kandao liang ge ren duizhe yi mian fanqi, mianhong erchi zhenglun buxiu

Have time, master Liuzuhuineng saw two CL people facing one CL banner, face-red ears-red arguing nonstop

One time, Master Liuzuhuineng saw two people facing a banner, arguing excitedly without stopping.

一个说：“*如果没有风，幡子怎么会动呢？*所以说是风动。”

Yi ge shuo: “*ruguo meiyou feng, fanzi zenm hui dong ne? suoyishuo shi feng dong.*”



One CL says: “if no wind, banner how can move SFP? So is wind move.”

One says: “*if there wasn't wind, how could be banner move? So it's the wind that moves*”

另一个说: “没有幡子动, 又怎么知道风在动呢? 所以说是幡动。”

Ling yi ge shuo: “meiyou fanzi dong, you zenme zhidao feng zai dong ne? suoyishuo shi fan dong.”

Another says: “without banner moving, again how know wind ING move SFP? So is banner move”

Another says: “*without the banner moving, how could you know the wind is moving? So it is the banner that moves.*”

两人各执一词, 互不相让。

Liang ren ge zhi yi ci, hu bu xiang rang.

Two people each hold one word, each NEG mutual concession

Two people are both holding their opinions without concession.

(CCL Contemporary *Dialogues between masters of media and masters of Buddhism*)

One rhetorical question (1%) is associated with mock impoliteness, as indicated by the preceding metalanguage “he jokingly said”. However, this result is not to say that the other 87 rhetorical questions (91%) are all associated with politeness. Rather, there simply is not enough contextual evidence to indicate that these rhetorical questions are associated with impoliteness or politeness. Such rhetorical questions are used as negative assertions, figure of speech for emphasis, or pragmatic markers to seek agreement, which do not warrant an interpretation of impoliteness or politeness in the contexts. This type of use is labeled as “other” in Chart 1 where a distribution of the different uses of 96 rhetorical questions in 16 forms is demonstrated.

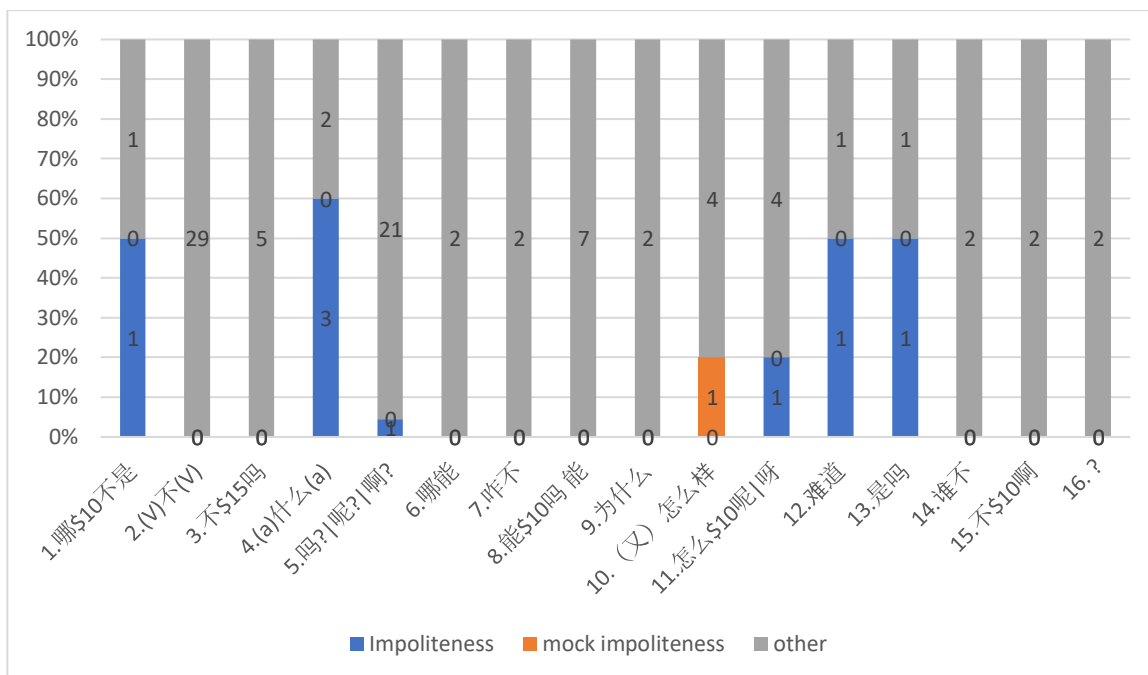


Figure 6. 1 Distribution of the use of rhetorical questions in different forms

It is worth noting that, there seems to be differences among particular forms of rhetorical questions in whether they are conventionally associated with impoliteness. However, due to the small number of rhetorical questions of each form that has been collected, there isn't enough statistical evidence to draw a conclusion. Although as fascinating as this particular issue might be, it is beyond the scope of the current research. What is clear from the results in Figure 6.1 is that rhetorical questions are not conventionally associated with impoliteness according to Culpeper's (2011) criterion that more than 50% of the cases have to be associated with impoliteness for a certain form to be considered as a conventionalized impoliteness formula.

Thus, can rhetorical questions be considered as conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in some contexts? This is quite possible. The rhetorical questions which appeared in 30 acts in the data all contribute to understandings of mock impoliteness, as the 145 speech acts had been coded as mock impoliteness speech acts to begin with. This is not to say that the rhetorical questions contribute to the understandings of mock impoliteness because they were coded so, rather, the 145 speech acts had been coded as mock impoliteness before the pattern of the frequent uses of rhetorical questions emerged. The rhetorical questions are a symptom of impoliteness taking place, but they

are not necessarily the key formula that triggers the impoliteness. This is consistent with the adapted method 1 of identifying mock impoliteness formulae:

1. Study those specific contexts in which participant(s) regularly display an understanding that something **mock impolite** was expressed (what expressions were used, if any?).

The next question is, do the uses of rhetorical questions fit any or both of the adapted two key roles of conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae?

- a) the behaviours which are used to express the insincere impoliteness may involve conventionalized **(im)politeness** formulae;
- b) the mock impolite behavior itself may be conventionalized for the expression of **(im)politeness**.

This should be examined in the actual usage of rhetorical questions in mock impoliteness speech acts. Example [6.2.2] below involves an understanding of mock impoliteness with the use of a rhetorical question at the end.

[6.2.2] The host, Shaogang Zhang is introducing the main guest of the show, Yuqi Zhang, a famous actress.

- 1 张绍刚: 张雨绮是主咖  
**Zhang Shaogang:** Zhang Yuqi shi Zhuka  
**Shaogang Zhang:** Zhang Yuqi is main cast  
**Shaogang Zhang:** Zhang Yuqi is the main guest
- 2 咱就好好介绍人家 啊  
Zan jiu haohao jieshao renjia a  
Us PM good-good introduce person-family A  
Let's introduce her properly ok
- 3 张雨绮有很多的代表作  
Zhang Yuqi you henduo de daibiao zuo  
Zhang Yuqi has many of representative work  
Yuqi Zhang has many representative works
- 4 像什么《长江七号》啊  
Xiang shenme changjiang qihao a  
Like PM long-river no.7 A  
Like *CJ7* (a film of Yuqi Zhang)
- 5 《妖猫传》啊  
Yao mao zhuan a

Deman cat biography A  
*The Legend of the Demon Cat*

- 6 《美人鱼》啊等等  
Mei Renyu a dengdeng  
Beautiful mermaid A and so on  
*Mermaid* etc.
- 7 你说哪部电影不是离开她  
Ni shuo na bu dianying bushi likai ta  
You say which CLASSIFIER film NEG without she/her  
Which one of these films, without her

(Pause for 1s)

- 8 都会更好看  
Dou hui geng haokan  
All would (MOD) more good-looking  
Wouldn't be better?  
(says with a rising tone, a smile and enlarged eyes)

In this example, the host starts with a rather polite introduction, then he lists a few famous films of Yuqi Zhang, as a demonstration of her successful career. However, at the end, he uses a rhetorical question (*Which one of these films without her wouldn't be better*), with a deliberate pause for 1 second before he delivers the meaning that those films would actually be better without her. This act is followed with laughter from other guests and the audiences, and Yuqi herself replied with a smile. The message delivered by the rhetorical question can be somewhat impolite, as it attacked the roastee's quality face. However, note that the roaster's paralinguistic cues accompanying his speech demonstrate a playful, joking manner, which possibly made the message less impolite, thus giving rise to an understanding of mock impoliteness. This usage of the rhetorical question fits the adapted two key roles of conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae:

- a) the behaviours which are used to express insincere impoliteness may involve conventionalized **(im)politeness** formulae (e.g., the polite introduction and appraisal of many representative works of the roastee in example [6.2.2])
- b) the mock impolite behavior itself may be conventionalized for the expression of **(im)politeness** (e.g., rhetorical questions can be associated with impoliteness in example [6.2.1] above where two people are arguing over a banner")

Therefore, in example [6.2.2], the usage of the rhetorical question contributes to an understanding of mock impoliteness. This type of usage is entrenched in the context of the show *Roast!* through frequent uses (in 30 acts). That is to say, 30 out of 30 mock impoliteness acts involve the uses of rhetorical questions contributing to the

understandings of mock impoliteness, thus rhetorical questions can be considered as conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae. However, it is important to note that, this claim does not mean that rhetorical questions are conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in every context, as Culpeper (2011:127) emphasizes that “there is a scale of conventionalization” and that “conventionalized meaning (as opposed to conventional meaning) sits midway between semantics and pragmatics, between fully conventionalized and non-conventionalised meanings (Levinson, 2000:25)”. The conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae discussed so far, by their nature are what Terkourafi (2005b: 211-212) refers to as Generalised implicature I (utterance-type meaning presumed in minimal context). This also echoes Culpeper’s (2011: 128) emphasis on the extent to which the conventionalized impoliteness is “context-spanning”. What I claim here, is that within the context of the show *Roast!*, rhetorical questions are frequently used as a mock impoliteness strategy accompanying certain paralinguistic cues contributing to understandings of mock impoliteness, therefore, they can be considered as conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae.

### 6.2.2 Imperatives

When annotating the data that involves the use of imperatives, the question that whether imperatives are conventionally associated with impoliteness also needs to be answered. In B&L (1987), imperatives can be used for politeness in invitations such as “help you self”, which falls under bald on record politeness strategy. Gu (1990) also suggests that the use of imperatives is a common way for an invitation to be performed in Chinese. Indeed, self-repetition expressions such as “坐坐坐” (sit sit sit), “吃吃吃” (eat eat eat), “来来来” (come come come), and expressions including complements of durations such as “坐一下” (sit for a while), “慢一点” (slow down a bit) are all conventionalized formulae to express politeness through imperatives. Although, imperatives such as “出去” (go out/away) can be used as a dismissal in some contexts, which is a rather conventionalised formula to express impoliteness.

Similar to the problem of rhetorical questions, imperatives also do not have a specific searchable form for a corpus assisted approach since the form of the imperatives in Chinese is (Subject +) V+ Object. This form applies to the basic syntax type of Chinese

as an SVO language. Therefore, the same method used for collecting rhetorical questions above was again adopted for imperatives, that is, the forms of 23 imperatives in the 18 mock impoliteness speech acts (some acts contain more than one imperative) were examined to generate the corpus queries to verify how imperatives are used in other contexts, as presented in Table 6.2.

Imperative forms in S02E08	Frequency (out of 23)	percentage	queries	Numbers of imperatives to be collected in CCL
1. 不要/用 <sup>17</sup> don't	6	26%	不要 不用	26
2. (你)别(you)don't	3	13%	别 你别	13
3. 赶紧 quickly	2	9%	赶紧	9
4. 好好(听/看)一(听/看) have a good look	2	9%	好好(v)一(v)	9
5. 体会一下 feel	2	9%	体会一下	9
6. Unmarked (v)	6	26%	你先/你去/一定要/你\$10啊/你把	26
7. 让/给我 Let me	2	9%	让我 给我	9

Table 6. 2 Forms of imperatives and their search queries in CCL

101 imperatives thus are collected using the search queries in Table 6.2 in CCL. For the unmarked form, the search queries are based on the imperatives used in the data and common patters of imperatives in Chinese. The 101 imperatives were then coded according to whether they are associated with impoliteness by examining their contexts of uses. The results of whether imperatives are conventionally associated with politeness or impoliteness is indicated in Figure 6.2. “Other” indicates that there isn’t enough contextual evidence in deciding whether politeness or impoliteness is involved.

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<sup>17</sup> One might argue that “不用” (bu yong, no need), which constitutes a negation marker and “用” indicating obligation or necessity, is rather deontic than imperative. However, in Chinese or Sinitic languages, there is no real difference between modality and mood (Chappell & Peyraube, 2006). For negative imperatives, a set of modal verbs can be used following the negation marker, such as “不用” in this example. A more vernacular version of “不用” is “甭” (beng), which is formed of the character “不” being on top of “用”. Xiao and McEnery (2010: 124) found “甭” (beng) is used as imperatives in spoken corpus.

Such imperatives are used as instructions from public figures to audiences, suggestions from experienced professionals to less experienced ones, or requests among people with close relationships. In other words, imperatives used in such contexts are considered as “default” or politic (cf. Watts’ (2003) term of ‘politic behaviour’), and the signs of interpretations of politeness or impoliteness are not flagged up. The reason why the (im)politeness dimensions are different from the analysis on rhetorical questions is simply that the analysis is data driven. For imperatives, there are cases where politeness is clearly negotiated, such as when used for comfort, apology and in contexts indicating polite interactions, but no cases indicate mock impoliteness. On the other hand, in the previous analysis on rhetorical questions, there were cases of mock impoliteness context and impoliteness, but none of politeness were found.

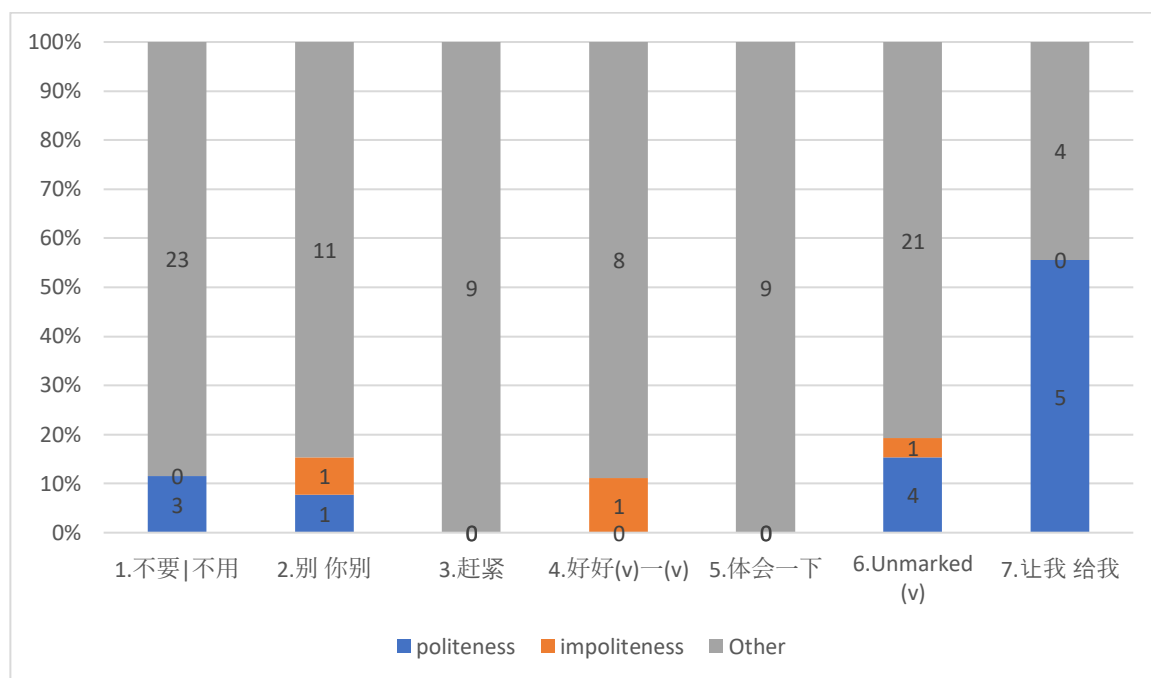


Figure 6. 2 Distribution of the use of imperatives in different forms

As Figure 6.2 presents, 13 out 101 imperatives (13%) are associated with politeness (used with conventionalized politeness formula “please”, for apologies, and invitations), only 3 out of 101 imperatives (3%) are associated with impoliteness (indicated by taboo words, negative feelings of the hearer evident in the context, and metapragmatic comments). Interestingly, there might be some scalar conventionalization as to which particular forms of imperatives are more likely to be conventionally associated with

politeness or impoliteness, e.g., form 7 让我/给我 (let me) seems to be more conventionally associated with politeness than other forms. This is parallel to the form of “let me/us” in English, which has a long-established connection with politeness. Traugott and Dasher (2002:176-177) argues that the intersubjective meaning “permit us to X” gradually develops from the imperative construction “let us X”. From a B&L’s perspective on politeness, “let” could encode deference by asking for permission (negative politeness), while “us” includes both speaker and the hearer which conveys that S and H are cooperators (positive politeness). However, the number of each form collected is not enough to draw a conclusion. In general, there is not enough evidence to conclude imperatives are conventionalized (im)politeness formulae.

Thus, can imperatives be considered as mock impoliteness formulae in some contexts? The following example [6.2.3] where the roaster used imperatives to express mock impoliteness indicates such a possibility.

[6.2.3] The roaster, Dan Li, just mocked two film directors, Zhengyu Lu and Yuelun Wang, which was well-received by the audience with loud laughter. He goes on and says:

- 1 李诞: 怎么样二位导演  
**Li Dan:** Zenmeyang er wei daoyan  
**Dan Li:** How two CLASSIFIER directors  
**Dan Li:** What’s up, two directors
  
  - 2 就是自己拍电影没听过这样的笑声吧  
 Jiushi ziji pai dianying mei tingguo zheyang de xiaosheng ba  
 PM self shoot films NEG listened (to) such AUX laughter BA  
 You’ve never heard laughter like such when you are making films, right?  
 (The roaster smiles while speaking. The two directors nod and shake hands with each other. Audiences laugh)
- 好好听一听是吧<sup>18</sup>  
 Haohao ting yi ting shiba  
 Good-good listen one listen PM  
 Listen to it, ok
- 珍惜珍惜啊  
 Zhenxi zhenxi a  
 Cherish cherish A  
 Cherish it, cherish it

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<sup>18</sup> The pragmatic marker “是吧”(shi ba, ok) could mitigate the face threat of the imperative “listen to it”, as it potentially asks for co-action or seeks agreement of the hearer. Thus the speech act of “listen to it ok” is in between a directive and a co-actional assertion.



This example is particularly interesting as it contains both a rhetorical question and an imperative. The first two lines form a rhetorical question (*What's up two directors, you've never heard laughter like such when you are making films, right?*), which can be considered as a conventionalized mock impoliteness formula according to the analysis in the previous section. This is evident in the paralinguistic cues accompanying the speech and the roastees' reactions, which gives rise to an understanding of mock impoliteness. The two imperatives (*listen to it ok? Cherish it, cherish it*) following the rhetorical question, can be interpreted as a joke, thus contributing to a jocular frame (Haugh and Bousfield 2012) or non-seriousness to some extent (Bateson, 1955; Haugh, 2016; Culpeper et al., 2017). The roaster also added the discourse marker/pragmatic marker "shi ba" (ok?) and a particle "a" (similar to "eh" in English) to soften the tone. Such clause periphery markers (pragmatic markers and sentence final particles), according to Tantucci and Wang (2018, 2020), are non-obligatory constructions that address the potential reactions of the addressee to what is being said, which encodes intersubjectivity. In other words, the encoding of intersubjectivity demonstrates a concern for rapport management. This is why the clause periphery markers "shiba" (ok) and "a" soften the tone and the imposition of the two imperatives to some degree. However, it is still not clear whether it is the combination of imperatives and clause periphery markers displays an understanding of mock impoliteness, or that the language form of imperatives itself contributes to the understanding of mock impoliteness.

A further examination of the 18 imperatives that contribute to the understanding of mock impoliteness in the data demonstrates a frequent pattern of the combination of imperatives and clause periphery markers, as demonstrated in the following list. Note that this list is to show the *language forms* of imperatives realized in mock impoliteness behaviours, therefore the relevant contexts are not provided. Clause periphery markers are highlighted in bold (in the original and the transliteration), and PM stands for pragmatic marker. The examples without any highlighting are associated with paralinguistic cues.

[6.2.4]所以你要想请张雨绮不要怪别人请不来不要怪别人 改名 王家卫

Suoyi ni yao xiang qing zhang yuqi buyao guai bieren qing bu lai buyao guai bieren  
gaiming wang jiawei

So you if want invite zhang yuqi don't blame others invite NEG come don't blame others

change-your-name Wang Jiawei

So if you want to invite Yuqi Zhang, don't blame others. If you can't manage to invite her don't blame others. Change your name to Karwai Wang (a famous director's name).

[6.2.5]不要老想着接班 不要老想着那些事

Buyao lao xiangzhe jieban buyao lao xiangzhe naxie shi

Don't always think about successor don't always think about those things

Don't always think about being a successor (to Stephen chow) Don't always think about those things

[6.2.6]哎建国 你先上来说 说完之后赶紧下去写道歉的稿 好不好

**AI** Jianguo ni xian shanglai shuo shuowan zhihou ganjin xiaqu xie daoqian de gao **hao bu hao**

**AI** Jianguo you first come-up talk talk-finished after quickly go-down write apology AUX letter **PM** (good-Neg-good)

AI Jianguo, you come up to roast first, and then you can write the apology letter afterwards, is that ok?

[6.2.7]这个都是你们应该做的 戒骄戒躁 继续努力 好吧

Zhege doushi nimen yinggai zuode jie jiao jie zao jixu nuli **haoba**

This all is you should do AUX quit pride quit arrogant continue working **PM** (good-BA)

This is all what you should do! Don't be pride and keep trying ok?

[6.2.8]好好听一听是 吧 珍惜珍惜啊

Haohao ting yi ting shiba zhenxi zhenxi **a**

Good-good listen one listen **PM** cherish cherish **A**

Listen to it, ok? Cherish it, cherish it

[6.2.9]你别来了下期好不好

Ni bie lai le xia qi **hao bu hao**

You don't come AUX next episode **PM** (good-NEG-good)

You, don't come next episode ok?

[6.2.10]体会一下别人的心情好不好

Tihui yixia bieren de xinqing **hao bu hao**

Sympathize one CLASSIFIER other 's mood **PM** (good-NEG-good)

Sympathize with other's feeling, ok

[6.2.11]你以后不用再为我操心啦

Ni yihou bu yong zai wei wo caoxin **la**  
You future NEG need again for me worry **LA**  
Don't you worry about me again in the future

[6.2.12]你别生气啊我之前没有告诉你 别生气别生气

Ni bie shengqi **a** wo zhiqian meiyou gaosu ni bie shengqi bie shengqi  
You NEG angry **A** I before NEG told you NEG angry NEG angry  
Don't you get angry that I didn't tell you (about this) before. Don't be angry!  
Don't be angry!

[6.2.13]拍喜剧啊 一定要积累很多的生活经验

Pai xiju **a** yiding yao jilei henduo de shenghuo jingyan  
Shoot comedy **A** must accumulate many AUX life experience  
When making comedies, you must accumulate many life experiences

[6.2.14]你可以好好看一看啊

Ni keyi haohao kan yi kan **a**  
You can good-good look one look **A**  
You can have a good look at it!

[6.2.15]小卢啊 你不要有压力啊

Xiaolu **a** ni buyao you yali **a**  
Xiaolu **A** you don't-need have pressure **A**  
Little Lu, don't have pressure

[6.2.16]亲爱的 让我再折磨一下呗

Qinai de rang wo zai zhemo yixia **bei**  
Dear AUX let me again torture one-time **BEI**  
My dear, let me torture you again!

[6.2.17]大家凑活看好吧

Dajia couhuo kan **haoba**  
Everyone make-do watch **PM** (good-**BA**)  
Everyone, make do with the show when you watch it ok

[6.2.18]卢正雨 给我退票

Lu Zhengyu gei wo tui piao  
Lu Zhengyu give me refund

Zhengyu Lu, refund me!

[6.2.19]体会一下自己比猫戏份多的感觉

Tihui yixia ziji bi mao xifen duo de ganjue

Feel one-time yourself compare cat scenes-in-the film more AUX feeling

Feel what it's like to be more important than a cat

[6.2.20]所以王导你沉住气啊

Suoyi Wangdao ni chenzhuqi A

So Wang director you be-steady A

So director Wang you calm down

[6.2.21]赶紧从我的别墅搬出去

Ganjin cong wode bieshu ban chuqu

Quickly from mine villa move out

Move out from my villa quickly!

It can be seen that, 13 out of 18 imperatives used in mock impoliteness behaviours co-occur with clause periphery markers, which gives the impression that it is the co-occurrence of imperatives and clause periphery markers that display an understanding of mock impoliteness. As for the other 5, paralinguistic cues (exaggerating tones/facial expression, gestures) that accompany the speech and other clues in the context all provide enough convincing evidence that they contribute to understandings of mock impoliteness. Hence, the use of imperatives and multimodal cues contribute to an understanding of mock impoliteness as well. This echoes Culpeper's (2011:139-152) discussion on various means (the addition of modifiers, taboo words, particular prosodies, non-verbal features, etc.) to exacerbate the offensiveness of an impoliteness formula. The clause periphery markers and paralinguistic cues can also exacerbate the uptake of mock impoliteness. This frequent use of imperatives (co-occurring with clause periphery markers or with paralinguistic cues) in the context of the show *Roast!* always associates with the understanding of mock impoliteness, which shows that such co-occurrences can be considered as a conventionalized mock impoliteness formula. The approach taken so far in demonstrating the association between imperatives and conventionalization of mock impoliteness is the adapted method 1 in identifying mock impoliteness formulae. Furthermore, the use of imperatives in the data also fits the adapted two key roles of conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae:

- a) the behaviours which are used to express the insincere impoliteness may involve conventionalized **(im)politeness** formulae (e.g., “Go away” is a conventionalized dismissal to express impoliteness)
  
- b) the mock impolite behavior itself may be conventionalized for the expression of **(im)politeness** (e.g., imperatives can be used for conventionalized politeness formulae for invitation)

The interesting phenomenon is that the imperatives in the data examined so far either co-occur with clause periphery markers which encodes intersubjectivity or co-occur with certain paralinguistic cues that encodes a jocular or non-seriousness frame (it is also possible that imperatives co-occur with clause periphery markers and certain paralinguistic cues at the same time). Such co-occurrences are reinforced and conventionalized through frequent uses in the context of the show, where a pattern emerges that such co-occurrences can be used to express mock impoliteness. Considering the frequency of imperatives (co-occurrences), 18 out of 18 mock impoliteness acts involve the use of imperatives (co-occurrences) contributing to the interpretation of mock impoliteness. In other words, the co-occurrences of imperatives with clause periphery markers and/or certain paralinguistic cues can be considered as conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in the context of the show *Roast!*.

### 6.2.3 Notes on clause periphery markers and paralinguistic cues

It is worth noting that the use of clause periphery markers and paralinguistic cues are not only associated with imperatives and rhetorical questions, although the use of imperatives and rhetorical questions in the data are often associated with these two features, as demonstrated in the above analysis. Theoretically, since clause periphery markers encode intersubjectivity which is an overt marker of rapport management (Tantucci and Wang 2018, 2020), it can be added to any impolite message to lower the degree of face attack or the rank of imposition or soften the tone. For example, “讨厌!” (tao yan, which means (that’s) annoying) can be used as an expression of unpleasant feelings, however, if a clause periphery marker is added, such as “讨厌啊” (annoying A), “讨厌了啦” (annoying LE LA), or “讨厌嘛” (annoying MA), they can be interpreted as flirtatious.

There are some examples of such usage found in the data, the following example [6.2.22] is one of them:

[6.2.22] the host of the show, Shaogang Zhang is talking about how the directors of the show failed to invite a guest they want:

- 1 张绍刚：我跟你说  
Zhang Shaogang: Wo gen ni shuo  
Shaogang Zhang: I and you talk  
Shaogang Zhang: I'm telling you
  
- 2 导演组就是太稚嫩  
Daoyan zu jiu shi tai zhineng  
Director team just is too naïve  
The team of the directors is just too naïve  
(says with exaggerating facial expression, and pointing gestures)
  
- 3 最后没有斗过那只老狐狸吧  
Zuihou meiyou dou guo na zhi lao huli **ba**  
At last NEG fight PAST-TENSE that CLASSIFIER old fox **BA**  
You lost it to the old fox (the guest they failed to invite) at last, didn't you?
  
- 4 是不是  
**Shi bus hi**  
**PM** (Is-NEG-is)  
Isn't it!  
(everyone laughs)

In this case, the assertion that “the directors are too naïve” is a bald-on-record criticism by its semantic meaning, however, the use of the clause periphery markers encodes intersubjectivity which shows a consideration of the targets' reaction; the paralinguistic cues accompanying his speech also gives the impression that the criticism is not very serious, thus leading to an understanding of mock impoliteness. Similar usage of clause periphery markers and paralinguistic cues can also be found in assertions using modal verbs (italicized below):

[6.2.23] the roaster is mocking the roastee's frequent plastic surgeries by saying that he needs to use fingerprint to unlock a phone, which is a feature of a new phone that the roaster's company sells:

1 赵典: 因为你的脸啊

**Zhao Dian:** Yingwei nide lian a

**Dian Zhao:** Because your face **A**

**Dian Zhao:** Because if your face

2 如果总是变来变去

Ruguo zong shi bian lai bian qu

If always is change come change go

Is always changing

3 那肯定用不了面部解锁嘛

Na kending yong bu liao mianbu jiesuo ma

**PM (Then) must use NEG AUX face unlock MA**

Then you *must* not be able to use the feature of face-ID

4 那肯定要用指纹解锁嘛 对不对

Na kending yao yong zhiwen jiesuo ma dui bu dui

**PM(Then) must need use fingerprint unlock MA PM (right-NEG-right)**

Then you *must* need to use feature of unlocking your phone with your fingerprint, am I right?

