





ELSA 2023

e-Proceeding



3RD INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
EDUCATION AND
LANGUAGE FOR
STUDENTS & ADULT
LEARNERS (ELSA)

"Digital Transformation in Language and Education" 25 - 26 OCTOBER 2023

ORGANISED BY

ACADEMY OF LANGUAGE STUDIES

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA PERAK BRANCH

e-ISBN: 978-967-2776-23-9

ELSA 2023 e-Proceeding

3rd International Conference on Education and Languages for Students and Adult Learners (ELSA)

"Digital Transformation in Language and Education"



Organised by:

Academy of Language Studies Universiti Teknologi MARA Perak Branch

Published by:

Unit Penerbitan UiTM Perak

Address:

Unit Penerbitan UiTM Perak,
Research, Industrial Linkages, Community, and Alumni Network Office,
Universiti Teknologi MARA Perak Branch,
32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia.

05-3742710 uitmperakpress@gmail.com

© Unit Penerbitan UiTM Perak, UiTM 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means; electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise; without permission in writing from the director of Unit Penerbitan UiTM Perak, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing in Publication Data

No e-ISBN: 978-967-2776-23-9



Cover Design : Norasyikin Abdul Malik Typesetting : Dr. Nor Ashikin Ab Manan

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Nor Ashikin Ab. Manan

Editors

Mohamad Syafiq Ya Shak
Zarlina Mohd Zamari
Sheema Liza Idris
Prof. Madya Dr. Puteri Rohani Megat Abdul Rahim
Dr. Nuramira Anuar
Farahidatul Akmar Awaluddin
Dr. Paul GnanaSelvam a/I Pakirnathan
Mr. F. Peter a/I G. Francis
Dr. Nor Nadia Raslee
Norasyikin Abdul Malik
Noorlinda Alang
Wan Faridatul Akma Wan Mohd Rashdi
Nurul Ain Hasni

The 3rd International Conference on Education and Language for Students and Adult Learners (ELSA)
e-Proceeding

Organised by,

Academy of Language Studies,
Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Perak Branch

AN ANALYSIS OF CRITICISING STRATEGIES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Siti Khadijah Omar*1, Nor Syamimi Iliani Che Hassan², and Hairunnisa Mohammad Nor³

^{1, 2, 3} Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan, MALAYSIA

> sitikhadijah7547@uitm.edu.my syami@uitm.edu.my nisa032@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

The use of social media platforms for obtaining up-to-date information and sharing personal opinions has made them a rich source of data for linguistic research. Hence, this study aims to investigate the strategies used by Malaysians to express criticism online. Drawing on earlier research on criticism in everyday situations, this study explored how Malaysians expressed political criticisms amidst Malaysia's 15th General Election. Data were procured from a local Malaysian English newspaper's Facebook page. The study found that the criticism realisation strategies in the 180 Facebook comments can be grouped into two primary types: indirect strategies and direct strategies. For indirect criticism realisation, Malaysians would most frequently employ the "hints" strategy to criticise whereas they would most frequently make explicit expressions of disagreement, disapproval or dislike in their direct criticisms. This study also found two new indirect strategies - making compliments to and asserting support for opponents as other means to criticise. This study has offered insights into Malaysian social media users' preferences to assert criticisms especially regarding the political context.

Keywords: Criticism realisation strategies, social media, speech acts, netizen, Facebook.

INTRODUCTION

In this age of social media, we could observe that Internet users (hereafter netizens) do not just navigate through this domain for its entertainment features, but this social media platform is also used to gain updated information. These platforms are now seen as our cradle when we want to hear opinions and ideas expressed by other people (Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022). Facebook for instance offers us tremendous viral posts or comments over social and political issues (Chunly, 2020). The opinions and ideas shared in this social media also contain complaints and criticism that challenge government narratives, outline media and public agenda and weigh decisions and policies of the ruling party in a country (Vong & Hok, 2018) making it the best source of reference for linguistics study.

Not only confined to that, becoming engaged in politics too is seen more incidental with this social media platform progress. This is due to an array of ways for political online interactions taking place in social media platforms (Nanz & Matthes, 2022). Interactions that occur via these platforms are laden with political criticisms from netizens, among whom are future voters. Criticism, which is also a form of interaction, offers us an interesting point to study which is the effects of

political criticism in our public culture and democratic outcomes. Sasaki's (2017) opined that criticism provides a sense of political empowerment is achieved among netizens when they can have their online conversations in democracy.

