

A Comparative Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies in Chinese and English Negative Movie Reviews: Take the *Kung Fu Panda* Movie Series as an Example

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Abstract

Based on Culpeper's (Culpeper, 1996) impoliteness theory, this study collects negative online reviews of the movie *Kung Fu Panda* from the well-known movie review websites Douban and Rotten Tomatoes and comparatively analyzes the impoliteness strategies adopted from a cross-linguistic (Chinese and English) perspective. The study results show a commonality in the impoliteness strategies adopted by Chinese and English negative movie reviews, with positive impoliteness dominating in both Chinese and English negative movie reviews, and sarcasm being the least utilized impoliteness strategy. Meanwhile, there is a statistically significant difference between Chinese and English negative movie reviews in the use of on-record and off-record impoliteness strategies. The frequency of on-record impoliteness strategies was significantly higher in English reviews than in Chinese reviews, while Chinese reviews were more likely to use off-record impoliteness strategies. In addition, this study also observed that the frequency of on-record impoliteness strategy use was higher in reviews of low-rated movies than in high-rated movies. The findings provide film and television industry practitioners with insights related to using impoliteness strategies in negative movie reviews in a cross-cultural context and contribute to the study of impoliteness in online communication.

Keywords

Impoliteness Strategies, Impoliteness, Online Reviews, Cross-Linguistic Comparison

1. Introduction

With the acceleration of globalization, cross-cultural exchanges have become in-

creasingly frequent. As a key component of cultural products, movie commentaries and interpretations within various cultural contexts serve not only to mirror the wealth of cultural and social significance but also constitute a rich dataset for examining the interplay between language and culture. In addition, the phenomenon of impoliteness in online communication has gradually become a new focus of attention for academics at home and abroad. [Lorenzo-Dus et al. \(2011\)](#) conducted a study on the impolite strategies adopted in YouTube comments; [Li and Yan \(2021\)](#) found that emotional and contextual factors are the main reasons affecting the use of impolite strategies by analyzing microblog comments. However, there is still a relative paucity of research on impoliteness in languages other than English, and in bilingual contexts ([Wei and Wei, 2021](#)).

In consideration of this, this study takes Culpeper's ([Culpeper, 1996](#)) model of impoliteness and its subsequent revisions as the basis, and selects Rotten Tomatoes, a mainstream movie review website in the West, and Douban, China's largest movie review website, as the sources of data, to compare and analyze the differences in the use of impoliteness tactics in negative reviews of movies in Chinese and English. This study aims to enrich the study of impoliteness in online communication, as well as to provide new perspectives and insights for cross-cultural communication research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Impoliteness

[Lachenicht \(1980\)](#) published the first article on impoliteness (called aggravating language) with insulting discourse in verbal communication as the object of study, but it was not until [Culpeper \(1996\)](#) and [Bousfield \(2008\)](#) wrote books detailing the phenomenon of impolite speech that it attracted much attention. In 2008, Bousfield published his first monograph on impoliteness and collaborated with Locher on a special issue of the *Journal of Politeness Studies* on impoliteness. In the same year, Culpeper and Bousfield initiated two successful impoliteness seminars at Lancaster and Huddersfield Universities, which became milestones in the development of impoliteness research.

The concept of impoliteness is often constructed as a deliberate strategy aimed at undermining the dignity of others ([Bousfield, 2008](#)). According to Culpeper, Bousfield, and Wichmann ([Culpeper et al., 2003](#)), individuals who engage in impoliteness aim to transcend the social status of simply ignoring their conversational partners; they actively choose provocative expressions to undermine that status. Bousfield, in a later work ([Bousfield, 2007](#)), further articulated that impoliteness is characterized by the deliberate use of provocative and incongruous speech acts to threaten social face. These behaviors are executed in one of two ways: 1) There is no attempt to mitigate the impact, especially in the expectation of some sort of relief, and/or, 2) There is a clear intent to be provocative, amplifying the threat to face in a way that exacerbates the potential for harm to a person's social standing. (p. 7) The academic community has yet to reach a con-

sensus regarding the definition of impoliteness, as [Locher and Bousfield \(2008\)](#) point out.