(the roaster smiles during his speech)

(the roaster turns to the roastee)

5 是不是很方便呀

Shi bus shi hen fangbian ya

Is NEG is very convenient **YA**

Isn't it very convenient?

(the roastee nods and applauds with an exaggerating smile)

In example [6.2.23], the clause periphery markers and the paralinguistic cues again contribute to weakening the impoliteness indicated by the implicature (the use of modal verb “must”) that the roastee's face is always changing because he is doing plastic surgeries constantly, thus giving rise to an understanding of mock impoliteness. Note that the PM “*dui bu dui*” (isn't it/am I right) is also a rhetorical question on its own,

which further strengthens the association of mock impoliteness with clause periphery markers and rhetorical questions. This echoes Kim's (2011) conclusion that rhetorical questions play a catalyst role in the grammaticalization process with the example of KETUN (deriving from a conditional connective to a discourse marker) in Korean. As for the paralinguistic cues, its mismatch with the (im)polite message can be accounted for by a category in Culpeper's (2011) model of mixed message, that is, convention-driven internal multimodal mismatch.

To conclude, clause periphery markers are a strong indicator of the interpretation of mock impoliteness, certain paralinguistic cues are also a strong indicator for mock impoliteness. Not only do they occur with conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae (rhetorical questions and imperatives), but they also contribute to the understanding of mock impoliteness with the co-occurrence with potential impolite messages in the data.

### 6.3 Non-conventionalized mock impoliteness: implicational mock impoliteness

Culpeper (2011:155) asserts that “many impoliteness events do not involve conventionalized impoliteness formulae at all”, and reports that 59 of the 100 reported impoliteness events he collected did not involve conventional impoliteness formulae. The same situation applies to mock impoliteness—many mock impoliteness events do not involve conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae at all. Indeed, in the chosen two episodes of *Roast!* (S01E08 and S02E08), 217 out of 405<sup>19</sup> (54%) mock impoliteness speech acts did not involve conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae (imperatives and rhetorical questions identified in 6.2), which is consistent with the figure of 59% in Culpeper (2011). In other words, 54% of data is implicational mock impoliteness of which interpretation relies on particular contexts.

In this section, I analyse all kinds of implicational mock impoliteness according to the modified theoretical framework of mixed messages (Culpeper 2011; Culpeper et al. 2017) (see 3.5 and 5.5), and Spencer-Oatey's (2002, 2005) rapport management (see

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<sup>19</sup> A breakdown of this figure in each episode: in S01E08, out of 213 mock impoliteness speech acts, 65 are conventionalized, and 110 are implicational; in S02E08, out of 192 mock impoliteness speech acts, 46 are conventionalized and 107 are implicational. The rest of the mock impoliteness speech acts (77 out of 405) will be discussed in 6.5 *Self-directed mock impoliteness*.



3.6 and 3.7). In particular, I explore the interesting relationships between the two theoretical frameworks demonstrated in the data. The modified model of mixed messages tackles particular behaviours as “triggers” for the interpretation of a potential (im)polite message. Here I follow the same definition of behaviours in Culpeper (2011), which is worth citing in its full length:

My use of the term behaviour refers to behaviours in their multimodal fullness. It is more difficult to specify where ‘a behaviour’ in interaction begins and where it ends. Typically, their upper limit is that they never exceed one conversational turn; their lower limit is that they must consist of some communicative material, be it as little as a single word or gesture; their norm is that they contain one or two clauses (which can be reduced) or gestures; their cohesive principle is that all parts must contribute to the same pragmatic strategy or move.

Culpeper (2011:155)

It is important to note that although the term behaviour refers to behaviours in their multimodal fullness, this section focuses more on linguistic behaviours, while the important issue of multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness will be dealt with in section 6.4.

Spencer-Oatey’s (2002, 2005) rapport management in the context of this study focuses on which aspects of face for sociality rights are targeted by the potential impolite message in mock impoliteness speech acts. In this way, the relationship between the two theoretical frameworks can explain clearly how mock impoliteness is constructed.

As both theoretical frameworks offer classifications, all 217 implicational mock impoliteness speech acts were coded accordingly<sup>20</sup>. The following Figure 6.3 displays an overview of the distribution of implicational mock impoliteness speech acts in mixed messages and rapport management. The X axis indicates 7 categories of mixed messages, in each of which 5 categories of rapport management are indicated in different colors, while the Y axis indicates their frequency.

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<sup>20</sup> See section 5.3 and 5.5 for coding classifications of the two theoretical frameworks. Appendix 1 shows examples of the coding process in detail.

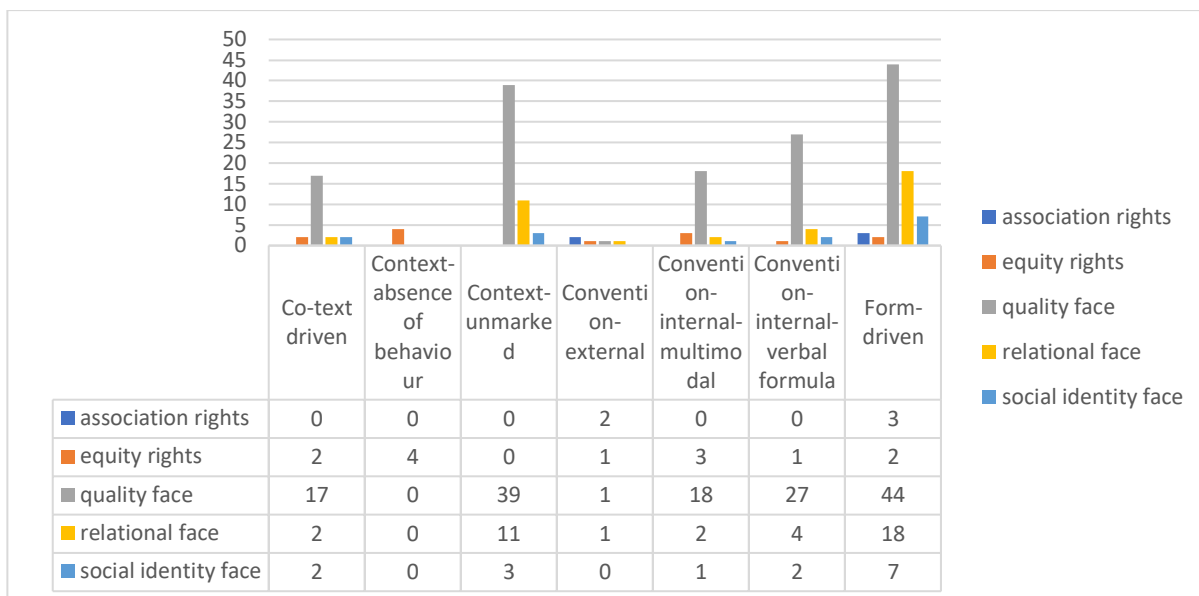


Figure 6. 3 Distribution of implicational mock impoliteness

It can be observed that in Figure 6.3, the distribution of the data is uneven. Out of the possible 35 intersections (7 categories of mixed messages intersecting with 5 categories of rapport management), 47% (102 out of 217) of data fall into 4 intersections of two most frequent categories of each theoretical framework, that is, the intersections of Form-driven and Context-driven unmarked behaviour with Quality face and Relational face, while the rest scatter around other intersections. This pattern provides a rationale for selecting the following examples to illustrate and discuss the different types of mock impoliteness in *Roast*. In the following sections, examples encompassing the most frequent categories will be analysed first in 6.3.1, and then examples of other categories will be discussed in 6.3.2, thus offering a wholistic view of the various types of construction of mock impoliteness in particular contexts. There is also a zero distribution of data in several intersections. This means that although theoretically such an intersection could exist, in the collected data of *Roast!*, no examples were found.

Another important finding is that there is a significant preference of targeting the hearer's Quality face in all types of mixed messages except for Context-driven-absence of behaviour amongst the values ( $\chi^2=11.6$ ; d.f. 5;  $p<0.05$ )<sup>21</sup>, this will be discussed in detail in 6.3.3.

<sup>21</sup> The Chi-square test excluded the value for Context-driven-absence of behaviour, as the value of this cell is zero.

### 6.3.1 The most frequent categories

#### *Form-driven mock impoliteness*

The following excerpt is an example of form-driven mock impoliteness involving Quality face.

[6.3.1] The host of the show Shaogang Zhang is introducing a guest Yuelun Wang, who is a film director.

- 1 张绍刚: 王岳伦  
**Zhang Shaogang:** Wang Yuelun  
**Shaogang Zhang:** Yuelun Wang  
**Shaogang Zhang:** Yuelun Wang
- 2 内地导演  
Neidi Daoyan  
Mainland (China) director  
A director in mainland China
- 3 代表作  
Daibiao Zuo  
Representative work  
(Whose) representative work is  
...(4.9)
- 4 观众: [@]安吉拉[@]  
**Audience:** Angela<sup>22</sup>  
Angela  
Angela
- 5 张绍刚: 没什么代表作啊  
**Zhang Shaogang:** Mei Shenme Daibiao Zuo A  
**Shaogang Zhang:** No what representative work PRT  
**Shaogang Zhang:** There is no representative work
- 6 张雨绮: [@]  
**Yuqi Zhang:** [@]
- 7 张绍刚: 啊拍了四部电影  
**Zhang Shaogang:** A Pai Le Si Bu Dianying

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<sup>22</sup> Angela is Yuelun Wang's daughter.

**Shaogang Zhang:**PRT film AUX four QUANT films

**Shaogang Zhang:** (he) made four films

- 8           总平均分 4.6 分  
              Zong Pingjun Fen 4.6 Fen  
              Total average score 4.6 score  
              The average score is 4.6<sup>23</sup>

9 王岳伦: [@]

**Yuelun Wang:** [@]

In this example, the long pause after line 3 plays an important part in the construction of mock impoliteness, which is also intensified by the speaker's eye rolling as if he was trying to search for Yuelun Wang's representative works but it took him so long<sup>24</sup>. This behaviour flouts the maxim of manner and triggers the implicature that it is hard to find Yuelun Wang's representative works. This implicature was quickly picked up by the audiences, as indicated by their laughter and a proposal that Yuelun's daughter Angela should be his "representative work". The audiences' behaviour is another mock impoliteness speech act which involves maxim of relation as they have departed from the film topic. In lines 5-8, the roaster Shaogang Zhang completes this mock impoliteness speech acts by insinuating how unflattering Yuelun Wang's career as a film director is, which is relative to Grice's maxim of manner. The potential impolite message, that is, the implicature that Yuelun Wang is a bad film director targets his Quality face.

One important issue is that Form-driven is the most frequent trigger of mock impoliteness in the data. It is worth noting that in Culpeper (2011:156), form-driven is considered to be triggers of implicational impoliteness, which "overlap[s] with various phenomena to which everyday terms such as 'insinuation', 'innuendo', 'casting aspersions', 'digs', 'snide comments/remarks' and so on refer". He also points out that "prosody and other intensifying techniques are used to ensure that we are guided to the 'impolite' interpretation" (Culpeper, 2011:157). Form-driven was not in Culpeper et al.'s (2017) model of mixed messages in accounting for mock (im)politeness either, as it does not fit the definition of a mixed message. It is only in section 5.5 (modification of the theoretical framework) that form-driven was incorporated to account for mock

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<sup>23</sup> The rating scale is from 1 to 10.

<sup>24</sup> See 6.4 for the analysis of the multimodality in this excerpt.

impoliteness. Thus, what makes the potential impoliteness triggered in a form-driven way be interpreted as mock impoliteness? Take [6.3.1] as an example, there could be three factors: i) exaggerating techniques (e.g., eye rolling and exaggerated facial expression in Figure 6.4 below) are used to ensure that we are guided to the interpretation of mock impoliteness (see 6.4); ii) reactions of audiences and other participants also set a humorous tone, which dynamically contributes to the co-construction of mock impoliteness speech acts (see 6.7); iii) the context of *Roast!* (including i and ii) sanctions or neutralizes the potential impolite message (which may be interpreted so in other contexts), which is interpreted as mock impoliteness rather than impoliteness. Culpeper (2011:218) points out that neutralization, where the context compete with the salience of the impoliteness signal is exactly what happens in ritualized banter. This also applies to the context of the show *Roast!* where many factors, such as flouting Grice's maxims, multimodal cues, participants dynamics, etc. all compete with the potential impolite message and neutralize it. Perhaps in another context where utterances in example [6.3.1] would be interpreted as impolite, but in example [6.3.1], the roastee Yuelun Wang's reaction does not seem that he had taken any offence<sup>25</sup>.



<sup>25</sup>As discussed in section 3.4, laughter does not always have the same meaning, but in the literature laughter is commonly considered as a signal for mock impoliteness.

Figure 6. 4 Zhang’s facial expression during the lang pause after line 3 in [6.3.1]

***Context-driven unmarked mock impoliteness***

The excerpt [6.3.2] below is an example of Context-driven unmarked mock impoliteness involving Relational face.

[6.3.2] Roaster Yuelun Wang comments on a film, in which the roastee Yuqi Zhang played a couple with another actor Liang Zhang. He had previously stated that the film was a failure.

- 1 王岳伦: 张亮大家对他的感觉啊  
**Wang Yuelun:** Zhang Liang Dajia Dui Ta De Ganjue A  
**Yuelun Wang:** Liang Zhang everyone to him AUX feeling PRT  
**Yuelun Wang:** People’s feeling towards Liang Zhang
- 2 就是那个居家好男人  
Jiu Shi Nage Jujia Hao Nanren  
Just is that family good man  
Is that he is a good family man
- 3 观众看的时候就肯定会跳戏  
Guanzhong Kan De Shihou Jiu Kending Hui Tiao Xi  
Audience watch AUX time would definitely would Jump Scene  
When audiences watch it, they wouldn’t be convinced (that they are a couple)
- 4 觉得张雨绮完全不会爱上他  
Juede Zhang Yuqi Wanquan Bu Hui Ai Shang Ta  
Think Yuqi Zhang completely NEG would love upon him  
(they) won’t believe that Yuqi Zhang would ever fall in love with him
- 5 因为张雨绮  
Yinwei Zhang Yuqi  
Because Yuqi Zhang  
Because Yuqi Zhang
- 6 就不大可能爱上好男人嘛  
Jiu Bu Da Keneng Ai Shang Hao Nanren Ma  
Just NEG big Possible love upon good man PRT  
Is just not likely to fall in love with good men PRT
- 7 [@]
- 8 观众: [@]  
**Audience:** [@]
- 9 张雨绮: [@]  
**Yuqi Zhang:** [@]

As a famous actress, Yuqi Zhang’s personal life was put under the spotlight. Her ex-husband was charged with hiring prostitutes, and her husband then (ex-husband now) had unflattering rumors when this episode of *Roast!* was filmed. The roaster Yuelun Wang ridicules Yuqi Zhang for having a bad taste in men despite that she had no part

in her (ex-)partners' actions<sup>26</sup>, and line 5 and 6 are targeting her relational face. The behaviour in line 5 and 6 is unmarked and unconventionalised, as no marked behaviour (either in the surface form or semantic content) nor conventionalized (im)politeness formula was involved. In other words, the potential impolite message is expressed through a bald-on record behaviour, which can be interpreted as direct impoliteness. However, the context of the show *Roast!* neutralizes the potential impolite message, leading to interpretations of mock impoliteness. Of course, one could argue that Yuqi Zhang's laughter may not be genuine, that she could be offended by such remark but has to pretend that she was not due to the fact that she agreed to do this show. This may be true, but the reality is that it is very difficult (if not impossible) to verify how Yuqi Zhang really felt at that specific moment. In the context of the show *Roast!*, a mock impoliteness speech event has many participant roles, roaster, roastee, other guests, live audiences and online audiences. Although line 5 and 6 are targeting Yuqi Zhang, other third-party participants' reactions—laughter, applause, and cheers all potentially form a pressure on the roastee to laugh along, which contributes to the co-construction of mock impoliteness. In Culpeper (2005:57), in the context of a quiz show *The Weakest Link*, a contestant also responds to an impolite message by laughing off the attack even though that he might have taken offence. The similarity between *Roast!* and *The Weakest Link* is the activity type of a game/quiz show, which helps to determine how what one says will be interpreted (Levison 1992). In *Roast!*, as each roastee already had the expectation of being the target of potential impolite message, they might feel the pressure to laugh along even though they might be really offended.

Regarding Relational face, Spencer-Oatey uses “relational” to refer to “the relationship between the participants, and the ways in which this relationship is managed or negotiated” (2007: 647). In *Roast!*, relationships being attacked are the ones between teacher and student, (potential) romantic partners, family members, colleagues and friends. Excerpt [6.3.2] is a good example of the roastee's relational face with her (ex) partners under attack by the potential impolite message in the mock impoliteness speech act. It seems that to the roaster, the audience, and maybe even the roastee herself, although the roastee did not take part in her (ex-)partners illegal or immoral actions, it was her who chose to be with them and thus she is at “fault” to a certain extent. It is

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<sup>26</sup> In the author's view, Yuelun Wang's behaviour is obviously sexist. However, in the cultural context of *Roast!*, this behaviour is interpreted as mock impoliteness rather genuine impoliteness.

important to note that this type of victim blaming might not be interpreted as mock impoliteness, but genuine impoliteness in other contexts or culture.

In *Roast!*, Relational face is the second most frequent type of (possible) offence. This finding is partially consistent with Culpeper's (2011:44) findings that in the 5 cultures (Chinese, English, Finnish, German and Turkish), regarding Relational face, Chinese data shows the highest frequency. However, compared with other types of offence in all 5 cultures, Relational face has the lowest frequency, which drastically contrasts with the findings in Figure 6.3. This contrast is consistent with the particular salience of Relational face in (mock) impoliteness in Chinese. This result is very interesting, as the counterpart of Relational face (in a first-order sense) in Chinese — “guanxi” (relations) is “heavily based on everyday renqing (favor) and mianzi (individual face) practices” (Ran and Zhao, 2018:185). “Guanxi”, as a relationship network that prescribes rights and obligations, is essential in building rapport in Chinese. Much discussion has shed light on the significance of maintaining “guanxi” in Chinese society (Chiao, 1982; Jacobs, 1979; Standifird and Marshall, 2000; Pan, 2000; Chang and Haugh, 2013). Thus, why would Relational face be involved in *Roast!* with such a high frequency? After all, attacking (even jokingly) someone's relational face is a huge threat to the relational face between the roaster and the roastee. Why would the roasters risk harming their relationships with the roastees? One way to explain this is that they probably “know” that there is little or no consequences. As previously discussed, the context of *Roast!* neutralizes impoliteness, in which even attacking other's relational face would not be considered as genuine impoliteness, hence, no offence would be taken. Furthermore, the purpose of the show is to entertain, thus the higher degree of the potential impolite message is, the more entertaining the show possibly would be. As impoliteness has an entertaining function (Culpeper 2011: 233), mock impoliteness certainly does as well. This can be confirmed by the third-party participants' metapragmatic evaluations in Danmaku data (see 7.3), that impoliteness is the second most significant factor contributing to positive evaluations. In addition, other contextual issues also play roles in the topics of mock impoliteness. As most of the guests are celebrities, their personal relationships are known to the public. Such shared knowledge among every participant provides many choices for topics of *roasting*. It is also worth noting that the main guest chooses other guests to be on the show, and they are often friends and colleagues.



Shared knowledge of each other's personal life (which potentially involves relational face) might be a reasonable repertoire of topics they could draw on to perform *roasting*.

### 6.3.2 Other categories

This section discusses examples of mock impoliteness encompassing less frequent categories in Figure 6.3.

#### *Convention driven-internal verbal formula mismatch*

[6.3.3] Upon finishing her turn of roasting, Chang Shen, a friend and former agent of Yuqi Zhang says:

- 1 沈畅: 今年  
**Shen Chang:** Jin Nian  
**Chang Shen:** This year  
**Chang Shen:** This year
- 2 我最大的愿望  
Wo Zui Dade Yuanwang  
My most big wish  
My biggest wish
- 3 就是跟雨绮再拍一部电影  
Jiushi Gen Yuqi Zai Pai Yi Bu Dianying  
Is with Yuqi again film one QUANT film  
Is making another film with Yuqi
- 4 亲爱的  
Qin'ai De  
Dear  
My dear
- 5 让我再折磨一下呗  
Rang Wo Zai Zhemo Yixia Bei  
Let me again torture one time PRT  
Let me torture you again
- 6 张雨绮: 我爱你  
**Zhang Yuqi:** Wo Ai Ni  
**Yuqi Zhang:** I love you  
**Yuqi Zhang:** I love you
- 7 沈畅: 我也爱你  
**Shen Chang:** Wo Ye Ai Ni  
**Chang Shen:** I too love you  
**Chang Shen:** I love you too

In Excerpt [6.3.3], the behaviour projected by a conventionalized politeness formula “my dear” in line 4, mismatches the potential impolite message of torturing Yuqi in line 5, which involves equity rights by imposing on her. Line 5 is in the form of an

imperative sentence in Chinese, which can be considered as a mock impoliteness formula according to the previous discussion in section 6.2.2. Note that in the previous corpus data of imperatives in section 6.2.2, the form “让我” (Rang Wo, let/allow me) can be used to express politeness. In English, “let me” is a hortative and a formula of politeness. In Chinese, according to the corpus data in 6.2, “让我/给我” (let me) seems to be more conventionally (5 out of 9) associated with politeness than impoliteness. Although imperatives are considered as mock impoliteness formulae in general in *Roast!*, the form “让我” (Rang Wo, let/allow me) could still encode polite message which contrasts with “折磨” (Zhemo, torture). Theoretically, a conventionalized impoliteness formula can mismatch some polite behaviour, leading to an understanding of mock (im)politeness (vice versa). Similarly, a conventionalized mock impoliteness formula can also mismatch with polite or impolite behaviours, such as line 4 and 5 in example [6.3.3] (“*dear let me torture you again*”). My assumption is that when conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae mismatches with polite message, the interpretation would be directed towards mock impoliteness or even politeness as the polite messages may outweigh impolite messages. However, when it mismatches with impolite message, the interpretation is likely to be directed towards mock politeness or even impoliteness, as the impolite messages may outweigh the polite messages. Judging from the roastee’s reaction in line 6, it seems that the interpretation has taken the former possibility.

### ***Convention driven-internal multimodal mismatch***

[6.3.4] When introducing a beloved guest Chizi, the host Yunjin Cao says:

- 1 曹云金: 好多观众喜欢池子我也不明白为什么  
**Cao Yunjin:** Hao Duo Guanzhong Xihuan Chizi Wo Ye Bu Mingbai Wei Shenme  
**Yunjin Cao:** Very many audiences like Chizi I also NEG understand for what  
**Yunjin Cao:** Many audiences like Chizi, which I don’t understand
- 2 观众: [@]  
**Audiences:** [@]
- 3 曹云金: 这种猥琐男的形象看来是深入人心啊  
**Cao Yunjin:** Zhe Zhong Weisuo Nan de Xingxiang Kanlai Shi Shen Ru Ren Xin A  
**Yunjin Cao:** This type obscene man ADJ image looks is deep in people’s heart PRT  
**Yunjin Cao:** It seems that this image of an obscene man has gone deep into people’s mind
- 4 观众: [@]  
**Audiences:** [@]

The combination of a derogatory adjective and “男 nan” (man) is a conventionalized impoliteness formula. Examples of the same constructions can be found in corpus <sup>27</sup>, such as “渣男 Zha Nan” (scum bag man, 1325 concordances), “家暴男 Jiabao Nan” (male domestic abuser, 84 concordances), “妈宝男 Mabao Nan” (a man that listens to everything his mom says, 308 concordances), which all have negative connotations. In the same corpus, “猥琐男 weisuo nan” (obscene man) is used 12 times to describe offenders of sexual harassment, thus it is clearly a conventionalized impoliteness formula. However, the roaster was smiling while uttering line 3, which mismatches the impolite message, thus the multimodal behavior contributes to an interpretation of mock impoliteness. In the next section on multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness, this example will be revisited. Regarding rapport management, it is the roastee’s quality face that is under potential attack as the conventionalized impoliteness formula is about the roastee’s appearance.

### *Convention-driven external mismatch*

[6.3.5] In Chizi’s turn of roasting, he mentions Shaogang Zhang, who is the long-term host of the show, but was not available for the filming of this episode.

1 池子：我觉得就是张绍刚老师虽然已经不在

**Chizi:** Wo Juede Jiushi Zhang Shaogang Laoshi Suiran Yijing Buzai Le

**Chizi:** I think is Shaogang Zhang teacher although already not here PRT

**Chizi:** I think that although teacher Shaogang Zhang is not here anymore

2 观众：[@]

**Audience:** [@]

3 池子：就是..也不是..也不是不在

**Chizi:** Jiushi..Ye Bushi..Ye Bushi Buzai

**Chizi:** is..also not..also not not here

**Chizi:** well..it’s not...not that he’s no longer here

4 观众：[@]

**Audience:** [@]

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<sup>27</sup> The corpus used here is *Chinese Web 2017(zhTenTen17) simplified (13,531,331,169 words)* in Sketch Engine: [https://app.sketchengine.eu/#dashboard?corpname=preloaded%2Fzhtenten17\\_simplified\\_stf2](https://app.sketchengine.eu/#dashboard?corpname=preloaded%2Fzhtenten17_simplified_stf2)

- 5 池子：就是走了嘛..就是  
**Chizi:** Jiushi Zou Le Ma..Jiushi  
**Chizi:** just is go PAST PRT..is  
**Chizi:** it's just that he's gone..just
- 6 观众：[@]  
**Audience:** [@]
- 7 池子：但是我觉得他永远活在我们心里  
**Chizi:** Danshi Wo Juede Ta Yongyuan Huo Zai Women Xin Li  
**Chizi:** But I think he forever live in our heart inside  
**Chizi:** But I think he will live in our hearts forever
- 8 观众：[@]  
**Audience:** [@]

The expressions in line 1, 5 and 7 are conventionalized forms used in eulogy in Chinese, which is a euphemistic way of expressing someone's death. Blatantly saying someone died or passed away in Chinese can be seen as very rude or even a taboo. The context projected by this behaviour mismatches the context of use in *Roast!*, thus it is a convention-driven external mismatch. The fact that the audiences burst into laughter after every turn demonstrates that this mismatch is obvious. Obviously, the roastee is not deceased, but using such conventionalized forms potentially attacks his association rights by excluding him from the living.

### ***Co-text driven mismatch***

[6.3.6] The host Yunjin Cao mentions that Xiaolu Li is a member of "Teddy sisters", which is a group of female celebrities who all have teddy bear dogs and often get together as a social group.

- 1 曹云金：泰迪姐妹团的成员  
**Cao Yunjin:** Taidi Jiemei Tuan de Chengyuan  
**Yunjin Cao:** Teddy sisters group ADJ member  
**Yunjin Cao:** (Xiaolu Li) is a member of "Teddy sisters"
- 2 这个团的成员女星是众多  
 Zhege Tuan de Chengyuan Nü Xing Zhongduo  
 This group 's member female star many  
 There are a lot of female celebrities in this group

- 3           而且我觉得这个团的组建是非常有必要的  
Erqie Wo Juede Zhege Tuan de Zujian Shi Feichang You Biyao de  
And I think this group 's foundation is very have necessity AUX  
And I think founding this group is very necessary
- 4           它毕竟整容它团购比较便宜  
Ta Bijing Ta Zhengrong Ta Tuangou Bijiao Pianyi  
It afterall it plastic surgery it group buying more cheap  
Afterall it is cheaper to get plastic surgeries with group buying
- 5 某人: [@]  
Someone: [@]

Co-text driven mismatch is a new category added to the model of mixed messages (see section 5.5) to capture examples such as [6.3.6], where there is a mismatch between a polite message and an impolite message without any conventionalized (im)politeness formulae involved. Line 3 projects a polite message, while line 4 projects an impolite message that members of this group often get plastic surgeries together. In the data, there are 23 examples of co-text driven mismatch, which proves the necessity of the modification of the theoretical framework. The lack of using conventionalized formulae points to an issue of creativity, as “very few behaviours can be described as neither marked nor conventionalized” (Culpeper, 2011: 180), which is a feature of the mock impoliteness speech acts in *Roast!*. Culpeper (2011: 239) also points out that creativity is an important feature of entertaining impoliteness. Since roasting is like dancing a fine line between politeness and impoliteness, comedians have to be careful and creative with the linguistic devices they choose. The humorous effects would be reduced if the show was too polite, and the audiences probably would not accept it if it was too impolite, which happened to the first episode of *Roast!* — it was taken down and remade!

As it is the roastee’s identity of being a member of this group under attack, Social identity face is involved. Of course, saying that someone needs plastic surgery would also involve quality face, but for example [6.3.6], the social identity face of being a member of “Teddy sisters” seems to be more prominent than Quality face. This raises the issue of the fuzzy boundaries between categories, which is a common issue in applying qualitative categories to quantitative research.