Since expressing criticism can occur in diverse ways, comprehending its illocutionary act would drive us towards a more effective communication. According to DeClerck and Holtzman (2018), criticism can be related to passive judgements which are made by surrounding people and in upholding democracy, criticism is classified as a healthy engagement (Raghuramaraju, 2009). Additionally, Nguyen (2005), outlined criticism as an act of negative evaluation towards hearer's actions or words with an intention of betterment to the hearer or for the sake of the third party. From Nguyen's description of criticism, it is imperative to note that criticism is the opposite of complaints since criticism involves a constructive attitude and it provides benefit to the hearer or the third party but not the speaker (Al Kayed & Al-Ghoweri, 2019).

People can criticise others directly or indirectly – which strategies they choose are determined by several factors. These factors include culture, social status, work role, gender, and age (Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022). Nguyen (2005) shows that direct strategies are employed when an interlocutor explicitly shows the problem with a hearer's choice, actions, work, or products. This can be articulated by means of explicit negative evaluation, disapproval, disagreement, identification of problem, consequences, and statement of difficulties. In contrast to these, criticisms are said to be indirect if the problems with a hearer's choice, action, or work are addressed implicitly through requests for change, hints and opting out.

Derived from Nguyen's (2005) framework, studies on criticism have been conducted in various sociocultural contexts. These include native and non-native speakers of English (Farnia, 2022; Lin, 2020; Nguyen, 2013), Jordanian Arab (Al Kayed & Al-Ghoweri, 2019; Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022), Persian (Farnia, 2022; Farnia & Sattar, 2015), Chinese (Lin, 2020) and other Asian and African languages (El-Dakhs et al., 2019; Haristiani et al., 2023). Out of these studies, four were conducted in simulated situations, some of which also represented different social power and social distance between speakers (Al Kayed & Al-Ghoweri, 2019; El-Dakhs et al., 2019; Farnia & Sattar, 2015; Nguyen, 2013). Two studies collected data from entertainment media (Haristiani et al., 2023; Lin, 2020) and social media (Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022; Farnia, 2022) respectively.

Regarding the choice of criticism strategies, these studies reported different results. Nguyen (2013) reported that non-native English speakers more often employed direct criticism and indirect criticism – requests for change, while native English speakers employed direct criticism and indirect criticism – requests for change and hints on an equal basis. Similarly, El-Dakhs et al. (2019) found that indirect strategies were preferred by their research participants. Meanwhile, in a comparative study between Minangkabau and Japanese speakers, Haristiani et al. (2023) discovered that Minangkabau speakers showed a higher tendency to criticise directly whereas Japanese speakers would criticise others

indirectly. In Farnia et al. (2015), Persian speakers used negative evaluation, identification of problem, consequence and disapproval as their direct strategies and opted request for change, suggestion for change, demand for change, asking/presupposing, other hints, indicating standard, preaching, advice for change, and expressing uncertainty when they criticised indirectly. In the online context, Farnia (2022) reported that Persian speakers employed direct strategies more than indirect strategies with a similar result yielded for English speakers. Among Jordanian Arab speakers, in a simulated context, they more often employed indirect strategies (Al Kayed & Al-Ghoweri, 2019) whereas in an online context, they were reported to employ direct criticism – identification of a problem and direct criticism – sarcasm on an almost equal frequency (Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022). Lin (2020) also reported no significant differences in the use of direct and indirect criticism among American English speakers and Taiwanese speakers while British English speakers more frequently opted for direct strategies to criticise in a face-to-face communication context.

According to Purnanto and Jauhari (2016), context is the main moderator which will regulate the type of criticism strategies chosen by the interlocutors. On the other hand, Farnia and Abdul Sattar (2015) assert that indirect strategies are usually driven by participants' culture and their tendency to save the face of their interlocutors. In Cao's study (2005), it was discovered that social and cultural factors were the biggest influence shaping one's choice of criticism strategies. Meanwhile, Hoa (2007), highlighted several determinants which can affect criticising behaviour of interlocutors like distance, criticism outcome on the relationship, purpose of criticising, age of the hearer and finally severity of the offence. Nuryani (2016) too discovered that relative power, social distance, and rank of imposition have the biggest impact on the choice of criticism strategies.

