"I Keep Forgetting You're Still Alive": Unmasking Impoliteness in the Xsphere

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Abstract

Pragmatic competence entails awareness-raising of impoliteness. This paper delves into the pragmatics of impoliteness in online communication, focusing on X (Twitter) interactions, with a particular emphasis on 126 replies to Elon Musk's controversial tweet. Utilizing Culpeper's (2011) model of impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness, the study analyzes responses to this tweet, exploring the multifaceted dimensions of impoliteness. The research also investigates the moral order expectations expressed by the repliers, shedding light on the factors influencing their reactions and responses. By employing qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, the study reveals the nuanced forms of impoliteness and the underlying moral order themes inherent in these online exchanges. *Responsible wealth behavior*, *appropriate and non-offensive language*, *respect and decency*, *refraining from political narratives*, *engaging in social responsibility*, and *showing transparency, accountability, and ethics* were the identified moral order expectations. The findings underscore the relevance of examining impoliteness in the digital age, where public figures' tweets can have far-reaching consequences and provoke diverse reactions from the online community. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of impoliteness in online discourse and its implications for social media interactions by language learners, which are currently lacking in language classrooms.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Impoliteness, Moral Order, X, Online Communication*

Introduction

Social networks have become an indispensable part of social, academic, and political life. Yet their role in language instruction has largely been taken for granted. They have penetrated people's interactional sphere to the extent that a platform such as Twitter (currently rebranded as X) is now used as a primary means of spreading news, ideologies and standpoints. In the same vein, politeness and moral order expectations exist at the heart of social networks as is the case in other forms of communications such as face-to-face interactions. As Locher (2010) maintains, computer-mediated communications provide fertile research grounds on how the

relational aspect of language works and how people define their social environments online. Twitter, among others, can be particularly relevant in impoliteness research as it can be very provocative because, according to Ott (2017), it demands simplicity, promotes impulsivity, and fosters incivility. Added to this is the fact that some Twitter accounts such as those of politicians, celebrities, entrepreneurs, etc. are more sensitively and broadly monitored by the society. Furthermore, ''Twitter affords a platform for condensed yet potentially rich and variably public or private performances of the self'' (Papacharissi, 2012, p. 1989).

One of the most prominent and controversial users (and the current owner) of Twitter is Elon Musk (EM), the world's richest person and a famous entrepreneur and innovator who is known for his tweets on various topics, such as technology, business, politics, environment, and culture. Musk has over 156.8 (as of September 16, 2023) million followers on Twitter and often engages with them in playful, humorous, or provocative ways. Added to this is the fact that he acquired Twitter in 2022 and renamed it to X afterwards. However, some of his tweets have also sparked controversy and criticism. For example, he has tweeted about his plans to colonize Mars, his views on cryptocurrencies, his support for Covid-19 vaccines, his criticism of media outlets, and his personal disputes with other public figures. Elon Musk's tweets often elicit strong reactions from his followers and other Twitter users, who may reply offensively or take offence with his tweets. For example, on November 14, 2021, Elon Musk, 50 (at the time of tweeting), in response to a politician Bernard Sanders (BS), tweeted "I keep forgetting you're still alive". Bernard Sanders, 80 (at the time of tweeting), had initially twitted "We must demand that the extremely wealthy pay their fair share. Period." Later, on November 15, under the same tweet by Sanders, he replied "Bernie is a taker, not a maker.". These tweets triggered some responses on the part of some repliers which indicated their lack of contentment with the tweets. The replies were either supportive of Musk or Sanders or neither, while some were presumed to be neutral in tone.

We presumed some of these replies would contain explicit or implicit cases of impoliteness (as a sign of offense taking) towards either parties or/and justifications as to why they have taken offense. Impoliteness is a phenomenon that involves intentionally or unintentionally violating the norms of politeness and causing face damage to others (Culpeper, 1996). However, more recently, attempt has been made to move beyond the intentionality paradigm and closer to listener perceptions of impoliteness (Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2021). Impoliteness can be manifested through various conventionalized formulae such as insults, threats, curses, and challenges and also implicational means such as sarcasm, irony, or presuppositions (Culpeper, 2011). We presume that impoliteness depends on the context and is triggered by the expectations of the moral order (Haugh, 2013, p. 60). In addition to that, the moral order and the interactional accomplishment of social actions and pragmatic meanings are closely connected to how (im)politeness is evaluated, and therefore, (im)politeness evaluations can be ultimately seen as a type of social practice (Haugh, 2013, p. 52).