### ***Context-driven absence of behaviour***

[6.3.7] The roaster Zhengyu Lu, is roasting Yuqi Zhang, who is one of the actresses who have played the leading character in Steven Chow's films, thus having a title of "xingnvlang" (lady in Chow's films)

1 卢正雨：对于星女郎呢我真的是如数家珍

**Lu Zhengyu:** Duiyu Xing NvLang Ne Wo Zhende Shi Ru Shu Jia Zhen

**Zhengyu Lu:** As for Xing ladys PRT I really is like counting family treasures

**Zhengyu Lu:** I can name all the "xingnvlang"

2 其中我最喜欢的就是张小姐

Qi Zhong Wo Zui Xihuan De Jiushi Zhang Xiaojie

Which among I most like AUX is Zhang Miss

Among which my favorite one is Miss Zhang

3 所以我今天想借这个机会呢来一个真情告白

Suoyi Wo Jintian Xiang Jie Zhege Jihui Ne Lai Yige Zhen Qing Gaobai

So I today want borrow this opportunity PRT come one real feeling  
coffession

So I really want to express my feeling with this opportunity

4 张敏我真的很喜欢你

Zhang Min Wo Zhende Hen Xihuan Ni

Min Zhang I really very like you

Min Zhang I really like you

5 观众：[@]

**Audience:** [@]

6 卢正雨：好拉开个玩笑啦来个认真的

**Lu Zhengyu:** Hao La kai Ge Wanxiao La Lai Ge Renzhen de

**Zhengyu Lu:** Okay PRT open one Joke PRT here comes one real ADJ

**Zhengyu Lu:** Okay I was just kidding and I'll be serious now

7 其实我说的是另外一位张小姐

QiShi Wo Shuode Shi Lingwai Yi Wei Zhang Xiaojie

Actually I talked is another one QUANT Zhang Miss

Actually I'm talking about another Miss Zhang

8 张柏芝我真的很喜欢你

Zhang Bozhi Wo Zhende Hen Xihuan Ni

Cecelia Cheung I really very like you

Cecelia Cheung I really like you

9 观众：[@]

**Audience:** [@]

10 卢正雨：不开玩笑了来个认真的

**Lu Zhengyu:** Bu Kai Wanxiao Le Lai Ge Ren Zhen de

**Zhengyu Lu:** NEG open one Joke PRT here comes one real ADJ

**Zhengyu Lu:** No more kidding this time. I'm really serious.

- 11            我喜欢的真的是长江七号里面的女主角徐娇我真的喜欢你  
              Wo Xihuan De Zhende Shi Chang Jiang Qihao Limian de Nü Zhujue Xu  
              Jiao Wo Zhen De Xihuan Ni  
              I like ADJ is long river No.7 inside 's female main Character Jiao Xu I  
              really like you  
              The one I really like is the leading actress from "Long river No.7". Jiao Xu  
              I really like you

In this excerpt, the roaster gives the impression in Line 1-3 that his favorite actress is the roastee Yuqi Zhang, however, in the following line 4, 8, 11, this compliment is always missing, which are three examples of absence of behaviour. It is the absence of behaviour that projects the potential impolite message that Yuqi Zhang is actually not the Miss Zhang he was talking about. In addition, he kept turning to Yuqi's direction and kept saying that he was kidding, which continuously guides the understanding to a garden path, and then never gave the expected behaviour. Such absence of behaviour involves Equity rights, in the sense that Yuqi was unfairly dealt with. Compared with Culpeper's (2011:44) findings that sociality rights (equity rights and association rights) are major types of offence in impoliteness events alongside quality face, mock impoliteness events involve low frequency of sociality rights. This contrast is possibly caused by the difference between the data. Culpeper's (2011) study collects diary report from university students, which may involve the attack on sociality rights in daily interactions, however, *Roast!* features publicly mocking/ making fun of each other on the stage, which mainly involves the issue of face rather than sociality rights.

### 6.3.3 Quality face

Quality face is the most frequent target of mock impoliteness in the data, as displayed in Figure 6.3 and illustrated by excerpt [6.3.1] and [6.3.4]. This result is in tune with the previous findings in literature. In Culpeper (2011:45), 500 reports of impoliteness events by students in 5 geographically separated cultures (Chinese, English, Finnish, German and Turkish) were used to study the cross-cultural variation in the types of offence in impoliteness events. The results show that Quality face features the most

important type of offence in all the cultures for both any and primary offence, except the German data for any type of offence and Chinese for primary offence<sup>28</sup>. It is worth noting that in Culpeper's findings, even in the primary offence for Chinese data, quality face is still the second most important type of offence with only one value less than that of association rights. Be it in impoliteness events or mock impoliteness events, Quality face being overwhelmingly important is not surprising in that it deals with the "fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g., our confidence, abilities, appearance etc." (Spencer-Oatey, 2002:540). It also closely matches Goffman's concept of face, which has some connections to the origin of notion of face in Chinese (see also 2.2 and 2.3). In the context of the show *Roast!*, as most guests are celebrities in the show business, one constant theme of roasting is how successful, famous or good looking one is, which obviously points to Quality face.

The above analysis offers a wholistic view of how mock impoliteness is constructed in particular contexts. Rapport management and the modified model of mixed messages are powerful in explaining the potential types of offence and the linguistic/behavioural constructions of mock impoliteness. The data in *Roasts!* shows a dominant pattern of the intersections of Form-driven and Context-driven unmarked behaviour with Quality face and Relational face, while other constructions do not represent typical types of mock impoliteness in *Roast!*.

#### 6.4 Multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness

Brown and Prieto (2017:357) rightly points out that (im)politeness is fundamentally multimodal. Prosody, facial expressions, gestures, body positions, etc. could all play important roles in the negotiation of (im)politeness. It is perhaps even more so for the negotiation of mock impoliteness as mock impoliteness already contains mixed

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<sup>28</sup> The distinction between primary offence and secondary offence types are explained as such "one type of offence can have secondary effects for another. For example, someone who doesn't pay you the attention you expect given the relationship (association rights) may imply also that they have a low value of your opinions (quality face)" (Culpeper 2011:43). In this thesis, I did not differentiate between primary offence and secondary offence as most of the time the type of potential offence involved is quite clear and only a small part of examples might involve more than one type of offence. Therefore, it would be unnecessary to make this distinction, but examples which might involve more than one type of offence will be discussed in 6.6.



messages of something polite and something impolite. Mckinnon and Prieto (2014) assess the role of prosodic and gestural patterns in the interpretation of mock impoliteness in Catalan in comparison to the interpretation of genuine impoliteness, using oral Discourse Completion Tasks. Their findings show that mock impoliteness utterances are prone to be evaluated as genuine impoliteness due to its inherent ambiguity, and that gestures and prosody are crucial for the interpretation of mock impoliteness.

The previous analysis on mock impoliteness speech events in 6.2 and 6.3 have tapped into multimodal cues to a certain degree. In this section, I aim to address the issue of the multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness. In studying multimodal cues in mock impoliteness or (im)politeness in general, one difficulty is to tease out the roles of certain cues from the others among the multimodalities happening at the same time. There is the problem of how each cue interacts with the other cues, as “it is a mistake to assume that non-verbal cues are separable from other aspects of the communication” (Culpeper 2011:151). There is also the possibility that some functions may only come into existence through combinations of certain cues. It is perhaps for such reasons that for a long time<sup>29</sup>, (im)politeness research has mainly focused on verbal (im)politeness, as Culpeper points out: “remarkably, the bulk of research on politeness or impoliteness pays woefully little attention to the role of prosody” (2011:146). Mapson (2014:163) also acknowledges the practical difficulty in studying speech in its multimodal fullness. One solution to this is to study multimodal cues in experimental settings where the researchers could control certain factors to focus on particular cues, such as the works of Brown et al. (2014), Nadeu and Prieto (2011), McKinnon and Prieto (2014), Winter and Grawunder (2011, 2012) among many others. However, spontaneous multimodal cues are equally important in offering insights in what particular cues are salient in the interpretation of mock impoliteness.

In the show *Roast!*, the facial expression of eye-rolling (“白眼” show white eyes), and the multimodal realization of a conventional marker of dismissal (“切” qie, “噤” qi, or “噤” qi) deserve special focus as they are salient in the interpretation of mock

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<sup>29</sup> Fortunately, recent years have seen booming interests in multimodality in (im)politeness. See Brown and Prieto (2017) for reviews and further references.

impoliteness, and will be discussed in section 6.4.1 and 6.4.2. Section 6.4.3 reports a small-scale study of comparing the prosody of the polite message and impolite message within mock impoliteness speech events.

#### 6.4.1 Eye-rolling or “‘白眼’ show the white eyes” in Chinese

The first question to answer in this section is: what is the facial expression of eye-rolling or “‘白眼’ show the white eyes” in Chinese? Figure 6.5 below shows sequential screenshots (left to right and top to bottom) of a roaster Xiaoxiao doing the eye-rolling in 2.3 seconds. The eye rolling in Figure 6.5 was done while Xiaoxiao roasts Yuelun Wang, where he mocks the latter for sitting at an inferior position due to a lack of popularity<sup>30</sup> in the show business.



Figure 6. 5 Movements of the eye-rolling “‘白眼’ show the white eyes” in Chinese

In the Figure 6.5, one can see that the eye-rolling expression is also accompanied by head and body movements. At the starting point, the roaster’s eyes are open. Then his

<sup>30</sup> The excerpt [6.5.1] of this mock impoliteness speech event is transcribed and analysed in section 6.5.

head and body turn to the direction of the target as he closes his eyes. He then opens and rolls his eyes upwards as the head and body turn back to the original direction of facing the camera. Since eye-rolling involves rolling the eyes upwards by which the sclera, or the white part of the eye is shown, it is thus called “‘白眼’ show the white eyes” in Chinese. This gesture of eye-rolling is surprisingly seldomly mentioned in the literature of (im)politeness, except for a passing reference as a multimodal marker of irony and sarcasm in Attardo et al. (2003)<sup>31</sup>. Although this might be intuitively true, empirical evidence is also needed to understand what eye-rolling means.

By searching “白眼” (Bai Yan, white eye) in the Chinese Web 2017 (zhTenTen17) Simplified corpus<sup>32</sup>, 37,719 hits of “白眼” as noun were found. Table 6.3 below shows the top 10 collocations of “白眼”.

Word	English translation	Cooccurrences	Candidates	T-score	MI	LogDice
翻着	turning	193	11, 210	13.89	15.31	8.44
翻了	turned	485	62, 960	22.02	14.15	7.83
翻起	turning	98	9, 068	9.90	14.64	7.64
受尽	endure	130	19, 635	11.40	13.94	7.32
遭人	endure/past tense marker	100	13, 522	10.00	14 . 10	7.32
红眼	red eye	85	10, 620	9.22	14.21	7.30
翻	turn	1, 366	310, 810	36.96	13.34	7.14
翻翻	turn	107	18, 350	10.34	13.75	7.11
冷遇	cold reception (cold shoulder)	60	8, 739	7.75	13.99	6.96
举觞	raise glass	25	210	5.00	18.10	6.83

Table 6. 3 Top 10 collocations of “白眼”(show the white eyes)

<sup>31</sup> Rickford and Rickford (1976:296) study a visual gesture called “cut-eye”, which “communicates hostility, displeasure, disapproval, or a general rejection of the person at whom it is directed in Guayana”. Goodwin and Alim (2010) studies a similar expression but called it “eye roll”, which is associated with working-class black “Ghetto Girls”. However, such visual gestures are different from the Chinese “show the white eye”, both in meaning and the formation of the gesture.

<sup>32</sup> The corpus is accessed via Sketch Engine: [https://app.sketchengine.eu/#dashboard?corpname=preloaded%2Fzhtenten17\\_simplified\\_stf2](https://app.sketchengine.eu/#dashboard?corpname=preloaded%2Fzhtenten17_simplified_stf2) This is a Chinese web corpus with 13,531,331,169 words.

5 out of 10 collocations in Table 6.3 are the verb or movements of doing the white eye - “翻”, which means turn, flip or roll. This is not surprising as “翻白眼” in Chinese is the phrase for showing the white eye, i.e., eye-rolling. Two collocates, “受尽” and “遭人” (endure) show that someone can be the target or the sufferer of “白眼” (Bai Yan). Interestingly, one collocate - “冷遇” (cold reception) means to give someone the cold shoulder, which is an attitude that can be associated with impoliteness. Among the top 40 collocations, the following collocations are associated with (mock) impoliteness, as showed in Table 6.4 below.

Ranking	Word	English translation	Cooccurrences	Candidates	T-score	MI	LogDice
11	白眼	white eye/eye-rolling	153	38, 429	12.37	13.20	6.79
14	冷嘲热讽	ridicule	44	11, 845	6.63	13.10	6.26
15	没好气	not good toned	52	18, 754	7.21	12.68	6.05
18	奚落	taunt	26	8, 073	5.10	12.90	5.82
19	闭门羹	refusal	21	6, 203	4.58	12.97	5.70
20	鄙夷	despise	40	18, 628	6.32	12.31	5.68
24	嘲讽	ridicule	89	63, 781	9.43	11.69	5.36
25	冷语	cold words	10	1, 040	3.16	14.47	5.35
26	冷脸	cold face	10	1, 101	3.16	14.39	5.34
27	讥讽	ridicule	35	21, 917	5.91	11.88	5.31
29	冷嘲	(cold) ridicule	9	1, 080	3.00	15.12	5.28
30	欺辱	bully and humiliate	14	5, 739	3.74	12.50	5.17
31	唾弃	spurn	23	14, 221	4.79	11.90	5.15
32	嗔道	angrily said (mildly complain)	10	2,378	3.16	13.28	5.13
34	冷落	treat someone coldly	50	41, 152	7.07	11.49	5.09
35	嘲笑	making fun of	95	86, 650	9.74	11.34	5.05
37	谩骂	fling abuse	31	28, 058	5.57	11.35	4.86
39	冷言冷语	cold words	8	2, 490	2.83	12.89	4.79

Table 6. 4 Collocates of “白眼”(show the white eye) that associate with (mock) impoliteness

The 18 collocates in Table 6.4 either express negative emotions associated with impoliteness such as anger (see Culpeper 2011:63-65) or are first-order terms of (mock)impoliteness (see 3.1). Consequently, eye-rolling or “白眼” (show the white eye) is conventionalized in contexts of impoliteness or mock impoliteness, as it is not always possible to tell how it was interpreted by the target in limited contexts in the corpus. In mock impoliteness speech events, the eye-rolling facial expression can help signal negative attitudes, and thus exacerbate the impolite message. For example, in the excerpt [6.5.1] where Xiaoxiao did the eye-rolling as showed in Figure 6.5 above, the eye-rolling accompanied his utterance “*Aren't you ashamed of having the same degree of popularity as a product manager when you're the one who works in the show business?*”. This rhetorical question in the context of *Roast!* can be considered as a conventionalized mock impoliteness formula (see 6.2), which was used here to challenge the target's quality face. The product manager's quality face is also challenged as his position was mocked as inferior. The potential impolite message here is that – *you're supposed to be more famous than a product manager considering you work in the show business*. The eye-rolling expression, accompanied by the head-turning, could signal contempt and disaffiliation, thus exacerbating the potential impolite message. The roastee nodded and laughed instantly after Xiaoxiao's eye rolling, and the audience also laughed loudly, which all point to interpretations of mock impoliteness rather than impoliteness. How might an exacerbated impolite message lead to understandings of mock impoliteness? What happened here fits “say something obviously untrue” and “say something obviously impolite to *h*” and in Leech's (1983:144) Banter Principle, which gives rise to an interpretation that “what *s* really means is polite to *h* and true”, thus the speech act was interpreted as mock impoliteness rather than impoliteness. In this case, the role of the eye-rolling might be making something impolite “obviously impolite”. The laughter might have come from the shock of how obviously the message is impolite and untrue, which also contributes to the construction of mock impoliteness.

#### 6.4.2 The multimodal realization of a conventional marker of dismissal (“切” qie, “噫” qi, or “呲” qi)

This conventional marker of dismissal in Chinese, commonly represented orthographically as “切” qie, “噉” qi, or “啐” qi, can be most closely transcribed as /tɕʰi:/ or /tɕʰie:/ in IPA. It is often used as an interjection to express a dismissive attitude, disapproval, scorn, or contempt. Its closest equivalent in English is perhaps an exclamation “pfft” /(p)ft/, which is used to express a contemptuous or dismissive attitude according to Oxford Languages<sup>33</sup>.

The earliest documentation<sup>34</sup> of “啐” qi is perhaps in *Shuowen Jiezi* (*discussing writing and explaining characters*), an ancient Chinese dictionary from the Han dynasty (25AD-220AD). The character “啐” is polyphonic and polysemous, but it means dismissive or to reprimand when pronounced as “qi”. The most inclusive available Chinese dictionary, the *Hanyu Da Cidian* records its use as an exclamation in Shi Nai’an’s novel - *Water Margin*<sup>35</sup> in 14<sup>th</sup> Century, as quoted below:

李逵道：“啐！原来是梦，却也快当！”

Likui said: “Qi! Turned out it was a dream, but it was quick!”

(The nighty third Chapter of *Water Margin* by Shi Nai’an)

“切” qie or “噉” qi are alternative representation of “啐” qi in modern Chinese. In the Chinese Web 2017 (zhTenTen17) Simplified corpus of 13.5 billion characters, search query “噉” generates 1222 hits, “啐!”146 hits, and “切！” 2605 hits. In the BLCU Chinese Corpus (BCC)<sup>36</sup> of 15 billion characters, “噉” generates 780 hits, “啐!”287 hits, and “切！” 1150 hits. The exclamation marks are used to exclude other meanings as much as possible, as “啐” and “切” are both polysemous. Such results suggest that the form “切” is the most used form in modern Chinese, therefore the following analysis will focus on this character in particular.

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<sup>33</sup> The search query “pfft” in the corpus of English Web 2020 (enTenTen20) on Sketch Engine generated 5587 hits, the majority of which express dismissive attitudes, which confirms its resemblance to the Chinese “qie” or “qi”. It is worth noting that the mention of “pfft” as an equivalent of “qie” or “qi” aids the understanding of the meaning of “qie” or “qi” in Chinese, rather than signaling an attempt of a comparative study, which although fascinating, is not the purpose of this section.

<sup>34</sup> This source is credited to the author Gu Shui of an answer on Zhihu: <https://www.zhihu.com/question/41228147>

<sup>35</sup> This novel has also been translated to *Outlaws of the Marsh*, *All Men Are Brothers*, *Men of the Marshes*, and *The Marshes of Mount Liang*. It is one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature.

<sup>36</sup> <http://bcc.blcu.edu.cn>

Below is the top 10 collocations of “切 !” qie in the Chinese Web 2017 (zhTenTen17) Simplified corpus.

Word	English translation/explanation	Cooccurrences	Candidates	T-score	MI	LogDice
切切切	chop chop chop	6	187	2.45	17.64	6.14
海带咋	seaweed how	5	6	2.24	22.34	5.97
隐便	error tags	5	20	2.24	20.60	5.96
心细艾	undecipherable character strings	5	101	2.24	18.27	5.92
士杰	name	4	9	2.00	21.43	5.65
垫刀曦	name	4	43	2.00	19.18	5.63
不屑	disdain	93	75741	9.64	12.93	5.28
撇嘴	curl one's lip	28	21841	5.29	13.00	5.23
芦磊	name	3	781	1.73	14.58	4.86
不屑道	disdainfully said	4	2315	2.00	13.43	4.74

Table 6. 5 Top 10 collocations of “切 !” qie

As can be seen from the Table 6.5, even when searched with an exclamation mark, the top two collocations (ranked by LogDice) show cases where “切” is used to mean chopping something with a knife (checked in their concordances), rather than the interjection use to express disdain. Except for the error tags and undecipherable character strings, the rest of the collocations indicate the names of people who uttered “切 !” qie, the attitude of distain, and a description of one’s facial expression that accompanies “切 !” qie. Interestingly, it is the collocations “disdain” and “curl one’s lip” that have the most frequent cooccurrences despite ranking rather low by LogDice. This is because that the uses of “切 !” usually follow such a word order: “*切!*” *someone (a name) disdainfully said*. As LogDice score represents the most typical collocates rather than the most frequent ones, although “disdain” occurs more frequently, it ranks lower than the names of people who uttered “qie”.

In the list of top 40 collocates of “切 !” qie, Table 6.6 shows the collocates that indicate behaviours or attitudes associated with “切 !” qie.

Ranking	Word	English translation	Cooccurrences	Candidates	T-score	MI	LogDice
12	撇撇嘴	curl one's lip	4	2967	2.00	13.07	4.56

15	嗤之以鼻	turn up one's nose at	11	15567	3.32	12.14	4.31
19	轻哼	lightly humph	5	6139	2.24	12.34	4.23
23	嗤笑	laugh at with contempt	6	11255	2.45	11.73	3.83
25	翻白眼	show the white eyes/roll one's eyes	5	9137	2.24	11.77	3.80
26	撇	curl (one's lip)	5	10186	2.24	11.77	3.80
27	不屑一顾	beneath attention	9	20469	3.00	11.45	3.68
28	满不在乎	do not mind at all	4	7878	2.00	11.66	3.64
31	鄙视	look down upon	18	51942	4.24	11.11	3.43
34	哼了	humph (past tense)	8	25040	2.83	10.99	3.25
36	嘘声	boo	3	8854	1.73	11.08	3.10
37	揶揄	ridicule	3	8908	1.73	11.07	3.09
39	不服气	unwilling to submit	4	14208	2.00	10.81	2.96

Table 6. 6 The collocates indicating behaviors or attitudes that are associated with “切!” qie

Some collocates in Table 6.6 describe the facial expressions of the speakers when they utter “切!” qie, such as curling one’s lip and rolling one’s eyes; some are metalinguistic terms for describing the use of “切!” qie, such as “lightly humph” or “humph”; “boo” and “unwilling to submit” are the hearer’s reactions towards “切!” qie while “切!” can be reactions to “ridicule”, and the rest are synonyms of disdain<sup>37</sup>. All of these collocates indicate that “切!” qie is a conventional marker of disdainful attitude and it is often used in contexts of impoliteness.

In the show *Roast!*, “切” (qie) is also used accompanied by “白眼”(show the white eyes), as demonstrated in the excerpt [6.4.1] below.

<sup>37</sup> All uses are checked in their contexts in the Chinese Web 2017 (zhTenTen17) Simplified corpus.



[6.4.1] The host, Shaogang Zhang introduces the next roaster Dian Zhao, who is the product manager of the sponsor of the show.

- 1 张绍刚：下面有人要上场了  
Zhang Shaogang: Xiamian You Ren Yao Shang Chang Le  
Shaogang Zhang: next have person on stage PRT  
Shaogang Zhang: someone is coming onto the stage next
  
- 2 大家看一下我这表情  
Dajia Kan Yi Xia Wo Zhe Biaoqing  
Everyone look one time my this facial expression  
Everyone have a look at my facial expression



- 3 观众：产品经理。。。产品经理！  
Guan Zhong: Chanpin Jingli...Chanpinjingli!  
Audiences: The product manager...the product manager!  
Audiences: The product manager...the product manager!
  
- 4 张绍刚：你们猜对了，嗯  
Zhang Shaogang: Nimen Cai Dui Le, en  
Shaogang Zhang: you guessed right PRT, yep  
Shaogang Zhang: your guess is correct
  
- 5 观众：[@]  
Audiences: [@]
  
- 6 张绍刚：都不想介绍

Zhang Shaogang: Dou Bu Xiang Jieshao  
Shaogang Zhang: Even not want introduce  
Shaogang Zhang: I don't even want to introduce him

7 也不知道怎么介绍啊  
Ye Bu Zhidao Zenme Jieshao A  
Also not know how introduce PRT  
And I don't know how to introduce him either

8 vivo 的产品经理 切  
Vivo De Chanpin Jingji Qie  
Vivo's product manager Qie  
Vivo's product manager Qie



9 观众: [@]  
Audiences: [@]

In excerpt [6.4.1], after line 2, the roaster explicitly drew the attention to his facial expression, which demonstrates his dismissive attitude towards the target, the product manager. As he utters the dismissive “qie” in line 8, he also rolled his eyes and turned his head away from the target’s position. There also seems to be a sneer on his face at the same time, which could point to scorn and contempt (Kehl, 2000:382). Such visual cues can exacerbate the roaster’s potential impolite message that the roastee (the product manager) is not worth introducing, which challenges the roastee’s equality rights and association rights.

The camera did not give a close-up scene of the target Dian Zhao’s reaction immediately after “qie”, but later Dian Zhao went up on the stage to perform with a seemingly genuine smile. Of course, this might not be convincing enough, as one could

take the offence but still appear otherwise (see 6.3.1 for discussions on a similar case). The audiences certainly were amused by the speech act of “qie”, as indicated by their laughter. Of course, they might laugh because they were not the recipient of “qie”, and they could easily laugh at the product manager’s expense, which fits the entertaining function of impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011). However, as has been discussed in 6.3, mock impoliteness is co-constructed by many parties in the context of *Roast!*, of which the audiences’ reactions play an important role. Given the context of the game show, the roastee could feel the pressure to laugh along. Thus, this speech act is most likely to be interpreted as mock impoliteness, rather than genuine impoliteness. The visual cues (eye-rolling, sneering, and head turning) might make the potential impolite lexical meaning “obviously impolite”. In addition, such exacerbation may also signal something “obviously untrue”, especially in a game show where it is unlikely that the host truly despises the target. Thus, the interpretation of what the host said is “something polite and true”, which fits Leech’s (1983:144) Banter Principle.

In addition to the visual cues, the following analysis of its prosody (Figure 6.6) also shows that “qie” is realized with a salient pitch contour and intensity comparing to the previous words in the same line.

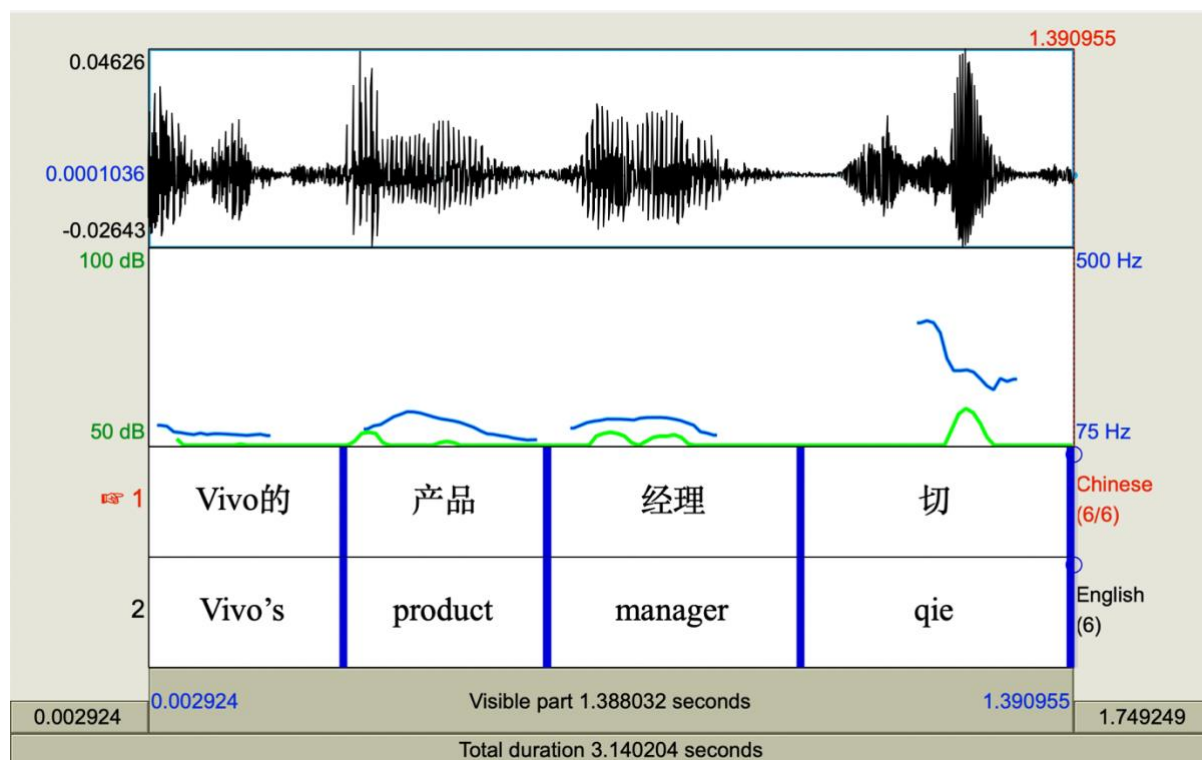


Figure 6. 6 An instrumental analysis of “qie” in excerpt [6.4.1]

Figure 6.6 shows the instrumental analysis of line 8 in excerpt [6.4.1]. It is visually obvious that in line 8, “qie” was uttered with a higher pitch (blue line) and more intensity (green line) than the preceding characters. “Qie” starts with a high pitch than a rapid fall, thus the pitch range of “qie” is wider (193.6Hz to 344.1Hz) than the previous characters. Moreover, the minimum pitch is still much higher than the maximum pitch (150.2Hz) of the previous characters (occurring during the utterance of “product”). In the literature, there seems to be a universal association between high pitch and politeness, as exemplified through Ohala’s (1984, 1994) Frequency Code Hypothesis, and Brown & Levison’s (1974) claim that high pitch may implicate deference. Such association has been confirmed by studies on Dutch and English (Chen et al., 2004), Japanese (Ohara, 2001; Ofuka et al., 2000), Mexican Spanish (Orozco, 2008, 2010) and Catalan (Devís and Cantero, 2014). However, some studies have showed the opposite evidence that low pitch correlates with politeness in Korean (Winter and Grawunder, 2011, 2012; Brown et al., 2014). Idemaru et al. (2020) showed that while some listeners associate high pitch with deferential meaning, others associate low pitch with deferential meaning in Korean. Stadler (2007) also found that high pitch was used to express aggression in German and New Zealand English (see Brown and Prieto 2017 for more references). Thus, the association between high pitch and politeness may not necessarily be universal. Due to the lack of studies on how pitch correlates with (im)politeness meaning in Chinese, it is yet not sure whether the high pitch of “qie” in Figure 6.6 exacerbates or counteracts (to an extent) the negative lexical meaning of the utterance.