While one perspective prioritizes speakers' intent in defining impoliteness, an alternative perspective underscores the significance of both speaker intent and listener interpretation. For example, [Tracy and Tracy \(1998\)](#) define impoliteness as "interactions that are perceived by a social group as intentionally designed to offend" (p. 227). On the other hand, argue that "irrespective of the speaker's intention, verbal impoliteness is verbal behavior that the hearer perceives as an attack on the hearer's face or social identity, and that violates the norms of decent behavior in a given context". [Culpeper \(2005\)](#) also expresses this view, suggesting that impoliteness manifests itself either as a conscious attempt by the speaker to attack another person's social face or as an intentional attack on the social face that is perceived by the recipients of such exchanges as an attack on the social face.

2.2. Culpeper's Model of Impoliteness

Culpeper's model of impoliteness is based on the seminal study by [Brown et al. \(1987\)](#). This research categorized face into two types: Positive Face—affirmation and approval of the self-image one wants to maintain in public; and Negative Face—having the autonomy and freedom to not lose face by accommodating others or being interfered with or hindered. Based on this, [Culpeper \(1996\)](#) categorized impoliteness strategies that attack both positive and negative faces. This categorization corresponds to [Brown et al. \(1987\)](#) categorization of politeness strategies as follows: 1) On-record impoliteness: expressing impoliteness in an obvious way, attacking the other person's face directly; 2) Off-record impoliteness: Expressing impoliteness in an implicit way, such as using subtle criticism or innuendo. 3) Positive impoliteness: Attacking the other person's positive face by questioning or belittling his or her qualities or abilities. 4) Negative impoliteness: by restricting or depriving the other party's freedom or rights to attack the other party's negative face. 5) Withholding politeness: The intentional non-use of politeness to show indifference or disrespect to the other party.

In addition to this, Culpeper proposes a list of some output strategies for impolite behaviors in terms of Positive and Negative Impoliteness (as shown in **Table 1**), but he emphasizes that "this list is not exhaustive, and the strategies represented behind these behaviors depend on the specific context in which the impoliteness occurs" ([Culpeper, 1996: 357-358](#)):

Although the list cannot fully cover the impolite reviews discussed in this research, some of the elements in Culpeper's list are comparable to the examples analyzed in this study and can be used as a reference for categorizing the impolite strategies of negative reviews in this study. Culpeper's ([Culpeper, 1996](#)) model of impoliteness and its subsequent revisions ([Culpeper et al., 2003](#); [Culpeper, 2005](#)) were used in this study as the basic framework for examining the impoliteness strategies of Chinese and English negative online movie reviews. This will be explained in detail in the data analysis.

Table 1. Culpeper's (Culpeper, 1996) list of output strategies.

Positive impoliteness output strategies	Positive impoliteness output strategies
Ignore, snub the other	
Disassociate from the other	
Use inappropriate identity markers	Frighten
Exclude the other from an activity	Condescend, scorn or ridicule
Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic	Invade the other's space
Seek disagreement	Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect
Make the other feel uncomfortable	Put the other's indebtedness on record
Use taboo words	
Use inappropriate identity markers	

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

The overarching aims of the present study are to be fulfilled by answering the two-folded research questions as follows.

- 1) What are the differences in the use of impoliteness strategies in negative online movie reviews in English and Chinese?
- 2) What are the differences in the use of impoliteness strategies in negative online reviews of high and low-rated movies?

3.2. Data

The empirical data for this investigation were sourced from Rotten Tomatoes, a prominent Western platform for film critique, and Douban, which is recognized as a leading movie review aggregator in China. Furthermore, both platforms have instituted a rigorous and systematic audience rating mechanism, structured around a quintile star-rating scale. Within this framework, an inverse relationship is observed, where a lower number of stars corresponds to a diminished level of viewer satisfaction.

This investigation centers on the critical reception of the *Kung Fu Panda* film series within these platforms. Debuting in 2008, the series has garnered global acclaim through its fusion of Eastern cultural motifs and humor, achieving robust box office success in both Eastern and Western markets. As a notable instance of a cross-cultural film franchise released internationally, the series has elicited a spectrum of responses and evaluations, offering a fertile ground for scholarly examination of the nuances in critical discourse across different cultural settings.

This study retrospectively collected a total of 600 negative reviews (one-star and two-star reviews) on Rotten Tomatoes and Douban platforms before May 25, 2024, with 300 reviews in Chinese and 300 in English. Considering the possible impact of movie quality on negative reviews, this study started collecting negative review data for the high-rated movie *Kung Fu Panda 1* (Rotten Tomatoes rating of 7.1/10, Douban rating of 8.2/10) and the low-rated movie *Kung Fu*

Panda 4 (Rotten Tomatoes rating of 6.1/10, Douban rating of 6.4/10), with 300 reviews collected for each. The data collection methodology entailed the utilization of the “Houyi Collector” web crawler to simulate user actions, including login, search, and retrieval of film reviews, thereby extracting the necessary data. Subsequently, the data were archived in CSV format, followed by an initial phase of cleansing and processing to eliminate invalid and duplicate entries. Ultimately, the qualitative data from the film reviews were collected using spreadsheet software.

