

# Analysis of Disagreement Expression Strategies Based on Minzhuhu Forum

Jing Zhao

*Chongqing Business Vocational College, Chongqing, China*

**Abstract:** Through investigating the disagreement expression strategies based on data from Minzhuhu Forum, guided by Rees-Miller's taxonomy of disagreement, this paper aims to summarize the strategies currently used in expressing opposite idea and find out the most frequently used one in the context of computer-mediated communication or online communication by calculating the frequency of each strategy, thus to promote understanding of disagreement expression as well as improve harmonious communication. After analyzing the collected data, it is obvious to find out that softened disagreement occupies the highest using percentage compared with aggravated disagreement and disagreement neither softened nor strengthened, because speakers try to take the addressees' face needs into consideration during online communication. Besides, the strategies adopted are not entirely the same with Rees-Miller's taxonomy, with some strategies not found, and some new strategies added. In the category of disagreement neither softened nor strengthened, giving personal experience is the most frequently adopted strategy. Using of downtoners is the most commonly occurring strategy among softened disagreement, while in aggravated disagreement expression, rhetorical questions and intensifiers are the two most widely used strategies.

**Keywords:** Softened Disagreement; Aggravated Disagreement; Disagreement Neither Softened nor Strengthened; Expression Strategy; Online Communication

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Disagreement refers to a situation in which people express different opinions about

something and sometimes quarrel according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. As far as Smith and Mackie (2000) concerned, disagreements are grounded in the discrepant ideas, world views, goals, plans, and actions between two or more social agents [1]. It is a commonly occurred and almost inevitable phenomenon in people's communication since people hold different personal world views, values, and attitude toward the same things, or they are usually uncooperative during communication because of personal character, habits and other specific differences. When people have different opinions or viewpoints towards the same things, insists on own opinions and wants to persuade others, then they may argue or quarrel, that is to say, it has many similarities with some closely related concepts, such as negation, refusal, dispute, quarrel, leading to insufficient study of it, combined with the difficulty of data collection of this kind of "disorderly discourse" [2].

Disagreement is an important part of everyday-life communication. With the development of the computer and the Internet in the twenty-first century, communication ways among human beings have experienced a dramatic change. The emergence of various communication methods via the Internet such as e-mail, weblogs, Internet forums, Facebook, and Twitter has boosted online communication. Nowadays, text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) enjoys unprecedented prosperity, naturally bringing about the frequent occurrence of disagreement in it. However, among the insufficient studies of disagreement, research on online communication disagreement is rarely seen. Therefore, research about disagreement in online communication is needed.

### 1.2 Research Questions and Significances

Whenever people engage with one another to interact and express their opinions, there is a latent but natural potential for disagreements to

occur [3]. According to Levinson, the act of “disagreement” is potentially face-threatening. Therefore, the strategies chosen in expressing disagreement is vital. This paper, guided by Rees-Miller’s taxonomy of disagreement, attempts to explore the disagreement strategies used in Minzhuhu Forum (MZH) on the basis of data collected from there. Research questions are as follows:

(1) What kinds of strategies are used to express disagreement in MZH forum? Are they the same with what Rees-Miller proposed?

(2) What is the frequency of each strategy? What might be the reason of the difference in frequency?

By investigating the data collected in MZH forum, the paper endeavors to summarize and categorize disagreement strategies used by forum responders. It might be able to shed some light on other online disagreement research.

### 1.3 Layout of the Paper

This paper contains five parts, with part one mainly about research background, research questions, significance and structure, part two is literature review, focusing on findings about conflict talk discovered by scholars from home and abroad, meanwhile the gap which needs to be filled will be indicated. Part three provides a theoretic foundation to this paper; especially Rees-Miller’s taxonomy of disagreement will be explained. In the fourth part, methodology of this paper will be introduced, including how data is collected. What’s more, as the main body of the paper, discussion and analysis will be presented in this part. Part five is the conclusion, summarizing the findings and providing the limitations of the present paper.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Definition

The word “disagreement” has been defined by different scholars in a variety of ways. Brown and Levinson (1987) consider “disagreeing” as a face-threatening act that threatens the hearer’s positive face, indicating that it is an act which would undermine the solidarity between the speaker and the addressee [4,5]. According to Stalpers (1995), disagreement occurs when participants do not share common ground with respect to a particular matter because of a difference in opinion [6]. Rees-Miller (2000) defined disagreement as “a speaker S disagree

when he or she considers untrue some proposition P uttered or presumed to be espoused by an Addressee A and reacts with an utterance the propositional content or implicature of which is not P”, which this paper will follow and base on [7].