Impoliteness has been studied from different perspectives and domains (e.g., Altahmazi, 2022; Bella et al., 2015; Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2014; Kleinke & Bös, 2015; Mills, 2009; Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2021; Sinkeviciute, 2018; Terkourafi et al., 2018). Nevertheless, there is a scarcity in the literature regarding how impoliteness is realized in response to impoliteness (Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2018, p. 91), and the moral order themes that can emerge from the participants expectations. Additionally, the nature and type of notions

such as one's wants, desires, and expectations mentioned above, have not been systematically explored across languages and cultures, even though they are crucial in how people judge an act or behavior as impolite (see, however, Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2018, 2021). These factors come into play especially when language learners come from different contexts and might lack the knowledge of what constitutes impolite language and how communities expect individuals to behave. This is also in light of the fact that impoliteness has not been the focus of attention in educational context. Therefore, this study attempted to address why repliers take offence and how impoliteness is performed on the part of individuals who receive broad public recognition.

We also assumed that the tweets will show what twitter repliers expect from these interactions i.e., their moral order expectations. Accordingly, we formulated the following questions.

RQ₁: How are the reply tweets impolite from Culpeper's (2011) framework's perspective?

RQ₂: What moral order expectations did the repliers explicate?

We chose Culpeper's (2011) model of impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness because it offers a comprehensive and flexible framework for identifying and analyzing different types and degrees of impoliteness in various contexts, including online communication. We also chose this model this model because, unlike the classic approaches such as Culpeper's impoliteness super strategies (2005) or Leech's framework on violations of politeness maxims framework (Leech, 1983, 2014), this model takes into account the contextual, societal, and interactional linguistic norms and deviations thereof. As a discursive approach, it can explicate and elaborate some examples in the authentic context of impolite language from X(Twitter). However, we also acknowledge that this model has some limitations, such as the difficulty of determining the speaker's intention and the hearer's perception of impoliteness, the variability of impoliteness norms and expectations across cultures and situations, social classes (see, Ghyasi & Salimi, 2020) and the possibility of multiple interpretations and ambiguities of impoliteness expressions. Therefore, we supplement our analysis with other sources of evidence, such as contextual cues, pragmatic markers, emoticons, and political factors to support our claims and analysis.

Our main argument is that the replies to Musk's tweets reveal different types of impoliteness that serve different pragmatic functions, which provide instances of impoliteness in different forms and can be used to raise awareness of their types and frequencies for the learners. We also argue that the replies reflect different moral order expectations that are based on various factors, such as political affiliation, cultural disposition, social identity, personal values, or ethical principles. We presume that these expectations influence how the repliers perceive and evaluate EM's and BS's tweets, and their own responses. This approach aligns with the broader objective of our research, which is to explore impoliteness in online communication and the multifaceted dimensions of impoliteness, including its relationship with moral order expectations. By presenting the Twitter replies in their original form, we attempted to provide readers with a glimpse into the diverse ways in which individuals express their views and expectations within the digital realm.

The structure of our paper is as follows: In literature review, we review the relevant literature on impoliteness theory and research, with a focus on Culpeper's (2011) model and its application to Twitter data. In method, we describe our data collection and analysis methods, including our sampling criteria, our framework, coding scheme, and thematic analysis

procedure. Next, we present our results, organized by two research questions. Finally, we discuss our findings in light of current research and summarize our main findings and contributions, address the limitations of our study, and suggest directions for future research.

Literature Review

Perceptions of (Im)politeness as a Pragmatic Phenomenon

Some of the first attempts to explain politeness in pragmatics used Gricean Maxims and Speech Act theory, which assumed that the utterances were the basic units of analysis and that they were universal for all languages (for example, see, Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). However, these early models were criticized by later researchers who argued that these classic approaches did not account for the differences in cultures, contexts, and genres that affect how people use language (Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003). This led to the development of post-modern views of politeness that emphasized the role of context in determining how impoliteness is perceived and expressed. Therefore, (im)politeness research shifted from focusing on how speakers produce speech (speaker-oriented) to how listeners evaluate speech (hearer-oriented) in terms of its appropriateness for the situation (Culpeper, 2011; Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003; Terkourafi, 2005, 2015). As a result, most recent studies on impoliteness have highlighted the importance of how participants and observers judge the acts that are performed, whether they are verbal or non-verbal (Davies, 2018; Haugh, 2013; Mitchell & Haugh, 2015). Recent studies also show how (im)politeness is related to the concept of expectations (see Culpeper, 2011; Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2018; Tayebi, 2016). Among the recent approach to impoliteness is Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness framework of conventionalized impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness. Culpeper's impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness are two types of impoliteness that can be used to cause offence or damage face in communication.

