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Cyberbullying in China: The Connection between Language and Behaviour

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2020

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying refers to individual or group behaviours involving the use of offensive language online, and it is a global issue that causes serious social problems. Research on cyberbullying has thus emerged in several fields, such as psychology, sociology, computer science, and linguistics. However, studies of cyberbullying in China have met with limitations and challenges, despite cyberbullying there becoming a serious and prevalent problem, making China a meaningful case study for cyberbullying investigations. This thesis thus used a new combined theoretical framework, a *Socio-ecological Framework with Language Feature and Management Approaches*, to analyse cyberbullying language features and usages, cyberbullying motivations, and the variables affecting cyberbullying in the Chinese context. Based on its overall findings, this research also made some extrapolations to cognate social issues in order to discuss the consequences of cyberbullying, and to develop potential measures for detecting or regulating cyberbullying.

The methodologies selected for this thesis were content analysis, social network analysis, and interviews; thus, the work is both qualitative and quantitative. Content analysis was used to examine cyberbullying language usage, formations, and features using an author-created 2,000-word database. Based on these results, social network analysis was applied to provide deeper insights into how contextual and sociolinguistic variables affect cyberbullying, while the interviews helped to gather additional views on cyberbullying, providing new ways to examine the challenges of regulating cyberbullying, as well as highlighting potential approaches to doing this.

The main finding of this thesis is that not all cyberbullying words are inherently offensive; emotional and even ordinary words may have cyberbullying functions in context. Additionally, during cyberbullying, the context for communication, current events, and the forms adopted all affect the use of cyberbullying language. Both males and females both use a range of offensive words in cyberspace, and cyberbullying can affect any internet users, not only minors. The consequences of cyberbullying may also be more serious than those of traditional bullying. These findings were then adopted to draft a set of preliminary measures for addressing cyberbullying.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all persons and organisations for their support, encouragement and advice that contributed directly or indirectly to the timely conclusions and contributions of this thesis.

Acknowledgement is due first and foremost to my supervisors Dr. Jonathan Sullivan and Dr. Qianlan Wu for their continued guidance, advice and invaluable insight throughout this research. I also wish to express my appreciation and thanks to Prof. Xiaoling Zhang for her guidance and suggestion at my early PhD stage.

My thanks are extended to the School of Politics and International Relations for providing all the necessary opportunities and facilities. I would also like to thank the participants of the 'Information Management and Management Science' panel of the 2019 IMMS International Conference, as well as the participants of the 'Information Management' panel of the 5th ICIM for commenting on earlier versions of the thesis chapters.

I appreciate all the volunteers and participants who took part in the surveys. Million thanks are to my parents for their unconditional patience and continued support, as well as my friends Min Hu, Jinpeng Ma, Shuo Yan, Xi Li, Michael Basford, and Fatma Poyraz Ciddi for their help, academic discussions, translation guidance and their friendship throughout the research period. In addition, I appreciate the technical support provided by Huimin Yu and Luyao Li. Finally, special thanks to my idol, Ms. Yuchun Li, and my favorite actress, Ms. Qin Li, who make me remain true to my original research aspiration and have given me powerful spiritual support over the past years.

DECLARATION

The work described in this thesis was conducted at the University of Nottingham, School of Politics and International Relations between October 2016 and April 2020. I declare that the work is my own and has not been submitted for a degree of another university.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

List of acronyms and abbreviations used throughout the thesis (alphabetical order)

BoVW	Bag of Visual Words
BOW	Bag-of-Words
CDA	Communications Decency Act
CMC	Computer-mediated Communication
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
COPA	Child Online Protection Act
COVID-19	2019 Novel Coronavirus
CS	Computational Stylometry
EWM	Entropy Weight Method
GST	General Strain Theory
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ID	Identification
IP	Internet Protocol
LIWC	Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count
LMT	Language Management Theory
LPP	Language Policy and Planning
ML	Machine Learning support
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NLPIR	Natural Language Processing Information Retrieval
PBC	Perceived Behavioural Control
RAT	Routine Activities Theory
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SN	Subjective Norm
SVM	Support Vector Machine
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WKB	The Lexicon of Warriner, Kuperman and Brysbaert