### 2.2 Previous Study on Disagreement

Scholars have conducted many studies of disagreement from the perspectives of speech act, discourse analysis, conversational analysis, politeness theory etc. It was Sornin (1977) who made the earliest study on disagreement on the basis of English data [8]. In the 1980s, disagreement was mainly studied under the framework of conversational analysis, such as Schiffirin (1984), Pomerantz (1984). Later, Beebe and Takahashi (1993) explored on expressing disagreement among American and Japanese through DCT and note taking, showing that the Americans were more indirect than the Japanese when expressing disagreement [9-11]. After face theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), it “stimulated a considerable research over the last 15 years” [12]. For example, Holtgraves (1997) carried out a study on how people expressed disagreement politely and how speech acts were performed with the framework of the face theory with the help of questionnaires [12]. Later, basing her work on face theory, Rees-Miller (2000) researched the linguistic markers of disagreement specifically in an American context, categorizing three types of disagreement: softened disagreement, disagreement that is neither softened nor strengthened and aggravated disagreement [7]. Obaida Mohammed Chaqmaqchee and Zainab Faiz Jasim (2022) investigated politeness strategies of disagreement expressed by undergraduate Iraqi EFL students in Online Asynchronous Discussions [13]. Ishtiaq et al (2022) explores disagreement strategies in the context of a multicultural Computer-mediated classroom (CMC) with English as a medium of instruction and communication, studying how disagreement strategies are influenced by the participants' own cultural pragmatic rules and pose problems for others to follow them as intended [14]. Lukman et al. (2024) explores politeness strategies in lecturer-student interactions within WhatsApp course groups, addressing concerns related to impoliteness and misunderstandings [15].

Compared with the studies on disagreement

abroad, domestic study on disagreement expressions is few. Du (1995) reported on complaining, giving bad news and disagreeing by surveying of thirty university students in Beijing, indicating that face-threatening acts were performed in a cooperative way instead of a confrontational way [16]. Liang (2003) conducted a contrastive study of disagreement strategies between American English and Mandarin Chinese [17]. Guo (2004) carried out a pragmatic analysis of disagreement in Chinese pedagogical context [18]. Wan Weimin (2006) summarized the politeness strategies of expressing disagreement in Chinese on the basis of face theory and Gu Yueguo's Chinese model of politeness principles by DCT [19]. Zhang Honglian (2006) made a contrastive study of the patterns of disagreement between family members and TV debate show, showing the importance of context which influences the choice of disagreement strategies [20]. In 2008, she pointed out that power and social distance influence the use of strategies [21]. Winnie Shum and Cynthia Lee (2013) studied politeness and disagreement in computer-mediated communication by investigating two Hong Kong Internet discussion forums based on the forum interlocutors' disagreement strategies [22]. Liu Ying (2021) explored what disagreement strategies Chinese college students will use to mitigate the face-threatening act with absence or presence of a third party for an attempt to shed some light on the speech act theory in Chinese settings [23]. Huang Wenjing (2021) examines the act of disagreement as realized in English and Chinese linguistic book reviews and the mitigation devices used to soften disagreement [24]. Zhang Huaiyu (2022) analyzes the speech act of disagreement performed by people with different power relations in Chinese job-hunting reality show-*Only You* [25].

Compared with researches about other speech act, such as compliment, refusal, apologies, etc., it is obvious to see that researches have been carried out about disagreement are insufficient, among which researches about real life disagreement in daily communication, especially computer-mediated communication are hardly found since many of them carried out with the help of DCT. Thus, this paper attempt to explore the disagreement strategies used in Minzhuhu Forum (MZH) on the basis of data collected from there.

### 3. Related Theory

Guided by Brown and Levinson' face theory, Rees-Miller (2000) categorized disagreement into three categories based on the presence or absence of identifiable linguistic markers:

(1) Softened disagreement, including two subcategories in accordance to positive and negative politeness:

(a) Positive politeness structures, such as positive comments, humor, and partial agreement, with which, the speaker increases solidarity with the addressee by showing that they share some of the same wants or belong to the same group despite the disagreement.