Culpeper's model of impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness provides a comprehensive and systematic framework for analyzing different types of impoliteness in online interactions. It distinguishes between conventionalized impoliteness, which is based on fixed expressions or formulas that convey negative meanings, and implicational impoliteness, which is based on the inference or implication of negative meanings from the form, context, or the absence of behavior. Culpeper's model also accounts for the various factors that influence the interpretation and evaluation of impoliteness, such as the relationship between the interlocutors, the expectations of the situation, and the intention and effect of the behavior. Culpeper's model is suitable for our study because it allows us to capture the diversity and complexity of impoliteness phenomena in online platforms, which have been largely absent from language instruction. In online platforms, users can employ various linguistic and multimodal resources to express or imply impoliteness, and where users may have different norms and values that affect their perception and reaction to impoliteness.

Participants in a given exchange can be divided into three parties; the speaker (the addresser), the hearer (the addressee), and the bystanders (meta-participants)((Goffman, 1981)). The speaker is the one who initiates communication and produces an utterance or an act. The hearer is the one who receives and interprets the utterance or the act. The bystanders are the ones who observe or overhear the communication but are not directly involved in it. They may have different expectations about what constitutes appropriate or inappropriate

behavior in a given situation. These expectations may be based on various factors, such as social norms, cultural values, personal beliefs, situational contexts, and relational histories. When these expectations are violated or challenged by an utterance or an act that is perceived as impolite or offensive, the offended party may react in various ways to express their stance, such as expressing displeasure or satisfaction, showing anger or amusement, retaliating or supporting, ignoring or engaging, or forgiving or condemning.

Some studies have attempted to analyze explications of behavioral and moral expectations online. Parvaresh and Teyebi (2018) analyzed the rude comments on an Iranian actress's nude photo on Facebook. The study found that the rude language came from an implied meaning that the actress broke the moral order of the commenters. Their study identified four themes of moral order expectations that were explicated by the commenters: (a) religious norms and values, (b) national identity and culture, (c) gender roles and sexuality, and (d) personal integrity and dignity. One study was conducted by Graham and Hardaker (2017) on impoliteness in an online knitting community. The study examined how members of the community used impolite language to challenge and defend the norms and values of the group. The study used the notion of moral order to analyze the impolite language used in the comments. The study identified four themes of the moral order that commenters explicated: (a) knitting expertise and authority, (b) group identity and solidarity, (c) politeness and respect, and (d) authenticity and honesty. The study concluded that impoliteness is a way of expressing and enforcing the moral order in online communities.

Expectations play an undeniable role in the perception of the level of (im)politeness in a verbal exchange. Meier (1995, p. 352) maintains that an act of ''politeness can only be judged relative to a particular context and to particular addressees' expectations''. What can be concluded is that impoliteness takes place by a "mismatch of expectations" (Mills, 2003, p. 145). Nevertheless, despite the importance attached to this notion, it has suffered lack of systematic analysis in the study of taking offence (Tayebi, 2016).

Moral Order and Impoliteness

Moral order is a set of shared beliefs and values that guide social behavior and expectations. It can be argued that moral order is an inherent feature of human societies (Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2018). Moral order refers to expectations and practices which are "socially standardized and standardizing, 'seen but unnoticed,' expected, background features" (Garfinkel, 1964, p. 226). In other words, moral order is a socially constructed set of notions we take with us from circumstance to circumstance. It is moral in that it directs our sense of "right and wrong, good and bad." It is an order because it is echoed in a "patterned set of personal actions" (Domenici & Littlejohn, 2006 as cited in Culpeper, 2011, P. 38). In online communication, especially on social media platforms like Twitter, the moral order can be challenged or violated by impoliteness, such as insults, threats, mockery, or incitement.

Confronted with offence, a discourse community might intentionally or unintentionally compare their expectations of a particular verbal exchange in a similar circumstance to what has been said in reality. Tannen (1979) believes that these expectations are learned as individuals grow and immerse in a particular culture and, therefore, they measure a new perception against what they know from prior experience. Therefore, they might decide to counter or remain verbally inactive. When they counter, analysts can, identify the impolite

instances through "the reciprocation of concern evident in the adjacent placement of expressions of concern relevant to the norms invoked in that particular interaction''(Haugh, 2007). This is because participants are at the heart of discursive approaches to politeness assessment and can provide worthwhile input (Davies, 2018).

Impoliteness in X (Twitter)

X (Twitter) is a popular social media platform that allows users to post and interact with short messages called tweets. Twitter has been used for various purposes, such as personal expression, information sharing, entertainment, social networking, and political communication. Twitter also provides various affordances that shape the context of communication, such as hashtags, mentions, retweets, likes, and replies (Zappavigna, 2015).