To perform a criticism act is indeed challenging as it is more face-damaging compared to other speech acts (Nguyen, 2013). Brown and Levinson (1987) define 'face' as the public self-image that every member in a society wants to project which can be differentiated as positive face and negative face. Negative face is seen as an individual's need for independence, not to be imposed on and to be given freedom of selection. On the other hand, a positive face is portrayed as one's desire to belong and be accepted by others. Face threatening and even worse face losing, would occur when face is not respected by interlocutors (Yule, 2010). Therefore, sometimes pre-plan is required in performing this highly complex speech act that is criticism – an act that can be damaging to an individual's positive face as their acts, personal characteristics, goods, beliefs, or values are ignored by others in a communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Based on the review of related literature, it has been unearthed that studies on criticism which is a highly offensive speech act are still scarce. Furthermore, more studies have been conducted thus far in simulated situations using role play and discourse completion tests. Although the number of people communicating online, especially via social media has escalated steadily (Data Reportal, n.d.), there is a lacuna of studies on online criticism. To address this, our study would

examine criticism realisation strategies adopted in political comments corpora performed by Malaysian netizens amid the 15th General Election in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

The study corpus consisted of 180 Facebook comments collected using the purposive sampling method. These comments were posted in response to news about the Malaysian 15th General Election on the Facebook page of a local Malaysian English newspaper. 180 comments written to six news articles were collected into our research corpus. These six articles were among those which received the highest number of comments during which the data were collected. However, only 30 comments were extracted from each of the six articles for this preliminary research. We coded the data in several rounds by addressing one question at a time using ATLAS.ti version 22 as the main coding software that eases data management and data retrieval compared to a manual data analysis. Coding was conducted in several rounds as we discovered and needed to use more accurate words for the original strategies and merged conceptually similar strategies (Saldaña, 2016). All researchers were involved in the coding process, primarily to identify the strategies used in expressing online criticisms. The analytical framework developed for this study was adapted from Nguyen (2013) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Analytical framework for online criticism

Direct criticism	(DC1) An explicit statement of a problem.	
	(DC2) An explicit expression of disagreement with, disapproval and dislike of the addressed politician's actions.	
	(DC3) Warning about the consequences of the addressed politician's actions.	
Indirect criticism	(IC1) Requests for change	Giving advice for changes and improvements; encouraging changes and improvement in the addressed politician's actions. Insisting that changes be made. Indicating standard and expectations.
	(IC2) Hints	Presupposing or asking the addressed politician's opinion of their own actions.
		Light teasing or sarcasm
	(IC3) Opting out	No performance in a situation

MAIN RESULTS

Our analysis found that 240 criticism realisation strategies were used in the Facebook comments. Out of the 240 strategies, 34.4% consisted of direct strategies and 65.6% were indirect strategies. The findings indicate that in expressing criticisms online, Malaysian netizens would criticise indirectly, most probably because they realised that criticism could damage the respective political parties or politicians' (hereafter politicians) positive face in the online space (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Al Kayed and Al-Ghoweri (2019) also suggested that when people opted to criticise others indirectly, they were aware of the degree of threat of criticism against hearers.

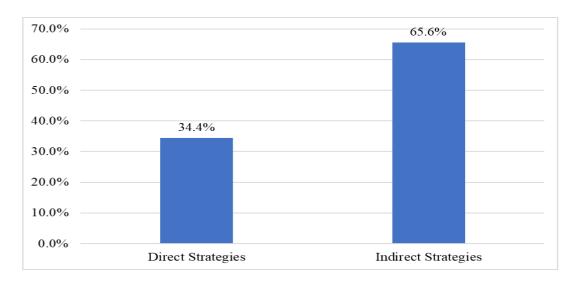


Figure 1. Distribution of realisation strategies used in online criticisms.

A closer analysis of the realisation strategies yielded seven strategies: three direct criticism realisation strategies and four indirect criticism realisation strategies as shown in Figure 2.

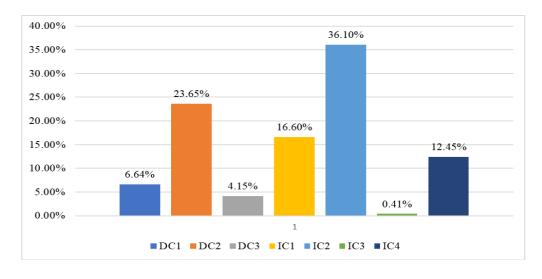


Figure 2. Distribution of direct and indirect strategies used in online criticisms.