(b) Negative politeness structures, such as the use of 'I think' or 'I don't know', downtoners ('maybe', 'sort of'), and verbs of uncertainty ('seems'); by using these forms of self-effacement and distancing from the disagreement, the speaker avoids imposing on the addressee's autonomy.

(2) Disagreement neither softened nor strengthened, including contradictory statements (sometimes contains a negative or the words "no") and contradiction repeats (which she calls 'verbal shadowing');

(3) Aggravated disagreement, which is strengthened by means of rhetorical questions, intensifiers, use of the personal you with imperative or accusatory force, or judgmental vocabulary [7].

### 4. Methodology and Discussion

#### 4.1 Data Collection

The data of this paper is collected from the Minzhuhu Forum (MZH), which is the official forum of Chongqing University. Founded on October 9, 2002, equipped with all kinds of section (more than 100 sections), it is the most popular and influential virtual community among teachers and students of Chongqing University, with over 600,000 visitors every single day. The main function of it is to provide a platform for its users to communicate with each other and answer all kinds of questions to them. In total, 100 pieces of disagreement data is collected randomly.

#### 4.2 Discussion

In this section, disagreement strategies used in MZH will be analyzed and categorized on the basis of Rees-Miller's taxonomy. To answer the

research questions, both quantitative method and qualitative method are adopted. Some strategies on the list are found in the data but some are not. New strategies are added during

the analysis. The strategies that are found in the data together with the corresponding descriptions are summarized as table 1 and table 2.

**Table 1. Types of Disagreement**

Types of strategies	Subcategories	Examples
Softened disagreement	Humor	shi xiong hai shi bu yao can hai shi mei le.
	Partial agreement	nan sheng kai che shi bi jiao da zhong, bu guo ye bus hi shuo nv sheng jiu bu xing
	Downtoners	lou zhu xin tai mao si you dian wen ti
Disagreement neither softened nor aggravated	Contradictory statement	ni shi mei yu jian tai du bu hao de.
	Contradiction repeats	ge ren jue de gong zuo hou du yan du bo de ken ding bu shao, xiang 88 nian yi hou zhe ge nian ling duan de zheng you cheng gong le neng zou dao zui hou de ken ding hen di
	Giving personal experience	cheng gongde lu guo, hai shi hen kao pu de.
	Giving facts	ge ge nian ling duan dou you ba, ye you hen duo 85 hou huo zhe 90 hou a
Aggravated disagreement	Rhetorical questions	shui shuo jie hun he ai qing jiu chong tu le?
	Intensifiers	ming xian shi jia de.
	Judgmental vocabulary	LZ you zhi le.
	Ironical statement	yu ji ba shi nian hou lou zhu jiu neng hu xi dao wu wu ran de xin xian kong qi la.

**Table 2. Percentage of Each Type Disagreement Strategy**

Disagreements	Number	Frequency
Softened disagreement	47	47%
Disagreement neither softened nor strengthened	22	22%
Aggravated disagreement	31	31%

From table 2, it is obvious to find out that softened disagreement has the highest percentage, accounting to nearly half of the whole data, compared with other two kinds of strategies, indicating that users of MZH tend to adopt softened disagreement strategy to express different opinions. The reason for that might be that speakers try to take the addressees' face needs into consideration during online communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed that every person has two types of face: "positive face" and "negative face" [4,5]. Positive face refers to the desire to be liked, approved and appreciated etc, while negative face means the desire not to be impeded upon. As disagreement is "a speech act that jeopardizes the solidarity between speaker and addressee", which damages communicators' positive face, adopting softened disagreement expression strategy plays an important role in decreasing face-threatening force, disguising opposition and enhancing harmonious relationship.

#### 4.2.1 Softened disagreement

According to Brown and Levinson, disagreement is a face-threatening speech act, thus in order to be polite and to enhance the harmonious relationship between people, softened disagreement is preferred when expressing disagreement. By using this type of strategies to displaying opposite opinions, the speaker is making effort to save the addressee's face needs and minimizes face threat to the addressee.