Impoliteness in Twitter has been studied from different perspectives and domains (Kountouri & Kollias, 2023; Pung & Faizal, 2023; e.g., Saz-Rubio, 2023). For example, Altahmazi (2016) examined how impoliteness was used to fuel ethno-sectarian conflicts in Iraq by analyzing the tweets of political leaders and their followers. Altahmazi (2022) also analyzed how impoliteness was used as a diplomatic strategy to give and take offence in the Middle East by examining the tweets of the Iranian Foreign Minister and his interlocutors. In a different research investigation, 500 instances of tweets focused on the Spanish and English Prime Ministers (Saz-Rubio, 2023). The results indicated that English participants employed sarcasm and implied impoliteness to criticize the negative face of the Prime Minister, whereas Spanish participants utilized insults and rectification to target the positive face of the Prime Minister (Saz-Rubio, 2023). One study analyzed data from Greek Twitter, and revealed a growing trend among users in weaponizing these features such as hashtags and mentions to consistently target various political accounts and audiences, involving multiple dimensions of political incivility. The deliberate use of these tactics goes beyond establishing uncivil norms within ad-hoc political communities, posing potential implications for affective polarization and democratic processes (Kountouri & Kollias, 2023). Pung and Faizal (2023) explored impoliteness on Twitter among Malaysian users, focusing on tweet replies related to COVID-19 issues. Using Culpeper's impoliteness model and framework, the analysis identifies four impoliteness strategies—bald-on record, positive, negative, and sarcasm. Positive impoliteness was the most prevalent strategy, with pointed criticism being the most common trigger, indicating potential influences of culture and the communication platform on impoliteness use in tweets.

EM's tweets often elicit strong reactions from his followers and other Twitter users, who may reply offensively or take offence with his tweets. Therefore, impoliteness in EM's tweets is a relevant and timely topic that deserves further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to examine how impoliteness is manifested and perceived in the replies to EM's by using Culpeper's (2011) model of impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness.

Method

To collect data, we used X's advanced search function to retrieve all the replies to Elon Musk's tweet "I keep forgetting you're still alive", which was itself a reply to Bernie Sanders' tweet: 'We must demand that the extremely wealthy pay their fair share. Period.'. We coded all the replies that were reacting negatively to BS or EM. We also excluded the replies that were addressed to other users rather than to EM or BS. Our obtained 126 replies were imported into

MAXQDA 2022 software for qualitative content analysis. Before and during coding process researchers familiarized themselves in the context of the tweets and had prolonged engagements with the tweets of both parties to avoid any type of biased interpretation.

First, 126 tweets were coded as impolite by *both* coders. This means that remaining tweets were coded as either neutral or polite. We applied Culpeper's (2011) model of conventional impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness to identify the impoliteness in the replies. We followed Culpeper's (2011) definitions and examples of each strategy and coded the replies accordingly. We also considered the context of the tweets and the relationship between the interlocutors to determine the degree of impoliteness. We coded all the replies independently and then compared our codes to ensure inter-coder reliability. We resolved any discrepancies through discussion and consensus. We then calculated the frequencies and percentages of each category.

Impoliteness formulae are conventionalized linguistic expressions that are associated with impoliteness effects in specific contexts, such as insults, threats, negative expressives. For example, calling someone 'an idiot' or telling them to 'shut up' can be considered an impolite act that attacks the positive face (self-image) or the negative face (autonomy) of the hearer. Implicational impoliteness, on the other hand, is a more indirect and ambiguous way of being impolite, which relies on the inference of the hearer and the violation of expectations or norms. For example, using sarcasm or irony to imply something negative or derogatory about the hearer or their beliefs is implicational impoliteness that can be interpreted differently depending on the context and the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. The model distinguishes three subtypes of implicational impoliteness: form-driven, convention-driven, and context-driven. Form-driven impoliteness happens when a behavior has a marked form or meaning that implies something negative. Convention-driven impoliteness happens when a behavior does not match the context in which it is used, or when different parts of a behavior are inconsistent. Context-driven impoliteness happens when a behavior that is unmarked or missing does not fit the context and goes against the expectations of the interlocutors (Culpeper, 2011). Table 1 has outlines and exemplifies each type of impoliteness. We also selected some representative examples of each strategy to illustrate our findings shown in Table 2.

Table 1

Culpeper's (2011) Framework on Impoliteness

Impoliteness main types		Impoliteness formulae type		Example
Conventional Formulae	Impoliteness	Insults	Personalized negative vocatives	You f***ing moron
			Personalized negative assertions	You are such a hypocrite.
			Personalized negative references	your little hands
			Personalized third-person negative references	She's a nutzo.
		Pointed criticisms/complaints		that is total crap.
		Unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions		– why do you make my life impossible?
		Condescension		that's being childish.