In terms of loudness, the maximum intensity (59.4dB) also occurred during the realization of “qie”, while the mean intensity of this line is 48.8dB. Idemaru et al. (2020) found that lower intensity is more likely associated with deferential meaning in Korean. This finding is consistent with Winter and Grawunder (2012) but is the opposite of Brown et al. (2014). As pointed out by Idemaru et al. (2020), intensity has received relatively little attention in phonetic studies of social meaning to date, especially in politeness research. Thus, whether the high intensity of “qie” exacerbates the negative lexical meaning is not known either.

In Murray and Arnott (1993), they found that disgust (hatred, contempt, scorn) has the following acoustic cues: “very slow speech rate, much lower pitch average, slightly wider pitch range, quieter, grumbled, chest tone, wide falling terminal contours, normal articulation” (1993: 1104-1106). The emotion of disgust is obviously relevant to impoliteness (Culpeper 2011:149). While previous corpus findings have confirmed that “qie” is a marker for contempt, its realization in excerpt [6.4.1] fits Murray and Arnott’s “slightly wider pitch range” and “wide falling terminal contours” but contradicts “much lower pitch average” and “quieter”. In Culpeper (2005:53), the instrumental analysis of a dismissive use of “goodbye” also shows a fall with a very high starting point in pitch. This might be a feature of dismissive tone in both Chinese and English, but further investigation is needed for generalizations. So far, it seems to be a mixed picture of the interpretation of the high pitch and high intensity of “qie”. What is clear is that the dismissive marker “qie” was uttered with prosodic salience in this line. This prosodic salience resonates with Ofuka et al.’s discussion on the role of “extreme value” – “a single extreme value for any acoustic feature (e.g., very fast speech rate) may reduce perceived politeness, but this will differ listener by listener” (2000:215). Thus, the prosodic salience of “qie” could be “extreme” enough to attract the listeners’ attention in perceiving the utterance as impoliteness or otherwise. The visual cues exacerbating impoliteness and the acoustic cues potentially signaling mixed message could work together, which leads to interpretations of mock impoliteness, rather than genuine impoliteness.

#### 6.4.3 Prosody in mock impoliteness speech acts

This section investigates the prosodic features demonstrated in mock impoliteness speech acts in *Roast!*. It is important to note that this is not an attempt to find the prosodic features of mock impoliteness. It is unlikely that there is a straight-forward mock impoliteness prosody, just as Bryant and Tree’s (2005) study failed to find an “ironic tone of voice”. They conclude that the perception of ironic tone “appears to be a result of the integration of multiple sources of information (including, we believe, non-acoustic)”, and that extensive analysis at acoustic level may be “an exercise in futility” (Bryant and Tree 2005:273). The case studies of eye-rolling and “qie” in above sections have demonstrated that non-acoustic cues also play important roles in mock impoliteness speech events. Thus, rather than finding certain prosodic features

of mock impoliteness, my aim is to investigate the prosodic features of the polite message and impolite message occurring within the same mock impoliteness speech act. The rationale is that mock impoliteness is achieved through mixed messages, that is, “they mix features that point towards a polite interpretation and features that point towards an impolite interpretation” (Culpeper 2011:166).

Section 6.3 has demonstrated many ways in which polite messages mix with impolite messages. Undoubtedly, such messages are not limited to verbal, but could also be visual and/or acoustic. However, the focus here is the acoustic features of polite and impolite *verbal* messages within the same mock impoliteness speech acts, as they i) embody the key features of mock impoliteness (polite message and impolite message), and ii) offer a comparable condition for acoustic features (both messages are verbal). Firstly, 34 mock impoliteness speech acts (16 in S02E08 and 18 in S01E08) are selected, which are all achieved through convention-driven internal verbal formula mismatch. This is to ensure that there are verbal messages of both politeness and impoliteness within one mock impoliteness act. Then, only the speech acts which contain both conventionalized politeness formula and conventionalized impoliteness formula in separate sentences or intonation units are selected. This is to ensure that the impact of other multimodal factors is lowered as much as possible and that the (im)polite verbal messages are separable from each other for acoustic analysis. An example is [6.4.2], where a conventionalized politeness formula “such a beautiful woman” mismatches with a conventionalized impoliteness formula “how disgusting”. In this way, 15 mock impoliteness speech acts (10 in S02E08 and 5 in S01E08) are selected<sup>38</sup>.

[6.4.2] Chang Shen roasts Yuqi’s beauty hack of applying pork lard on her face.

1 沈畅: 你说这么大一个美女

**Shen Chang:** Ni shuo zheme da yige mei nv

**Chang Shen:** you say such big one CLASSIFIER beautiful  
woman

**Chang Shen:** what a beautiful woman

2 天天脸上糊着厚厚的猪油

Tian tian lian shang huzhe hou hou de zhu you

---

<sup>38</sup> See Appendix 2 for the translations of these 15 mock impoliteness speech acts.

Day day face on apply thick thick ADJ pork lard  
 (but she) applies a thick layer of pork lard on her face  
 everyday  
 3 多恶心呐  
 Duo e'xin na  
 How disgusting PRT  
 How disgusting!

Two prosodic features are of particular interest, that is, pitch and intensity. The discussion of pitch and intensity in section 6.4.2 has revealed that previous studies show contrastive evidence in how they correlate with politeness across languages. In addition, the lack of such studies on Chinese poses obstacles for understanding the role prosody plays in mock impoliteness speech events. Thus, an investigation of the pitch and intensity of polite messages and impolite messages in mock impoliteness speech acts could shed light on this issue.

The results of the pitch average and mean intensity of the polite messages and impolite message in the 15 mock impoliteness speech acts are shown in Figure 6.7 below.

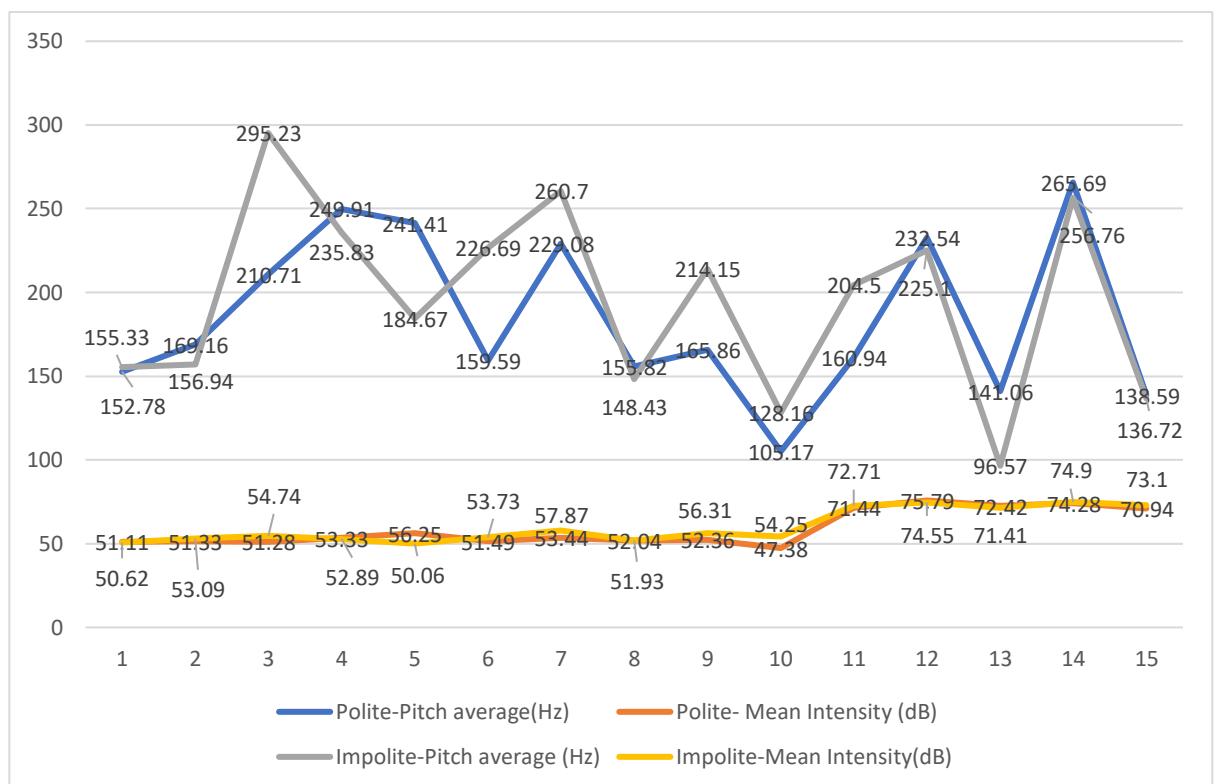


Figure 6. 7 Pitch average and mean intensity of (im)polite messages in 15 mock impoliteness speech acts<sup>39</sup>

In Figure 6.7, in the 15 mock impoliteness speech acts, 46.7% of impolite messages have higher pitch average than polite messages (speech act 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11). Such results contradict previous findings that higher pitch correlates with politeness (Ohala 1984, 1994; Brown and Levison, 1974; Chen et al., 2004; Ohara, 2001; Ofuka et al., 2000; Orozco, 2008, 2010; Devis and Cantero, 2014). However, 46.7% is not a compelling figure to conclude that lower pitch correlates with politeness, such as found in (Winter and Grawunder, 2011, 2012; Brown et al., 2014). As for intensity, 53.3% of impolite messages have higher mean intensity than polite messages (speech act 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14 and 15). However, as can be seen from the Figure 6.4.2, such difference is marginal. As mentioned previously, intensity in relation to (im)politeness has received little scholarly attention so far, and the few exceptions (Winter and Grawunder, 2012; Brown et al., 2014; Idemaru et al., 2020) are production or perception studies on whether higher intensity is associated to deferential meaning in Korean in lab conditions. While deferential meaning is associated with politeness, the polite messages in the selected mock impoliteness speech acts in *Roast!* have little relation to deferential meaning. One example from the report data in Culpeper (2011:149) does link loudness to impoliteness in English, in which the informant reports that “I probably provoked him slightly by raising my voice back”. However, further studies are needed for generalizations. Thus, little can be said about the relationship between intensity and impoliteness in comparison to these studies.

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pitch average of the polite messages and the impolite messages within the same mock impoliteness speech acts. There was not a significant difference in the pitch average of polite messages (M=185.2207, SD=48.5199) and impolite messages (M=195.0520, SD=56.7334);  $t(14) = 0.9671$ ,  $p = 0.3499$ . The same test was also conducted to compare the mean intensity of polite messages and impolite messages. There was not a significant difference in the mean intensity of polite messages (M=58.9920, SD=10.4473) and impolite messages (M=60.1440, SD=9.8748);  $t(14) = 1.4609$ ,  $p = 0.1661$ . Therefore, there is no significant

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<sup>39</sup> The numbers on the horizontal axis represents 15 mock impoliteness speech acts. The first 10 are from S02E08 and the last 5 are from S01E08.



statistical tendency that high or low pitch/intensity is associated with either politeness or impoliteness in *Roast!*, which contradicts previous findings (Ohala 1984, 1994; Brown and Levison, 1974; Chen et al., 2004; Ohara, 2001; Ofuka et al., 2000; Orozco, 2008, 2010; Devis and Cantero, 2014; Winter and Grawunder, 2012; Brown et al., 2014; Idemaru et al., 2020).

There may be several reasons for the contradiction between this study and the previous findings. Firstly, the data in this study is spontaneous in a game show, while most of the previous study on prosody in (im)politeness is elicited data via different formats of DCT under laboratory conditions. This is not to say that one type of data might be better than the other, as it is well known that both types of data have their advantages and drawbacks. Rather, this is simply one reason why the findings might differ. While spontaneous data may be more representative of the natural language use, it is difficult to control the impact of other factors. For example, the speech rate and speech duration could not be controlled in this study, and they might have impact on the pitch average and mean intensity. It is vice versa for the data in laboratory conditions.

Secondly, the contexts of the data in different studies vary. For instance, Winter and Grawunder (2011, 2012) and Brown et al. (2014) study the prosody of deferential speech, which of course, does not represent the many possible contexts of politeness. It is therefore important to question whether lower or higher pitch is associated with politeness in general is a valid hypothesis. This might also be a reason why there is contrastive evidence of the relationship between pitch and (im)politeness.

Thirdly, the differences across languages might also play a role. Since prosodic studies of (im)politeness in Chinese is scarce, further research is much needed to solve the puzzle. Admittedly, the data in this study is also limited for further generalizations. This is because that the cases where conventionalized politeness formula and conventionalized impoliteness formula occur within the same speech act are not very common, as is proved by the fact that only 15 instances were found in 405 mock impoliteness speech acts in two episodes of *Roast!* which features in mixed messages.

Finally, while the intention of this study was to compare the prosodic features of the most typical polite messages and impolite messages in mock impoliteness speech acts,

it is possible that the typicality of (im)polite messages is powerful enough to result in the interpretations of mock impoliteness, thus little effort was made or needed to distinguish such messages on the prosodic level. In addition, this could mean that some functions may only come into existence in combinations of certain things, and prosody alone does not make a statistically significant difference.

To summarize, although there is no statistically significant difference found in the pitch average and mean intensity between polite messages and impolite messages in *Roast!*, two case studies on eye-rolling and a dismissive marker “qie” suggest that facial expressions, body movements, prosodic features could holistically exacerbate the verbal messages, which contribute to the construction of mock impoliteness.

### 6.5 Self-directed Mock Impoliteness

So far, the phenomena of mock impoliteness discussed in this thesis has been other-directed, i.e., the target of mock impoliteness is others, rather than the speaker him/herself. Occasionally, the target of mock impoliteness could also be the speaker him/herself, which is self-directed mock impoliteness. 41 cases of self-directed mock impoliteness were found in S01E08 (26 cases) and S02E08 (15 cases). This section discusses self-directed mock impoliteness and its functions in mock impoliteness speech events.

The term self-directed mock impoliteness is coined to i) emphasize the orientation of mock impoliteness; and ii) distinguish it from other terms for similar phenomena in the literature, such as self-disparaging/self-denigrating/self-deprecating humour, self-mockery, self-directed jocular mockery, self-directed joking or jocular depreciation (Norrick 1993; Crawford 1995; Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Kotthoff, 2000; Suzuki, 2001; Lampert and Ervin-Tripp, 2006; Dynel, 2008; Haugh, 2010; Yu, 2013; Yang and Ren, 2020). Such terms indicate some connection between self-directed (mock) impoliteness and humour. However, self-directed (mock) impoliteness does not necessarily involve humour. One can direct impoliteness at oneself without the intention of humorous effect, such as self-directed reproach (Goffman 1981). One can also direct (mock) impoliteness at oneself with the intention of humorous effect but fail to achieve

it. Therefore, self-directed (mock) impoliteness and humour, although they may be closely related, should be discussed with such distinctions in mind. It is for this reason that the term *self-directed mock impoliteness* is coined for the phenomena to be discussed in this section.

In *Roast!*, self-directed mock impoliteness plays important roles in mock impoliteness speech events. In the example [6.5.1] below, self-directed mock impoliteness mitigates the potential impolite message which aids interpretation of other-directed mock impoliteness.

[6.5.1] The roaster Xiaoxiao points out the link between where one sits and how famous one is, with references to a film director Yuelun Wang, Yuelun Wang's more famous wife, a special guest representing the sponsor of the show (product manager), and himself. Two screen shots of Xiaoxiao and Yuelun wang (in that order) between line 7 and 8 are provided.

1 肖骁: 王岳伦老师

**Xiaoxiao:** Wang Yuelun Laoshi

**Xiaoxiao:** Yuelun Wang teacher

**Xiaoxiao:** Yuelun Wang teacher

2 你知道你老婆来了坐哪儿吗?

Ni Zhidao Ni Laopo Laile Zuo Naer ma?

You know your wife comes sits where PRT?

Do you know where your wife sat when she came (to this show)?

3 坐那儿

Zuo Naer

Sat there

(She) sat there

(pointing to the main guest's seat)

4 王岳伦: 对

**Wang Yuelun:** Yes

**Yuelun Wang:** Yes

**Yuelun Wang:** Yes

(smiles and nods)

5 观众: [@]

**Audience:** [@]

6 肖骁: 你来了只能坐在产品经理旁边儿

**Xiaoxiao:** Ni Lai Le Zhi Neng Zuo Zai Chanpin Jingli Pangbianer

**Xiaoxiao:** you came PRT only can sit on product manager next

**Xiaoxiao:** when you're here you're only sitting next to product manager

7 你一个混娱乐圈儿的跟人家一个知名度你不丢人啊

Ni Yi Ge Hun Yule Quaner de Gen Renjia Yi Ge Zhimingdu Ni Bu Diu Ren

A

You a QUANT mingle show business circle AUX compare him One QUANT

fame

You NEG lose person PRT

Aren't you ashamed of having the same degree of popularity as a product

manager

when you're the one who works in the show business?





8 观众: [@]

Audience: [@]

9 肖骁: 算了, 我还坐第二排呢

Xiaoxiao: Suan Le, Wo Hai Zuo Di Er Pai Ne

Xiaoxiao: Nevermind, I still sit in the second row PRT

Xiaoxiao: Nevermind, I still sit in the second row

10 观众: [@]

Audience: [@]

11 王岳伦: [@]

Yuelun Wang: [@]

(applauses)

In Chinese culture, sitting positions indicate one's status in various settings. In the show *Roast!*, the main guest's seat is a big single seat to the left of the stage, while the minor guests sit in two rows on smaller seats to the right of the stage, which demonstrates the difference in status between the main guest and minor guests. Yuelun Wang's wife, Xiang Li, is more famous than her husband and had been invited as a main guest for *Roast!* in a previous episode. In comparison, Yuelun Wang in this episode sits in the first row of the minor guest area next to the product manager of the sponsor of the show, who is not known to the audience as he does not work in the show business. By comparing Yuelun Wang's, the product manager's and Yuelun Wang's wife's sitting positions, the hierarchy among their status is made explicitly. In the excerpt [6.5.1], other-directed mock impoliteness in line 6 and 7 potentially attacks Yuelun Wang's and

the product manager's quality face. It may even attack Yuelun Wang's relational face if the participants hold the traditional ideology that a husband should be more capable than his wife. Such attacks are realized in a rhetorical question, which is a conventionalized mock impoliteness formula, accompanied by exaggerated facial expressions such as eye rolling. This was well received by the roastee Yuelun Wang and other audience, as indicated by the smile and laughter. Perhaps the roaster (Xiaoxiao) deemed such attacks to be too harsh, he went on with self-directed mock impoliteness in line 9 to mitigate previous attacks especially with the use of “算了, 我还坐第二排呢” (never mind, I still sit in the second row), the implicature is that the roaster admits that he himself is not as famous and does not have the place to judge others' sitting positions. This implicature is triggered by flouting triggered by Grice's maxim of relation, since he was the roaster and did not have to bring himself into this, but he did, thus he must be talking about something relevant, that is, the relation between his popularity and his position. The roastee Yuelun Wang reacted to this move with laughter and applause. Yu (2013) discusses that speakers use self-mockery to save the face of their recipients, by exposing their own weaknesses in comparison with those of their recipients. Although the context of excerpt [6.5.1] is different from the everyday conversations in Yu (2013) as the roasters deliberately attack the roastees first, self-directed mock impoliteness still saves the roastees' face to a certain degree and contributes to understandings of mock impoliteness.

Self-directed mock impoliteness could also boost the potential impoliteness of the message in other-directed mock impoliteness speech events. The excerpt [6.5.2] below is an example.

[6.5.2] Roaster Xiaoxiao retorts Dan Li's previous comments

- 1 肖晓: 李诞吧  
**Xiaoxiao:** Li Dan Ba  
**Xiaoxiao:** Dan Li PRT  
**Xiaoxiao:** Dan Li
- 2 李诞: 干嘛呀  
**Li Dan:** Gan Ma Ya  
**Dan Li:** Do what PRT  
**Dan Li:** Yes?

- (leans forward, smiles and pretends to flick back his hair)
- 3 肖骁: 自称是作家  
**Xiaoxiao:** Zi Cheng Shi Zuojia  
**Xiaoxiao:** self claimed is writer  
**Xiaoxiao:** (he) claimed to be a writer himself  
(audiences cheer and Xiaoxiao smiles)
- 4 自称是作家  
Zi Cheng Shi Zuojia  
self claimed is writer  
(he) claimed to be a writer himself
- 5 观众: [@]  
**Audiences:** [@]
- 6 肖骁: 吐槽我没文化  
**Xiaoxiao:** Tucao Wo Mei Wenhua  
**Xiaoxiao:** Roast me no culture/education  
**Xiaoxiao:** (he) roasted me that I don't have education
- 7 是  
Yes  
Yes  
Yes
- 8 我是没什么文化  
Wo Shi Mei Shenme Wenhua  
I am NEG what education  
I indeed did not have much education
- 9 但是看你的作品  
Danshi Kan Nide Zuopin  
But read your work  
But does it require education
- 10 难道需要文化吗  
Nandao Xuyao Wenhua Ma  
RQM need education PRT  
to read your work
- 11 观众: [@]  
**Audiences:** [@]  
(applause)
- 12 李诞: [@]  
**Dan Li:** [@]  
(applauses)

Xiaoxiao in line 8 performs self-directed mock impoliteness (“*I indeed did not have much education*”), which serves as a condition for the following other-directed mock impoliteness in line 9 and 10. The use of “but” turns the direction of potential impoliteness message to Dan Li, indicating that his work was not so sophisticated to understand. This is different from the use of self-directed mock impoliteness in excerpt [6.5.1]. In excerpt [6.5.2] self-directed mock impoliteness precedes other-directed mock impoliteness, and potentially boosts the impolite message by leading the hearers up a garden path.

So far, the two examples above showed how self-directed mock impoliteness play important roles in other-directed mock impoliteness. Of course, self-directed mock impoliteness can be independent from other-directed mock impoliteness, as demonstrated by the following excerpt [6.5.3].

[6.5.3] Yuelun Wang explains why he had turned down a previous invitation from the show  
*Roast!*:

- 1     **王岳伦**: 我也想来呀  
           **Wang Yuelun**: Wo Ye Xiang Lai Ya  
           **Yuelun Wang**: I ADV want come PRT  
           **Yuelun Wang**: I wanted to come (to the show)
- 2             但是李湘不同意  
                   Danshi Li Xiang Bu Tongyi  
                   But Xiang Li NEG agree  
                   But Xiang Li did not agree
- 3             因为那天她要工作  
                   Yinwei Na Tian Ta Yao Gongzuo  
                   Because that day she needed to work  
                   Because she needed to work that day
- 4             我必须在家带孩子  
                   Wo Bixu Zai Jia Dai Haizi  
                   I have to at home taking care of child  
                   I had to stay at home to take care of our child
- 5     **观众**: [@]  
           **Audiences**: [@]



- 6 王岳伦：男人嘛  
**Wang Yuelun:** Nan Ren MA  
**Yuelun Wang:** male human PRT  
**Yuelun Wang:** (A) Man
- 7 要以老婆的事业为重  
 Yao Yi Laopo de Shiye Wei Zhong  
 Should regard wife 's career as important  
 should prioritize (his) wife's career
- 8 观众：[@]  
**Audiences:** [@]  
 (applause)

In this episode of *Roast!*, Yuelun Wang was constantly mocked for not being the main bread winner in his family. There is certainly a stereotype held among the participants and audience that a husband should be the main bread winner and that a wife should be the main care giver of children. Thus, when Yuelun Wang went against this stereotype in line 1-4, the audience laughed. Then he went on with self-directed mock impoliteness in line 6-7 (“*a man should prioritize his wife’s career*”), the audience laughed even louder and applauded. Of course, this interpretation of line 6-7 as self-directed mock impoliteness is also based on cultural-specific social norms. “*A man should prioritize his career*” is a commonly held belief, while Yuelun Wang’s adaptation - “*a man should prioritize his wife’s career*” certainly deviates from this norm. Such deviation is generally negatively evaluated in Chinese society. Culpeper (2011: 36) rightly points out that social norms “relate to authoritative standards of behaviour and entail positive or negative evaluations of behaviour as being consistent or otherwise with those standards”. Thus, what counts in the interpretation of line 6-7 is what the participants and audiences regard as norms. If placed in a culture where women having a more successful career than her husband is considered as normal, then line 6-7 would probably not be deemed as self-directed mock impoliteness.

Unlike examples [6.5.1] and [6.5.2], the self-directed mock impoliteness in [6.5.3] is independent from other-directed mock impoliteness, and potentially serves two functions. One function is that it enhances Yuelun Wang’s quality face. Through self-directed mock impoliteness, he demonstrates that not only he could take a joke as he had been constantly mocked for having a less successful career than his wife (see also

excerpt [6.5.1]), but also that he could even *roast* himself. This worked as some danmaku comments praise him for having a good temper and not taking offence. Another function is that it creates humour, which is evidenced in the audiences' reaction. This is in line with the positive evaluations of a sense of humour or someone being able to "take a joke" in western cultures (Goffman, 1956; Collinson, 1988; Davies, 2006). Rappoport (2005: 40) describes an interesting psychological principle that humour can serve as "a type of social testing (can 'they' take a joke without getting upset?) or self-enhancement (I can tell a joke on myself without getting upset)". This is also why many terms covering the similar phenomena tend to focus on humour in the literature, such as self-mockery, self-denigrating humour, etc. However, the above analysis has made it clear the necessity of making a distinction between self-directed mock impoliteness and humour despite acknowledging their close link.

To summarize, self-directed mock impoliteness is used in the show *Roast!* to i) mitigate or boost the potential impolite message in other-directed mock impoliteness; ii) enhance the speaker's face; and iii) create humour. Of course, more than one of such functions can work at the same time.

## 6.6 Summary

The dynamics of mock impoliteness is a broad issue. This chapter first of all discussed how mock impoliteness is linguistically constructed in section 6.2 and 6.3. Just as there are conventionalized politeness, impoliteness and mock politeness formulae which became conventionalized through their frequent occurrences in certain contexts, this research has found that the formulaic usages of two forms—rhetorical questions and imperatives in *Roast!*, have entrenched in the context to encode mock impoliteness, thus they are considered as conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in *Roast!*. Although the analysis focused on 1 episode of the data (S02E08), further analysis of the rhetorical questions and imperatives in S01E08 showed that the formulaic uses of rhetorical questions and imperatives exist in the entire data set. It is important to emphasize that this finding does not entail that rhetorical questions and imperatives are conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in every context. The focus of conventionalisation is the relationship between the frequency of the co-occurrences between language forms and specific contexts. What this finding has shown is that

conventionalization when highly contextually driven, may occur in quite short time-span, which is in contrast with what is normally assumed in most language-change studies.

The application of two theoretical frameworks, modified Culpeper's (2011) model of mixed messages and Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2005, 2007 and 2008) rapport management gives thorough de-construction of mock impoliteness, which revealed that in the context of *Roast!*, the most frequent constructions are form-driven mock impoliteness and context-driven unmarked mock impoliteness, which shows that in a context that sanctions or neutralizes impoliteness, potential impolite messages may be interpreted as mock impoliteness rather than impoliteness. This finding is consistent with Culpeper (2011:218) discussion on how neutralization gives rises to ritualized banter. In terms of the rapport management, it is not surprising that quality face is the most frequent type of face involved, which is in consistent with previous findings.

The multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness cannot be overlooked, as demonstrated by the two case studies of an eye gesture "show the white eye" and the multimodal realization of a conventional marker of dismissal "qie". Prosody is also an important aspect of mock impoliteness. By comparing the pitch average and intensity of the polite messages and impolite messages within the same mock impoliteness speech events, the finding concludes that there is no significant statistical tendency that high or low pitch/intensity is associated with either politeness or impoliteness in *Roast!*, which contradicts with previous studies arguing a certain relationship between (im)politeness and pitch average/intensity. Further research on this front is much needed.

In addition to the linguistic and multimodal construction of mock impoliteness, phenomena that emerged from the data — self-directed mock impoliteness serves three functions: i) mitigating or boosting the potential impolite message in other-directed mock impoliteness; ii) enhancing the speaker's face; and iii) creating humour. In this way, chapter 6 answered the *RQ1- how is mock impoliteness constructed?*. The next chapter will answer the *RQ2- how is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?*.

## Chapter 7. Evaluation of Mock Impoliteness

### 7.1 Introduction

Danmaku data, which is rich in metapragmatic comments from vast online audiences, can offer significant insights into how mock impoliteness is evaluated by the third-party participants. According to the Danmaku selection criteria in 4.5, an initial 1467 and 942 Danmaku comments for the randomly chosen episodes of Roast! - S01E08 (season 1 episode 8) and S02E08 (season 2 episode 8) were collected respectively. In order to answer the RQ2- *How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?*, it is important to first examine what the Danmaku comments are reacting to, which is a sub question to be answered in 7.2. The answer to this question then highlights the features of Danmaku data and sheds light on the coding scheme which is described in 5.6. The coding is then used for further quantitative and qualitative analysis to answer the RQ2 in 7.3.

### 7.2 What are the Danmaku comments reacting to?

As discussed in 4.4 *Identification of mock impoliteness speech events*, by identifying mock impoliteness speech events, one can group single mock impoliteness acts into a larger unit which connects the mock impoliteness speech acts and the evaluation of mock impoliteness speech events together. This is important in that it is difficult to attribute a particular Danmaku comment to the exact speech act it was reacting to, especially when the Danmaku comment does not explicitly refer to a particular speech act. Thus, the collected Danmaku data are metapragmatic evaluations of the identified mock impoliteness speech events. However, this does not guarantee that the collected Danmaku comments all focus on mock impoliteness per se, since mock impoliteness is the focus of this research but not necessarily the focus of the Danmaku users. As a matter of fact, the Danmaku comments react to a range of matters. By first answering the question-*what are the Danmaku comments reacting to?*, it helps to narrow down the scope of factors for investigating the RQ2-*How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?* in 7.3.