Direct Criticism Realisation Strategies

For direct strategies, the most frequent ones (23.65%) were explicit expressions of disapproval, disagreement, or dislike towards the addressed politician (DC2). In the first excerpt, the netizen clearly exhibited their dislike towards the politician discussed in the news article by stating "u are not wanted here.". Another way of showing dislike can be seen in the next excerpt, "We don't want to believe you, especially the biggest liar.". Apart from stating their refusal to believe everything that was advocated by the politician, the netizen also negatively labelled the politician as "the biggest liar". In fact, there were various negative labels given to politicians whom future voters disapproved of such as "A cowherd n chicken party" and "Pak lebai korup Nyanyok!!!". Another way of expressing disapproval towards any politicians was done using the command strategy as used in these excerpts "pls berambussss [leaveeee]" and "[politician] please bungkus [pack] n go back to hutan Sabah [Sabah forest]".

For the other two direct strategies, there was only a little difference of 2.49% between them. Although there was a major difference with DC2, the netizens more frequently stated problems explicitly (DC1) as opposed to giving warnings to addressees (DC3). As the name suggests, netizens would criticise politicians that would be contesting in the election by raising any prolonged issues or problems that unfortunately cropped up during their governance. In this excerpt, "You were given a chance to right the wrongs you did in you first long tenure. You screwed us.... again." The problems raised by the netizen were referred to the mistakes made by the criticised politician throughout his tenure of governance. Then, another problem stated in the same comment "You screwed us.... again." which meant that the people, represented by the netizen, seemed to be deceived once again. Other than past issues that had yet to be resolved, netizens also criticised the politicians by foretelling problems that might be caused by them if people vote for these parties or politicians. "Country will go "haywire" if the same crooked politicians keep holding on to the baton.". In this excerpt, the possibility of facing problems was foretold by the netizen as "Country will go "haywire", nothing specifically mentioned but only a general prediction that Malaysians would be facing future issues. Another excerpt also shows a general prediction of a problem caused by a certain politician as foretold by a netizen "Country will goes crazy n mad if [politician] win". Aside from these, we also found that in their criticisms, netizens would also point out specific problems that had occurred as stated in this excerpt "Lately the country is put into more problems namely trains broke down, ship missing, rakyat [people] suffering from flooding and roads are not maintained."

Warning was also opted as a direct criticism realisation strategy by the netizens but this strategy was least used in the virtual platform. In their warnings, the politicians would either be addressed as the second person or third person. They would be warned of possible consequences that would arise during the campaigning period and after the election. In this excerpt, the politician was addressed as a second-person, "The time has come nobody can block it...so be prepared for a better Malaysia future.." whereas they were addressed as a third-person in this excerpt, "The more they do, the more they will be hated by the rakyat.". Because the context of criticism is the upcoming general election, none of the

warnings was said out of context. They were mostly about people's trust for the politicians, and the future situation of the country.

Indirect Criticism Realisation Strategies

As for indirect strategies, we found that the netizens most frequently gave hints (ic2) to indirectly state their criticisms (36.10%). the least frequently opted strategy (0.41%) was opted out (ic3) which implies that the netizens would rather say something indirectly than not saying anything at all or saying anything indirectly. In our data, the opt out strategy was not staying silent in the virtual platform, instead this was done by stating the following expression, "Whatever lah.." a way of saying that they refused to be further involved in any of the conflicts. As shown in the chart, besides the three indirect strategies suggested by (Nguyen, 2013), we found several other expressions that could not be categorised in any of the strategies. Hence, these expressions were put in the fourth category (IC4). Among the expressions under this new category were questioning the addressed politician, complimenting other politicians, and giving support to other politicians.

The hints strategy (IC2) which was most frequently opted for indirect criticism was realised in several ways. In this excerpt, "Voters knows which party to vote." the netizen did not criticise the politician in a straightforward manner, but by asserting it in a voice that represented fellow voters that they would vote for another politician, and not the one being discussed in the news. Interestingly, we also found an English proverb used by a netizen to criticise the politician, "A leopard never changes its spots.". Because a proverb can only be understood by relating it to the context rather than giving it a literal translation, it is also categorised in the hints strategy. Sarcasm, which is also categorised in the same strategy, was found in our data too. Some of the sarcasms found in our data were, "Greatest joke of the decade. A thief saying he will catch a thief.", "Die with his unfinished job." and "He is still in his wildest dream??".