	Message enforcers	– do you understand [me]? (tag)
	Dismissals	get lost.
	Silencers	Shut your sticking mouth.
	Threats	I'm gonna straighten you out.
	Negative expressives	Damn you.
II. Implicational impoliteness	Form-driven	***
	Convention-driven:	***
	Context-driven:	***

To answer the second research question, we coded the themes of moral order expectations explicated by the repliers. We considered all the reply tweets as they were deemed to be capable of incorporating moral order expectations of the participants. We particularly examined those tweets that expressed offence-taking or disagreement with the original tweet. We assumed that these tweets reflected the repliers' ideological standpoints and their expectations of how the original tweeters should behave or communicate. At this stage, we coded all the tweets together and then compared our codes to ensure inter-coder reliability. We developed a code book of open code through MAXQDA 2022 and derived our axial codes (which we called implicit and explicit replier expectations) in Table 3. We also developed our final codes and labeled them 'moral-order expectations' outlined in six categories in table 3.

Results and Discussion

Each tweet can contain one or more of the categories of impoliteness formulae or implicational impoliteness sketched out in table 1. Table 2 shows the percentage of the occurrence of each impoliteness type in relation to whole (of the total number 126.). It should be noted that some tweets contained more than one category.

Table 2

Culpeper's (2011) Impoliteness Types Instances and Percentages

Impoliteness types	Impoliteness formulae type		No. of instances	Percentage
Conventional Impoliteness Formulae	Insults	Personalized negative vocatives	6	4.7%
		Personalized negative assertions	10	7.9%
		Personalized negative references	4	3.1%
		Personalized third-person negative references	4	3.1%
	Pointed criticisms/complaints		12	9.5%
	Unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions		13	10.3%
	Condescension		3	2.3%
	Message enforcers		4	3.1%
	Dismissals		3	2.3%
	Silencers		1	0.7%
	Threats		2	1.5%
	Negative expressives		3	2.3%
II. Implicational impoliteness	Form-driven		36	28%
	Convention-driven:		7	5.5%
	Context-driven:		21	16.6%

The corpus of tweets under examination displayed a diverse range of impoliteness types, encompassing both conventional and implicational manifestations, albeit with varying frequencies. Within the purview of conventional impoliteness, specifically in the category of insults, a wide array of subtypes became apparent. These ranged from *personalized negative vocatives*, as exemplified by expressions like 'you deeply unfunny edgelord f**k,' to more elaborate formulations such as 'eat shit you disrespectful, soulless, deadbeat f**head,' among other variations. Concurrently, instances of *personalized negative assertions* surfaced, evident in statements like 'You are truly vile,' 'Elon, you are trash,' and 'You are a DOUCHEBAG.' Furthermore, personalized negative references found their place in this impoliteness discourse, exemplified by utterances such as 'We thought you'd be dead in your little rocket floating in space by now' and 'your rich-man-pissing contest to space.' The analysis also revealed *personalized third-person negative references*, including wordings like '@elonmusk is a corporate welfare queen.'

These illustrative examples underscore the prevalence of *personalized insults* and derogatory language as prominent modes of expression in the responses. The frequent recurrence of such personalized negative vocatives suggests a proclivity among respondents to employ explicit and offensive rhetoric, not only as a means of conveying their disapproval or frustration regarding the subject matter but potentially also as a mechanism for articulating contrasting ideologies. Consequently, it is plausible to posit that these retweets may have taken umbrage not solely due to the impolite remarks themselves but also as a means of expressing opposition to the ideologies espoused by the involved parties.

In the realm of *pointed criticisms/complaints*, the analyzed tweets featured instances such as 'that is some f***ed up thing to say to someone who…', 'what a deeply offensive thing to say' or 'this is so excessive'. These instances reveal the presence of pointed criticisms/complaints as they directly critique the subject matter, demonstrating strong disapproval. Following this, the category of *unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions* emerged, characterized by examples like '[…] you have billions of dollars and you're so triggered by a tweet about people paying their taxes?' or 'You scared bro?'. Unpalatable questions and presuppositions were employed to challenge or provoke the subject, often adopting a confrontational tone. Additionally, the exchanges featured instances of *condescension*, illustrated by replies such as 'you privileged idiot manchild' or 'imagine being this proud of being this infantile'. Condescension was employed through belittling or demeaning language aimed at denigrating the subject. *Message enforcers* were also deployed, evident in phrases like 'q.e.d. #TaxTheRich' and capitalizations such as 'you are a DOUCHEBAG', serving to emphasize the sender's stance and assert the intensity of the impoliteness. Furthermore, *dismissals* were evident in examples such as 'go to space and never come back […]' or 'Jesus Christ dude go f*** yourself', used to reject or disregard the subject, often accompanied by strong language. *Silencers* were employed in responses like 'shut up apartheid cracker', aiming to shut down or silence EM or BS, occasionally resorting to derogatory terms. In terms of threats, instances like, 'I can't wait to tax billionaires like you out of existence', appeared as mild threats, conveying negative consequences or harm. Finally, the category of *negative expressives* included ill-wishes such as, 'I hope your space suit rips in space', expressing curses or negative wishes, as seen in the comment about the space suit.