3.3. Data Analysis

This study adopted the discourse-centered research methodology proposed by [Androutsopoulos \(2008\)](#) in his CMC (computer-mediated communication) study. The categorization and definition of impoliteness strategies refer to the framework of [Bousfield \(2008\)](#), [Culpeper et al. \(2010\)](#), and [Garcés-Conejos Blitvich \(2010\)](#). The working definitions of impoliteness strategies corresponding to each negative comment were categorized and determined by manually screening each piece of data, as shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Working definitions of impoliteness strategies

Impoliteness in negative online movie reviews	Working Definitions
On-record impoliteness	Directly displaying rude comments directly threatens the positive or negative face of the filmmaker and the movie itself.
<i>Positive impoliteness</i>	a) Reviews that directly blame the movie, dub, or release; b) Reviews that use taboo words.
<i>Negative impoliteness</i>	a) Reviews that express emotions such as disappointment, anger, and annoyance; b) Reviews that have negative elements while presenting strengths and praise; c) Reviews that compare the movie to other movies in the previous series or the same genre; d) Comments calling for the cessation of the production of sequels.
Off-record impoliteness	Implicit displays of impoliteness through poor comments.
<i>Implicate impoliteness</i>	a) Comments that suggest that you are not the target audience, or that you are tired, etc; b) Reviews that use subtext, etc. to convey negative hidden meanings.
<i>Sarcasm</i>	a) Reviews that make unfriendly jokes about the movie in a sarcastic, rhetorical, or teasing tone; b) Comments that seem appropriate on the surface but imply facetious attacks and criticisms.

a) Withholding impoliteness was not located in any findings in this article, which is the reason why its working definition was not listed in [Table 2](#).

In this study, a meticulous single-coder approach was implemented to ensure the accuracy of the coding process. Utilizing the predefined framework, the researcher conducted an initial coding of 600 negative movie reviews. To reinforce coding reliability, a self-consistency check was performed by re-coding a randomly selected 50% of the samples. This procedure included revisiting the dataset and guidelines for any coding ambiguities, thereby ensuring a robust application of the classification strategy. This streamlined method effectively ensured the study's coding consistency and bolstered the credibility of the research findings.

4. Results

4.1. Impoliteness in Chinese vs. English Negative Movie Comments

As shown in **Table 3**, overall, English negative movie reviews (378 times) adopted impolite strategies slightly more frequently than Chinese negative movie reviews (345 times). Among the impoliteness strategies employed in both Chinese and English negative reviews, positive impoliteness dominated (47.25%, 163 times in Chinese; 43.39%, 164 times in English). Sarcasm was the least employed impoliteness strategy, accounting for 8.12% of Chinese movie reviews and 7.41% of English movie reviews.

Table 3. Impoliteness strategies across Chinese vs. English.

Impoliteness Strategies	Language Chinese (n = 300)		Language English (n = 300)		<i>p</i> (Chi-square test)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
<i>On-record impoliteness</i>	233	67.54%	292	77.25%	0.00344
Positive impoliteness	163	47.25%	164	43.39%	0.29760
Negative impoliteness	70	20.29%	128	33.86%	0.00004
<i>Off-record impoliteness</i>	112	32.46%	86	22.75%	0.00344
Implicated impoliteness	84	24.35%	58	15.34%	0.00233
Sarcasm	28	8.12%	28	7.41%	0.72190
Total	345	100.00%	378	100.00%	

Despite the similarities, there are also large differences in the use of impoliteness strategies between the Chinese and English data. Off-record impoliteness strategies accounted for 32.46% of the Chinese movie reviews compared to 22.75% of the English reviews, with significantly more implicated impoliteness strategies in the Chinese reviews (24.35%) than the corresponding proportion in the English reviews (15.34%). Further chi-square test results show that there is a significant difference in the frequency of on-record and off-record impoliteness strategies between Chinese and English negative online movie reviews ($p = 0.0034$), which is manifested by the fact that the frequency of on-record impoliteness strategies in English negative movie reviews is significantly higher than

that in Chinese, whereas the frequency of off-record impoliteness strategies in Chinese negative movie reviews is significantly higher than that in English (e.g., **Figure 1**).

