

## MASTER'S THESIS

### The (im)politeness of disagreements in Hong Kong Internet online forums Shum, Wai Lan Winnie

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**THE (IM) POLITENESS OF DISAGREEMENTS IN  
HONG KONG INTERNET ONLINE FORUMS**

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## ASBTRACT

The field of (im) politeness study of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has become increasingly important, and more research dealing with the same issue in different culture backgrounds is called for. Therefore, the present paper investigated the (im) politeness of disagreement in the context of Hong Kong (HK) internet online forums by using both the discursive approach (Watts 1989, 1992) and interactional approach (Arundale 1999, 2006). Data was drawn from 2 popular online forums in HK. 11 types of disagreements were discovered from the data along with their framing and linguistic features. The (im) politeness issue of disagreement in HK online forums was first revealed through the evaluation given by the forum participants in their conversations. Then a questionnaire following the three parameters ((im) politeness, (in) appropriateness and markedness) in the relational work was conducted to understand outsiders' perception of the (im) politeness by rating some disagreement responses along a 5-point likert scale. A follow-up interview was also administered to extract more information about the norms of behavior in HK online forums. Spearman correlation and ANOVA test have proven the interdependent relationship among the three parameters. The findings have given sufficient evidence to prove the applicability of the discursive approach in CMC data. However, at the same time, the current paper also raises important questions for further research in the study of the (im) politeness in CMC data, especially in the HK context.

## 摘要

在電腦輔助溝通 (computer-mediated communication) 的 (不) 禮貌 ((im) politeness) 研究日趨重要的情況下, 對於在不同文化背景下的類似研究需求漸增。為此本文旨在運用論述理論 (the discursive approach, Watts 1989, 1992) 與互動理論 (the interactional approach, Arundale 1999, 2006) 調查在香港網絡論壇中表達不同意見的 (不) 禮貌情況。本文從 2 個香港最受歡迎的網上論壇截取了部份對話作為研究素材, 並從中發現了 11 種表達相反意見的方式。此外, 本文透過論壇參與者的評論和問卷調查中了解了人們對於 (不) 禮貌的理解。另一方面, 跟進訪問亦為是次研究提供了更多有用的資訊去解釋人們是如何判斷一句評論或一段對話的 (不) 禮貌性。更重要的是, 問卷調查的結果體現了 (不) 禮貌性, (不) 恰當性與顯著性 ((im) politeness, (in) appropriateness and markedness) 之間的關係。除此之外, 本文亦向電腦輔助溝通的 (不) 禮貌研究提出了問題, 並希望可以吸引更多的調查以豐富電腦輔助溝通的 (不) 禮貌研究領域。

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