The second category of impoliteness, which focuses on implicational impoliteness, revealed diverse instances in the reply tweets. *Form-driven impoliteness* was frequently expressed through echoing, as seen in examples like 'I keep forgetting that you accused a heroic British cave diver of being a paedophile[sic]' or 'I keep forgetting you're an A-hole.' *Convention-driven* impoliteness was exemplified by statements such as, 'everyone should have Elon Musk's Twitter level confidence' or 'wow what a good rhetorical argument. Up there with "well you're ugly.",' both of which carry a sarcastic tone. Another example is 'sick burn on a politician > FSD to your customers you promised 2+ years ago', which seems to sarcastically criticize Elon Musk for prioritizing making negative or insulting comments about a politician over fulfilling a promise to customers. The term "sick burn" typically refers to a clever or sharp insult, often used in a humorous or mocking way. In this context, the tweet suggests that Elon Musk is more focused on delivering sharp criticisms against politicians rather than delivering on a promise he made to customers about "FSD," which stands for "Full Self-Driving" technology. The implication is that the author believes Musk should prioritize fulfilling his commitments to customers over engaging in political rhetoric.

Form-driven impoliteness involved echoing or mimicking certain behaviors, while convention-driven impoliteness employed elements like sarcasm or humor to convey impoliteness. *Context-driven* impoliteness emerged in instances like 'I better set a stop loss on my Tesla stock tomorrow', 'money can't buy class 'or 'forgetfulness is one of the side effects of extended meth use', which does not have meaning on its own, meaning that it can only be interpreted within the context. This tweet is not stating a fact, but rather suggesting that Elon Musk is forgetful and attributing this forgetfulness to the claim of "side effects of extended methamphetamine use". It's a sarcastic or mocking comment insinuating that the person's forgetfulness may be due to drug use, even though there is no evidence to support such a claim. This type of comment is often used as a form of criticism or ridicule. Context-driven impoliteness relied on the original message to convey impoliteness, often involving subtle or indirect language choices.

In the next part, moral order expectations of the repliers are elaborated and exemplified within Table 3.

Table 3
Moral Order Expectations of the Participants

Moral Order Expectations	Explicit and Implicit Replier Expectations	Excerpts
responsible wealth behavior	Expecting the extremely wealthy to pay their fair share of taxes.	'[…] It is time for the billionaires to pay their fair share.'
	Demanding responsible wealth management.	"Every billionaire owes massive debt to security, human capital, infrastructure, democracy that made their fortune possible."
	Criticizing billionaires for receiving government subsidies or corporate welfare.	"Somebody does not want any more government subsidies."
appropriate and non-offensive language	reacting negatively to offensive or disrespectful language used in tweets	"What a deeply offensive thing to say."

	expressing disappointment in the tone and content of tweets	"Unbelievably petty thing to say in response to an opinion on tax policy."
respect and decency	condemning personal attacks	'Money certainly doesn't buy kindness or manners."
	expecting a higher level of respect and decency in online interactions	"Money can't buy class."
refrainment of or changing political narrative and ideology	expressing disagreement with EM's or BS's political views and policies	"Bernie is the best politician in US."
	challenging the narrative and ideology presented in the tweets	"Why's he against paying 'fair share' of #taxes, and wishing someone dies instead?..."
	advocating for alternative political perspectives and solutions	"Bernie ain't going anywhere till we have a prosperous society."
engagement in philanthropic activities and social responsibility	calling for billionaires to use their wealth for the betterment of humanity	"Imagine having the means to completely eliminate homelessness."
	criticizing billionaires for prioritizing personal wealth over social responsibility	"Time to tax the rich. They've stolen too much."
transparency, accountability, and ethics	responding to specific allegations and accusations made in tweets	"That is some f**ed up thing to say to someone who has devoted their life to the country, you just lost whatever respect I had left for you."
	criticizing unethical behavior or actions	"I can understand why you support republicans being the subpoena dodger that you are." 'We don't need more Bernie's who own 3 homes yet pretend to hate capitalism.'