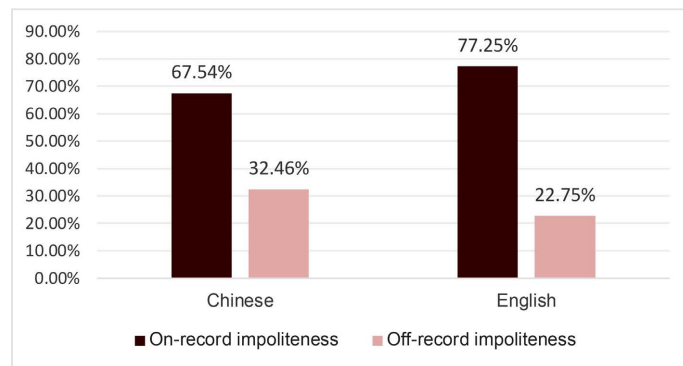


Figure 1. On-record and off-record impoliteness distribution across Chinese and English.

4.2. Impoliteness in Negative Movie Comments of Low-Rated vs. High-Rated Movies

In addition, this study analyzed the differences in the use of impoliteness strategies in negative reviews of high and low-rated movies, as shown in **Table 4**:

Table 4. Impoliteness strategies in high-rated and low-rated movies.

Movie Impoliteness Strategies	<i>Kung Fu Panda 1</i> (n = 300)		<i>Kung Fu Panda 4</i> (n = 300)		P (Chi-square test)
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
<i>On-record impoliteness</i>	252	68.85%	273	76.47%	0.02164
Positive impoliteness	148	40.44%	179	50.14%	0.00877
Negative impoliteness	104	28.42%	94	26.33%	0.05297
<i>Off-record impoliteness</i>	114	31.15%	84	23.53%	0.02164
Implicated impoliteness	86	23.50%	56	15.69%	0.00821
Sarcasm	28	7.65%	28	7.84%	0.18970
Total	366	100.00%	357	100.00%	

In terms of strategy frequency, the analysis revealed a consistent pattern in the deployment of impoliteness strategies for both films, with positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, implicated impoliteness, and sarcasm ranking from most to least frequently employed.

Contrastingly, when examining the specific application of impoliteness strategies within the negative reviews, discernible disparities were observed between the two films, as illustrated in **Figure 2**. The on-record impoliteness strategy was used slightly more frequently in the reviews of *Kung Fu Panda 4*, at 76.47% (273

times), while the strategy was used at 68.85% (252 times) in the reviews of *Kung Fu Panda 1*. The chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant divergence in the employment of on-record and off-record impoliteness strategies between the two film reviews, with a p-value of 0.02164. Notably, the implicated impoliteness strategy was particularly more prevalent in the discourse surrounding *Kung Fu Panda 1*, featuring in 23.50% of its reviews, versus 15.69% in *Kung Fu Panda 4*. Subsequent chi-square testing substantiated this significant variance in the application frequency of the implicated impoliteness strategy, yielding a p-value of 0.00821.

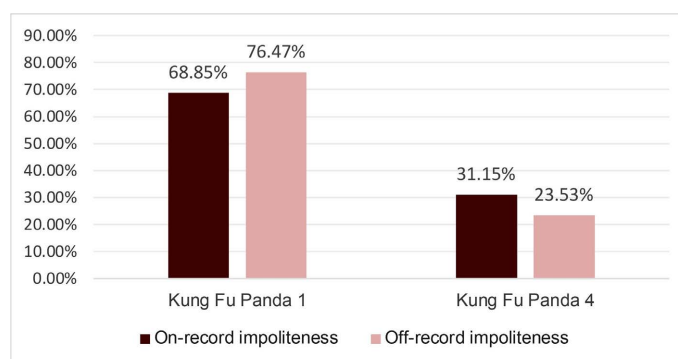


Figure 2. On-record and off-record impoliteness in high-rated and low-rated movies.

4.3. Analysis of Individual Impoliteness Strategies

This section illustrates the use of each impoliteness strategy in the context of negative movie reviews in English and Chinese, to decrease the overall frequency of use.

4.3.1. Positive Impoliteness

As the most common impoliteness strategy in negative movie reviews, positive impoliteness is the main channel for reviewers to blame the quality of the film, and the parties involved in its production, or to express strong emotions (sometimes using taboo language). **Example 1 - Example 4** illustrates how positive impoliteness is manifested in negative movie reviews in English and Chinese.