By closely examining the Danmaku data, it is evident that the Danmaku users make positive or negative metapragmatic evaluations on two levels, a general level, and a more specific one. At the general level, the evaluations are being made without specifying any particular factors behind such evaluations. While at the specific level, the Danmaku comments indicate users' reactions to various matters within the mock impoliteness events. The diagram below can clearly illustrate this pattern, and examples will be presented to demonstrate each category in the diagram.

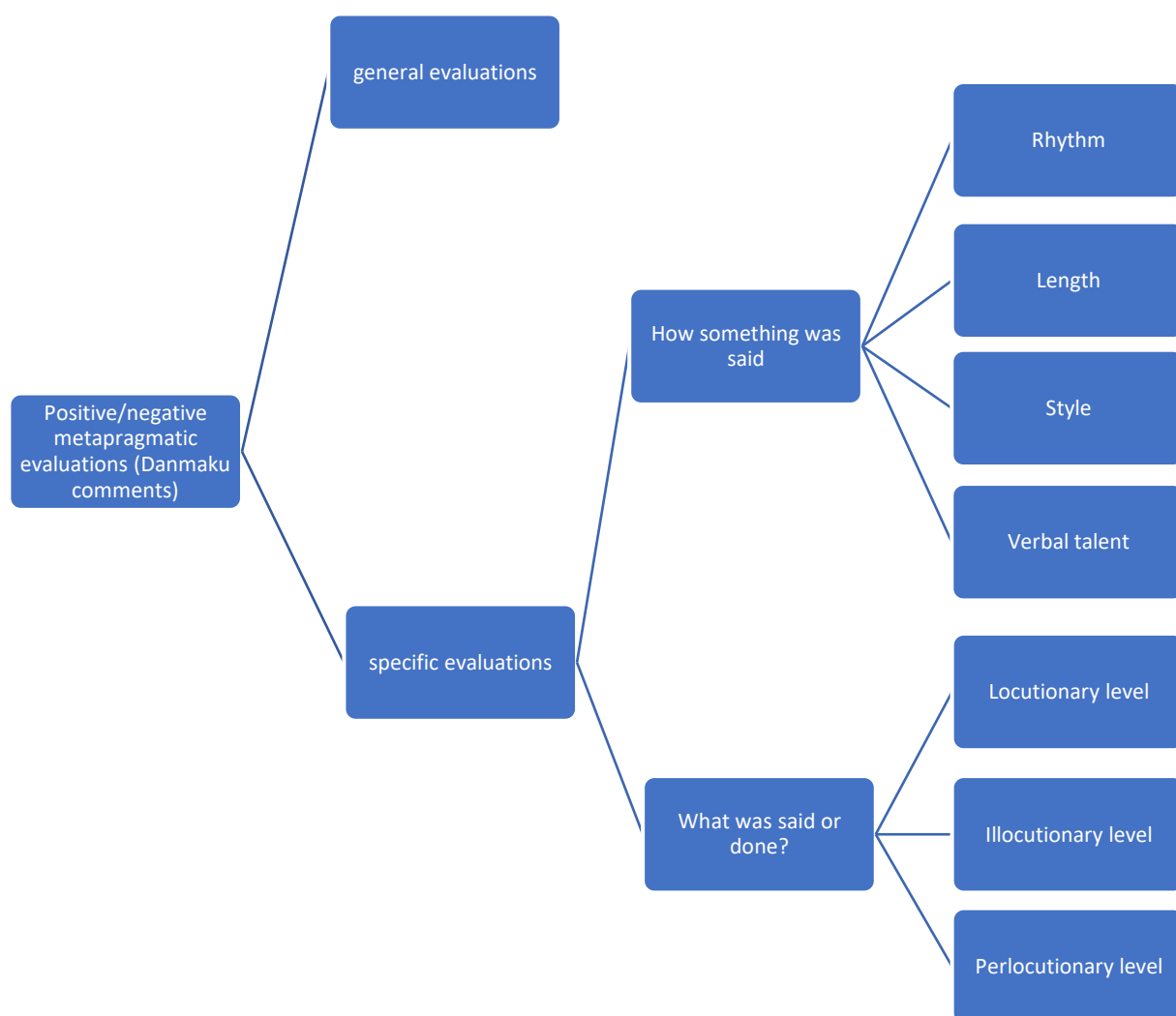


Figure 7. 1 What are the Danmaku Comments reacting to?

The diagram in Figure 7.1 illustrates the different factors the Danmaku users react to in giving positive and negative evaluations. The following sections explain each factor by analysing examples from the Danmaku data.

### 7.2.1 General evaluations

Very often in the Danmaku comments, third-party participants gave general positive or negative evaluations without specifying which factor it is that makes them give such evaluations, as exemplified below:

General positive evaluations:

[7.2.1] 挺不错 (👍113)

Ting Bu Cuo

Quite not bad

“Quite good”

This comment, as it does not offer any clues that helps attribute the evaluation to a specific mock impoliteness speech event, is an example of the ambiguous feature of Danmaku discussed in 5.6. Comments like [7.2.1] clearly express a positive evaluation, although it does not offer further clues for the researcher to analyse the factors prompting the users to make such evaluations. Such general positive evaluations may vary in form:

[7.2.2] 牛 (👍133)

Niu

Ox

“Awesome”

[7.2.3] 蛋蛋很棒 (👍161)

Dan Dan Hen Bang

Dan Dan very Good

“Dandan is very good”

[7.2.4] 厉害厉害 (👍209)

Lihai Lihai

Awesome/fierce Awesome/fierce

“Awesome/fierce Awesome/fierce”

[7.2.5] 666 可以 (👍195)

666 Keyi

666 can/could

“Awesome this is okay/this would do”

General negative evaluation:

[7.2.6] 整段垮掉 (ㄉㄨㄥˋ ㄑㄨㄚˋ ㄑㄨㄚˋ ㄊㄩㄟ)

Zheng Duan Kuadiao

Whole section break down

“The whole section broke down”

[7.2.7] 太菜了 (ㄊㄞˋ ㄘㄞˋ ㄌㄞㄟ)

Tai Cai le

Too vegetable PRT

“(That is) too lame”

[7.2.8] 你更烂!!! (ㄋㄧˋ ㄍㄥ ㄌㄢˋ !!!)

Ni Geng Lan

You more rotten

“You’re worse!!!!”

[7.2.9] 下去 (ㄒㄩㄚˋ ㄑㄩ)

Xia Qu

Down Go

“Come off (the stage)”

[7.2.10] 滚蛋吧, 曹狗 (ㄍㄨㄢ ㄉㄢ ㄅㄚ, ㄘㄞ ㄍㄡ)

Gun Dan Ba, Cao Gou

Roll egg PRT, Cao dog

“Go away, Cao (you) dog”

[7.2.11] 不行 (ㄅㄨˋ ㄒㄩㄥ)

Bu Xing

No do

“This won’t do”

Comments [7.2.6] to [7.2.11] are all negative evaluations in different forms, which resemble general positive evaluations such as [7.2.1] to [7.2.5] to some degree. [7.2.1], [7.2.2], [7.2.4], [7.2.6] and [7.2.7] seem to be general evaluations on how well the show was, which in this case consists of many mock impoliteness speech events. Particularly, metaphors are imbedded in both [7.2.2] and [7.2.7], with [7.2.2] suggesting “(this) is as awesome as an ox” and [7.2.7] “(this) is as lame as vegetables”. [7.2.3] and [7.2.8] are

evaluations that are more specific towards the roaster, as signaled by the referents “Dandan” and “you”. [7.2.5] and [7.2.11] clearly implies a certain standard the third-party participants have by which they judge what kind of behaviours counts as “would do” or “won’t do”, although this standard was not specified in the Danmaku comments. [7.2.9] and [7.2.10] are blatant dismissals to the roaster with [7.2.10] even containing swearing, which shows strong negative evaluations. However, none of such comments offer specific reasons behind the positive or negative evaluations. That being said, with the large numbers of such comments in the collected data, it is important to point out that this is a feature of metapragmatic evaluations on mock impoliteness in Danmaku.

### 7.2.2 Specific evaluations

The term specific evaluations refers to evaluations that indicate specific factors the Danmaku comments react to. Such factors can be divided into two categories, that is, a) how was something said and b) what was said or done.

#### a. How was something said?

As the show *Roast!* is presented in the form of a contest where each guest performs in turn to be judged by the main guest to win the “Talk King” trophy, it is not surprising that the Danmaku users also react to how something was said to give positive or negative evaluations. There are mainly 4 factors repeatedly mentioned in the Danmaku comments, that is, rhythm, length, style and verbal talent.

#### a1. Rhythm

Some danmaku comments react to the rhythm or the speed of how the roasters perform as exemplified below:

[7.2.12]曹云金节奏把握的不错啊 (👍145)

Cao Yunjin Jiezou Bawo de bucuo a

Cao Yunjin Rhythm grasp AUX not bad PRT

“Yunjin Cao’s handling of the rhythm is not bad”

[7.2.13]其实段子挺好的，就是节奏没掌握好。。。 (👍413)



Qishi Duanzi Ting Hao De, Jiushi Jiezou Mei Zhangwo Hao...

Actually joke quite good AUX, only Rhythm no grasp well

“Actually, the jokes are quite good, it’s only that (the roaster) didn’t handle the rhythm well...”

[7.2.14] 哈哈哈哈哈建国唱了一段 rap (👍4)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha Jianguo Chang Le Yi Duan rap

Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha Jianguo sing PTM one paragraph rap

“Hahaha Jianguo sang/did some rap”

[7.2.15] 又快又破 (👍211)

You Kuai You Po

Both fast and broken

“(the roasting) is both fast and broken”

Example [7.2.12] and [7.2.13] both focus on the rhythm of the roaster’s performance, with [7.2.12] being a positive evaluation and [7.2.13] a negative evaluation. [7.2.14] is a comment about a speech event where the roaster talked in a rather fast speed, although it did not use the exact word “rhythm”. Referring to the roaster’s performance as “rap” implies that the evaluation is about the speed or rhythm. The “hahaha” at the beginning of [7.2.14] indicates that the user was entertained by the roaster’s way of performing. Thus, when a roaster talks too fast, third-party participants might give positive evaluation. However, some Danmaku users might not agree and give negative evaluations such as example [7.2.15], which refers to the same speech event as example [7.2.14] does.

## a2. Length

Third-party participants also comment on the length of roasters’ performance. They might give positive evaluations when some beloved roaster’s performance is too short:

[7.2.16] 喜欢池子太短池子时间长点 (👍533)

Xihuan Chizi Tai Duan Chizi Shijian Changdian

Like Chizi Too Short Chizi Time Longer

“I really like Chizi. This is too short. (Let) Chizi’s slot be longer.”

Although, when a roaster performs for too long, negative evaluations might be enticed, such as example [7.2.17].

[7.2.17] 曹云金这个。。。太长了吧。。。 (ㄟ120)

Cao Yunjin Zhege... Tai Chang Le Ba...

Cao Yunjin this...too long PRT PRT...

“This (performance) of Yunjin Cao...is way too long...”

### a3. Style

The third-party participants are aware of performing styles of the roasters. In one speech event, which previous examples [7.2.14] and [7.2.15] also refer to, the roaster mimicked another comedian’s characteristic style of talking very fast during his performance. This practice was noticed by the third-party participants as shown in the following examples [7.2.18] to [7.2.20]. While the previous rhythm focuses on the pace of the performance (such as example [7.2.15]), style refers to something more general that seems to be recognizable by the audience as a roaster’s personal way of performance (such as example [7.2.20]).

[7.2.18] 挺好的，模仿的不错 (ㄟ210)

Ting Hao De, Mofang De Bu Cuo

Quite good PRT, imitating not bad

“Quite good, the imitation wasn’t bad”

[7.2.19] 建国，没啥说的啦？学周云鹏，恶心 (ㄟ286)

Jianguo, Mei Sha Shuo De La? Xue Zhou Yunpeng, E‘xin

Jianguo, no what talk about PRT? Learn Zhou Yunpeng, disgusting

“Jianguo, have you got nothing to talk about? Imitating Yunpeng Zhou<sup>40</sup> (is) disgusting”

Example [7.2.18] is clearly a positive evaluation on the practice of imitating another comedian’s style, however, example [7.2.19] evaluated this negatively and seems to be criticising a lack of originality of the roaster’s performance. These two examples are chosen as they react to the same factor differently, although, it is worth noting that this category of style is not limited to imitation as indicated by example [7.2.18] and [7.2.19], other style can also be positively evaluated by the third-party participants, such as example [7.2.20].

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<sup>40</sup> This person mentioned here does not appear in the show but is a comedian in another show.

[7.2.20] 曹云金主持得很好， 我喜欢他的风格! (👍256)

Cao Yunjin Zhuchi de Hen hao, Wo Xihuan Tade Fengge

Cao Yunjin hosts AUX very well, I like his style

“Yunjin Cao hosts very well, and I like his style!”

#### a4. Verbal talent

When Danmaku users, as third-party participants, comment on the show *Roast!* that emphasizes on talking, it is not surprising that they would comment on the performers’ techniques in talking or roasting, such as the following examples. The term *verbal talent* is a translation of the metalinguistic term “口才”(kou cai) used in Danmaku, such as example [7.2.21]-[7.2.23]. In English, a possible translation of “口才”(kou cai) is *eloquence*. However, the actual semantic meaning of “口才”(kou cai) is different from eloquence in that it is neutral in quality and can be described as either good or bad, while “bad eloquence” is self-contradictory.

[7.2.21] 蛋总的口才真心太好了 (👍 426)

Dan Zong De Kou Cai Zhen Xin Tai Hao Le

Egg Chief’s<sup>41</sup> mouth talent really heart too good PRT

“Danzong’s verbal talent is really great”

Example [21] shows that the focus of the positive evaluation is the roaster’s verbal talent. There are also cases where verbal talent, together with other factors are commented on by the third-party participants as the following examples:

[7.2.22] 肖骁的思路口才跟李诞比还是差远了 (👍231)

Xiao Xiao De Si Lu Kou Cai Gen Li Dan Bi Hai Shi Cha Yuan Le

Xiaoxiao’s thinking way mouth talent and Li Dan compare still is lack far PRT

“Xiaoxiao’s train of thoughts, and verbal talent, compared to Dan Li are far behind.”

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<sup>41</sup> The roaster’s name is Dan Li (李诞). Dan (诞) and Dan (蛋 egg) are homophones, and this roaster is often referred to as Dandan (could possibly mean “balls”, or “egg egg”), which is a nickname. The nickname used in this comment “egg chief” is possibly derived from Dandan. Zong (总, meaning “chief”), is often added to someone’s name for honorific usage, most commonly used if the person being referred to has a leading position in an organization, but it could also be used to show respect even when someone isn’t actually a leader. In this case, as the roaster really is the producer of this show and does actually hold a leading position in a company, it seems apt why people are referring to him as “egg chief”. This potentially also contributes to the positive evaluation this comment embodies.

[7.2.23] 曹云金口才好，还能调动气氛，牛笔 (👍162)

Cao Yunjin Kou Cai Shi Hao, Hai Neng Diaodong Qifen, Niubi

Cao Yunjin mouth talent is good, and can move atmosphere, awesome

“Yunjin Cao is indeed eloquent, and he can also energize the atmosphere, which is Awesome”

[7.2.24] 口条好差啊 (👍101)

Koutiao Hao Cha a

Tongue very bad PRT

“roaster’s) verbal skills are very bad”

In example [7.2.22], the third-party participants gave positive evaluations to roaster Dan Li and negative evaluations to another roaster Xiaoxiao at the same time according to their judgements on two factors, the roaster’s train of thoughts and verbal talent. While in example [7.2.23], the positive evaluations focus on both eloquence and the roaster’s ability in influencing the atmosphere of the show. Such comments demonstrate that in the third-party participants’ evaluations of mock impoliteness, verbal talent certainly plays a role, sometimes in combination with other factors. Although, the Danmaku comments do not always use the word “Koucai”, a metonymy “tongue” is used to stand for verbal skills in negative evaluations [7.2.24].

b. What was said or done?

Previously in 4.3, I briefly explained the link between Austin’s speech act theory and mock impoliteness through the term *mock impoliteness speech act*. The notion of speech act is accordingly useful when analysing the metapragmatic evaluations of such mock impoliteness speech acts. J. L. Austin’s speech act theory (1962/1975) suggests that every utterance/speech act has three aspects, that is, locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act, which respectively refers to “the act of saying something”, “the performance of an act in saying something” and “what we bring about or achieve by saying something” (Austin, 1975:94, 99, 109). However, in the literature, speech act is commonly considered as synonymous with illocutionary act especially through Searle’s work (Culpeper and Terkourafi, 2017). In Searle’s work, what he meant by speech act is illocutionary acts. He acknowledges that he employs Austin’s “illocutionary acts” with some misgivings, because he does not accept Austin’s distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts (1969:23). Searle’s rejection of the distinction

between locutionary and illocutionary acts links speech acts to the performance of speaker intentions (see also Culpeper and Terkourafi, 2017:13). This is not helpful in analysing the evaluations of mock impoliteness from the hearers' (third-party participants') point of view, as it is not always the case that a hearer recognizes the speakers' intentions, which is precisely what happens in Danmaku<sup>42</sup>. It is therefore worth emphasizing that in this research, the term "speech acts" is used in Austin's sense rather than the equivalent of illocutionary acts that Searle advocates. Since the defined mock impoliteness speech events are clusters of mock impoliteness speech acts, the metapragmatic evaluations of such speech events do react to what was said or done. Thus, teasing out which aspect of a given speech act the focal point of Danmaku users' metapragmatic evaluations would offer a clear vision of what the Danmaku comments are reacting to. Note that although the following sections are structured according to the three aspects of a speech act, this is not to say that one necessarily reacts to one aspect separately from the others. Rather, what is of interest is the focal point on a certain aspect of a speech act (which is textually demonstrated through Danmaku comments). When Danmaku comments textually reveal a focus on the literal meaning of what was said or done, the focal point is more likely to be on the locutionary level. When they textually reveal a focus on the intended meaning or the meaning interpreted by the Danmaku users, illocutionary level is more profiled. And when the Danmaku comments textually address the effects of what was said or done on the Danmaku users, then perlocutionary level is more profiled than other levels. Danmaku that focus on the locutionary level tend to repeat verbatim the roasters' utterances, or comment on the topic of the roasting. Danmaku comments that focus on the illocutionary level use metalinguistic terms such as "roast", "complement", "criticize" to describe the roasters behaviour, rather than quoting their utterances. The use of such metalinguistic terms shows that the Danmaku users are commenting on the pragmatic function of the roasting,

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<sup>42</sup> Expanding from the famous example of "Can you pass me the salt?" at a dinner table in illustrating speech act theory, the locutionary act is the act of saying this utterance, the illocutionary act is the request of passing the salt from the speaker to the hearer, and the perlocutionary act would be the effect of such request, which might be the hearer's reaction of passing the salt to the speaker. Although, it is not surprising that there are chances that the hearer does not interpret the utterance as a request but simply a question of the hearer's ability of passing the salt. Even though the hearer does interpret the utterance as a request, the action of passing the salt might still not follow. The argument here is that hearers' or participants' reactions to a certain speech act may vary very differently. Similarly, in the metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness speech events, different third-party participant may react to different aspects of the speech acts, which could be locutionary act, illocutionary acts or perlocutionary act.

as the focus is on what the roasters are doing with their speech. The ones with a focal point on the perlocutionary level describe the Danmaku users' own reaction towards the roasting or cooperates with the roasters' requests of typing something onto the screen.

#### b1. Locutionary level

When the Danmaku users focus on the wording, literal meaning or topics of the utterance, the focal point is on the locutionary level of a certain mock impoliteness speech act.

A certain phrase or sentence the roaster uttered might be particularly quoted in the Danmaku comments to show positive evaluation, as shown by [7.2.25] below.

[7.2.25] 这句真好，坐在她前面的就是留不住云！赞常远一个 (👍825)

Zhe Ju Zhen Hao, Zuozei Ta Qianmian De Jiushi Liubuzhu Yun! Zan Changyuan

Yige

This sentence real good, sitting her in front of is can't keep Yun! Praise

Chuangyuan one

This line is really good, "sitting in front her is "the person who can't keep the character "'Yun' in his name!" One thumb up for Changyuan."

In [7.2.25], the Danmaku user quoted a sentence the roaster just said where the roaster used a pun to mock the host of the show, and evaluated it as "really good", which results in a positive evaluation. There are also cases where the third-party participants mention something said by the roasters to give negative evaluations:

[7.2.26] 你最猥琐好么 好意思说别人 (👍204)

Ni Zui Weisuo Haome Hao Yisi Shuo Bie Ren

You most obscene ok Good meaning talk other people

"You're the obscenest (person), ok? You've got some nerve to talk about/criticize others"

In the speech event that example [7.2.26] refers to, the roaster previously said that another guest looked obscene and did not understand why so many audiences like him. It is arguable that the *verbum dicendi* "shuo", when interpreted as "criticize", might also suggest a focus on the illocutionary level of the speech act. However, what seems to be more of focus is the wording or the literal meaning of the roaster's comment, which is

on the locutionary level especially demonstrated by the retort “You’re the obscenest (person), ok”. Even though the roaster was targeting at another guest, it is the third-party participants instead of the roastee who find it unacceptable. It is interesting to note that this Danmaku comment is similar to a “tit for tat” strategy as responses to impoliteness (Lein and Brenneis, 1978; Culpeper 2003), where an offensive message was responded by another offensive message, forming a parallelism.

Third-party participants seem to have highly context-based expectations of what the topic of the roasting should be, and they give positive or negative evaluations according how well such expectations are met:

[7.2.27]只有肖骁把每个人都说到了 (👍148)

Zhiyou Xiaoxiao Ba Meige Ren Dou Shuodao Le

Only Xiaoxiao PREP every person all talk PRT

“Only Xiaoxiao managed to roast/talk about/mention everyone (on the stage)”

This comment suggests that the positive evaluation seems to be relevant to the fact that Xiaoxiao is the only person that complied with the topic of roasting every guest on the stage. [7.2.28] below shows that the third-party participants might give negative evaluations when the roaster fails to comply with such topic.

[7.2.28]没前面说的详细了，忽略了好多人啊 (👍512)

Mei Qianmian Shuo De Xiangxi le, Hulue le Haoduo Ren A

Not previous talk AUX in detail, ignore PRT many people PRT

“(this is) not as in detail as the previous roasting, (the roaster) ignored/missed (roasting) many people”

[7.2.29]跑题了不吐槽李小璐 (👍4)

Pao Ti Le Bu Tucao Li Xiaolu

Run topic PRT not roasting Li Xiaolu

“(You) strayed off the topic by not roasting Xiaolu Li”

As is shown by [7.2.29], when a roaster strayed off the topic of roasting the main guest, third-party participants might give negative evaluations.

[7.2.30]真是的，干嘛老说郭德纲 (👍7)

Zhen Shi De, Ganma Lao Shuo Guo Degang

Real is PRT, why always talk Guo Degang  
“Seriously, why (do you) always talk about Degang Guo”

Example [7.2.30] shows that the repeating topic mentioned by the roaster for many times contributes to the negative evaluations.

## b2. Illocutionary level

Sometimes, the Danmaku comments react to the illocutionary level of the mock impoliteness speech acts, as demonstrated by the examples below.

[7.2.31] 这一波怼得真不错呢 (👍8)  
Zhe Yibo Dui De Zhen Bu Cuo Ne  
This wave poke AUX really not wrong/bad PRT  
“This (wave of performance) dissed/roasted/mockd really well”

In [7.3.31], the Danmaku users were reacting to the illocutionary act of performing the act of “dui”. In other words, whatever was said during the speech event was interpreted as mock impoliteness, as demonstrated by the performative verb “Dui”, which is positively evaluated by the third-party participants.

[7.2.32] 这是表扬呢? (👍9)  
Zhe Shi Biaoyang Ne?  
This is compliment PRT?  
“Is this a compliment?”

Example [7.2.32] is most likely to be a rhetorical question, considering that this Danmaku appeared when a roaster expressed his affection to the roastee while they were younger at school together. What the roaster has said clearly was not “roasting”, but “compliment” for the third-party participants that wrote and liked this comment. Again, the Danmaku users react to the illocutionary act of the speech act, which is not the act as expected, thus showing a negative evaluation.

[7.2.33] 师傅再不是东西轮不到徒弟来说 (👍101)  
Shifu Zai Bu Shi Dongxi Lun Bu Dao Tudi Lai shuo  
Teacher even not is thing turn not to student to say  
“Even when the teacher is awful, it is not the student’s place to comment”



Example [7.2.33] indicates that the Danmaku users are reacting to the act of a student commenting on his teacher, which in Chinese culture is deemed highly disrespectful, and potentially very rude or impolite. The focus here is “the performance of an act in saying something”, which is illocutionary act (Austin, 1975:99). This negative evaluation certainly highlights the social status or hierarchy between students and teachers and reveals the third-party participants’ value that students shouldn’t comment on their teachers’ behaviours no matter what.

### 3b. Perlocutionary level

Finally, all Danmaku comments reveal third-party participants reactions, which are perlocutionary acts. However, what is discussed here are explicit metapragmatic comments on their reactions towards the identified mock impoliteness speech events, that is, metapragmatic comments on perlocutionary acts, such reactions can be behavioral and/or mental, as demonstrated by the following examples:

[7.2.34] 笑死了哈哈 (🤣) (👍58)

Xiao Si Le Hahaha

Laugh die PRT hahaha

“(I’m) dying laughing hahaha (🤣)”

Example [7.2.34] shows that the third-party participants’ reaction to the mock impoliteness is laughing, which is both behavioral and mental.

There are also mental reactions which shows negative evaluations such as [7.2.35]:

[7.2.35] 看得好尴尬 (👍222)

Kan De Hao Ganga

Watch AUX very awkward

“Watching this (makes me feel) very awkward”

The third-party participants gave negative evaluations in [7.2.35] as this mental reaction of feeling awkward is triggered. Bella and Ogiermann (2019: 187) discuss that awkwardness is an emotional reaction to intergenerational impoliteness. In humor studies, Bell (2015) mentioned that awkward attempts at joke telling could result in failed humor but did not discuss this issue in further detail. In the collected Danmaku

data, there are quite a few comments suggesting that such awkward reactions contribute to negative evaluations.

Another behavioral reaction of mock impoliteness is following the roaster's instruction, which shows the cooperation and participation of the third-party participants. In a mock impoliteness speech event, the roaster asked Danmaku users to type "Jinzi is shameless/doesn't want face" in the Danmaku as a way to mock the roastee Jinzi. Then, many danmaku users followed this instruction and typed [7.2.36]:

[7.2.36] 金子不要脸金子不要脸金子不要脸金子不要脸 (👍11153)  
Jinzi Bu Yao Lian Jinzi Bu Yao Lian Jinzi Bu Yao Lian Jinzi Bu Yao Lian  
Jinzi not want face Jinzi not want face Jinzi not want face Jinzi not want face  
"Jinzi doesn't want face/is shameless. Jinzi doesn't want face/is shameless. Jinzi  
doesn't want face/is shameless. Jinzi doesn't want face/is shameless."

In [7.2.36], the reaction towards the roaster's speech act was following his order and typing exactly what he has asked in the Danmaku. This interaction shows that the third-party participants are willing to cooperate with the roaster and participated in the act of roasting Jinzi, which count as positive evaluations of mock impoliteness. Note that this particular comment has an upvote of a very high number of 11153, which shows that this reaction was highly appreciated among the Danmaku users. There are also many other similar comments around the timestamp of this speech event.

To summarize, third-party participants give positive or negative evaluations on two levels, a general level and a specific level. On the general level, they simply evaluate mock impoliteness positively or negatively without giving specific factors behind such evaluations. On a more specific level, they evaluate mock impoliteness according to on a) how something was said; and b) what was said or done.

### 7.3 How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the Third-party Participants?

As the previous section 7.2 demonstrates, although the collected Danmaku comments all pertain to the mock impoliteness speech events studied for RQ1-*What constitutes mock impoliteness in the show Roast!?*, there is no guarantee that the collected Danmaku

comments all focus on mock impoliteness per se, as mock impoliteness is the focus of this research but not necessarily the focus of the Danmaku users. Since the focus of RQ2-*How is Mock Impoliteness Evaluated by the Third-Party Participants?* is on metapragmatic evaluation of mock impoliteness per se, Danmaku comments that focus on how something was said, for instance, the rhythm, length, style or verbal talent of a roaster's performance, are not relevant to mock impoliteness. Thus, not all collected Danmaku comments (1467 for S01E08 and 942 for S02E08) are needed in analysis for RQ2. In other words, the initial collected data needs to be narrowed down to focus on mock impoliteness.

In 5.6, the coding categories for Danmaku data include: (i) in-text reference (Referent and Speech Event); (ii) pragmatic phenomena that are relevant to mock impoliteness (Impoliteness and Funniness); (iii) metapragmatic evaluation (Evaluation); and (iv) the technical affordance of the Danmaku system (Likes). As previously reviewed in 3.2 and 3.3, and demonstrated in the examples [7.2.34] in 7.2, impoliteness and funniness are relevant to mock impoliteness, thus two coding categories in (ii) — that is, Impoliteness and Funniness — are also used as the reselection criteria of the Danmaku data to narrow down the scope of investigation for RQ2. This is to say that if a Danmaku comment does not reveal any evaluation of impoliteness or funniness, it is excluded from the data coding based on the categories described in 5.6, such as example [7.2.16] and [7.2.17] in 7.2, among many others. Thus, 653 and 522 Danmaku comments for S01E08 and S02E08 respectively were reselected and coded.