The requests for change strategy (IC1) was the second most frequently employed indirect strategy to express criticism online. As this strategy is also associated with giving advice, we noted that in our data, netizens would either give advice to politicians or to fellow voters. In the advice given to a politician, the netizen expressed it politely so as not to appear rude and damage the politician's negative face. The advice was mitigated using modality markers as follows, "Please don't tense and uses races for your benefits. To be a good leader kindly learn respect all races & religions". Another example of mitigated advice can be seen in this excerpt which downplayed the severity of the threat using a committer, "Ithink u got to take lesson b4 accusing others.". In addition to advising politicians, the netizens also advised their fellow voters to indirectly criticise those in politics. "Rakyat..vote wisely." This excerpt is advice addressed to fellow voters to think wisely before voting and to indirectly assert that they should not vote for the politician under discussion.

The least frequently used strategy was opting out (IC3). In our corpus, only one comment employed this strategy. The netizen criticised the politician simply with the statement "Whatever lah..!" which indicated their reluctance to comment

further on the political scenario. In face-to-face conversation, opting out can be signalled by one's silence in the conversation. However, when conversing online, opting out can be indicated by no response in an ongoing chat which yields no data for researchers.

As shown in Figure 2, we found a new set of strategies which can be categorised as indirect crAs shown in Figure 2, we found a new set of strategies which can be categorised as indirect criticism realisation strategies in our corpus. In this new set of strategies, we noticed that the netizens would question the actions or capabilities of the contesting politicians. "So what? Who else is more capable, resilient and passionate as a PM candidate?" In this excerpt, the criticism was thrown as a rhetorical question to ask for the politician's opinion about a better candidate for the new Malaysian Prime Minister. This question can be understood intrinsically as an objection towards the politician. Another new strategy employed by the netizens in our corpus was expressing support and compliment towards other politicians who were opponents of those politicians being discussed in the news. This strategy seemed like a counterattack against the politicians that were not supported by the netizens. An example of compliment to the opponent is shown in this excerpt, "Being obsessed makes him more diligent n hardworking" and support for the opponent lies in this excerpt, "[politician] is definitely my choice of being Malaysia's next PM to steer the nation back to the right path after it has been plundered and led astray by corrupted politicians.". If we examine these comments superficially, no negativity can be detected as they are entirely positive statements directed towards the opponents. Nevertheless, through a closer inspection of the comments, we can understand that they both implied criticisms of the politician that was being discussed in the news.

Based on our analysis above, we can conclude that online criticisms specifically those engendered by political issues can be expressed mainly in two ways as direct and indirect criticisms. When criticisms are expressed directly in social media, netizens most often state their disagreements, disapproval or dislike towards specific politicians in explicit ways. They also tend to bring up problems caused by those politicians. Besides these, netizens may also warn the competing politicians of possible consequences if they proceed with their manifestos and warn fellow voters of the consequences if certain politicians are supported and voted for. Meanwhile, netizens also choose to criticise politicians indirectly by advising them and advising fellow voters to make changes, giving hints, or making sarcastic remarks. In our data, we have generated two new indirect criticism realisation strategies: making compliments to and asserting support for opposition politicians.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the strategies used by Malaysians to express political criticism amidst Malaysia's 15th General Election. From our analysis, the following results emerged: indirect criticism realisation strategies were more commonly used than direct criticism realisation strategies and two new strategies of indirect

criticism were yielded – complimenting and supporting opponents of the criticised politicians.

Our findings were consistent with the studies on criticism by Al Kayed and Al-Ghoweri (2019) and El-Dakhs et al. (2019) as their studies also revealed that people showed a higher tendency to criticise indirectly. Criticism, which is a type of aversive communication, is intrinsically a threat to one's positive face as it challenges one's desire for approval by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Chen, 2015). More specifically, criticism can be seen as social incivility as it depreciates the criticised individuals' self-concept, character, capability, and self-perception (Chen, 2015). Social media are "networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication" (Meikle, 2016, p.6). Social media have converted communication which used to be visible only to the parties involved in face-toface communication to being largely visible to a wider audience (Leonardi, 2014). Because of the communication visibility in online space, social media users might be highly conscious of what they post online. This factor could have also influenced their choice of indirect strategies to criticise those in politics. By being indirect in their criticisms, they could minimise the impact of the criticisms' threat to politicians' positive face (Masjedi & Paramasivam, 2018; Trosborg, 1994). Our study has shown that when it comes to political issues, many people tend to avoid expressing their opinions directly. Instead, they would look for other ways to address controversial issues. People may turn to hints as a means of venting their aggravation or expressing their discontent with the current state of affairs. Our findings were also consistent with Darweesh's (2011) study which demonstrated how Arabic speakers used indirect strategies to overcome the impact of criticism. It is also believed that most netizens use hints when expressing political criticism as a way to avoid potential backlash or repercussions from those in power (Shapiro, 1990). This suggests that individuals may not always feel secure expressing their thoughts freely, hence, resort to indirect strategies to avoid being targeted. Nguyen (2005) also suggested that people tend to criticise indirectly to steer clear of potentially harmful interactions.