Rees-Miller (2000) divided this type of disagreement strategy into positive and negative politeness [7], but this paper without totally using her framework, specifically categorizes it into three subtypes: humor, partial agreement and downtoners. Table 3 is the percentage of each subcategory, as downtoners the most frequently used strategy since using of downtoners could largely decrease the face-threatening force of disagreement. Humor also can soften the atmosphere, but not all people are humorous. In addition, using humor strategy in some cases is rather risky, because it has the potential to irritate the addressee.

**Table 3. Percentage of Subcategories**

Softened disagreement	Number	Percentage
Humor	5	11%
Partial agreement	16	34%
Downtoners	26	55%

Humor is a very effective way to mitigate disagreement. Its function is to maintain the speaker's position but also create a harmonious atmosphere. As lubricant of interpersonal communication, it makes people happier as a distraction. Examples are as follows:

(1) Lou zhu: zhi xiang gao su zai xiao de xiao you yi ju, ru guo yao lian ai, yi jie hun wei mu de, qing zhao lao xiang, dui zi ji dui ta fu ze.

Ping lun zhe: hai shi yao huan ge kou wei cai hao

In this example, the poster proposes that if someone wants to get married and be responsible for your girlfriend or boyfriend, he/she would better date someone coming from the same province. The responder obviously disagrees with the poster, but he expresses his opinion in a very humorous way by saying that "it is better to change taste". The implied meaning is that it is not necessary for people to date with people from the same province. By humor, the force of disagreement is mitigated and the threat to the poster's face is decreased to a minimal point. However, only five pieces of disagreement is found, despite of its effectiveness in soften disagreement.

Partial agreement, as a strategy defined as the "yes-like" response, is used by the speaker to soften the force of disagreement before putting forward a different opinion against the addressee. According to Sacks (1987), when agreement does not happen, a "yes-like" response will nevertheless be contiguous, while the expression of disagreement will be hidden away later [26]. It is often symbolized by some verbal devices such as "ke shi", "dan shi".

(2) Lou zhu: zhi xiang gao su zai xiao de xiao you yi ju, ru guo yao lian ai, yi jie hun wei mu de, qing zhao lao xiang, dui zi ji dui ta fu ze.

Ping lun zhe: ding yi xia LZ, zhao dui xiang zhao lao xiang que shi hen fang bian hen shi ji, ke cao zuo xing zui qiang, bu guo ye bus hi shuo bus hi lao xiang jiu bu xing le.

The responder in this example definitely agrees that dating someone from the same province is much more practical and convenient, but he also holds that it is not necessarily a must. By using partial agreement, the speaker tries to strengthen solidarity with the addressee through showing that they share some of the same opinion.

Downtoners, the most frequently used strategy among softened disagreement, includes degree adverbs, such as "zhi shi", "you dianr", subjectiviers, such as "wo jue de", "wo ren wei",

"ju wo suo zhi", modal particles, such as "ba", "ni". and verbs of uncertainty, such as "ke neng", "si hu". They are used to mitigate the unfriendliness or unkindness of a statement since they convey a sense of uncertainty or subjectivity, indicating that the speaker cannot responsible for or not sure of the accuracy of the statement.

(3) Lou zhu:(bu zhu) hai shi bei cui de 1700, you mu you!

Ping lun zhe: yi jing bu cuo le ba. gai zhizu le.

(4) Lou zhu: ge ren jue de chong da hai shi yi ben ke sheng he shuo shi ju duo ba, xiang 85 yiqian zhe ge nian ling duan de zheng you cheng gong lv ken ding hen di. que qiao bu kao pu.

Ping lun zhe: mao si, zhe ye bu neng shuo ming que qiao bu kao pu ya.

These two examples respectively use downtoners "ba" "mao si" and "ya" to mitigate the face-threatening force of the disagreement, which to a large extent decrease the impoliteness. This strategy is widely used to modifier tone and to protect face in MZH when expressing disagreement

#### 4.2.2 Disagreement neither softened nor strengthened

Lobov and Franshel (1977) propose that "within conversation, participant may select to perform actions in either mitigated or modulated ways, or alternatively in aggravated or unmodulated ways" [27]. However, in the field of disagreement, there are speakers who adopt neither softened nor strengthened strategies. Rees-Miller (2000) divides it into two types: contradictory statements and contradiction repeats (namely 'verbal shadowing') [7], which lays the foundation of this paper's categorization. As far as the author concerned, there are other two types of strategies belong to this category, and they are: giving personal experience and giving fact because both of them directly show disagreement, but not so face-threatening as aggravated disagreement. In the data collected from MZH, this type of strategy accounts to 22%. Table 4 is the percentage of each subcategory, with giving personal experience has the highest share. People resorting to these two strategies might for the reason that these two strategies are used frequently because they are persuasive.