To answer RQ2, it is important to first examine the phenomenology of Danmaku data, which corresponds to a two-stage process:

- a. The third-party participants make evaluations about mock impoliteness.
- b. The third-party participants vote for such evaluations by clicking on the upvote symbol<sup>43</sup>, leading to the number of likes.

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<sup>43</sup> The upvote symbol in the Danmaku system is a clickable thumbs-up emoji “👍”.

Therefore, to answer RQ2 is to answer i) what factors contribute to the third-party participants' evaluations; and ii) what factors contribute to the number of likes that each comment gets.

A conditional inference tree model (cf. Hothorn et al., 2006; Tagliamonte and Baayen, 2012; Tantucci and Wang, 2018), which is “a method for regression and classification based on binary recursive partitioning” (Levshina, 2015:291), was fitted to answer these two questions. There are several advantages of this method in that the variable selection is unbiased, overfitting can be avoided, and the algorithm also returns the p-values to show how confident one can be about every split (Levshina, 2015). Moreover, it “can be particularly useful in situations of data sparseness (‘small n large p’, where n is the number of observations and p is the number of predictors), high-order interactions, and highly correlated predictors (Tagliamonte & Baayen 2012)” (Levshina, 2015: 292). The danmaku data fits these features in that i) the number of observations is 653 and 522 for S01E08 respectively while there are 6 predictors, i.e., coding categories (‘small n large p), ii) many predictors (Speech Event, Referent, Impoliteness, Funniness) may affect the outcome variable of Evaluation or Likes (high-order interactions) and iii) Speech Event, Referent, Impoliteness, Funniness, Evaluations and Likes are highly correlated (highly correlated predictors). Therefore, this model was selected to investigate how the convergence of multiple factors contribute to the Evaluations or Likes.

### 7.3.1 Factors contributing to Third-party participants' evaluations

For question i) what factors contribute to the evaluations, a conditional inference tree model was fitted for the data of S01E08 and S02E08 respectively with “Evaluation” as the dependent variable, and “Speech Event”, “Referent”, “Impoliteness” and “Funniness” as the independent variables. The number of likes was excluded from this model as the likes were voted after the evaluation was made, which means it could not contribute to the evaluation<sup>44</sup>.

#### 7.3.1.1 The results and analysis of the Danmaku data of S01E08

The results of the data of S01E08 are shown in Figure 7.2:

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<sup>44</sup> See table 5.3 for illustration of the Danmaku data annotation.

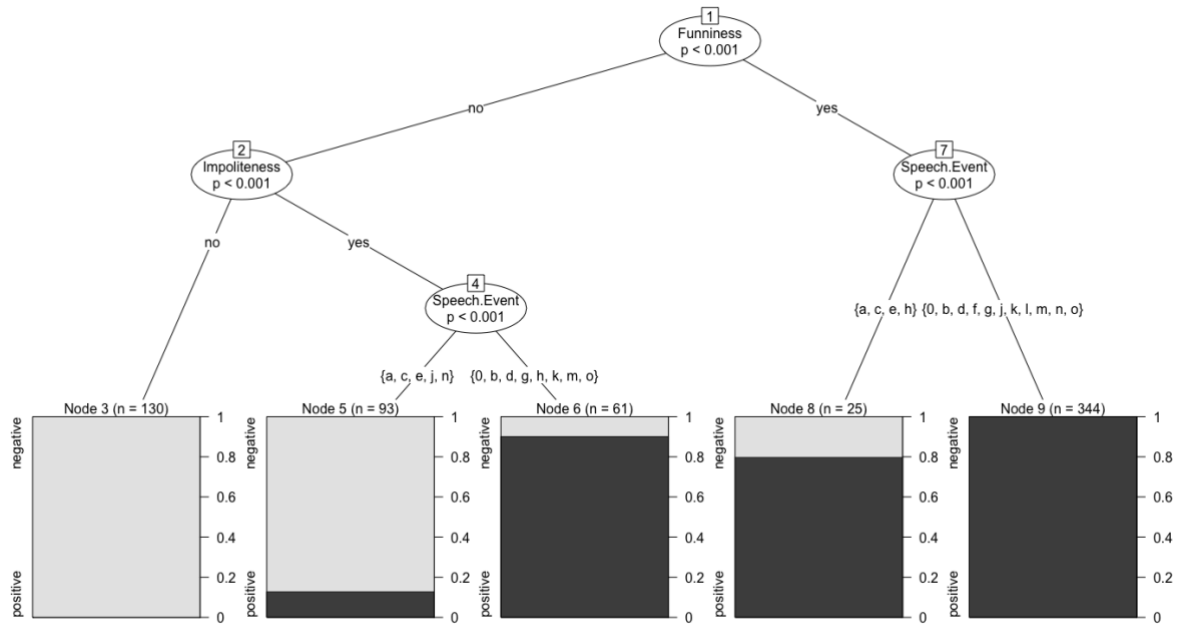


Figure 7. 2 Conditional inference tree of Evaluation for S01E08

Figure 7.2 is obtained with the “ctree” function of the R package “party” (cf. Levishina 2015:291) and demonstrates the result of how significant each factor is in contributing to positive and negative evaluations. Each node, as displayed in the figure with numbers from 1 to 9, was generated based on the statistical significance of conditional dependencies among variables, as indicated by the p-value. Nodes 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 (the ones corresponding to the bars at the bottom of the Figure) show the distribution of Danmaku comments of the outcome variable, Evaluation, in two values, with the rising dark grey bars indicating positive evaluation and the falling light grey bars negative evaluation. The numbers in the brackets on top of the blocks indicate the number of observations at each node, and the scales to the right side of the blocks indicate percentages. Node 1, 2, 4, 7 correspond to the independent variables and are ranked spatially in terms of how significant they affect the dependent variable, Evaluation. The higher the node is spatially in the figure, the more significant that conditional decision is (cf. Tantucci & Wang 2018).

Each node simulates the “decision” made in the model at predicting the outcome variable, in this case, whether the evaluation is positive or negative. In this way, different conditions predict different outcomes, as presented in the figure. In other words, based on the data fitted in this model, there are 5 hierarchical pathways

(pathways hereafter) representing the decision-making process of the third-party participants' evaluations (node 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9) depending on the effect of independent variables at node 1, 2, 4 and 7. Thus the five pathways represent the hierarchical effect of each node on the outcomes, such as pathway 1-2-3 (encompassing node 1, node 2 and node 3), 1-2-4-5, 1-2-4-6, 1-7-8, 1-7-9. The following analysis will deal with these 5 pathways one by one with examples from the data.

Figure 7.3 below, extracted from Figure 7.2, shows the pathway of node 1-2-3, which can be interpreted as a decision-making process of the third-party participants.

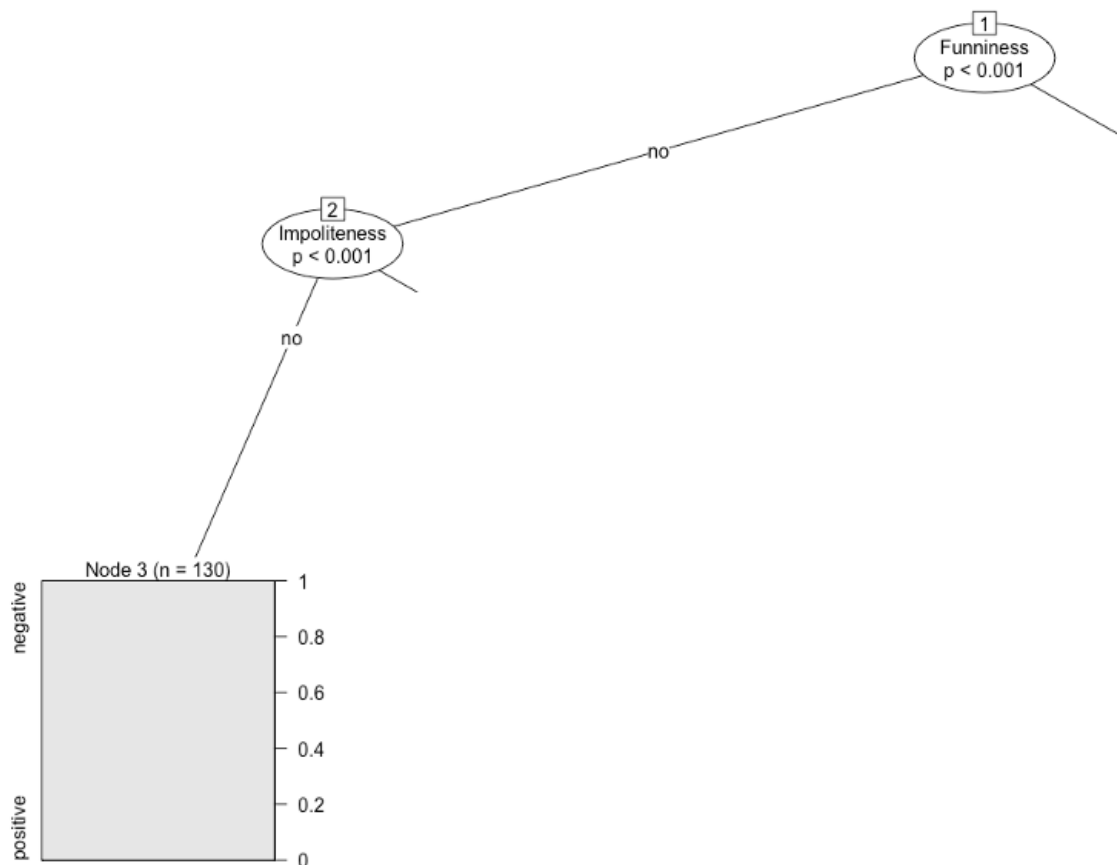


Figure 7. 3 Hierarchical pathway 1-2-3 (Funniness-Impoliteness-Evaluation)

In Figure 7.3, the first factor (statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ ) in third-party participants' evaluation is Funniness (node 1). When Funniness is not referred to by third-party participants, then the next contributing factor is impoliteness (node 2). When impoliteness is not referred to, then the evaluations of 130 Danmaku comments in node

3 are definitely (100%) negative, as indicated by the entirely light grey bar. The following examples demonstrate this clearly.

[7.3.37] 无聊吗? 这是吐槽大会。不是澄清大会

Wuliao Ma? Zhe Shi Tucao Da Hui. Bu Shi Chengqing Da Hui.

Boring PRT? This is Roasting big conference. Not clarification Da Hui

“Isn’t this boring? This is *Roast!*. Not *Clarify!*”

[7.3.38] 好尴尬! 滚下去

Hao Ganga! Gun Xiaqu

Very awkward! Roll down

“(This) is so awkward! Get lost”

Example [7.3.37] explicitly indicates the negative evaluation of the lack of impoliteness (roast) and funniness (boring)<sup>45</sup>, while [7.3.38] is an example where neither funniness nor impoliteness<sup>46</sup> were explicitly mentioned. The pathway 1-2-3 demonstrates that when funniness is not mentioned, and when impoliteness is not referred to either, the third-party participants always make negative evaluations. In other words, when third-party participants evaluate mock impoliteness, the focus is primarily on Funniness and then on Impoliteness. This result can be explained by a function of mock impoliteness, that is, exploitative entertainment, which “involves pain for the target but pleasure for other participants” discussed in Culpeper (2011:215). It is obvious that the third-party participants want to be entertained, especially when they can exploit the pleasure at the cost of the targets, which are roastees in this case. The lack of Funniness and Impoliteness would thus result in a failure of exploitative entertainment, which is reflected in negative evaluations at node 3.

Figure 7.4 below shows pathways 1-2-4-5 and 1-2-4-6, concerning the decisions on Funniness-Impoliteness-Speech Event-Evaluation.

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<sup>45</sup> It is important to note that in English, boring is the opposite meaning of interesting, which does not necessarily contrast with funny. However, in Chinese, the semantic meanings of interesting and funny can be expressed by the same form, “有意思” (you yisi, interesting/funny), thus “boring” in example [37] is the opposite meaning of funny.

<sup>46</sup> See 5.6 for the indicators of Impoliteness and Funniness.

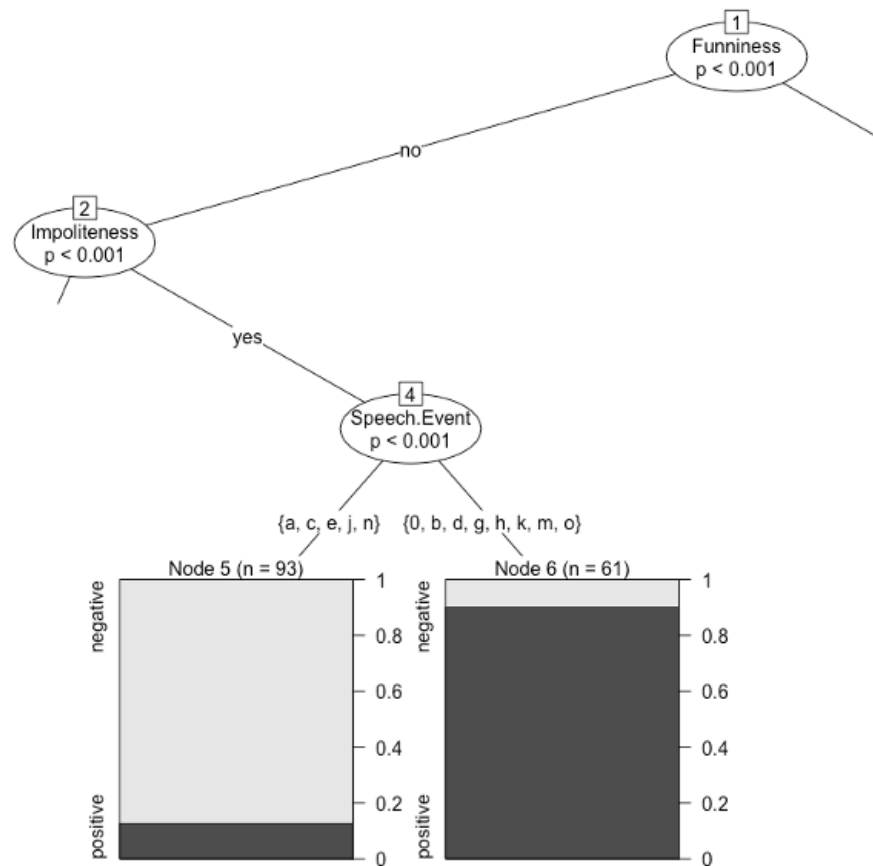


Figure 7. 4 Hierarchical pathways 1-2-4-5 and 1-2-4-6 (Funniness-Impoliteness-Speech Event-Evaluation)

Similar to the interpretation of Figure 7.3, the pathways in Figure 7.4 demonstrate that Funniness (node 1) is the most significant factor in the decisions of making evaluations. When there is no explicit reference to Funniness being at play, the Danmaku comments tend to focus on Impoliteness (node 2). When Impoliteness is referred to then the next factor to decide evaluations is Speech Event (node 4). When the evaluations are about speech events a, c, e, j and n, the evaluations tend to be negative as more than 80% (the lighter block of node 5) of the 93 Danmaku comments are negative evaluations. However, at node 6, when the evaluations are about speech events 0, b, d, g, h, k, m and o, the evaluations tend to be positive as more than 80% (the darker block of node 6) of the 61 Danmaku comments are positive evaluations. A natural question at this point is what are the reasons that the speech events (a, c, e, j and n) in node 5 are statistically significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) different from the ones in node 6?



As the format of the show *Roast!* prescribes that the participants should take turns at roasting, each speech event is one participant's or roaster's turn of roasting. Therefore, there is a correspondence between each roaster and their speech events, which is demonstrated below in Table 7.1:

Speech event	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	j	k	l	m	n	o
Roaster	Yunjin Cao	Dan Li	Yunjin Cao	Yuan Chang	Yunjin Cao	Jianguo Wang	Yunjin Cao	Yun Liu	Yunjin Cao	Chizi	Yunjin Cao	Yang Xiao	Yunjin Cao	Xiao lu Li

Table 7. 1 Correspondence between each speech event and the roaster<sup>47</sup> in S01E08

Interestingly, as presented in Table 7.1, the speech events in node 5 (a, c, e, j and n) all correspond to the same roaster Yunjin Cao, who is also the host of the chosen episode S01E08. As the host of the show, Cao comes to the stage to comment on the previous roaster's performance and introduces the next roaster, and this is also Cao's opportunity to roast other guests. This explains why Cao is the roaster of every other speech event.

The majority of the negative evaluations in node 5 appear to suggest that Cao or Cao's roasting is a distinctive source of attracting negative evaluations. There might be three reasons for this. Firstly, in S01E08, Cao was the standing host of the show as the usual host of the show, Shaogang Zhang was not available for this episode. Third-party participants who are not in favor of this substitution may compare Cao to Zhang and give negative evaluations such as example [7.3.39]:

[7.3.39] 文化层次不一样，张绍刚是吐槽，这就是纯粹损人了 (speech event a)

Wenhua Cengci Bu Yiyang, Shaogang Zhang Shi Tucao, Zhe Jiushi Chuncui Sun Ren Le

Cultural level not same, Shangang Zhang is roasting, this is purely harm people PRT

“Their levels of education are not the same, while Shaogang Zhang is roasting, this is purely deriding people”

<sup>47</sup> The Danmaku comments of speech event “i” were originally collected but excluded at the re-selection stage, and this is why speech event “i” is not in the table; speech event “0” refers to the ones that are difficult to attribute to a certain speech event as previously discussed in 5.6.

Secondly, example [7.3.39] also shows that the reason for a negative evaluation is possibly because the degree of impoliteness in Cao's roasting is too high, indicated by the use of "sun" (harm/damage/deride). To the third-party participants, the degree of impoliteness of "sun" seems to be higher than that of "tucao(roasting)", which supports Dynel's (2009: 1293) argument that "the degree of aggression in teasing is gradable". It may be argued that when the degree of impoliteness or aggression is acceptable (although what counts as acceptable varies among individuals and contexts<sup>48</sup>), the third-party participants would give positive evaluation, however when it goes over a certain threshold, then negative evaluation might incur.

Thirdly, Cao, as a crosstalk actor, constantly alludes to his dispute with his former teacher and ridicules him. This is considered as highly disrespectful, especially in the traditional art form of crosstalk in China, where the teacher-student relationship is often referred to as father-son like relationship<sup>49</sup>. Thus, the act of mocking one's former teacher could entice severe criticism in Chinese culture, such as example [7.3.40]:

[7.3.40] 不要脸! 没师傅你自己学的放屁! ! ? ? (speech event c)

Bu Yao Lian! Mei Shifu Ni Ziji Xue De Fangpi !!??

Not want face! No teacher you yourself learn AUX farting!!??

"Shameless! How could you say that you don't have a teacher? Did you teach yourself to do crosstalk/fart?"

Although the majority of node 5 are negative evaluations on speech events a, c, e, j, n, there are also some positive evaluations such as example [7.3.41]:

[7.3.41] 为什么不能损老郭? 就损他 (speech event e)

Weishenme Bu Neng Sun Lao Guo? Jiu Sun Ta

Why not can harm old Guo? Just harm him

"Why can't (he) deride Lao Guo<sup>50</sup>? Just deride him"

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<sup>48</sup> Contexts here refer to both its narrow sense, as in the contexts of the show *Roast!*, and its broad sense as in psychological, physical, social, cultural contexts, etc.

<sup>49</sup> There is a saying "一日为师, 终身为父", which means "as long as A is B's teacher for one day, A will be like B's father for life".

<sup>50</sup> Lao Guo is Cao's previous teacher in crosstalk.

However, for node 6, when the speech events (0, b, d, g, h, k, m and o) are of concern, more than 80% of the evaluations are positive. Except for speech event g corresponding to the roaster Cao, other speech events correspond to other guests of the show whose turn of talking or speech event 0 are positively evaluated such as examples [7.3.42] and [7.3.43]:

[7.3.42] 这黑和自黑高级 (speech event 0)

Zhe Hei He Zihei Gao Ji

This black and self-black high class

“This ridicule and self-mockery are of high class”

[7.3.43] 李小璐不错，敢说会说!!!!!! (Speech event o)

Li XiaoLu Bu Cuo, Gan Shuo Hui Shuo !!!!!!!!

Xiaolu Li not wrong, dare speak can speak

“Xiaolu Li is not bad. She dares and can speak/roast”

The above examples [7.3.41] - [7.3.43] demonstrate that impoliteness referred to in mock impoliteness can be positively evaluated by the third-party participants, however, it might also be negatively evaluated such as examples [7.3.39] and [7.3.40]. Note that the same condition, that Funniness is not explicitly referred to while Impoliteness is explicitly referred to, applies to the Danmaku comments in both node 5 and 6. However, node 5 and node 6 reveal mostly opposite evaluations. Given the fact that all of the speech events in node 5 correspond to the roaster Cao, it seems to suggest that Cao’s turn of talking or roasting is mostly negatively evaluated, while the other roasters’ impoliteness is positively evaluated. This result indicates that when Funniness is not referred to while Impoliteness is referred to, the third-party participants evaluation is highly dependent on in-text reference, which may be further related to a specific participant, and/or the degree of impoliteness in mock impoliteness (see also “gradable aggression in teasing” in Dynel 2009).

Figure 7.5 below further demonstrates the extent to which in-text reference affect third-party participants’ evaluations when Funniness is overtly referred to.

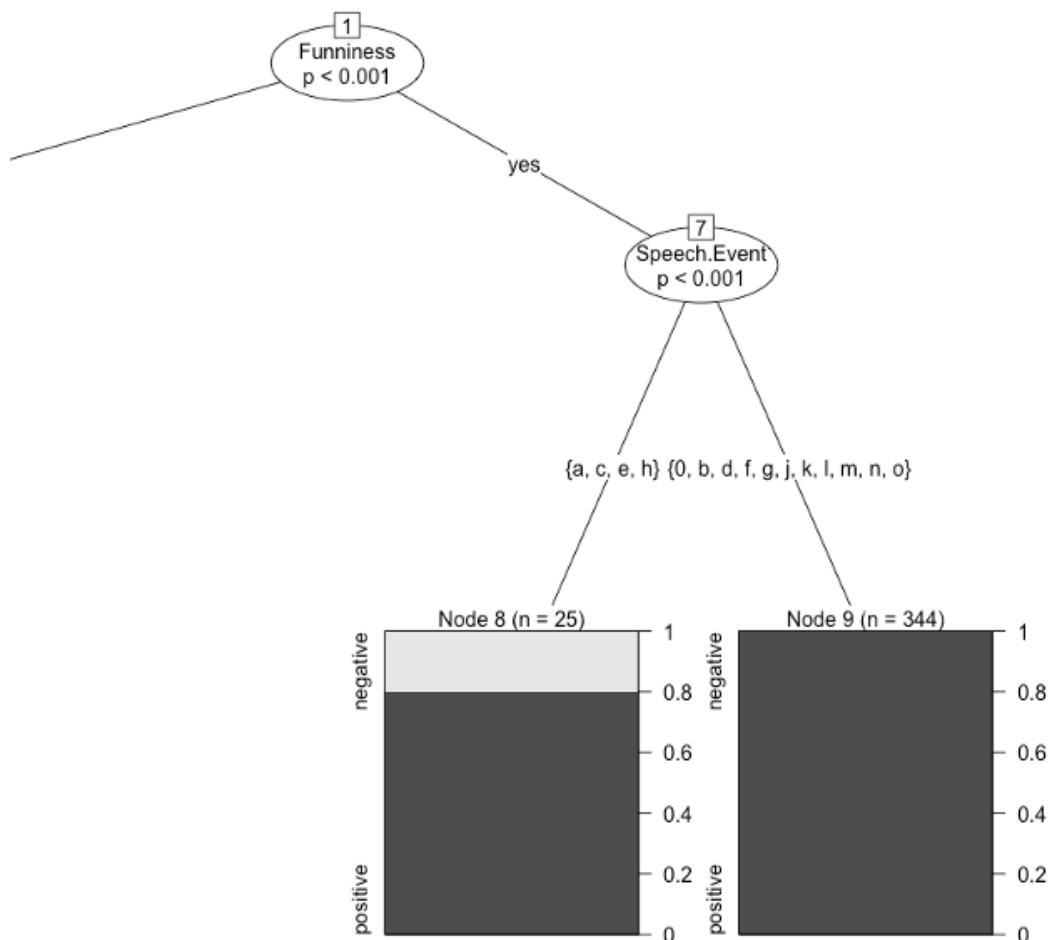


Figure 7. 5 Hierarchical pathways 1-7-8 and 1-7-9 (Funniness-Speech Event-Evaluation)

In Figure 7.5, for pathways 1-7-8 and 1-7-9, Funniness (node 1) is still the most important factor for the third-party participants to give evaluations. When Funniness is referred to in the Danmaku comments, Speech Event (node 7) is the next contributing factor. Then there is a split between two groups of speech events, that is speech event a, c, e, and h in node 8, and speech event 0, b, d, e, f, g, j, k, l, m, n and o in node 9. For node 8, 80% of the 25 comments are positive evaluations while for node 9, the evaluations are definitely positive (100% positive evaluations) as indicated by 344 Danmaku comments.

Of the four speech events in node 8, three of them, a, c, and e all correspond to roaster Cao, while h corresponds to roaster Yun Liu. However, the roastees of speech event h is

still Cao. Below are examples of both negative evaluations and positive evaluations in node 8:

[7.3.44] 也就这么一个梗 (speech event a)

Ye Jiu Zheme Yige Geng

Also only this one joke

“There’s only this one joke after all”

[7.3.45] 哈哈哈哈哈，曹云金女朋友多 (speech event h)

Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha, Cao Yunjin Nv Pengyou Duo

Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha, Yunjin Cao girlfriends a lot

“Hahahahaha, Yunjin Cao has a lot of girlfriends”

Although example [7.3.44] acknowledges that there is a joke, the third-party participants gave a negative evaluation in that there was only one joke, while example [7.3.45] is a positive evaluation. It is important to point out that example [7.3.44] corresponds to roaster Cao. Even though they find his joke funny, they evaluated it negatively because there was only this one joke, while in example [7.3.45], Cao is the roastee of speech event h, which corresponds to the roaster Yun Liu. As he was ridiculed for having many girlfriends, the third-party participants give positive evaluations. This suggests that the specific participant Cao (either as roaster or roastee) strongly determines the split of speech events at node 7, which is also consistent with the split at node 4 discussed above. It seems that when it comes to Cao, whether Funniness and/or Impoliteness is referred to in the comments, the third-party participants always evaluate Cao’s speech events differently.

One possible explanation for this different treatment of Cao by the third-party participants is that Cao is indeed a controversial figure, which makes him “special” among other participants. This is mainly due to the dispute with his former teacher, which is well-known among Chinese netizens as the blog disclosing the detail of the dispute on 05/09/2016 has accumulated 181,000 reposts, 383,000 comments, 954,000 likes on Weibo<sup>51</sup>, and has been read 57,180,000 times<sup>52</sup>. Note that when S01E08 was

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<sup>51</sup> Weibo is a widely used social media platform in China.

<sup>52</sup> Such figures are collected on 02/04/2021 via the link of the blog about the dispute posted by Yunjin Cao: [https://weibo.com/ttarticle/x/m/show/id/2309404016334328459355?\\_wb\\_client=1](https://weibo.com/ttarticle/x/m/show/id/2309404016334328459355?_wb_client=1)

aired on 12/03/2017, the dispute was still controversial, and may have been heated up by the recent appearance of Cao in S01E02 aired earlier on 15/01/2017. In fact, this incident is still much discussed even in 2021 (5 years after the incident), under almost every Cao's post on Weibo<sup>53</sup> despite that such posts are irrelevant to the dispute. Interestingly, people often criticize or support Cao by referring to what Cao has said about the dispute in S01E08 of the show *Roast!*. If what Cao has said or done 5 years ago in the show *Roast!* could still entice heated debates on another platform Weibo, it does not seem surprising why the third-party participants would treat him differently. This explains why Cao is always the trigger of the splits between groups of speech events. I speculate that the controversial views about Cao may contribute to third-party participants' personal attachment to Cao, which could affect their evaluations. Further discussion on this will be revisited in 7.3.2.

However, this is not to say that as long as Cao is involved, the evaluations would always be negative. There are positive evaluations even when Cao is involved, as is shown by the positive evaluations in node 8, for instance, example [7.3.46] below.

[7.3.46]老子也就是喜欢❤️曹云金。只要带来笑管他妈的 (speech event e)

Laozi Ye Shi Jiushi Xihuan (heart emoji) Cao Yunjin. Zhiyao Dailai Xiao Guan Ta Ma  
DE

Father also is just like Yunjin Cao. As long as brings laughter care his mother AUX

“Daddy (I) just loves Yunjin Cao. As long as (he) brings laughter who gives a damn”

Thus, comparing the analysis of Figure 7.4 and Figure 7.5, it is fair to say that speech events that correspond to Cao are evaluated differently from other speech events. This suggests that the third-party participants' evaluations are strongly dependent on references to specific contexts, which is demonstrated by the splits of Speech Event at node 4 and 7. It is also worth noting that Referent, although not shown in Figure 7.2, is also highly related to Speech Event as demonstrated in Table 7.1. Referent also indicates references to specific contexts of speech.

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<sup>53</sup> See Cao's Weibo page for other Weibo users' debates over his dispute with Degang Guo in comments: <https://m.weibo.cn/u/1284664183?jumpfrom=weibocom>

As for node 9, the 100% positive evaluations have an obvious explanation that the concern of the audience of a game show is mostly likely to be whether they are amused. Thus, when the third-party participants find the show funny, for the speech events in node 9, they give positive evaluations as demonstrated by the following example [7.3.47].

[7.3.47] 这个好看啊。笑点多啊 (speech event 0)

Zhege Hao Kan A. Xiao Dian Duo A

This good looking PRT. Laugh point many PRT

“This is entertaining. There are a lot of funny things.”