According to Nguyen (2008), direct criticism realisation strategy is a style of criticism by which issues or problems with others' actions are stated in a clear and concise manner. This was shown in our findings that the most frequently used direct strategy was explicit expressions of disapproval, disagreement, or dislike towards the addressed politician. Significantly, the findings of our study were parallel with a previous study focusing on the issues and comments on Malay political parties on social media in Malaysia by Kasim and Kamarul Zaman (2021). The study discovered that netizens had been openly criticising the leader of Malay political parties as well as hurling severe criticism on other politicians from opposition parties (Kasim & Kamarul Zaman, 2021). They noticed that netizens freely made remarks on social media to express their unhappiness and suggest solutions to politicians to the numerous problems they were facing. Nonetheless, Levinson (1978) asserts that peoples' preferences for direct strategies cannot be taken as proof that they are impolite. There are several possible explanations for the occurrences of direct criticisms. It is believed that direct strategies are used when giving criticisms because these will make criticisms clear, honest, and easy

to express. Therefore, being direct does not necessarily equate to being impolite as it is possible to communicate in a straightforward way and it may be more effective in conveying the intended message. This echoes with the study of Alshra' (2013) who demonstrated that direct strategies are generally accepted to be appropriate for discussing political issues. In a related study, Kerkam (2015) discovered that directness is valued and seen as courteous in certain cultures. People from different cultures may hold different interpretations as to what is direct criticism and indirect criticism (Eslamirasekh, 1993). For example, due to cultural differences, English speakers choose direct strategies as opposed to Chinese speakers when expressing criticism (Min, 2008). In other respects, Abdalhadi et al. (2023) found that people who are impacted by a crisis have a different manner of taking in information, processing it, and acting on it compared to the way in which they manage information during times when there is no crisis. This has reflected on the findings of our study as the 15th General Election in Malaysia is an example of a crisis that has impacted many individuals, specifically Malaysian voters. As a result, netizens resort to a direct style of communication characterised by strong statements of disapproval, disagreement, or hate in the form of comments. This may have been a contributing factor in their adoption of more overt methods of political criticism.

Our study also identified a new set of indirect criticism realisation strategies, which included making compliments and asserting support for opponents as other means to criticise. In the political realm, voters are supposed to maintain the confidentiality of their votes, but some voters have a propensity to reveal their favourite politicians and those whom they dislike, despite the fact that this is against the rules. The same thing occurred in this instance of criticism: they did not expressly proclaim their disagreement, but they did it indirectly by emphasising their support and compliment for particular political parties or people. On this basis, the results of our study were in line with a prior study by Iman Research (2023) – voters would indirectly criticise the policies and administration of another political group while ostensibly showing support for their favourite ones. This was done without directly attacking the opposition but rather emphasising the positive aspects of the opponent. In addition, Iman Research (2023) also revealed that their study respondents were also found to employ compliments to convey their disapproval. The respondents asserted their support for their favourite party by maintaining that it was likely to win with a significant majority because of the party's principles and readiness for election. It can be pointed out that criticising an opponent by giving praise to their fellow contestant to undermine the opponent's credibility is a notable strategy. In this strategy, compliments and asserting support for opponents are used as a cover to covertly provide constructive criticism. For instance, someone may start a criticism by recognising the skill of their opponent or a legitimate point that their opponent has made before going on to provide their own counterargument. As a result, the potentially confrontational element of criticism is mitigated, which may lead to the development of a discourse that is both more productive and open.

In conclusion, the use of both indirect and direct strategies in expressing political criticism plays a crucial role in fostering a dynamic and open political

discourse. These strategies provide people with a variety of possibilities for expressing their political concerns, ideas, and opposition. Indirect methods, such hints, sarcasm, advice, and compliments, make it possible to provide nuanced criticism while often keeping a degree of complexity and room for creative expression. Direct strategies, on the other hand, such as voicing disapproval, disagreement, or hate, as well as providing a warning, provide a strong way of confronting urgent problems head-on and rallying people for change. The combination of these tactics results in a strong political expression environment that caters to a wide range of ideas and settings. In the end, these diverse ways of doing things give people the power to change their criticism to fit the needs and challenges of the political moment.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate the strategies Malaysians used to express their political criticism during the 15th General Election in Malaysia. Interestingly, our findings have provided new insights into the preferences of Malaysian social media users to express criticisms, particularly with relation to the political setting. The results showed that criticism realisation strategies used in Facebook comments can primarily be broken down into two categories: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Additionally, our study found two new strategies for the fulfilment of indirect criticism. These strategies included complimenting opposing political parties and leaders and stating that you support them. Based on the findings, we can draw the conclusion that because online communication is public, people who use social media might be very careful about what they post. This could have also played a role in why they chose indirect ways to criticise politicians.