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Chapter I Introduction

1.1 Research questions, purpose and contributions

Cyberbullying is an individual or group offensive language behaviour that becomes an increasingly grave problem on social media.[1] The most frequently-used feature of information and communications technology (hereafter ICT) is computer-mediated communication (hereafter CMC, Romiszowski & Mason, 1996), which provides a medium for the development and growth of a plethora of social media channels (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media has enjoyed rapid growth in popularity in recent decades, and has clearly provided avenues for socialising and communicating in people's lives. Besides the benefits that the internet or social media has brought to people's lives, the constant developments and changes with the ubiquity of technology and social media in the digital domain have also created multiple problems and risks (Moxey & Bussey, 2019). Many studies point out that the growth in the use of social media has resulted in new means of cyber aggression, such as hate speech, vulgar language and cyberbullying (e.g. Willard, 2005; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Walrave & Heirman, 2011; Richburg, 2011; Genta *et al*., 2012; Sari & Camadan, 2016). Among these behavioural patterns, the global phenomenon of cyberbullying presents new challenges as well as opportunities for researchers (Smith, 2012; Chen *et al*., 2013; DeLisle, *et al*., 2016: 4).

The studies of cyberbullying in the psychological or sociology fields have primarily focused on its dissemination and adverse effects among adolescents and young people (Kofoed & Staksrud, 2018). Additionally, some research has sought means of detecting cyberbullying and automatically preventing it in English in the computer science field (Dadvar *et al*., 2012). Despite significant research on cyberbullying having been undertaken, no unified definition of cyberbullying has been specified. Meanwhile, the consequences of cyberbullying and the social problems caused by cyberbullying, such as increased aggressive and risky behaviour, psychosocial problems and suicide, are not analysed in a general way (Berne *et al*., 2019; Kwan *et*

1 The definition of cyberbullying used in this research is summarised from the existing studies on cyberbullying and relevant concepts. All the detailed information about the studies of traditional bullying and cyberbullying will be examined in the literature review chapter (II). Meanwhile, the limitations of such research and why this research updates the cyberbullying definition will also be described.

al., 2020). Moreover, although policymakers, regulators, and educators are challenged by how to apply or create new policies and regulatory models to prevent cyberbullying in English-speaking domains, scant scientific research has been focused on solving this problem in other language-domains, notably the Chinese language. Consequently, there are both necessities and possibilities for research into cyberbullying in different aspects; for example, an analysis in the social science field and a thorough investigation of cyberbullying language's characteristics, traits, functions and consequences in the Chinese context.

Against this backdrop, a cyberbullying database or structured data of cyberbullying in Chinese is necessary for solving problems. To this end, social media presents a promising natural laboratory for the study of cyberbullying, and a mixed research approach can be more objective. Therefore, this research aims to improve the conceptual understanding of cyberbullying and the measurement and development of detection and prevention/intervention strategies. Given that the theoretical discourse regarding cyberbullying in the Chinese context is limited, this research is an attempt to advance understanding of the cyberbullying phenomenon by drawing on available empirical literature and existing theoretical insights from other contexts, as well as cyberbullying examples and social media features in China. The central research question is this: What are the features of cyberbullying language, and the usages and functions on social media in China? Within this central research question, there are three sub-questions: firstly, how do the contextual variables and sociolinguistics variables affect individual's behaviour of using cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying language on social media?; secondly, what are the social problems caused by cyberbullying socially?; and thirdly, what are the potential legal/non-legal, and hard/soft measures to detect and reduce cyberbullying on social media?

The theoretical framework used in this research is a combined theoretical framework called *Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches* with the aim of facilitating identification and intervention in problematic cyberbullying with sufficient knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon. The combined theoretical framework was established based on the principles of the socio-ecological theory, the social cognitive theory, and language-related theories.