Example 1: 如果是系列粉丝的话只能打两分，吃老本严重的一作，连五侠配音费都省了，只想随便做一下拿出来尽快圈钱。

Translation: Only a two out of five if you're a fan of the series, a serious piece of work that basks in its past glory, even saving on the Five Warriors dubbing costs and just trying to finish it in haste and make a quick buck.

Example 2: 剧本失败，立意不足，没有了炫技的风格动画，连音乐都平庸。

Translation: The script fails, the intention is lacking, there's no more flashy stylized animation, and even the music is mediocre.

Example 3: A rotten piece of crap.

Example 4: It ruined my favorite franchise, a generic movie with no respect for the characters most beloved by us Kung Fu Panda fans, it seems that the producers of this movie did not know the franchise, and created a story with no depth, for me it is not a Canon movie.

In **Example 1**, the reviewer uses extreme quantification to visually convey a negative opinion of the work by pointing out that even a fan of the series would only be able to give it a two out of five. “Make a quick buck” is a blunt accusation that the producer of not motivated by the desire to create high-quality content.

In **Example 2**, the reviewer employs a direct and forceful approach to critique the film, which is indicative of positive impoliteness. The comment “The script fails, the intention is lacking” bluntly assails the creative and conceptual aspects of the movie, challenging the filmmakers’ competence and originality. This straightforward criticism is a hallmark of positive impoliteness, as it openly questions the quality and capabilities of those involved in the production.

In **Example 3**, the reviewer uses the very strong and emotional words “rotten” and the taboo word “crap” to express extreme dissatisfaction with the work. The use of such words directly attacks the quality of the work, leaving no room for explanation or justification by the producer of the film, and is a clear example of positive impoliteness.

In **Example 4**, the statement “It ruined my favorite franchise” is a direct and forceful attack on the film’s impact. This kind of personal and emotional critique is a hallmark of positive impoliteness, as it challenges the filmmakers’ understanding and respect for the source material. The phrase “a generic movie with no respect for the characters” further emphasizes the perceived lack of originality and disregard for the beloved characters, which is a direct affront to the creators’ ability to maintain the franchise’s integrity. The assertion that “the producers of this movie did not know the franchise” is a pointed accusation that questions the producers’ competence and their grasp of what makes the franchise special. Finally, labeling the movie as “not a Canon movie” is a definitive rejection of its legitimacy within the series, reinforcing the overall tone of impoliteness. The reviewer’s choice of words and the vehemence with which they are delivered serve to undermine the film’s standing and the filmmakers’ credibility, embodying the essence of positive impoliteness.

In conclusion, positive impoliteness in negative movie reviews is characterized by a direct and forceful approach to criticizing the film and its creators. This strategy is evident using strong language, accusations of a lack of quality and originality, and expressions of deep dissatisfaction. Reviewers utilize this form of impoliteness to convey their disappointment and disapproval, often challenging the competence and integrity of the production team. By employing such tactics, reviewers can leave no room for justification from the filmmakers, clearly stating their negative views.

4.3.2. Negative Impoliteness

Negative impoliteness attacks the negative face of the other person by infringing on or depriving them of their freedoms and rights, usually by expressing disappointment, anger, orders, or demands. **Example 5 - Example 8** demonstrates negative impoliteness in Chinese and English negative movie reviews.

Example 5: 不要再拍了吧~

Translation: Stop making movies~

Example 6: 变色龙的点好有创意，不知道狐狸是想表达什么.....别拍了.....

Translation: The chameleon point is so creative; I wonder what the fox is trying to say ... Don't make a sequel ...

Example 7: It's enjoyable, but this one falls short compared to the past three movies. They made the chameleon character so powerful then when it came to the fight scene it was disappointing.

Example 8: Okay, I did smile but between the references to Yoda, Karate Kid, Matrix, and others, I probably won't include it in my list of cult animations! I won't be part of the sequel!

The plea "Stop making movies~" in **Example 5** is a direct expression of negative impoliteness. It restricts the filmmakers' freedom to continue creating sequels, reflecting a strong desire to halt the perceived degradation of the franchise. This command is a clear infringement on the creators' autonomy, embodying the essence of negative impoliteness. Similarly, the comment "Don't make a sequel ..." in **Example 6** and the statement "I probably won't include it in my list of cult animations! I won't be part of the sequel!" in **Example 8** similarly restrict the filmmakers' creative liberty.