Responsible Wealth Behavior

The first and most widely used category was expectations of responsible wealth behavior. The tweets reflect a strong sentiment among participants that extremely wealthy individuals, like EM, should pay their fair share of taxes. This sentiment is rooted in a desire for economic fairness and the belief that wealthier individuals should contribute proportionally to society's upkeep. Additionally, there is a demand for ethical behavior and responsible wealth management. Some participants express concerns about the ethical choices made by billionaires in managing their wealth. Criticisms about him as a billionaire 'receiving government subsidies' or 'corporate welfare' are evident. Some participants argue that billionaires 'should not benefit from government assistance', reinforcing the expectation that they should operate independently. Expectations for the wealthy to contribute to societal well-being and reduce income inequality are prevalent. This reflects a broader societal concern about wealth disparities and a desire for billionaires to play a role in addressing these issues.

Appropriate and Non-offensive Language

Many participants reacted strongly to the offensive or disrespectful language used in tweets. This reflects a call for respectful and considerate communication, even in online discussions about contentious topics. Expressing disappointment in the tone and content of tweets suggests that participants are looking for a more civil and constructive discourse, highlighting their desire for a higher level of decorum in online interactions.

Respect and Decency

Participants strongly condemned personal attacks and name-calling in tweets. This category did not only refer to the original tweet (as was the case with the previous category), rather, they stressed the concept of respect and decency on a more general level. This signified a collective expectation for online interactions to maintain a degree of respect and decency, even when discussing controversial figures like EM or BS. The call for constructive criticism and debate instead of insults indicated a preference for substantive discussions over ad-hominem attacks which EM had done towards BS.

Refrainment of or Changing Political Narrative and Ideology

There is clear evidence of disagreement with both parties' political views and policies in some tweets. This highlights a diversity of political opinions among participants, which can be interpreted as having both the diverse audience from different political backgrounds and/or simply taking offense with the tweet regardless of the political background of the replier. We believe the former scenario sounds more plausible since many of those who check the tweets are likely to have political orientations. Therefore, the tweets reflected a willingness to challenge narratives and ideologies presented in EM's tweets, showing a commitment to critical thinking and scrutiny of public figures.

Engagement in Philanthropic Activities and Social Responsibility

Many participants expressed an expectation that billionaires, including EM, should engage in philanthropic activities and use their wealth for the betterment of humanity. This reflects a desire for billionaires to actively contribute to addressing societal challenges. Criticism of billionaires prioritizing personal wealth over social responsibility indicates that participants want to see billionaires actively invest in making the world a better place.

Transparency, Accountability, and Ethics

Some participants responded directly to specific allegations and accusations made in tweets. They wanted transparency and accountability when addressing such claims, emphasizing the importance of ethical conduct. The defense against claims of unethical behavior or actions suggests a desire for a fair and balanced examination of allegations rather than making unfounded accusations.

In summary, the tweets revealed a complex and diverse range of opinions and expectations regarding the behavior of individuals like EM and BS. While some expressed concerns about taxation and wealth management, other repliers focused on the tone of discourse and ethical conduct on the part of both parties. This reflects the multifaceted nature of public opinion and the various dimensions along which the actions of billionaires are evaluated by the online community.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the types of impoliteness and moral order expectations of participants within a political Twitter discourse community, the responses made by witnesses to a face-threat incidence. It is important to note that the replies we have included are not either rejected or confirmed by us as authors; rather, they are merely the reflections of the Twitter

repliers. Therefore, the claims regarding the truth or falseness of the information given regarding BS or EM's behavior, possessions, tax payments, or wealth status may not be accurate. However, our inclusion of these replies serves a distinct purpose: to illuminate the moral order expectations of the individuals involved. These responses are intended to evoke readers' moral order judgments, thereby enhancing the rhetorical arguments presented in these tweets.

As noted by Culpeper (2011), reciprocity plays a significant role in both impoliteness (see also Haugh, 2007). If one is verbally attacked, retaliation is often perceived as justifiable, although Culpeper does not explicitly address bystanders or face-threat witnesses in this matter (see, Dobs & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2013; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2011). The analysis encompassed 126 tweets, revealing various types of impoliteness formulae. The higher proportion of implicational impoliteness compared to conventional formulae based occurrences were expected as Culpeper (2011) has also argued that many impoliteness incidences do not follow any conventional formulae; in fact, in his own data, 59 percent of impoliteness in his data accounted for implicational impoliteness.