This new socio-ecological framework will investigate cyberbullying from the individual level to the social and cultural level, which can enable the relevant departments to develop social media programmes for anti-cyberbullying messages, so as to tackle the cyberbullying or cyber aggression problem in a more proactive manner. Meanwhile, the framework is not only used in the Chinese context, but is also provided as a reference for similar research with different backgrounds in the future.

According to the new theoretical framework, this study will use mixed methods to answer the research questions. First of all, content analysis (inductive content analysis and deductive content analysis) will be used to categorise the linguistic corpora into non-cyberbullying words and cyberbullying words (including offensive and mild/light offensive ones), and then analyse the cyberbullying words' features and functions. The research findings will work as basic results for further analysis, including cyberbullying word changes during the period, the motivation for cyberbullying and the contextual variables which affect cyberbullying.

Secondly, social network analysis will focus on the relations between cyberbullying and gender differences (e.g. gender of speakers and targets[2]). At this point, the subsample of the word category will be used. Thirdly, interview approaches (focus group interview and semi-structured interview) will focus on the consequences of cyberbullying, the social problems caused by cyberbullying and the challenges of addressing cyberbullying. Combined with the existing literature, this research will suggest preliminary legal/non-legal, as well as hard/soft measures to deal with cyberbullying and cyber aggression.

Therefore, the aims of this research are summarised as follows:

- To provide a comprehensive scientific definition of cyberbullying;
- To identify cyberbullying language features, usages and functions based on a large dataset from Sina Weibo comments in the Chinese context through the microsystem (individual level);

2 In this research, the term victim will be used after careful consideration. In more cases, the term target is used for cyberbullying behaviour. The difference between the term victim and the term target is that victim is a person harmed, injured, or killed as a result of a crime, accident, or other event or action; while target is an object of a behaviour who does not necessarily receive hurt. Correspondingly, the research will also use the term cyber perpetrator cautiously (D'cruz & Noronha, 2013; Whittaker & Kowalski, 2015). (Also see ref. https://www.dictionary.com/browse/target & https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/victim)

- To explain how contextual and sociolinguistic variables affect cyberbullying through the mesosystem;
- To provide insights into the consequences and social problems caused by cyberbullying through the macrosystem (social level), with focuses moving from children and the young to general internet users.
- To refine cyberbullying theories and to improve academic understanding of the media and cyberbullying, media regulation, and governance, particularly management of offensive information and behaviour in legislation, technical and educational strategies.

1.2 Background information on cyberbullying globally and in China

For cyberbullying, some research analyses cyberbullying's causes, consequences, and prevalence, such as in the USA (e.g. Holfeld & Grabe, 2012), Italy (e.g. Genta *et al*., 2012), Spain (e.g. Gamez-Guadix *et al*., 2013), UK (e.g. Horsman, 2016), Finland (e.g. Salmivalli & Poyhonen, 2012), Australia (e.g. Chalmers *et al*., 2016), Japan (e.g. Wright *et al*., 2014; Udris, 2015), Korea (e.g. Yang *et al*., 2013) and China (e.g. Su & Holt, 2010; Huang & Chou, 2010; Chang *et al*., 2013; Zhou *et al*., 2013; Wong *et al*., 2014; Ong, 2015). Facing the serious problems caused by cyberbullying, Western countries and China have developed approaches to decreasing negative consequences and address related problems. The next two subsections will introduce background information and the prevention of cyberbullying in the West and in China briefly.