In **Example 7**, While the reviewer acknowledges some enjoyment, the critique "this one falls short compared to the past three movies" conveys disappointment and indirectly criticizes the filmmakers for not meeting the standards of previous entries. The specific mention of the chameleon character's power and the subsequent disappointment in the fight scene adds a layer of detailed critique, which, while not overtly demanding, still carries a negative impoliteness by expressing dissatisfaction with the filmmakers' choices.

These examples demonstrate the use of negative impoliteness through direct commands, expressions of disappointment, and personal declarations of disengagement, all of which challenge the filmmakers' freedom to continue their creative work and express the reviewers' strong negative emotions.

4.3.3. Implicated Impoliteness

Implicated impoliteness is a face-saving threat through suggestive means and is often more euphemistic. **Example 9 - Example 12** demonstrates implicated impoliteness in negative Chinese and English movie reviews.

Example 9: 看个开头, 就睡了

Translation: Watch the beginning and fall asleep

Example 10: 就像一杯冰镇饮料, 前面还有味道, 后面全是冰化成的水。

Translation: It's like a cold drink with a sweet flavor in the beginning and all the ice melting into the water in the end.

Example 11: Had some funny moments, I am really glad I didn't pay to see it in the theaters I would have been mad.

Example 12: I find the movie needs a lot of work to get the story right.

In **Example 9**, the reviewer does not directly say that the movie is uninteresting or of low quality but implicitly suggests that the work fails to capture attention through the expression “fell asleep at the beginning”, which leads to the viewer's loss of interest in watching the movie.

In **Example 10**, the metaphor “It's like a cold drink with sweet flavor in the beginning and all the ice melting into the water in the end” suggests initial enjoyment that diminishes over time. This comparison implies that the movie started strong but lost its appeal as it progressed, with the ‘melting ice’ symbolizing a loss of substance or interest. The use of metaphor here is a key component of implicated impoliteness. It allows the reviewer to express dissatisfaction without resorting to direct criticism or overt negativity. Instead, the critique is veiled in the imagery of a drink losing its flavor, which is a more palatable way to communicate disappointment. Moreover, by not explicitly stating what was unsatisfactory about the movie, the reviewer leaves it to the reader to infer the meaning, which is characteristic of implicated impoliteness.

In **Example 11** reviewer implies that the work is not worth paying to see by expressing his gratitude for not having seen it in a movie theater, “or he would have been mad”. In both examples, the reviewers do not directly use insulting or offensive language, but euphemistically communicate their dissatisfaction through extra-verbal and subtextual language. This indirect approach to criticism is typical of implicated impoliteness.

Example 12 implies that the movie's narrative is flawed and requires significant improvement, yet it is phrased in a way that avoids overt hostility. The use of “needs a lot of work” suggests that the current state of the story is unsatisfactory, while the phrase “to get the story right” hints at the potential for the movie to achieve a standard that it has not yet reached. The reviewer's choice of words delicately navigates the balance between critique and politeness, offering a veiled but clear message of disapproval.

In a nutshell, implicated impoliteness in movie reviews is conveyed through subtle and suggestive language that allows reviewers to express their dissatisfaction without direct confrontation. This strategy is evident in the use of metaphors and euphemisms that imply a decline in quality or a lack of substance, as

well as in the expression of relief at not having paid to see a movie in theaters, which indirectly communicates the reviewer's lack of enjoyment. The reviewers' choice of words carefully balances critique with politeness, offering a nuanced message of disapproval that is indicative of implicated impoliteness.

4.3.4. Sarcasm

In this study, sarcasm is the least common impoliteness strategy, often taking the form of rhetorical questions and sarcastic teasing. **Example 13 - Example 16** illustrates how sarcasm is represented in negative comments in English and Chinese.

Example 13: 像是想好了开头和结尾，然后中间的故事编的时候各种矛盾，最后修修补补抹平剧本 BUG，一部电影就这样拍好了。

Translation: It's like having the beginning and the end figured out, but when it comes to weaving the middle part of the story, there are just filled with all sorts of contradictions. In the end, after patching up and smoothing over the script's flaws, a movie is made just like that.

Example 14: 打得莫名其妙，是为了集体露脸吗？

Translation: The fight scenes are ridiculous. Were they just thrown in for the sake of a group photo?

Example 15: Is this movie made by a director?????

Example 16: This is a perfect example of ruining an otherwise great franchise.