Contradictory statement contains a negative or sometimes the word 'no'. The speaker directly

expresses his/her disagreement without mitigation or aggravation. Below example, the three responders exactly show their disagreement without any modification.

**Table 4. Percentage of Subcategories**

Disagreement neither softened nor strengthened	Number	Percentage
Contradictory statements	5	23%
Contradiction repeats	3	14%
Giving personal experience	8	36%
Giving fact	6	27%

(5) Lou zhu: zhi xiang gao su zai xiao de xiao you yi ju, ru guo yao lian ai, yi jie hun wei mu de, qing zhao lao xiang, dui zi ji dui ta fu ze.

Ping lun zhe 1: kan dui yan le shi bu shi lao xiang dou xing.

Ping lun zhe 2: bu tong yi zhe ge guan dian, zhao lao xiang ye bu rong yi.

Ping lun zhe 2: bus hi lao xiang ye you zou za iyi qi de ke neng.

Brown (1978) points out that repeating of former speaker's words could establish intimate social relation because repetition is a symbol of encouragement and agreement. However, Pomerantz (1984) argues that repetition could also be a way of showing doubt of what others said [10]. Contradiction repeats mean that person A shows disagreement by making minor changes to or reconstructing person B's original comments instead of repeating the utterance.

(6) Lou zhu: min zhu hu que qiao li mian zheng nan you zheng nv you de, pu bian dou shi 85 yi qian de, zhe ge nian ji zhi shao ye shuo shi bi ye le. ge ren jue de chong da hai shi yi ben ke sheng he shuo shi sheng ju duo ba, xinag 85 yi qian zhe ge nian ling duan de zheng you cheng gong lv ken ding hen di ba. ge ren yi jian bu xi wu pen.

Ping lun zhe: wo zen me lao kan dao 88 nian he 90 hou lai zheng ni? zhe ge nian ji lian zi ji zhen zheng xiang yao shen me dou bu zhi dao ba. ge ren jue de gong zuo hou zai lai du yan du bo de ken ding bu shao. Xiang 88 nian yi hou zhe ge nian ling duan de zheng you cheng gong le neng zou dao zui hou de ken ding hen di. ge ren yi jian bu xi wu pen.

This example vividly demonstrates what contradiction repeat is. The responder repeats most information of the poster, but the meaning of his/her words is opposite to the poster's intention. Generally speaking, by contradiction repeats, the sentence structure is similar, and a

strong contrast is formed to show distinct disagreement.

Giving personal experience and giving facts are strategies people use to show disagreement and persuade others by referring to proof. To be specific, giving personal experience means that person A refers to his or her previous experience to support disagreement, while giving facts is that one disagrees by using quotations, statistical information, pictures, videos, etc. to show a completely opposite view. These two strategies are used frequently because they are persuasive.

(7) Lou zhu: ge ren jue de chong da hai shi yi ben ke sheng he shuo shi ju duo ba, xiang 85 yiqian zhe ge nian ling duan de zheng you cheng gong lv ken ding hen di. que qiao bu kao pu.

Ping lun zhe 1: cheng gong de lu guo, hai shi hen kao pu de.

Ping lun zhe 2: wo lai xian shen shuo fa. (zheng you cheng gong le)

Ping lun zhe 3: que qiao cheng gong lingzheng de bu shao, ni ke yi wen li ren ban zhu. you tong ji de.

(8) Lou zhu: nv si ji hui bu hui kai che? Ge ren jue de nv ren kai che de zhu yao wen ti shi yu dao shi qing jiu zhua bu dao jiang le. shuo bai le, nv ren yu shi mei nan ren chen zhuo leng jing.

Ping lun zhe: 9 nian jia ling de nv si ji zi bai, bei bie ren Zhuang guo, Zhuang wo zhe nan xing, bei zhuang shi wo che shi ting zhe de. bao yu ye kai che zou xiang cun gong lu, pao gao su, an quan wu shi gu.