It is important to point out that this research has its limitations. As it is preliminary research, only 180 Facebook comments posted by Malaysian netizens were collected for data analysis, reflecting a small-scale research. In order to reflect Malaysian netizens more accurately, future research may be conducted by employing a bigger sample size and procuring data from several social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Telegram. Moreover, netizens of different age groups use different social media. Future research can also conduct comparative studies between Malaysian netizens and those from other countries to identify sociocultural differences and similarities in online criticism realisation strategies. All in all, realisation of criticism strategies in social media is a complex phenomenon which requires further investigation.

BIODATA

Siti Khadijah Omar is an English lecturer at the Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kelantan where she teaches English skills to undergraduate students. She graduated from the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) with a bachelor's degree of Human Sciences (English Language and Literature). She

obtained her Master of Applied Linguistics from the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Her research interests include pragmatics, linguistics politeness, crosscultural pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics.

Nor Syamimi Iliani Che Hassan teaches English language at Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kelantan. She holds a master's degree in Applied Linguistics. She has conducted research and published research papers in the areas of mobile language learning, English for specific purposes, and pragmatics.

Nor Hairunnisa Mohammad Nor is an English language lecturer in the Academy of Language Studies at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Kelantan. She has been the faculty member since 2009. She received a bachelor's degree in Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and a master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Her research interests lie in the areas of second language acquisition, teaching English as a second language and sociolinguistics.

REFERENCES

- Abdalhadi, H., Al-Khawaldeh, N., Al Huneety, A., & Mashaqba, B. (2023). A corpusbased pragmatic analysis of Jordanians Facebook status updates during COVID-19. *Ampersand (Oxford, UK), 10,* 100099. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2022.100099
- Al Kayed, M. & Al-Ghoweri, H. (2019). A socio-pragmatic study of speech act of criticism in Jordanian Arabic. *European Journal of Scientific Research*, 153(1), 105-117.
- Alshakhanbeh, S. & Alghazo, S. (2022). A pragmatic analysis of criticism strategies against government policies on social media in Jordan: A gender-based investigation. *Jordan Journal of Modern Languages and Literatures*, 14(22), 263-286.
- Alshra', A. (2013). A sociolinguistic study of the speech act of criticism. Unpublished MA thesis. Irbid: Yarmouk University.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use.* Cambridge University Press.
- Cao, J. (2005). A pragmatic analysis of the speech act of criticism in primary and junior high school Chinese lecturer-student talk [Master's thesis, Northeast Normal University]. ProQuest Digital Dissertation.
- Data Reportal. (n.d.). Global social media statistics. https://datareportal.com/social-media-users
- Darweesh, A. D. (2011). Speech act of criticizing in MSA Arabic. *Basic Education College Magazine*, 6(1), 59-78.
- DeClerck, D. & Holtzman, S. (2018). To text or talk: Does communication modality matter when providing criticism to others? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 87, 109-120.
- El-Dakhs, D. A. S., Ambreen, F., Zaheer, M., & Gusarova, Y. (2019). A pragmatic

- analysis of the speech act of criticizing in university teacher-student talk: The case of English as a lingua franca. *Pragmatics*, 29(4), 493–520. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.18028.eld
- Eslamirasekh, Z. (1993). A cross-cultural comparison of requestive speech act realization patterns in Persian and American English. *Pragmaues and Language Learning Monograph Series*, 4. 85-103.
- Farnia, M. (2022). A cross-cultural CMC-based study of the speech act of criticism in response to school reopening during COVID-19. Issues in Language Teaching (ILT), 11(2), 291–324. https://doi.org/10.22054/ilt.2022.65791.674
- Farnia, M. & Abdul Sattar, H. Q. (2016). A sociopragmatic analysis of the speech act of criticism by Persian native speakers. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)*, 2(3), 305–327.
- Haristiani, N., Septiana, A., Nor, N. F. M., & Ryota, N. (2023). The politeness of criticism speech acts in Japanese and Minangkabau films. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13(1), 134–151. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v13i1.58272
- Hoa, H. (2007). Criticizing behaviours by the Vietnamese and the American: Topics, social factors and frequency. *VNU Journal of Science, Foreign Languages*, 23, 141-154.
- Iman Research. (2023). Election sentiments analysis of Malaysia's 15th general Elections (GE-15). https://www.imanresearch.com/wpcontent/uploads/2023/01/Election-Sentiments-Analysis-of-Malaysias-15th-General-Elections-GE15-FINAL-REPORT.pdf
- Kasim, A., & Kamarul Zaman, H. (2021). Social media analysis on Malay political parties in Malaysia: Study on the issues and comments Facebook.