To summarize, for the Danmaku data of S01E08, the results show that:

- i) The factors that influence the third-party participants' evaluations are hierarchical, in the order of Funniness, Impoliteness and Speech Event, although Speech Event is also correlated with Referent, as demonstrated in the above analysis.
- ii) It is evident that when neither Funniness nor Impoliteness is referred to, negative evaluations tend to occur. When Funniness is not textually referred to, but Impoliteness is, positive evaluations could occur. However, negative evaluations could also be triggered if Impoliteness is referred to as “crossing the line”, which mainly concern the speech events where an individual – in this case Yunjin Cao – is involved.
- iii) If Funniness is textually referred to, most likely the evaluations would be positive, however, on particular speech events where Cao is either the roaster or the roastee, there are also a few cases of negative evaluations.

### 7.3.1.2 The results and analysis of the Danmaku data of S02E08

In order to examine whether the above findings generally apply to other episodes of the show, the same conditional inference tree model is also fitted for the Danmaku data of S02E08. If the result of S02E08 is similar to that of S01E08, then it validates the above findings. Should the result be different, fitting the model to the two episodes respectively (and then comparing the results), rather than applying the model to the whole dataset allows the chance to further analyse what factors caused the differences if any. In addition, the local contexts of mock impoliteness phenomena within the two episodes are also different which might lead to different dynamics of the mock impoliteness phenomena and the subsequent evaluations. Analysing the whole dataset together would risk losing potential nuances of the evaluations of mock impoliteness in each episode. The result of the data of S01E08 is showed in Figure 7.6:

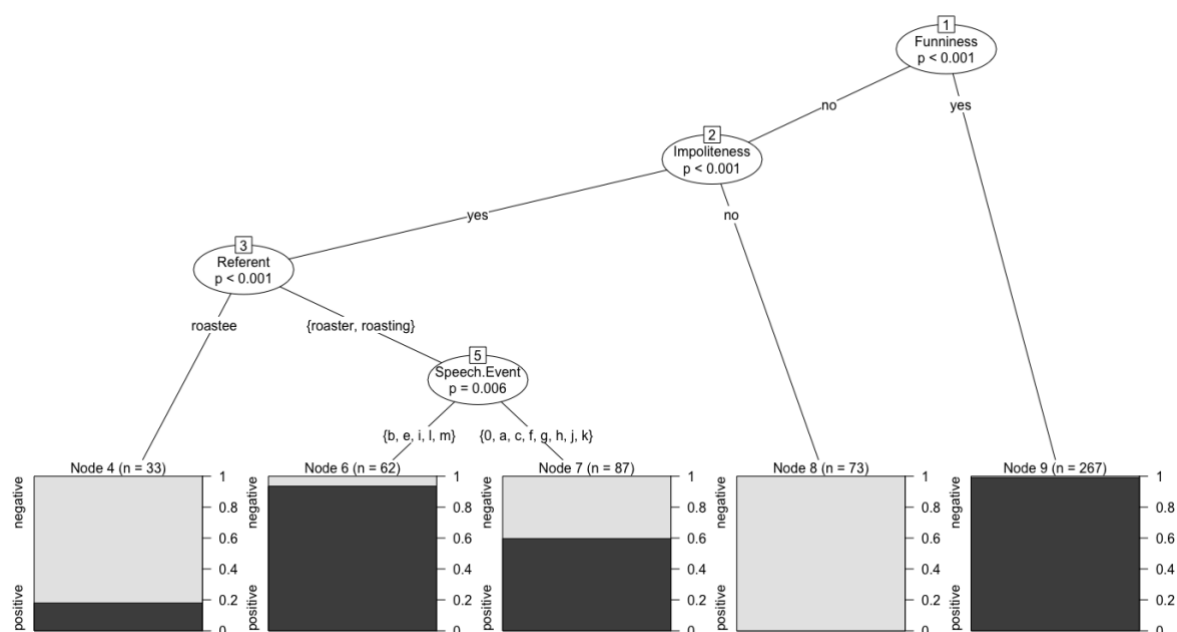


Figure 7. 6 Conditional inference tree of Evaluation for S02E08

As can be seen from Figure 7.6, the factors influencing third-party participants' evaluations are also hierarchical, in the order of Funniness (node 1), Impoliteness (node 2), Referent (node3) and Speech Event (node 5). This result is similar to that of S01E08 in that Funniness and Impoliteness are the two most significant factors in evaluations. What is different from the result of S01E08 is the effects of Referent and Speech Event,



as demonstrated by the pathways 1-2-3-4 (Funniness-Impoliteness-Referent-Evaluation), 1-2-3-5-6 and 1-2-3-5-7 (Funniness-Impoliteness-Referent-Speech Event-Evaluation), which will be the main focus of this section.

Pathway 1-2-3-4 (Funniness-Impoliteness-Referent-Evaluation) can be interpreted in this way: When Funniness is not referred to (node 1), then the next most influential factor is Impoliteness (node 2). When Impoliteness is referred to, then the next factor is Referent (node 3), and when the referent is roastee, more than 80% (lighter block of node 4) of the 33 Danmaku comments are negative evaluations. Example [7.3.48] below demonstrates negative evaluations:

[7.3.48]王岳伦被吐槽得好惨啊

Wang Yuelun Bei Tucao De Hao Can A

Yuelun Wang is roasted AUX very miserable PRT

“YueLun Wang is roasted so miserably”

When the referent is the roastee, the evaluations tend to take a sympathetic view on the roastee being the target of mock impoliteness, thus resulting in negative evaluations. This finding echoes Sinkeviciute’s (2017:52) analysis of non-participants’ evaluations of potentially humorous remarks, that is, when non-participants comment from the target’s perspective, the evaluations project a negative attitude towards a jocular remark. An explanation is that when the third-party participants choose to refer to the roastee or target, potentially they are psychologically projecting themselves as the roastee or target, thus more likely to make negative evaluations of the remarks.

Occasionally, the third-party participants are also happy to see the roastee being roasted as shown in example [7.3.49], although such cases are less than 20% in node 4.

[7.3.49]肖骁怼金主 这下被怼回来了吧

Xiaoxiao Dui Jin Zhu Zhe Xia Bei Dui Hui Lai Le Ba

Xiaoxiao poked money owner this time being poked back PRT

“Xiaoxiao dissed the investor and now he is being dissed back huh”

In example [7.3.49], Xiaoxiao was the roaster of a previous speech event where he roasted a representative of the investor of the show, and in this particular speech event, the representative is now roasting Xiaoxiao. The example [7.3.49] seems to indicate that the one who roasted other people also deserves to be roasted back. This fits the Principle of (Im)politeness Reciprocity (PIR) proposed by Culpeper and Tantucci (2021:150), which is “a constraint on human interaction such that there is pressure to match the referred to or anticipated (im)politeness of other participants, thereby maintaining a balance of payments”. In the third-party participants’ view, Xiaoxiao being roasted back maintains a balance of payments and is thus positively evaluated.

For pathways 1-2-3-5-6 and 1-2-3-5-7 (Funniness-Impoliteness-Referent-Speech Event-Evaluation), they initially follow the same decision-making process as pathway 1-2-3-4 in terms of the conditions for node 1 and 2, then the next split is at node 3, where the Referent for pathways 1-2-3-5-6 and 1-2-3-5-7 is roaster or roasting. Then at node 5, where Speech Event comes into play, more than 90% of the 62 Danmaku comments (node 6) are positive evaluations when the speech events are b, e, i, l, and m, while 60% of the 87 Danmaku comments (node 7) are positive evaluations when the speech events of concern are 0, a, c, f, g, h, j, and k. The results in node 6 and 7 demonstrate that the speech events in node 6 seem more likely to be evaluated positively than the ones in node 7, although both groups tend to get more positive evaluations than negative evaluations. This significant difference of evaluations between two groups of speech events is interesting. Could there be a similar pattern behind this split to that of S01E08?

With the variable of Roaster and Speech Event highly correlated, it is worth exploring the correspondence between each speech event and the roaster in Table 7.2.

Speech Event	a	b	c	d <sup>54</sup>	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
Roaster	Shaogang Zhang	Jianguo Wang	Shaogang Zhang	Zhengyu Lu	Dan li	Chang Shen	Xiao Xiao	Shaogang Zhang	Dian Zhao	Bo Pang	Shaogang Zhang	Yuelun Wang	Yuqi Zhang

Table 7. 2 Correspondence between each speech event and the roaster in S02E08

<sup>54</sup> Speech event d is already filtered out at node 2 and this is why it is not showing in node 6 or 7.

As indicated by table 7.2, the speech events b, e, i, l, and m (in node 6) correspond to Jianguo Wang, Dan Li, Dian Zhao, Yuelun Wang and Yuqi Zhang respectively, while four of the speech events in node 7 correspond to Shaogang Zhang and the others to Chang Shen, Xiaoxiao and Bo Pang.

In node 6, altogether there are 4 Danmaku comments indicating negative evaluations. 3 are about speech event e which corresponds to Dan Li, and 1 is about speech event m which corresponds to Yuqi Zhang. All 4 negative evaluations indicate that the level of impoliteness referred to is too much, such as example [7.3.50].

[7.3.50] 走了张有点过分了 (speech event m)

Zou Le Zhang Youdian Guo Fen Le

Left Zhang a bit cross limit PRT

“I’m leaving (because) Zhang has crossed the line a bit”

Although Impoliteness is referred to for both node 6, and 7, the Danmaku comments in node 6 are more positively received. An explanation for such a split is that the roasters or roasting in node 6 seem to be more popular than the roasters or roasting in node 7. For the roasters that corresponds to the speech events in node 6, Jianguo Wang is a frequent guest in the show *Roast!* and had previously won the trophy of talk King; Dan Li is the planner of the show and is a beloved performer through seasons of the show; Dian Zhao is the representative of the investor of the show, who was given a lot of credit for performing roasting for the first time in his life; Yuelun Wang was also appraised for being able to take a joke even when he was roasted; and Yuqi Zhang is the main guest for the show who was considered to be the attraction of this episode. However, this is just one possibility. It could also be that the roasters in node 6 are generally better at roasting than the ones in node 7, although the judgement varies among third-party participants. Another possibility is that despite the 4 negative evaluations such as example [7.3.50], the degree of impoliteness referred to by third-party participants in node 6 is generally more appropriate or acceptable than the ones in node 7 as the evaluations in node 7 are much more mixed. However, it is worth noting that the exact reasons behind such difference are difficult, if not impossible to retrieve, as i) the Danmaku comments offer limited information; ii) the number of Danmaku users, i.e., third-party participants are huge; and iii) the Danmaku comments are anonymous. This pattern that the Danmaku users’ evaluations favour a particular group of speech event

has already been seen in the results of S01E08, although the difference is that in S01E08 one person Yunjin Cao causes this divergence, the divergence is relevant to a group of people who all seem to share some sort of popularity. Such nuances also validate the decision of analysing the two episodes separately.

In comparison with node 6, the roasters correspond to the speech events in node 7 are Shaogang Zhang, who is also the host of the show and often receives mixed evaluations as demonstrated below in example [7.3.51] and [7.3.52]; Chang Shen, who was not commented much by the Danmaku users (only two comments regarding to speech event f); Xiaoxiao, who was also not commented much by the Danmaku users with only three comments regarding to speech event g; and Bo Pang, who also received mixed evaluations such as examples [7.3.53] and [7.3.54]. Speech event 0 corresponds to the Danmaku Comments that do not have explicit referents, and are also mixed, as in examples [7.3.55] and [7.3.56] below.

[7.3.51] 这个主持人不是吐槽，是很损，不喜欢👎 (speech event a)

Zhege Zhuchiren Bushi Tucao, Shi Hen Sun, Bu Xihuan

This host is not roasting, is very mean, not like

“This host is not roasting but being mean, I don’t like it”

[7.3.52] 张绍刚竟然吐槽赞助商，在下服 (speech event c)

Zhang Shaogang Jingran Tucao Zanzhu Shang, Zaixia Fu

Shaogang Zhang even roasts invest merchant, I admire

“Shaogang Zhang even roasts the investor, which I admire”

[7.3.53] 庞博这种冒犯，感觉并不幽默， (speech event j)

Pang Bo Zhe Zhong Maofan, Ganjue Bingbu Youmo

Bo Pang this kind offence, feel not humorous

“This kind of offence made by Bo Pang, I don’t think it’s humorous”

[7.3.54] woc 庞博说张雨绮整容? ! 什么话都敢讲，佩服佩服!! (speech event j)

Wo Cao Pang Bo Shuo Zhang Yuqi Zheng Rong?! Shenme Hua Dou Gan Jiang,  
Peifu Peifu!!

I fuck Bo Pang say Yuqi Zhang plastic surgery?! What talk even dare say, admire  
admire!!

“Oh my! Bo Pang said Yuqi Zhang did plastic surgery?! (he) dares talk about  
anything, which I truly admire!!”

[7.3.55] 一夸一踩还是做的不错的 (speech event 0)

Yi Kua Yi Cai Haishi Zuo De Bu Cuo De

One praise one trample still do AUX not wrong AUX

“The act of praising and trampling someone at the same time is done quite good”

[7.3.56] 有时候吐槽没轻重，感觉不尊重人 (speech event 0)

You Shihou Tucao Mei Qing Zhong, Ganjue Bu Zunzhong Ren

Sometimes roast no light heavy, feel no respect people

“Sometimes the roasting is too intense, which gives the feeling of not respecting people.”

As is evident in the above examples, when impoliteness is referred to in mock impoliteness, some third-party participants would evaluate such impoliteness positively while others might evaluate the same speech act negatively. Although, in general, impoliteness is more likely to be positively evaluated, which proves that impoliteness is expected in mock impoliteness. This finding is consistent with the finding in the data of S01E08 (7.3.1.1).

Note that in comparison to Figure 7.2 (S01E08), in Figure 7.6 (S02E08) Referent is a more influential factor than Speech Event on Evaluation. Then what might be the reasons for this difference? First, roastee is mentioned at a lower frequency (2%) than that in S02E08 (7%). Thus, in S01E08 the divergence of roastee and other values of Referent might not be statistically significant enough to be shown in the results (Figure 7.2). Secondly, the Danmaku comments that do refer to roastee in S01E08 all correspond to Yunjin Cao, which are subsumed by the divergence of Speech Event at node 4. Thirdly, Table 7.1 and Table 7.2 prove that Referent and Speech Event are highly correlated to each other. This is to say, although on a superficial level, the results of S01E08 and S02E08 may appear to be different, further analysis has revealed that this difference can be attributed to in-text reference, whether more prominently displayed in Referent or Speech Event. Thus, separately analysing two episodes teased out the nuances between the effect of Referent and the effect of Speech Event on third-party participants' evaluations, which is sensitive to the context of each episode. One can infer that similar patterns may also be observed in other episodes.

The pathway 1-2-8 (Funniness-Impoliteness-Evaluation) in Figure 7.6 is consistent with the pathway 1-2-3 of the result of S01E08, which indicates that when Funniness is not referred to, lack of impoliteness is negatively evaluated. As for pathway 1-9 (Funniness-Evaluation), it is in line with the finding of pathway 1-7-9 of S01E08, which suggests that when Funniness is referred to, the evaluations from the third-party participants are most likely to be positive.

To summarize, for the Danmaku data of S02E08, the factors that influence the third-party participants' evaluations are also hierarchical, in the order of Funniness, Impoliteness, Referent and Speech Event, which is slightly different from the result of the data of S01E08. However, the findings of S02E08 are mostly consistent with the ones of S01E08, which supports the predictive power of the results in the show:

- i) Third-party participants tend to give positive evaluations when Funniness is textually referred to;
- ii) After Funniness, Impoliteness is then likely to attract positive evaluations (although negative evaluations could incur when the degree of impoliteness is considered to have “crossed the line”);
- iii) Referent and Speech Event are correlated, and both episodes and evaluations are strongly dependent on in-text reference, although for the results of S01E08, Referent is not shown in Figure 7.2 but is proved to be correlated to Speech Event after closer analysis (table 7.1);
- iv) For S02E08, when neither of Funniness nor Impoliteness is referred to, the third-party participants tend to give more negative evaluations if the Referent is roastee, while giving more positive evaluations if the Referent is roaster or roasting;
- v) For both S01E08 and S02E08, there is significant difference between groups of Speech Event where one group is more likely to get positive evaluations than the other, although for S01E08, one group of speech events mostly correspond to the same roaster (the one who seems a controversial character) while for S02E08 such groups correspond to several roasters (who all seem to share some sort of popularity). This result demonstrates that certain traits of the roaster (be it positive or negative) could affect the way the third party-participants evaluate mock impoliteness speech events that involve the person.

### 7.3.2 Factors contributing to Likes

For question ii) *what factors contribute to the number of likes that each comment gets*, the same method of conditional inference tree model was again fitted for data of S01E08 and S02E08 respectively with “Likes” as the dependent variable, and “Speech Event”, “Referent”, “Impoliteness”, “Funniness” and “Evaluation” as the independent variables.

#### 7.3.2.1 The results and analysis of the Danmaku data of S01E08

Figure 7.7 shows the results of the data for S01E08.

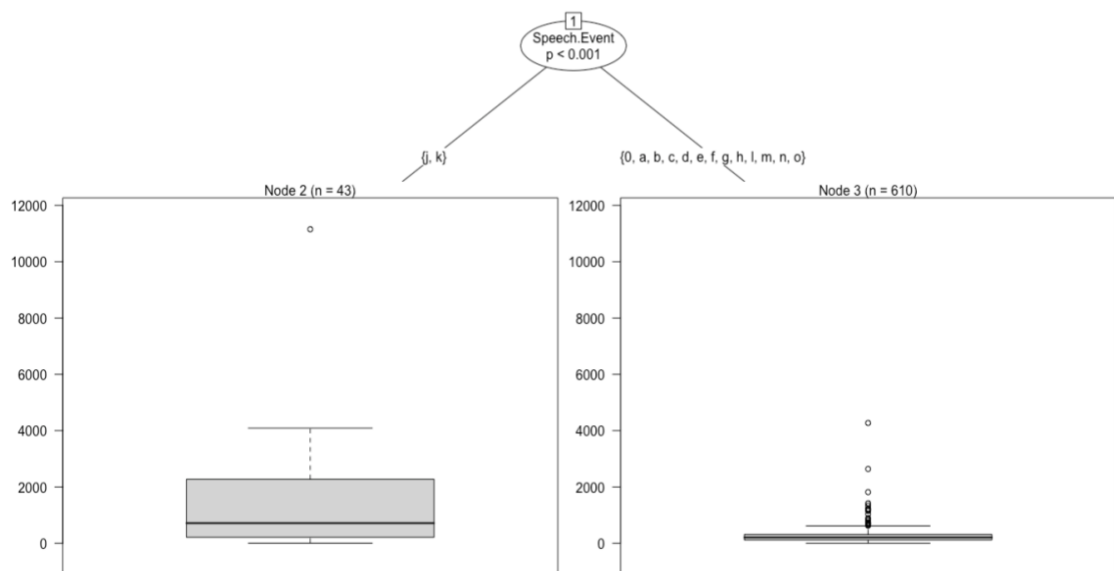


Figure 7.7 Conditional Inference Tree of Likes for S01E08

Figure 7.7 demonstrates that Speech Event (node 1) predicts the distribution of the numbers of Likes each comment would get in two box plots (node 2 and 3). In the box plots, the numbers on the vertical axis are the number of likes the Danmaku comments get. The boxes in grey shade indicate the interquartile range (IQR), which amounts to the range of Likes between the 25th to the 75th percentile of the observations. The horizontal lines inside the boxes indicate the median of the number of Likes. The highest and lowest bars represent the minimum and maximum number of likes the Danmaku comments could get excluding outliers. The dots outside the top bars

represent outliers, which are a few comments that get very high numbers of likes above the range.

Thus, it can be clearly seen from Figure 7.7 that Speech Event is the only significant predictor of the numbers of likes, and when the Speech Event is j and k, there are 43 Danmaku Comments (node 2) tend to get significantly ( $p < 0.001$ ) more likes than the 610 Danmaku Comments (node 3). In other words, the majority of Danmaku comments in node 3 tend to get between 1 to 1182 likes with a narrow IQR. However, the 43 Danmaku comments in node 2 tend to get between 1 to 2503 likes, with a much wider IQR. This result suggests that Danmaku comments about Speech Event j and k attract statistically significantly more likes than Danmaku comments about the rest of the speech events do. Thus, the question is: what makes Speech Event j and k so special?

As is displayed in table 7.1, speech event j corresponds to roaster Yunjin Cao while k corresponds to roaster Chizi. By examining such 43 Danmaku comments, for speech event j, the Danmaku comments criticize Yunjin Cao repeatedly for his previous remarks on Chizi being obscene, such as the example [7.3.26] discussed previously in 7.2 and repeated below:

[7.3.26] 你最猥琐好么 好意思说别人 (👍204)

Ni Zui Weisuo Haome Hao Yisi Shuo Bie Ren

You most obscene ok Good meaning talk other people

“You’re the most obscene (person), ok. You’ve got some nerves to criticize others”

Other Danmaku comments about speech event j seems to suggest commonly agreed negative evaluation on Yunjin Cao, such as example [7.3.57]:

[7.3.57]曹没品 (👍 997)

Cao Mei Pin

Cao no morality

“Cao does not have a sense of morality”

Example [57] attracted 997 likes by criticizing Cao’s lack of moral order. Moral order is defined in Domenici and Littlejohn (2006: 7) as “a tradition of thought worked out over time within a community. It is normally implicit and sub-conscious, but it is



powerful in driving human action” (see also Culpeper 2011). Here, the third-party participants evaluate Cao or Cao’s roasting negatively due to the lack of moral order, which supports Haugh’s (2013:57) claim that “the moral order is what grounds our evaluations of social actions and meanings as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘normal’ or ‘exceptional’, ‘appropriate’ or “‘inappropriate’ and so on, and of course, as ‘polite’, ‘impolite’, ‘over-polite’ and so on”. It is perhaps Cao’s comment on Chizi’s appearance (“obscene”) and/or the degree of impoliteness communicated that attracted such negative evaluations of lacking moral order.

Negative evaluations such as example [7.3.57] also signal another important issue, that is, impoliteness has limits. It is interesting that in a context where forms of impoliteness are constantly used to entertain the audiences, certain impoliteness topics are off-limits, and exceeding a certain level of impoliteness results in negative evaluations among third-party participants. Culpeper (2011:216) distinguishes the normalisation, legitimisation and neutralisation of impoliteness. While normalisation and legitimisation both rely on an ideology that positively values impoliteness, legitimisation relates much more clearly to institutional structures creating contexts in which impoliteness is licensed and rewarded, such as army recruit training, parliamentary debates, interrogations, etc. However, neutralisation, especially in the context of mock impoliteness, “results from an understanding that the context in which the impolite forms appear is not the requisite context for genuine impoliteness” (Culpeper, 2011:216). Despite that in the context of the show *Roast!*, impoliteness could be normalised or even legitimised, there are still limits for such impoliteness where neutralisation of impoliteness would fail and leads to negative evaluations. Similar examples are that a soldier perceived the sergeants’ language to be highly impolite despite understanding the impoliteness embedded in army training philosophy (Culpeper 1996), and that contestants still take offence in the quiz game show *The Weakest Link* (Culpeper, 2005). Culpeper (2011:218) explains that the neutralization of impoliteness fails because “generally targets of impoliteness tend not to pay sufficient attention to the context”. Thus, the roaster’s smiley facial expression, exaggerating tone and other contextual signals could still fail to compete with the salient impoliteness one might experience.

Interestingly, the situation of example [7.3.57] is contrary to the above examples where the soldier and the contestants were the targets of impoliteness. In the case of example [7.3.57], it is the third-party participants who are not the targets of impoliteness rather the targets of entertainment find the impoliteness has exceeded certain limits. Therefore, why could the third-party participants not just sit back and enjoy the exploitative entertainment at the cost of the real targets?

Many other factors might be at play. Firstly, the level of impoliteness has exceeded the limits, such as blatantly criticizing other people's appearance in [7.3.26]. Despite that the limits of impoliteness vary among individuals and/or contexts, as not all third-party participants evaluated this mock impoliteness speech act negatively, some third-party participants did take offence. This resonates with Sinkeviciute's (2015) findings that teasing can be negatively evaluated when it is meant to amuse the hearers at the target's expense, and that "there is a borderline between what can be considered as a joke and what goes too far" (2015: 26). Secondly, the impoliteness could be in conflict with cultural expectations of what should not be ridiculed, which in this case is exemplified by joking about one's teacher in Chinese culture. As Pan (2000:6) rightly observes, Chinese are "very deferential to their superiors" (see also Wong, 2016). This cultural emphasis dates back to Confucius' notion of "正名" (Zheng Ming, the rectification of names), which is a doctrine of feudal Confucian designations and relationships<sup>55</sup>. It prescribes that one's behaviour should adhere to one's social identity to ensure social harmony, and such identities or roles should not be changed or reversed (Oldstone-Moore, 2002). This explains why Danmaku users were so offended by Yunjin Cao's behaviour of mocking his teacher, because he as a student should not act out of his place. Thirdly, the anonymity of Danmaku might offer the third-party participants more freedom in expressing negative evaluations. This is commonly recognized in the literature that anonymity in CMC contexts could have a liberating effect on participants' behaviours (Lea et al., 1991; Graham and Hardaker, 2017).

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<sup>55</sup> Confucius says "a superior man considers it necessary that the names he uses may be spoken appropriately, and also that what he speaks may be carried out appropriately. What the superior man requires is just that in his words there may be nothing incorrect (君子名之必可言也，言之必可行也。君子於其言，無所苟而已矣)" — Confucius, *Analects*, Book XIII, Chapter 3, verses 4–7, Analect 13.3, translated by James Legge in (Legge, 1971).

While for speech event k, although it corresponds to roaster Chizi, 22 of 26 (85%) Danmaku comments are third-party participants' cooperative reactions to Chizi's calling for the roasting of Yunjin Cao.

Chizi's mock impoliteness speech act is transcribed below:

弹幕走起来 金子<sup>56</sup>不要脸 好不好 哎

Danmu Zou Qilai Jinzi Buyao Lian Hao Bu Hao Ai

Danmaku floating Jinzi no want face good no good PRT

“Let's put this in Danmaku: Jinzi is shameless, ok”

The bald on record phrase “Jinzi does not want face/Jinzi is shameless” is potentially impolite, despite being said in a jocular way with a smiley face. This explicit call on Danmaku users' participation is very much welcomed, with 85% of the Danmaku comments about speech event k participating in this mock impoliteness speech act, as demonstrated in example [7.3.58]:

[7.3.58] 金子不要脸! ! ! ! ! (👍 4090)

Jinzi Buyao Lian!!!!

Jinzi no want face good!!!!

“Jinzi is shameless!!!!”

Other Danmaku comments in similar form as example [7.3.58] all attracted high numbers of likes, ranging from 1126 to 2806, thus explaining the wide range of IQR in node 2. Danmaku such as [7.3.58], are both cooperative reactions to the roaster Chizi's mock impoliteness act of roasting Yunjin Cao, and positive evaluations of Chizi's roasting. Without the third-party's participation, Chizi's mock impoliteness speech act is not likely to achieve its function, equally, without the roaster's explicit call, such Danmaku comments probably would not appear or attract as many likes. Compared to the number of likes other Danmaku comments get, calling for participation is certainly well received by the third-party participants. Such interactions between the participants and third-party participants are particularly interesting in that it reveals a feature of participation of Danmaku, which is fundamentally different from other forms of non-participants' comments in investigating metapragmatic evaluation (e.g., Sinkeviciute,

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<sup>56</sup> “Jinzi” is a nick name for Yunjin Cao.

2017). Contrary to non-participants (post hoc interviewees that did not participate in jocular episodes) having “no personal attachment to the jocular episodes” (Sinkeviciute, 2017:44), third-party participants, like Danmaku users, might have more personal attachment to the roasters or roastees in mock impoliteness speech event in *Roast!*. This might be related to personality cults (von Klimó, 2004) of celebrities, which “ascribe magnetic, reverential and idealized meanings to a single social actor among a great population” (Cocker and Cronin, 2017:456). Since most of the guests in *Roast!* are celebrities, the attachment to their personalities may trump mock impoliteness, linguistic skills, their role as roaster or roastee. This could explain why Yunjin Cao is particularly targeted either as a roaster or a roastee (especially with his establishment as a controversial figure<sup>57</sup>), as demonstrated in the above examples regarding speech event j and k, and in the previous analysis in 7.3.1.

To summarise, the varying distribution of Danmaku evaluations in certain speech events was analysed with reference to the particular mock impoliteness speech acts/events studied in Chapter 6, for RQ1- What constitutes mock impoliteness in the show *Roast!*. The results in Figure 7.7 show that for S01E08:

- i) Speech Event predicts numbers of Likes each Danmaku attracts;
- ii) although Danmaku comments about Yunjin Cao do not necessarily attract high number of likes (node 3), the ones that do attract higher numbers of likes (node 2), all corresponds to Yunjin Cao (Speech Event j and k);
- iii) interactions between the participants and third-party participation (note that this is also targeted at Yunjin Cao) attract higher numbers of likes.

Indeed, the above results can be confirmed by fitting the conditional inference tree in Figure 7.7 multiple times (1000 times) on the same dataset, which is known as random forest model. Just as a forest is formed by thousands of trees, the relationship between random forest and conditional inference tree is similar. Random forests are “a combination of tree predictors such that each tree depends on the values of a random vector sampled independently and with the same distribution for all trees in the forest” (Breiman, 2001:5). Random forest model “reflects the impact of each predictor given all other independent variables” (Levshina, 2015: 292). This method does not overfit as

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<sup>57</sup> See previous discussion of Cao in 7.3.1.1.

more trees are added but produces a limiting value of the generalization error (Breiman, 2001: 7). Therefore, fitting random forest model would produce robust results of the statistical significance of each factor in predicting the number of likes. Figure 7.8 shows the results of random forest for S01E08.