1.2.1 Cyberbullying phenomenon globally and in China

Cyberbullying was first described in the USA in 2003 (Ybarra *et al*., 2010). American researchers focused mainly on the identity of the individual and social factors, and the investigation of young people who had become victims or perpetrators in cyberspace. Most researchers indicated that computer-based instant messaging (e.g. Wolak *et al*., 2007; Juvonen & Gross, 2008) and chatrooms (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008) were the most frequent means of implementing cyberbullying. In 2016, Hinduja and Patchin's research used a sample of 5,700 students aged between 12 and 17 to analyse the prevalence of cyberbullying, showing that approximately 34% of the

sample reported experiencing cyberbullying

In comparison with the USA, the cyberbullying situation in Europe is more complicated (Genta *et al*., 2012). A cross-cultural study of cyberbullying in Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Finland revealed that Finnish students exhibited more cyberbullying behaviour (25%) than their Italian (7.3%), English (22%), and Spanish (4.8%) counterparts; they cyberbullied via both mobile phones and computers (Smith *et al*., 2008; Ortega *et al*., 2009; Salmivalli *et al*., 2011; Ortega *et al*., 2012).

In the case of a Commonwealth country, Cross *et al.* (2012) examined data from a cross-sectional quantitative study entitled Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study,[3] which showed a potential relationship between offline bullying and cyberbullying. Cross and colleagues (2012) showed that 87% of a sample of students reported being bullied offline, with only 13% cyberbullied online. Likewise, of those who admitted cyberbullying others, only about 23% cyberbullied others online, whereas 77% bullied others offline.

Asian countries or regions' studies of cyberbullying had some specific characteristics, including frequency, the reasons for carrying out cyberbullying, and the serious mental health problems for the targets. For example, research on cyberbullying in Japan has found that nearly half of the respondents (45%) admitted cyberbullying for fun, and nearly a third of those who had been cyberbullied (31.8%) indicated that they had not told anybody about their experiences (Udris, 2015). In South Korea some researchers have begun to pay attention to psychological problems relating to cyberbullying and have stated that cyberbullying is a risk factor for suicide.[4,5]

In recent years, cyberbullying has become a problem and a growing concern in China, but the research in this field is limited. When we search the keyword '网络暴力' or '网络舆论暴力' (synonyms for *cyberbullying* in Chinese) in one of the most prominent academic databases (*China National Knowledge Infrastructure* (CNKI, 中

3 This study was commissioned by the Australian government to better understand how to address young people's covert and especially cyberbullying behaviour.

4 In South Korea, most of the people who are aged between 10 and 39 are regular internet users. A survey did in 2015, contained 4,000 students between 12 to 17, stated that about 27.7% of them were reported being the victim of cyberbullying. (ref. http://kerouinternetcultures.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/cyber-bullying-and-cyber-bullying-in.html)

5 A report - Cyber bullies reign in South Korea - published in 2010, pointed out that celebrities, authors and ordinary South Koreans have been subject to relentless online assaults - at times with disastrous, or even lethal, effects. (ref. http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/01/world/la-fg-korea-cyberthugs2-2010jan02)

国知网)),[6] 2,267 publications have been produced since 2004, including 1,400 journal papers and 27 conference papers in Chinese (as of February 9, 2020). Most of these publications focused on human flesh search, right to privacy, and public opinion and supervision, while others discuss freedom of expression, social media, and rumours. There were few studies that analyse the causes, impact and harm of cyberbullying and the regulations of cyberbullying in the Chinese context. According to the limited literature in Chinese and some relevant research in English, it can be found that researchers (e.g. Zhou *et al*., 2013; Wong *et al*., 2014; Ong, 2015) used gender and age factors to analyse cyberbullying in the Chinese context, and showed that males were more likely to be involved in cyberbullying than females, and females were also more likely to be hurt. Specifically, Chinese researchers used questionnaire surveys to show that 6.0% of boys and 14.8% of girls reported being involved in perpetrating behaviour, while 13.4% of boys and 12.8% of girls were cyber victims within a 30-day period in Hong Kong (Wong *et al*., 2014); 24.8% of boys reported that they had bullied someone online and 36.9% of the girls reported that they had been bullied by someone online in mainland China (Zhou *et al*., 2013).