In **Example 13**, the seemingly objective description of the movie production process is a sarcastic irony in the form of saying the opposite. "Smoothing over the script's flaws" implies that the movie is full of loopholes, and "a movie is made just like this" satirizes the hasty and rough production of the movie.

In **Example 14**, the reviewer's comment is a quintessential example of sarcasm. Sarcasm as an impoliteness strategy often involves the use of irony or a mocking tone to convey contempt or criticism. The reviewer questions the purpose of the fight scenes, suggesting that they were included without a clear narrative reason and perhaps merely to showcase a group of characters. The rhetorical question "Were they just thrown in for the sake of a group photo?" is not a genuine inquiry but a sarcastic remark that implies the fight scenes were unnecessary and poorly integrated into the story.

Example 15, on the other hand, adopts a rhetorical question to imply that the movie is of low quality and there is no trace of the director's coordinated processing. By repeating the question mark, the critic expresses his strong skepticism about the quality of the movie. This form of questioning does not seem to be accusatory on the surface, but it is a sharp criticism of the level of film production, which is harsher than implicated impoliteness.

Example 16 conveys the reviewer's disappointment and disapproval. The

phrase “perfect example” is ironic, as it juxtaposes the high standard implied by the word “perfect” with the negative outcome of “ruining an otherwise great franchise.” This contrast is a hallmark of sarcasm, where the literal meaning of the words is inverted to imply the opposite.

Summing up, sarcasm within the scope of this study is a nuanced approach to impoliteness in movie reviews. It is manifested through the strategic use of irony and rhetorical questions, which may seem innocuous on the surface but convey a strong sense of criticism and contempt. This method enables reviewers to cloak their critique in subtlety, making their disapproval more palatable to readers while still delivering a clear and potent message.

5. Discussion

Cross-cultural studies and investigations of impoliteness are crucial to the development of the field of incivility research (Kecskes 2014). Haugh (2010) states that the study of impoliteness in online communication can contribute to breaking down the traditional limitations of impoliteness research, leading to a deeper understanding of impoliteness. However, current cross-cultural research on impoliteness still focuses mainly on face-to-face communication. (Wei and Wei, 2021). Therefore, this study focuses on impoliteness strategies used in negative online comments on the Western movie review website Rotten Tomatoes and the Chinese movie review website Douban. The findings of this study provide new perspectives and insights for the study of impoliteness in cross-linguistic online communication.

The results of the study show that there are commonalities in the use of impolite strategies in both Chinese and English negative movie reviews. First, positive impoliteness dominated both Chinese and English negative movie reviews, with sarcasm as the least utilized impoliteness strategy. This finding is consistent with the findings on the use of impoliteness strategies in Wei Feng and Wei Ren’s (Wei and Wei, 2021) cross-cultural study of negative Amazon product reviews.

In addition, the study also found differences in impoliteness strategies across linguistic contexts. There were statistically significant differences between English and Chinese negative movie reviews in terms of on-record impoliteness and off-record impoliteness. Specifically, English negative movie reviews contained significantly more on-record impoliteness (positive and negative impoliteness) strategies than Chinese negative movie reviews. In contrast, Chinese negative movie reviews used significantly more off-record impoliteness (implicit impoliteness and sarcasm) than English. This difference confirms Burgoon and Hubbard (2005) argument that impoliteness has different manifestations and evaluation criteria in different cultures. In collectivist cultures such as China, people may be more inclined to use polite and non-directive expressions, which contrasts with more direct and frank communication styles in individualist cultures such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. In addition to this, the different preferences of Chinese and English commentators found in this study reflect

the differences in discourse expression between Western utilitarianism and Chinese Confucianism. Utilitarian discourse is related to Western society's emphasis on individual well-being and equal rights, and even though the expression may be offensive, individuals are still encouraged to communicate their thoughts and feelings clearly, efficiently, and goal-orientally. Confucian discourse, on the other hand, is characterized by the chase for consensus, indirectness, and harmony (Flowerdew, 1997). In Confucian culture, adherence to social etiquette and behavioral norms is the basis for maintaining harmony and order, and it is crucial to maintain the dignity or "face" of individuals and others. In this culture, individuals may be more cautious in expressing their dissatisfaction and tend to use indirect and subtle expressions to avoid conflict, maintain their social image without damaging the self-esteem of others, and seek common ground while reserving differences and living in harmony. In other words, the high power distance often associated with Chinese culture might explain the prevalence of off-record impoliteness strategies, as reviewers may opt for more indirect expressions of dissatisfaction to avoid openly challenging authority or established norms. In contrast, individualistic cultures like the United States, which are characterized by lower power distance, may exhibit a greater frequency of on-record impoliteness, reflecting a more egalitarian approach to expressing criticism.