 International Journal of Law, Government and Communication, 6 (26), 127–137. DOI: 10.35631/IJLGC.626011.
- Kerkam, Z. M. (2015). A comparison of Arabic and English directness and indirectness: Cross-cultural politeness. Doctoral, Sheffield Hallam University (United Kingdom).
- Lin, C. Y. (2020). Exploring judges' compliments and criticisms on American, British, and Taiwanese talent shows. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 160, 44–59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.02.008
- Nanz, A. & Matthes, J. (2022). Seeing political information online incidentally. Effects of first- and second-level incidental exposure on democratic outcomes. *Computers in Human Behaviour, 133*(2022), 1-12.
- Nguyen, M. (2005). Criticizing and responding to criticism in a foreign language: A study of Vietnamese learners of English [Unpublished doctoral dissertation] The University of Auckland, Auckland].
- Nguyen, T. T. M. (2008). Criticizing in a L2: Pragmatic strategies used by Vietnamese EFL learners. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 5(1), 41-66.
- Nguyen, T. T. M. (2013). An exploratory study of criticism realization strategies used by NS and NNS of New Zealand English. *Multilingua*, *32*(1), 103–130. https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2013-0005
- Nuryani, E. (2016). A pragmatic analysis of politeness features of criticism in Joseph Mcginty's This Means War. Sastra Inggris Quill, 5(2), 169-175.

- Purnanto, D. & Jauhari, E. (2016). Speech act of criticism as a mechanism of social control in the ethnic Madurese community. *Advanced Science Letters*, 22(12), 4112-4115.
- Raghuramaraju, A. (2009). Internal criticism in the democracies outside the West. *Alternatives*, 34(3), 339-358.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Sasaki, F. (2017). Does Internet use provide a deeper sense of political empowerment to the less educated? *Inf. Commun. Soc., 20*(10), 1445–1463.
- Shapiro, Ian. (1990). *Political Criticism*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Shang-chao, M. (2008). Study on the differences of speech act of criticism in
- Chinese and English. US-ChinaForeign Language, 6(3), 74-77.
- Trosborg, A. (1995). Interlanguage pragmatics. Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Vong, M. & Hok, K. (2018). Facebooking: Youth's everyday politics in Cambodia. South East Asia Res, 26(3), 219-234.
- Yule, G. (2010). The study of language. Cambridge University.

Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perak Kampus Seri Iskandar 32610 Bandar Baru Seri Iskandar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, MALAYSIA Tel: (+605) 374 2093/2453 Faks: (+605) 374 2299



Prof. Madya Dr. Nur Hisham Ibrahim Rektor Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Perak

Tuan.

PERMOHONAN KELULUSAN MEMUAT NAIK PENERBITAN UITM CAWANGAN PERAK MELALUI REPOSITORI INSTITUSI UITM (IR)

Perkara di atas adalah dirujuk.

- 2. Adalah dimaklumkan bahawa pihak kami ingin memohon kelulusan tuan untuk mengimbas (digitize) dan memuat naik semua jenis penerbitan di bawah UiTM Cawangan Perak melalui Repositori Institusi UiTM, PTAR.
- 3. Tujuan permohonan ini adalah bagi membolehkan akses yang lebih meluas oleh pengguna perpustakaan terhadap semua maklumat yang terkandung di dalam penerbitan melalui laman Web PTAR UiTM Cawangan Perak.

Kelulusan daripada pihak tuan dalam perkara ini amat dihargai.

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menjalankan amanah,

Setuju.

27.1-2023

PROF. MADYA DR. NUR HISHAM IBRAHIM REKTOR UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN PERAK KAMPUS SERI ISKANDAR

SITI BASRIYAH SHAIK BAHARUDIN Timbalah Ketua Pustakawan

nar