1.2.2 Preventing cyberbullying globally

Regarding prevention of cyberbullying, regulations of cyberbullying, to a large extent, are determined by the harm caused by cyberbullying and the conceptualisation of cyberbullying. In the legal system, not all countries or regions conceive cyberbullying as a criminal offence and sanction cyberbullying by criminal law. That is, there are three main approaches: legislation and policies, techniques and educational methods. The general purposes of these approaches are providing guidelines to parents, teachers, educators or society to know what is involved in cyberbullying and how to prevent it, especially the protection of children and young people (Katzer *et al*., 2009; Wong *et al*., 2010; Srivastava *et al*., 2013; Genta *et al*., 2014). This subsection will take the United States, Australia, Italy, Finland, Japan and South Korea as examples to introduce how these countries use different measures to prevent cyberbullying. Since

6 CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure, Chinese: 中国知网) is a crucial national information construction project under the lead of Tsinghua University, and supported by PRC Ministry of Education, PRC Ministry of Science, Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of China and PRC General Administration of Press and Publication. It has built a comprehensive China Integrated Knowledge Resources System, including journals, doctoral dissertations, masters' theses, proceedings, newspapers, yearbooks, statistical yearbooks, ebooks, patents, standards and so on.

these countries focus on both legal and non-legal aspects of cyberbullying regulation, their experience can provide implications for practice in China (see Chapter VII for a detailed explanation).

For conceiving cyberbullying in the legal system, the *Communications Decency Act* (CDA) and the *Child Online Protection Act* (COPA) in the United States aim to protect minors from indecent, patently offensive communications and harmful materials (Wang, 2007; Yan, 2009). In Australia, the *Commonwealth Criminal Law*[7] defines cyberbullying as a number of serious criminal offences that involve engaging in conduct using telecommunication services. This *Code* also provided a model available in Australia to prosecute cyberbullies.

Technical and educational approaches for preventing cyberbullying are widely used by European countries. For instance, in Italy, the *Italian Data Protection Authority - Anti-cyberbullying law* stated three main ways to protect cyberbullying, including both technique and educational means: greater protection to the privacy of victims of cyberbullying, allowing public authorities to roll out anti-bullying campaigns, and identifying the user who posted any content with the intent to hurt a victim.[8] Meanwhile, in Finland, the *Finnish Basic Education Act* pointed out that the legislation should concern all educational levels to make sure that students do not experience acts of cyberbullying while at school, and education providers have the responsibility to execute the plan and supervise adherence to cyberbullying and its implementation (Raskauskaus & Stolz, 2007; Smith *et al*., 2008). Furthermore, the *European Commission's Safer Internet Programme* makes effort to active in curbing online abuse by forming an agreement with 17 of the world's leading social networks, ensuring that young people and children are better protected online.[9] The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) aims to protect children

7 Australian criminal law was originally received from the English common law, which continues to evolve in Australian courts. The principal source of Commonwealth criminal law was originally the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth).The committee published its final report in 1991, recommending the development of a 'consolidating law' to reform Commonwealth criminal law. (ref. http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/consol_act/cca1995115/sch1.html)

8 With this expression, the law refers cyberbullying to 'whatever form of psychological pressure, aggression, harassment, blackmail, injury, insult, denigration, defamation, identity theft, alteration, illicit acquisition, manipulation, unlawful processing of personal data of minors and/or dissemination made through electronic means … whose intentional and predominant purpose is to isolate a minor or a group of minors by putting into effect a serious abuse, a malicious attack or a widespread and organized ridicule.' The provision aims to contrast the phenomenon of cyberbullying in all its expressions, with preventive actions whose purpose is to shift attention to protecting the victims and their families while re-educating the perpetrators. (ref. https://iapp.org/news/a/italian-dpa-welcomes-anti-cyber-bullying-law-amid-fears-on-resources-effective-enforcement/

9 Ref. https://www.cybersmile.org/advice-help/category/cyberbullying-and-the-law

from exposure to harmful online content and empower them to deal with risks.[10]

Besides, in some Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, the guidelines for anti-cyberbullying are in both individual and societal aspects (Kumazaki *et al*., 2011; Jang *et al*., 2013). Specifically, in Japan, the *Anti-Bullying Act* points out that schools and local authorities are responsible for bullying acts, so schools should regularly investigate and identify suspected cyberbullying cases.[11] In South Korea, the *Real Name Verification policy*[12] and the *Wall Street Journal*[13] are aiming to regulate online harmful contents. The former is part of the *Public Official Election Law* which provides for the tracking of harmful information providers, and the later is a service that can notify parents when their children receive messages containing swear or inappropriate words.