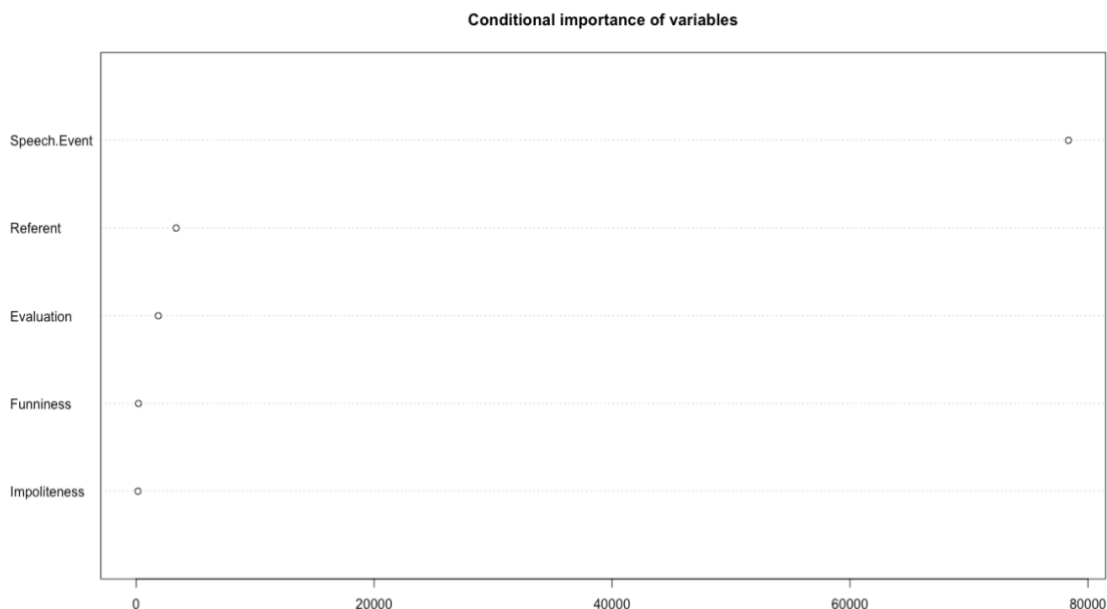


Figure 7. 8 Random Forest of Likes for S01E08

Figure 7.8 offers a clearer visualization of the effect of each independent variable on the number of Likes. The variable “Speech Event” plays the most significant role in predicting the outcome variable “Likes”, while other variables, “Referent”, “Evaluation” and “Funniness” and “Impoliteness” still contribute to “Likes”, their impact is not as significant as that of “Speech Event”. Thus, the illocutional complexity is relatively low as the outcome variable “Likes” is significantly influenced by just one variable “Speech Event”. This figure also shows a relatively low illocutional complexity, which is “the gradient intersection of overtly interactional variables that contribute to the encoding of a contextually and culturally situated speech act” (Tantucci and Wang, 2018:71). This explains why other variables were not apparent in Figure 7.6. More importantly, Figure 7.8 also suggests that the next ranking contributing factor to Likes is Referent, although not statistically significant enough to be shown in Figure 7.7. This finding is in line with the above finding that Referent Yunjin Cao specifically plays a role in contributing to

the number of Likes. Previous discussion on Cao’s controversial figure (7.3.1) could also support this finding.

### 7.3.2.2 The results and analysis of the Danmaku data of S02E08

Do the findings of S01E08 also apply to S02E08? Figure 7.9 below displays the results for S02E08.

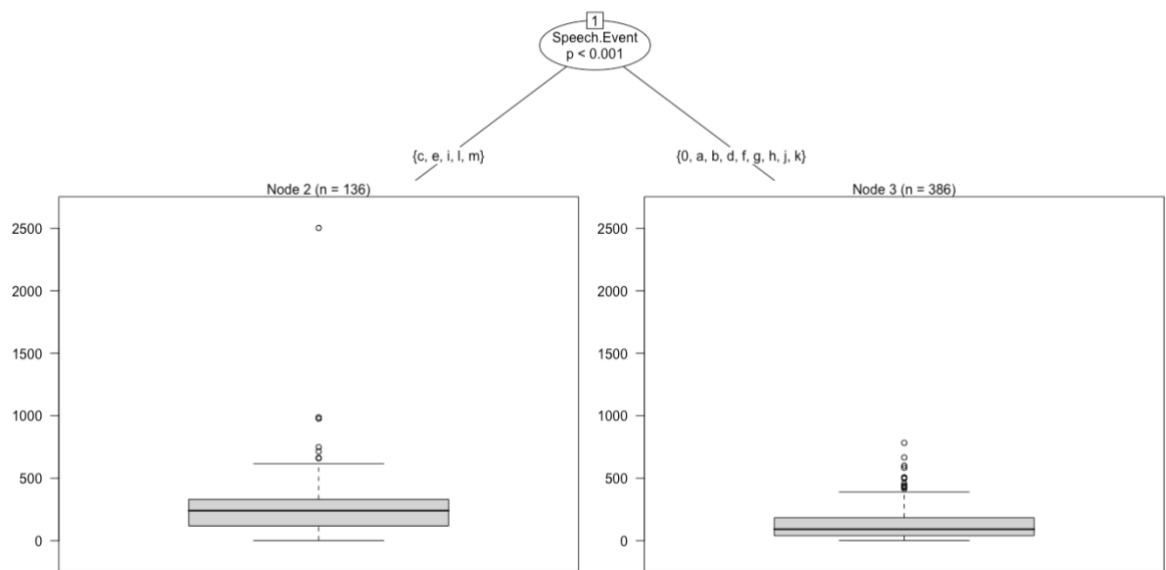


Figure 7. 9 Conditional Inference Tree of Likes for S02E08

Same as the results in Figure 7.7, Speech Event (node 1) predicts the numbers of Likes each Danmaku comment could get. However, compared with Figure 7.7, the number of likes for S02E08 are much lower than that of S01E08 in general. A possible explanation of this could be that the numbers of third-party participants for both episodes are different, as S01E08 precedes S02E08 chronologically, and has thus had more time to which accumulate Danmaku users’ contributions.

In Figure 7.9, Speech Event is also split into two groups, the 136 Danmaku comments about speech events (c, e, i, l and m) at node 2 tend to attract more (statistically significantly) Likes than the 389 Danmaku comments about speech events (0, a, b, d, f,

g, h, j and k) at node 3. Note that the speech events in node 2 (c, e, i, l and m) overlap with those in node 6 (b, e, i, l and m) in Figure 7.6 except for Speech Event b and c. Since the speech events b, e, i, l and m (node 6 in Figure 7.6) are more likely to be evaluated positively, the overlap between the two groups of speech events seems to suggest that positive evaluations tend to attract more likes. By examining the Danmaku comments about Speech Event c, I found that there are only 5 Danmaku comments and 4 (i.e., 80%) of them are positive evaluations. However, for Speech Event b, only 51% (19 out of 37) Danmaku comments are positive. This possibly explains why Speech Event c is in node 2 while b is grouped in node 3 in Figure 7.9.

This result is confirmed by fitting a random forest model for S02E08, as demonstrated below in Figure 7.10.

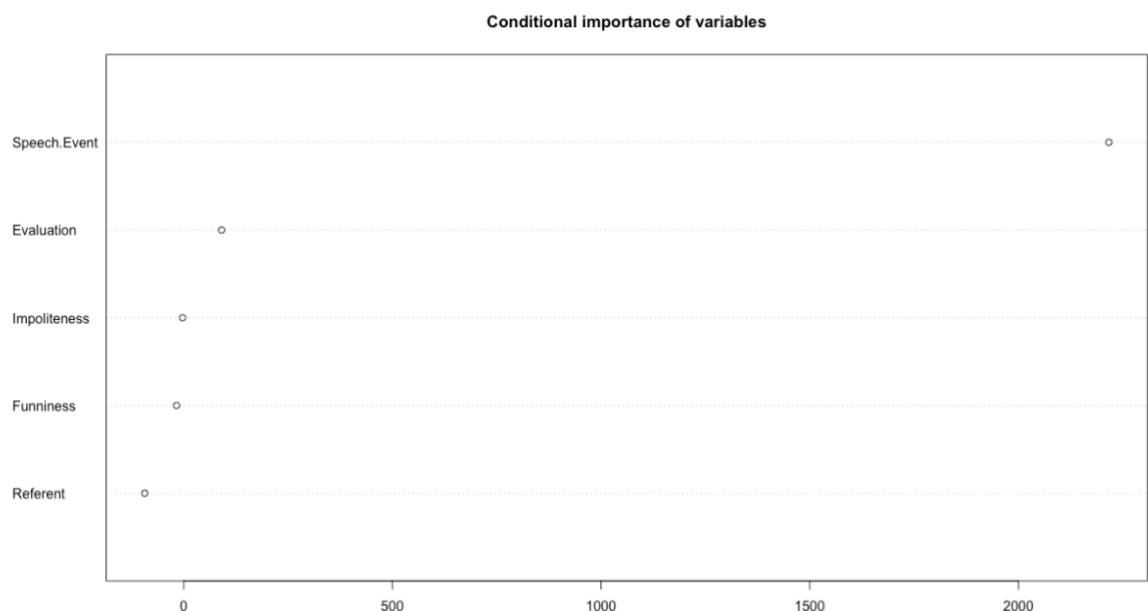


Figure 7. 10 Random Forest of Likes for S02E08

As can be seen in Figure 7.10, the patterns are similar to Figure 7.9, thus one can draw the same conclusion of low illocutionary complexity. In other words, Speech Event is the most significant contributing factor to Likes and Evaluation is the next contributing factor (although not statistically significant enough to be displayed in Figure 7.9). This confirms the above analysis that positive evaluations tend to attract more likes.

To summarize, the findings in answering what factors contribute to Likes are:

- i) for both S01E08 and S02E08, the number of Likes is affected significantly by just one variable – Speech Event;
- ii) for S01E08, the divergence of Speech Event is related to one particular Referent-Yunjin Cao, in that the Danmaku comments which correspond to Yunjin Cao tend to attract more likes, especially in the cases of interactions between participants and third-party participants;
- iii) for S02E08, the divergence of Speech Event is related to Evaluation, in that positive evaluations tend to attract more likes.

To conclude, the results for S01E08 and S02E08 are similar in general, although, as Speech Event is highly sensitive to references in specific context, there are different reasons for the divergence of Speech Event across episodes. However, one pattern exists in both episodes, that is, there are certain hot spots, corresponding to certain speech events in the show that tend to attract more likes than other speech events.

#### 7.4 Summary

This chapter investigated how mock impoliteness is evaluated by the third-party participants via a rather novel form of comments in CMC — Danmaku. In section 7.2 the categorization of the Danmaku comments gives detailed analysis of what Danmaku comments are reacting to, and sheds lights on the constructions of metapragmatic evaluations. This categorization is not only applicable to the metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness speech acts but can also be extended to metapragmatic evaluations of other speech acts or behaviours in future research regarding Danmaku.

The application of a machine learning algorithm — conditional inference tree (Hothorn et al., 2006; Tagliamonte and Baayen, 2012; Tantucci and Wang, 2018), to the analysis of third-party participants' metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness is a novel attempt to my knowledge. Section 7.2 and 7.3 demonstrates that this method offers solid (statistically significant) empirical evidence in revealing how mock impoliteness is evaluated by the third-party participants (from a first-order perspective). Importantly, the results prove that funniness and impoliteness are the two most statistically significant factors in the third-party participants' positive evaluations of mock impoliteness, which in return offers evidence for theoretical (second-order)



underpinning of mock impoliteness. The results also demonstrate that while Speech Event is the only statistically significant variable contributing to the number of likes in both datasets, closer analysis has revealed that in S01E08 evaluations involving one particular person tend to attract more likes, and in S02E08 positive evaluations tend to attract more likes.

The investigation of *RQ2 — How is mock impoliteness evaluated by the third-party participants?* adopted statistical methods, which offers clear visualisations and solid evidence. Meanwhile, extensive qualitative analysis is also heavily embedded in the interpretation of the statistical results. This is an important aspect to emphasize as the qualitative and quantitative distinction presents a false dichotomy — a thought-provoking reflection voiced by Rendle-Short (2019: 277). In this research, the statistic method of conditional inference tree is based on a data-driven coding scheme (see 5.6), which relies on initial qualitative analysis. In return, the data-driven coding scheme paves the foundation for quantitative analysis. Furthermore, the in-depth interpretation of the quantitative results can only be achieved through illustrations of qualitative analysis. It is through the flexible combination of both qualitative and quantitative analysis that the RQ2 is answered holistically. In fact, this flexible combination is carried out through the whole research process.

## Chapter 8. Conclusions

### 8.1 Research questions revisited

This research answered the following two questions:

- (1) How is mock impoliteness constructed in the show *Roast!*?
  - (a) How is mock impoliteness linguistically constructed?
  - (b) How is mock impoliteness multimodally constructed?
  
- (2) How is mock impoliteness evaluated the third-party participants?
  - (a) What factors contribute to the third-party participants' evaluations?
  - (b) What factors contribute to the number of likes that each comment gets?

The two questions were proposed for the purpose of understanding the phenomena of mock impoliteness in a Chinese online talk show *Roast!*. Chapter 6 answered RQ1—the construction of mock impoliteness from two perspectives: linguistic construction and multimodal construction, which provided a holistic view of the dynamics of mock impoliteness.

The investigation of the linguistic construction of mock impoliteness led to a special focus on the frequent uses of two linguistic constructions, rhetorical questions and imperatives in *Roast!*. By examining their forms and uses in corpora, it was found that both are conventionalized formulae of (im)politeness. The analysis of their frequent uses in the context of mock impoliteness in *Roast!* shows that both of them contribute to understandings of mock impoliteness. Although the analysis focused on 1 episode of the data (S02E08), further analysis of the rhetorical questions and imperatives in S01E08 showed that the formulaic uses of rhetorical questions and imperatives exist in the entire data set. In conclusion, rhetorical questions and imperatives through their formulaic uses in mock impoliteness contexts, have become conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in the context of the show *Roast!*. It is important to emphasize that this finding does not entail that rhetorical questions and imperatives are conventionalized mock impoliteness formulae in every context. The focus of conventionalisation is the relationship between the frequency of the co-occurrences

between language forms and specific contexts (Terkourafi, 2005b). What this finding has shown is that conventionalization when highly contextually driven, may occur in a quite short time span, which is in contrast with what is normally assumed in most language-change studies (e.g., Tantucci and Di Cristofaro, 2019; Tantucci and Wang, 2020).

The non-conventionalized mock impoliteness speech acts were analysed according to the modified Culpeper et al.'s (2017) model of mixed messages. Through the pilot study, it was demonstrated that mock impoliteness can be form-driven by flouting Gricean maxims. In addition, the pilot study also led to the proposal of a new category to Culpeper's (2011) model, that is, co-text driven. This category is defined as: the context projected by part of an unconventionalised behaviour mismatches that projected by another part of an unconventionalised behaviour. The modifications of the theoretical frameworks are fruitful for the analysis of the data from *Roast!*, with 34% of mock impoliteness speech acts being form-driven, and 11% being co-text driven. This demonstrates that the linguistic constructions of mock impoliteness vary across languages, as Culpeper's (2011) model is based on English. The analysis also shows that the most frequent categories are convention-driven mock impoliteness and context-driven unmarked mock impoliteness. While the form-driven category in Culpeper (2011) accounts for many cases of impoliteness, the category of context-driven unmarked behaviour is "supposed" to capture "bald on record impoliteness". This is to say that behaviours that are "supposed" to be impolite (according to B&L, 1987), were actually interpreted as mock impoliteness in *Roast!*. This finding supports Culpeper's (2011) argument on neutralization, in that the context of *Roast!* sanctions or neutralizes the potential impolite message (which may be interpreted so in other contexts), which is interpreted as mock impoliteness rather than impoliteness. The finding in turn has implications on the theoretical underpinning of mock impoliteness. The second-order prototype definition of mock impoliteness proposed in section 3.3 is: (i) the speaker has no intention to cause offence; (ii) there is a certain degree of impoliteness in the messages communicated; and (iii) the target or hearer perceived them without taking offence. The findings seem to suggest that as long as the speaker is not held accountable for causing offence, and as long as the target or hearer perceived them without taking offence, impoliteness can be interpreted as mock impoliteness instead of impoliteness. Indeed, in the analysis I have demonstrated cases where I as a research find the roaster's

utterances impolite (eg, example [6.3.2]), but they were indeed interpreted as mock impoliteness in the context. However, note that the target or hearer may demonstrate that they are able to take a joke, or that they are even enjoying being roasted, they could still take offence but chose to pretend the otherwise for many reasons. In this sense, mock impoliteness does not enhance solidarity as the previous research suggests (Culpeper et al., 2017), rather, it is sugar coated impoliteness in specific contexts that compels the target or the hearer to laugh along. Intensifying techniques (e.g., eye rolling, exaggerated facial expression, laughter/smile, etc.), and other participants' reactions could all help form such contexts, where the targets feel the pressure to demonstrate that they are not offended through ostensible behaviours (such as laughing, self-mockery, etc.). This also demonstrates the co-construction of mock impoliteness is important. If the target/hearer or other participants took offence, than the messages would be interpreted as impoliteness, even though the speaker may not intend so. Compared with direct impoliteness, where the targets may be sanctioned to respond with direct impoliteness (such as tit-for-tat cursing), mock impoliteness could coerce the targets to pretend that they are not taking offence. This coercive function of mock impoliteness requires further investigation.

In addition, the non-conventionalized mock impoliteness speech acts were also analysed according to Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2005, 2007, 2008) rapport management. The results demonstrate that quality face is most frequently involved. This is no surprise as the roasters often comment on how successful, famous, or good looking the roastees are, and this finding is in consistent with Culpeper's (2011) finding that quality face is the most frequent type of offence across languages in 500 diary reports of impoliteness incidents.

Besides the linguistic construction of mock impoliteness, multimodal constructions were also examined. Multimodal cues are important aspects of the construction of mock impoliteness, as demonstrated by the two case studies. In terms of prosody, this research did not find statistic significant correlation between pitch average/intensity and (im)politeness.

Chapter 7 examined the evaluation of mock impoliteness. The third-party participants' metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness in Danmaku, were firstly coded

following a data-driven coding scheme, which features qualitative analysis. Then, a rather novel method, the conditional inference tree model (Hothorn et al., 2006; Tagliamonte and Baayen, 2012; Tantucci and Wang, 2018), was fitted to generate a machine-learning simulation of the third-party participants decision-making process of their evaluations. The data-visualization demonstrated the ranking factors of the evaluations according to statistical significance, which provided solid empirical evidence of the metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness. The quantitative analysis was interpreted according to further qualitative analysis. In *Roast!*, the third-party participants' evaluations involve two stages: they gave positive or negative evaluations; they vote for such evaluations. The analysis of the contributing factors of positive or negative evaluations found that:

- i) Third-party participants tend to give positive evaluations when Funniness is referred to;
- ii) After Funniness, Impoliteness is then likely to attract positive evaluations (although negative evaluations could incur when the degree of impoliteness is considered to have “crossed the line”);
- iii) Referent (who/what they are talking about), and Speech Event are correlated, and both episodes and evaluations are strongly dependent on in-text reference, although for the results of S01E08, Referent is not shown in Figure 7.2 but appears to be qualitatively correlated to specific speech events after closer analysis (table 7.1);
- iv) For S02E08, when neither of Funniness nor Impoliteness is referred to, the third-party participants tend to give more negative evaluations if the Referent is roastee, while giving more positive evaluations if the Referent is roaster or roasting;
- vi) For both S01E08 and S02E08, there is significant difference between groups of Speech Event where one group is more likely to get positive evaluations than the other, although for S01E08, one group of speech events mostly correspond to the same roaster (the one who seems a controversial character) while for S02E08 such groups correspond to several roasters (who all seem to share some sort of popularity). This result demonstrates that certain traits of the roaster (be it positive or negative) could affect the way the third party-

participants evaluate mock impoliteness speech events that involve the person.

The analysis on the number of likes found that:

- iv) for both S01E08 and S02E08, the number of Likes is affected significantly by just one variable – Speech Event;
- v) for S01E08, the divergence of Speech Event is related to one particular Referent-Yunjin Cao, in that the Danmaku comments which correspond to Yunjin Cao tend to attract more likes, especially in the cases of interactions between participants and third-party participants;
- vi) for S02E08, the divergence of Speech Event is related to Evaluation, in that positive evaluations tend to attract more likes.

Such findings revealed funniness and impoliteness are the two most important factors resulting the third-party participants' (first-order) positive evaluations of mock impoliteness. Considering the context of the show *Roast!*, it is not surprising that funniness is the most important factor, as the audiences would expect to be entertained when watching a game show. The fact that impoliteness in mock impoliteness tend to be evaluated positively by the third-party participants, demonstrates the exploitative entertainment function of mock impoliteness. However, it is also important to recognize that the tolerance of the degree of impoliteness varies among the third-party participants, as the same mock impoliteness speech event could be evaluated positively by some but negatively by others. Such findings in turn provide solid empirical evidence for the second-order understandings of mock impoliteness.

## 8.2 Limitations and future research

There are several limitations of this research due to various reasons.

First of all, this research on mock impoliteness focused simply on the show *Roast!*, and the findings might not apply to mock impoliteness in Chinese in other contexts. While recently, there are a few research focusing on mock impoliteness in Chinese in other

contexts, such as (Chen, 2019) on jocular abuse in Chinese fiction, and Chang and Haugh (2020) on teasing in Taiwanese Chinese, much more research is needed to understand the phenomena of mock impoliteness in varieties of Chinese in various contexts.

Secondly, during the process of investigating the formulaic uses of rhetorical questions and imperatives, 197 corpora examples were analysed. This number is obviously limited, but the decision was made under the restriction of the time span and focus of this research. Future research can expand the sample size and incorporate more linguistic constructions of rhetorical questions and imperatives and produce more thorough results.

Thirdly, the multimodal exacerbation of mock impoliteness focused on two case studies and a small scale of study on prosody, which is limited by the data sample size of this research. Future research on more multimodal cues in larger data sets can reveal findings that may apply to wider contexts.

Lastly, as discussed in 5.7, the issue of ambiguity of Danmaku data posed some obstacles for data analysis, and some methodological compromises were made. As Danmaku research is so far a novel area, there were little literature, methodologies to draw on. Future research can perhaps provide further methodologies. It is also worth emphasizing that the Danmaku data is a rich data source with potential for many areas research of linguistics. While the current research focused on the metapragmatic evaluations of mock impoliteness, during the data analysis, I also found many interesting phenomena in Danmaku communication, such as (im)politeness within Danmaku, community of practice building among anonymous viewers, language change, gendered discourse, etc. Given the accessibility, quantity, and anonymity of Danmaku data, it is a prolific source for research on CMC with promising potential.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Examples of the data coding (implicational mock impoliteness) process according to Culpeper's (2011) mixed messages and Spencer-Oatey's (2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) rapport management.

Mock impoliteness speech acts	Mixed messages	Rapport management	Note
<p>(The Host of the show was introducing a guest, Xiao Xiao, who has been known for his excellent performance in another online talk show “奇葩说 Weirdo Talks”)</p> <p>想象过吗 Have you ever imagined 如果没有肖骁 If it weren't for Xiao Xiao 奇葩说 “Weirdo talks” 只能叫说 Would just be “talks” (the roastee and the audience laughed) ...(3) 对不对 Am I right?</p>	Form-driven	Social identity face	<p>This example is categorized as form-driven since it flouts the maxim of manner by implying that the roastee is a weirdo.</p> <p>The roaster attacked the roastee's face by implying that he was the weirdo in the show “weirdo talks”. In particular, the roastee's social identity face is involved because it is his social identity that belongs to a particular group, i.e., the show “weirdo talks”, is under attack.</p>
<p>(The roastee Zhengyu Lu is film director) 卢正雨 Zhengyu Lu 被称为周星驰接班人啊 Was referred to as the next Stephen Chow 那个绝世高手上映之前大家还是很期待 People quite looked forward to his film “Jue Shi Gao Shou” 后来改档了很多次 The releasing dates of that film was postponed many times 一开始说是撞 西游 怕被骂 蹭周星驰热度 At first it was because it clashes with releasing date of a film by Stephen Chow, and he was afraid of being accused of stealing Chow's thunder 啊改 改了七八回 怕这个怕那个 Then the date was changed several time because he was afraid of this and that 其实你那个电影啊 Actually, your film 我看了 Which I have seen 就是怕上映 Was afraid of being released.</p>	Co-text driven	Quality face	<p>This example is coded as co-text driven, because there is clearly a mismatch of polite message (the complement of the roastee at the beginning) and impolite message (the criticism of his film at the end), however, there is no conventionalized (im)politeness formulae involved.</p> <p>Quality face is involved as the roastee's ability as a film director is under attack.</p>



Appendix 2. Mock impoliteness speech acts achieved through convention-driven internal verbal formula mismatch for investigation on their prosody in 6.4.3

sequence	Verbal messages in Chinese	Translation in English
1	对不起正雨刚才我对你态度不好啊 我们还是非常感谢你今天来 而且正雨人家自己也是导演 也是导演 被称为星爷的接班人嘛 但是我跟你说正雨你确实当不了主咖	I'm sorry Zhengyu. I wasn't very nice to you just now. We're still very grateful for you coming here today, and Zhengyu himself is also a director. (He is) also a director. (He is) said to be the successor of Stephen Chow, but I tell you Zhengyu, you cannot be the main guest indeed.
2	我特别欣赏王岳伦导演 真的 我凭什么敢说欣赏他呢 就凭我从来没看过他任何电影	I really appreciate Director Yuelun Wang. It's true. Why dare I say I appreciate him? It's because I never watched any of his films.
3	你很少听说张雨绮演烂片 很会挑片子 明明就是演烂片的气质 不演	You could rarely see Yuqi Zhang in a lousy film. (She is) really good at choosing films. She clearly has the disposition of acting in lousy films, but she does not (act in lousy films).
4	你说这么大一个美女 天天脸上糊着厚厚的猪油 多恶心呐	Such a beautiful woman, but (her face) is covered with thick pork lard every day. How disgusting!
5	亲爱的 让我再折磨一下呗	Dear, let me torture you again!
6	那我本人也是卢正雨 卢导的粉丝 真的是强烈地推荐大家去看他的电影 因为看他的电影真的性价比很高 看他一部等于看周星驰两部 什么绝世高手 我看你就是功夫食神	I, myself, is Director Lu's fan. I honestly strongly recommend you watch his films. Because you can get your money's worth. Watching one of his films equals to watching two of Stephen Chow's films. What <i>The One</i> , I think it's <i>Kung Fu Hustle</i> and <i>The God of Cookery</i> combined <sup>58</sup> .
7	有请 没有微博认证的庞博	Welcome Pong Bo who has no Weibo verification.
8	当然成为产品经理还是很不容易的你要上到生 产线下来到大卖场你要都知道是吧听起来很厉害 啊 什么意思我给你们翻译一下啊 就是既不会开发也不会设计只想当经理	Of course, becoming a product manager is quite difficult. You'll need to know everything from the production line to the retail market. It sounds awesome right. I'll translate what I meant. It is that a product manager does not know how to develop or design a product but only wants to be the manager.
9	所以接下来我们要请出来的是 认真一下也拍不出好电影的王岳伦	So we're going to welcome the next one: Yuelun Wang who could not make a good film even if he tries.

<sup>58</sup> The One is the roastee Lu's film, while the other two are Stephen Chow's.

10	<p>经纪人都是那个漫天要价儿那个表里不一 啊出尔反尔这个真的挺讨厌的 当然我也有我的经纪人 就是李湘 但是我很爱她</p>	<p>Agents always overcharge, have two faces and break promises. They are very annoying. Of course, I have my agent as well. It's Xiang Li<sup>59</sup>, but I really love her.</p>
11	<p>其实小璐啊在艺术上还真是可圈可点的 呃在荧屏上塑造了很多清纯可爱的小姑娘的这种形象 其实啊我作为朋友我今天在这儿要爆料一下 她这个人其实在生活当中不是这样的 她是一个特别不拘小节的人 她在朋友面前经常打嗝</p>	<p>Actually, Xiaolu is really a good actress. She has built many characters of innocent and adorable young ladies on the TV. In fact, as her friend, I'm going to disclose something here. Actually, she is not like this in real life. She isn't a punctilious person. She often burps in front of her friends.</p>
12	<p>著名的导演 遭殃</p>	<p>Famous director-Zao Yang (suffering from disaster).</p>
13	<p>听了常远的对李小璐的深情告白 我只想尊称你为一句 备胎</p>	<p>After hearing the deep confession of love from Yuan Chang to Xiaolu Li. I just want to address you (Yuan Chang) respectfully as <i>spare tire</i><sup>60</sup>.</p>
14	<p>李小璐你的女儿非常可爱非常红 你女儿非常火她幼儿园还没毕业她就取得了今天这样的成就 她幼儿园还没毕业她是个文盲</p>	<p>Xiaolu Li, your daughter is very cute and very popular. Your daughter is very popular, and she has achieved so much even before graduating from nursery. She hasn't graduated from nursery, so she is illiterate.</p>
15	<p>刘芸和郑钧在娱乐圈应该算一对模范夫妻 两个人感情非常的好 但是再好的夫妻在一起他也有吵架的时候 在家里边一吵架她就摔东西 脾气特别爆</p>	<p>Yun Liu and Jun Zheng should be the model couple in the show business. Their relationship is very good. But couples still fights even when they have good relationships. Every time when they fight, she'd smash things. She has a fiery temper.</p>

<sup>59</sup> Xiang Li is the speaker's wife.

<sup>60</sup> Spare tire is often used to refer to someone who is seen as an unfavourable suitor, who might be considered if one does not work out with the real crush.

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