In example (7), the first two responders show their disagreement by giving personal experience, while the third responder adopts giving fact, which is statistic information. Example (9) is also a demonstration of giving personal experience to show disagreement, using her perfect driving skill to prove that women can drive well.

#### 4.2.3 Aggravated disagreement

People may not take into consideration of the addressee's face need and choose to be impolite. Instead of mitigating disagreement, they directly express disagreement and strengthen the force of it, damaging the addressee's face badly. From the data, it is self-evident that aggravated disagreement occurs more frequently than softened disagreement, which is contradicts with the idea that Chinese inclined to avoid disagreement or use softened disagreement in order to maintain harmony and to protect face. This paper will elaborate on the following five

subcategories of aggravated disagreement: rhetorical question, intensifiers, judgmental vocabulary, and ironic statement. Table 5 is the percentage of each subtype, with rhetorical question and intensifiers the two most frequently used strategies. As far as the author concerned, the reason for the high using percentage of rhetorical question and intensifier is that the two are less aggravating although they still undermine the address's positive face.

**Table 5. Percentage of Subcategories**

Aggravated disagreement	Number	Percentage
Rhetorical question	11	35.5%
Intensifiers	11	35.5%
Judgmental vocabulary	6	19%
Ironic statement	3	10%

By using rhetorical questions, speaker disagrees in the form of a question such as a negative tag question or a question using negative interrogatives [28] or another kind of question, which displays a very clear opposite view. According to Mchoul (1987), questions can be divided into two types: Q-type and N-type [29]. Q-type question is asked to obtain information and answers, while N-type question contains no intention to get answers, instead it is used to clearly express complain, doubt or disagreement. In speech acts like argument, disagreement, even Q-type question can be used to express opposite opinions. Questions that leave their answers hanging in the air can be used to do face-threatening acts.

(9) Lou zhu: ni shi mei jian dao you xie nvdeba, you xi env de ba dao qi lai, shi ge nan de dou bi bus hang.

Ping lun zhe: ge an neng dai biao quan ti?

(10) Lou zhu: min zhu hu que qiao li mian zheng nan you zheng nv you de, pu bian dou shi 85 yi qian de, zhe ge nian ji zhi shao ye gai shuo shi bi ye le. shen bian mei you he shi de me?

Ping lun zhe 1: nan dao hai yao xian zhi 85 zhi qian de bu neng zhao qin?

Ping lun zhe 2: 85 fa zheng you tie jiu you wen ti le? wan quan bu dong lou zhu de luo ji.

In these examples, responders use rhetorical questions to show their strong disagreement and feeling. These questions are asked without intention to obtain answers. In fact, this kind of strategy often started with “nan dao”, but it is not always the case since this word could be omitted. Obviously, the three questions all contain strong disagreement.

Intensifiers are used to strengthen the tone of

disagreement, including three subtypes: degree adverbs, some adverbs could enlarge complaint scope and intensify tone, such as, “hen, fei chang, tai, zhen de”, affirmatives: words used to increase the credibility of complaint, such as, “wo ken ding, hen ming xian, jue dui”, and denunciation or curse words: including insulting words, used to express speakers strong dissatisfactory feelings, such as “jian gui, keng die, la ji”.

(11) Lou zhu: xiao yi yuan y ixia zi bian shen chao ping jia yi yuan, ma ma zai ye bu yong dan xin wo mei qian kan bing le.

Ping lun zhe 1: ken ding shi tuo, jian ding wan bi.

Ping lun zhe 2: wo lei ge qu, ni ma ya, wo dang shi jiu nu le. lao zi de yibao gen ni de yi yao fei xia tiao you ban mao qian guan xi. wo qian dou hua chu qu le, ni gao ge yi yao fei xia tiao. xiao yi yuan shen ma de zhen shi keng die mei shang liang.

(12) Lou zhu: sui ran mei jing li guo, dan wo zhen shi xiang shuo, ai qing, wu guan ju li.

Ping lun zhe: ni tai dan chun le, wa qiang jiao de jiu xi huan ni zhe zhong.

In these examples, responders use intensifiers “ken ding”, “wo lei ge qu”, “ni ma”, “keng die, “tai” to vividly display their emotion and strong disagreement, which are very effective to strengthen the tone, showing the speakers’ paying no attention to the addressee’s face.