Furthermore, this study found that the number of on-record impoliteness included in the comments of the low-scoring movie *Kung Fu Panda 4* was higher than that of the high-scoring movie *Kung Fu Panda 1*. The expression of emotion is one of the key factors influencing the use of impoliteness strategies. (Li & Yan, 2021) The quality of the movie itself may stimulate reviewers' negative emotions, such as anger, disappointment, etc., and such emotions may lead reviewers to choose more direct impoliteness strategies, which may have an impact on potential viewers. At the same time, the choice of impoliteness strategies may also be altered by the overall negative review environment; in an environment dominated by negative reviews, reviewers may tend to use more pointed and blunt expressions due to the group effect that amplifies incivility.

This study offers several practical implications. Firstly, the research offers a nuanced perspective on the intricacies of negative discourse in cross-cultural film reviews. This understanding can be instrumental for the film and television sector, enabling the creation of content that is both culturally resonant and universally appealing. Particularly for sequels, which must delicately balance fan expectations with innovative elements, the insights from this study can be pivotal. They can assist filmmakers in striking a balance that ensures sequels are both authentic to their origins and appealing to a diverse global audience.

Secondly, the study's examination of impoliteness strategies across cultures provides insights into audience perception. Cultural backgrounds significantly influence how audiences interpret negative reviews, affecting their decisions regarding film consumption. By grasping these cultural underpinnings, the indus-

try can more accurately predict audience responses and craft marketing strategies that resonate with various demographic groups, thereby enhancing the industry's outreach and effectiveness.

The study also holds significant implications for cross-cultural communication in the digital age. As social media and online platforms become increasingly central to public discourse, comprehending the nuances of impoliteness in digital communication is imperative. The findings of this study can aid in the formulation of communication strategies that are sensitive to cultural variances, thereby promoting a more inclusive and cohesive global digital community.

Additionally, the research contributes to the strategic management of online platforms. In the digital realm, where platforms often serve as forums for public opinion, a clear understanding of the societal norms and interactional paradigms is essential. The insights garnered from this study can assist platform administrators in fostering a conducive digital environment that encourages constructive dialogue, while also upholding the diversity of cultural expressions.

In summary, this study significantly contributes to the discourse by highlighting the influence of cultural factors on impoliteness strategies in film reviews. It enriches the academic conversation on cross-cultural communication and the dynamics of social media, while also offering practical insights for the film industry and online platform management. This research aids in developing a more profound appreciation of cultural subtleties in digital interactions, thereby equipping industry professionals with the necessary tools to navigate the intricacies of a globalized media landscape and to enhance cross-cultural communication and audience engagement.

6. Conclusion

Employing Culpeper's (Culpeper, 1996) framework of impoliteness, this investigation conducted a categorical analysis and discourse examination of movie reviews on the Rotten Tomatoes and Douban platforms. The findings indicate a convergence in the impoliteness tactics within Chinese and English negative online film critiques, with an overarching prevalence of positive impoliteness and a minimal application of sarcastic strategies.

Contrastingly, the study discerned notable statistical disparities in the deployment of on-record versus off-record impoliteness between the two linguistic groups. The English critiques exhibited a marked propensity for on-record impoliteness, surpassing the frequency observed in Chinese counterparts, which favored off-record approaches. Such variances potentially stem from divergent cultural values, such as the Eastern and Western philosophical orientations towards collectivism and individualism, respectively.

Besides, the research identified a higher prevalence of on-record impoliteness in critiques of lower-rated films, which may be attributed to the overarching negativity of the review milieu and the emotional responses evoked by the films' quality.

Acknowledging the study's limitations, the first concerns the challenge of dis-

tinguishing between English as a first or second language, given its global ubiquity, which may introduce analytical discrepancies. Additionally, while the study has considered the impact of film quality on negative reception, other factors (e.g., platform-specific word filters and regional variations in film distribution conditions, age and gender of reviewers, writing styles and online personas, and specific platform guidelines) are also important.

Hence, subsequent research should aim to incorporate a broader spectrum of reviews and film genres, while meticulously controlling for additional variables that may confound the findings, thereby enhancing the precision and dependability of the conclusions drawn.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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