As far as the expectations of the participants were concerned, responsible wealth behavior, appropriate and non-offensive language, respect and decency, refrainment of or changing political narrative and ideology, engagement in philanthropic activities and social responsibility, and transparency, accountability, and ethics were the six identified overarching themes. Some similar studies confirm these findings. For example, the community's expectation of prudence from a high-profile figure became evident through emerging themes, aligning with findings by Parvaresh and Tayebi (Parvaresh & Tayebi, 2018) concerning moral order themes directed at an Iranian actress on her official Facebook page. These findings were also aligned with what Haugh and Sinkeviciute (Haugh & Sinkeviciute, 2019) referred to as indicating or claiming offense. It appears that appealing to the moral order of participants can be attributed to expectations related to the political and socio-political standing, age, and other factors of the face-threat initiator and recipient. The impolite responses can similarly be linked to shared assumptions and expectations within a culture that upholds common principles and social standards (Sharifian & Tayebi, 2017).

It is worth noting that twitter feuds, particularly those involving politicians and celebrities, are prone to controversy, making them more susceptible to offense and hate speech. This makes celebrities' and politicians' tweets fertile grounds for language analysts, learners, and educators to delve into impoliteness aspects. This sensitivity is exacerbated when conflicting interests are involved, often leading to significant verbal conflicts, especially on open social media platforms like X, where ideas can be rapidly disseminated and responses generated. In addition to that, X discourse is an easier and more available form of authentic data especially by the use of hashtags that can provide insights into trending discourses in the world. It can be viewed as a form of searchable talk (Zappavigna, 2015), with X users utilizing Twitter's affordances to publicize dis(approval) of other's values and discourse, as exemplified in this study.

Conclusion

This study attempted to delve into how participants in an online discourse community replied to discourse that they deemed as impolite and offensive. The instances we covered are only some among many other instances of impolite rhetoric manifestations on X. Therefore, the

findings, by no means, offer a comprehensive list of moral order judgments or impoliteness instances. Rather, we believe, by using authentic instances of impoliteness within context, students metapragmatic awareness and competence can be increased (Savić, 2018). Authentic data can also help them regarding social and interactional aspects and enhance their critical thinking skills about politeness (Tsakona, 2016). This study can also have practical implications for social media users, educators, and policymakers who need to be aware of the possible advantages and disadvantages of participating in online communication, and to devise ways to deal with or avoid situations that may threaten face. This can be particularly important for advanced L2 learners who face difficulties in learning the pragmatic competence that suits the socio-cultural context (Mestre-Mestre & Díez-Bedmar, 2022). Educators can use the findings of this and similar studies to increase awareness of what constitutes moral order expectations in twitter context. For example, the moral order expectations that were found in this study can be a source for language learners to resort to when engaging in similar online communication (i.e., political, social, etc. online exchanges). Further, teachers can design activities and tasks that involve analyzing impolite and polite language in different online platforms and genres, and that foster critical thinking and intercultural communication skills among learners. Moreover, policymakers can use the findings of this and similar studies to develop guidelines and regulations for online communication, and to promote ethical and responsible use of social media.

The study also suggests some directions for future research. The world has already become a global community where individuals from various cultures can get connected and collaborate on platforms such as X (Twitter), Instagram, Facebook, where individuals are more exposed to cross-cultural experience. Learning a language predisposes knowledge of cultural and pragmatic appropriateness. Therefore, first, more studies are needed to examine impoliteness and moral order in other online platforms and genres, such as blogs, forums, podcasts, videos, etc., to compare and contrast how they differ from or resemble X (Twitter) discourse. Second, more studies are needed to investigate impoliteness and moral order in other languages and cultures, to explore how they are influenced by linguistic and cultural diversity. Third, more studies are needed to adopt a longitudinal perspective on impoliteness and moral order in online communication, to examine how they change over time and across different situations. Fourth, more studies are needed to adopt a mixed-methods approach to impoliteness and moral order in online communication, to combine quantitative and qualitative methods for a more comprehensive analysis. Fifth, more studies are needed to involve participants' perspectives on impoliteness and moral order in online communication, to elicit their views and evaluations on their own or others' linguistic behavior.

In conclusion, this study has shed some light on the complex and dynamic nature of impoliteness and moral order in X discourse. It has shown how participants use various linguistic means to express their opinions and emotions, as well as to attack, show dis(agreement), or support others. It has also shown how participants evaluate their own or others' linguistic behavior according to their expectations based on their social, economic, cultural and political orientations. This largely overlooked aspect of discourse in language teaching context also requires more thorough investigations especially in naturally occurring contexts to provide language learners with more elaborate explanations and guidelines for the target culture's expectations of appropriate behavior.

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