Judgmental vocabulary includes words that show speaker’s attitude and emotion. In Rees-Miller’s opinion, using judgmental vocabulary is “characterized by the speaker’s negative evaluation towards the addressee’s propositional content or attitude, carrying the strongest face-threatening force and damaging the address’s positive face.

(13) Lou zhu: xiao yi yuan y ixia zi bian shen chao ping jia yi yuan, ma ma zai ye bu yong dan xin wo mei qian kan bing le.

Ping lun zhe: lou zhu tu yang t usen po.

(14) Lou zhu: yi qian jue de yi di lian mei shen me, xian zai que bu zain a me kan hao le.

Ping lun zhe: kan lai ni hai bu gou feng fu.

In (13) example, the responder expresses his/her disagreement simply by his/her judgment of the poster; he/she holds the opinion that the poster is too young too simple, thus the poster’s words are not believable. In (14) example, the responders use “bu gou feng fu” to evaluate the poster, displaying that he/she doesn’t agree with the poster. Both two examples contain a kind of

contempt besides disagreement.

Ironic statement, as far as Culpeper concerned, means that speaker says something insincerely and it remains a surface realization only with the use of an inappropriate identity marker [30]. The implied meaning is rather face-threatening.

(15) Lou zhu: zhen xi li, zhen bei ai, mao si huan jing bao hu han le N nian le, suo wei de huan jing you hao xing she hui li lun ye ting de wu gan jue le, ke wu mai lai le, yi qian suo wei you zhi shi jiang lin ge da cheng shi, si hu ye zhi neng mo mo di ren shou le.

Ping lun zhe 1: huan qiu shi bao shuole, wu mai you li yu jun shi fang yu. er deng pi pin jiu bu yao zai ci ji wai le.

Ping lun zhe 2: gong ye hua jin cheng zhong chan sheng huan bao xiao qing xin zhe yang de wu zhong, hai zhen shi jiao ren ku xiao bu de a.

The first responder says that “wu mai you li yu jun shi fang yu”, which means haze is beneficial to military defense, to show his/her disagreement with the poster. It is known to all that haze is bad for health and has nothing to do with military defense, thus it is obvious that it is an ironic statement. “er deng pi min” as well as “huan bao xiao qing xin zhe yang de wu zhong” are also rather ironic and face-threatening.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Major Findings

This paper investigates the commonly occur phenomenon, namely the expression of disagreement in the context of computer-mediated communication. By investigating the data collected in MZH forum, the paper endeavors to summarize and categorize disagreement expression strategies used by forum responders under the framework put forward by Rees-Miller, hoping to shed some light on later disagreement researches.

It is obvious that softened disagreement holds the highest using percentage compared with aggravated disagreement and disagreement neither softened nor strengthened. The reason for it might be that speakers pay attention to the addressees' face needs. For each category of disagreement expression, there are several subtypes exist. As for softened disagreement, the author did not completely follow Rees-Miller's division by dividing it into positive politeness and negative politeness. Instead, combined with the data collected, different with Rees-Miller's categorization,

three subtypes are frequently found: humor, partial agreement and downtoners, especially downtoners, which is the most commonly occurring strategy among softened disagreement. In the category of disagreement neither softened nor strengthened, on the basis of Rees-Miller's division, other two subtypes are added: giving personal experience and giving facts. Thus, in total, four subtypes of disagreement expression are found, with giving personal experience the most frequently adopted strategy. Among aggravated disagreement expression, strategies such as rhetorical question, intensifiers, judgmental vocabulary, and ironic statement are found, in which rhetorical question and intensifiers the two most widely used strategies. Compared to Rees-Miller's model, ironic statement is added while “personal you with imperative or accusatory force” strategy is rarely found.

### 5.2 Limitations and Recommendations

This paper only selects data from one forum with limited number, thus the quantity and the representativeness shall be enlarged and tested further. It would be better for further study to choose more data from different website. Besides, this paper only conducts a general, not detailed research on disagreement expression strategy; only part of its modes and methods are tackled. Third, when expressing disagreement, people may combine different strategies together. Due to the time limit, this paper does not involve this part. Detailed as well as comprehensive study is needed and welcomed.

## References

- [1] Smith, Eliot R & Mackie, Diane M., (2000). *Social Psychology*. Hove: Psychology Press.
- [2] Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- [3] Grimshaw, A.D. (1990). *Conflict Talk: Sociolinguistic investigations of arguments in conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [4] Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena*. In: Goody, E. N. (eds.) *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [5] Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness*:



- Some universals in language usage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [6] Stalpers, J. (1995). The expression of disagreement. In K. Ehlich & J. Wagner (Eds.), *The discourse of business negotiation*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- [7] Rees-Miller, J. (2000). Power, severity, and context in disagreement. *Journal of Pragmatics*, (32): 1087-1111.
- [8] Sornig, K. (1977). Disagreement and contradiction as communicative acts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, (1): 347-374.
- [9] Schifffrin, D. (1984). Jewish arguments as sociability. *Language in Society*, (13): 311-335
- [10] Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (eds.), *Structure of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Beebe, L, Takahashi, T. (1993). Cross-linguistic influence in the speech act of correction. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [12] Holtgraves, T. (1997). Yes, but positive politeness in conversation arguments. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, (16): 222-239.
- [13] Obaida Mohammed Chaqmaqchee, Zainab Faiz Jasim (2022) EFL Undergraduate Learners' Politeness Strategies in the Speech Act of Disagreement. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(8): 1-8.
- [14] Ishtiaq, M., Gul, N., & Iqbal, S.W. (2022). An Analysis of the Participants' Disagreement Strategies in Computer-mediated Intercultural Communication (CMIC). *Global Sociological Review*, VII(II), 149-158.
- [15] Lukman L., Andi M., Haryeni H. & Indarwati I. (2024). Addressing and Politeness Strategies in Lecturer-Student Interaction in the WhatsApp Platform: A pragmatics perspective. *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3(4): 2169-2187.
- [16] Du, J.S. (1995). Performance of face-threatening acts in Chinese: Complaining, giving bad news, and disagreeing. In G. Kasper (ed.), *Pragmatics of Chinese as a native and target language*. Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i.
- [17] Liang, G, Han D. (2003). A Contrastive Study on Disagreement Strategies for Politeness between American English & Mandarin Chinese. Unpublished dissertation for Master's degree. University of Science and Technology of China.
- [18] Guo, J.Y. (2004). A Pragmatic Analysis of Disagreement in Chinese Pedagogical Context. Unpublished dissertation for Master's degree. Shanxi University.
- [19] Wan, W.M. (2006). A Study on Politeness Strategies of Disagreement in Chinese. Unpublished dissertation for Master's degree. Shandong University.
- [20] Zhang, H.L. (2006). A Contrastive Study on Disagreement Strategies in Family and TV Debate Show Contexts. Unpublished dissertation for Master's degree. Beijing Language and Culture University.
- [21] Zhang, H.L. (2008). Analysis of Speech Strategies for Expressing Disagreement in Chinese. *Journal of Jilin Provincial Institute of Education*. (24):95-97.
- [22] Winnie, S., & Cynthia, L. (2013). (Im) politeness and disagreement in two Hong Kong Internet discussion forums. *Journal of Pragmatics*, (50): 52-83.
- [23] Liu, Y. (2021). An Exploration of the Influences of a Third Party on Chinese College Students' Speech Act of Disagreement. *Overseas English*, (12), 3.
- [24] Huang, W.J. (2021). A Corpus-based Contrastive Analysis of Disagreement in English and Chinese Linguistics Book Reviews. Unpublished dissertation for Master's degree. Shanghai University of Finance and Economics.
- [25] Zhang, H.Y. (2022). A Study of Disagreement Related to Different Power Relations in Chinese Job-Hunting Reality Show. Unpublished dissertation for Master's degree. Wuhan University.
- [26] Sacks, H. (1987). On the preferences for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversations, Button and Lee (eds.), *Talk and social organization*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- [27] Labov, W., & D. Fanshel. (1977). *Therapeutic Discourse*. New York: Academic Press.
- [28] Locher, Miriam A. (2004). Power and Politeness in Action: Disagreement in Oral Communication. Berlin and New York:

- Mouton de Gruyter.
- [29] McHoul, Alec W. (1987). An initial investigation of the usability of fictional conversation for doing conversational analysis. *Semiotica*, (67): 83-108.
- [30] Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, (3): 349-367.