In addition to the technological methods mentioned, a more efficient way of preventing cyberbullying is by categorising content and removing offensive materials through automatic software. Therefore, the principal focus of the automatic machine learning technique is detecting cyberbullying through the tremendous volume of online contents (see Chapter II for a detailed explanation).

1.2.3 Approaches to preventing cyberbullying in China

In China, measures to address online problems are primarily legislative and technical. In comparison with the international legislation approaches, the internet management policies in China have some specific features, which are set by the 'state' or the 'party' and mainly focus on political issues and harmful contents or information (Huysmans, 2006) (see details in Appendix I). There is a broader aspect to some general cyber problems, but the current legislation measures are limited to addressing cyberbullying issues. Moreover, it is crucial for Chinese internet companies to comply

10 The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, or UNCRC, is the basis of all of Unicef's work. It is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history. (ref. https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/)

11 The *Anti-Bullying Act* is Japan's first law that explicitly prevents school bullying. The Japanese government announced the introduction of the *Anti-Bullying Act* on June 28, 2013. According to the Act, government agencies, local authorities and schools shall implement measures to prevent bullying. Besides, the Act also urges that children and parents shall take part in bullying prevention. (ref. http://www.childresearch.net/papers/school/2015_01.html)

12 The Real Name Verification policy was first introduced in 2005. It was coined the 'Real Name Verification Law' (제한적 본인 확인제 in Korean) and was part of the 'Public Official Election Law (공직선거법 in Korean). Two years later, in 2007, despite protests and criticism from the civil society with regard to threats to online privacy and freedom of expression, the law was expanded to be part of a broader 'Information and Communication Network Law' (정보통신망법 in Korean). (ref. https://advox.globalvoices.org/2013/01/01/south-korea-perspectives-on-chinese-new-net-control-laws/)

13 The purpose of the Wall Street Journal is to counter an increasing occurrence of verbal abuse and cyber-bullying. (ref. http://time.com/41285/south-korea-kids-cyberbullying-alerts/)

with national laws and policies and take responsibility for monitoring their websites to prevent posting of harmful or sensitive contents. All the website administrators are responsible for all content that appears on their platforms, and they shall bear legal responsibilities to censor harmful or sensitive content (Bamman *et al*., 2012; King *et al*., 2013), but the main focuses are the general problems. Taking some examples from Sina Weibo[14], the general policy on Weibo is the *Sina Weibo Community Convention* (Chinese: 微博社区公约)[15]. This regulation has been created on the basis of existing laws and is the foundation of Weibo's regulatory practices to safeguard the Sina Weibo community. The main focuses of the Community Convention are regulating contents on Weibo, including damaging sensitive content, rumour or gossip. Thus, although Weibo has some basic rules to regulate the online content, the approaches are designed for general aspects, not for typical issues.

Besides the policies and rules to regulate online contents, a filtering mechanism approach – a keyword blacklist filtering is used to censor the contents automatically if the contents include any of the blacklisted words[16] (Yang *et al*., 2012; Vuori & Paltemaa, 2015; Yang, 2015). There are two existing blacklists *Sensitive Sina Weibo Search Terms*[17] and *Jason Q. Ng's Blocked*[18]. Both of them mainly relate to politically significant features and are used by internet or social media corporations to filter the online information. There is a quantity of research that has discovered that keyword filtering often happens in the first hour after a post has been made (Crandall *et al*., 2007; Zhu *et al*., 2012; Fu *et al*., 2013), and Bamman *et al.* (2012) found that censoring or deleting messages was not as a result of spam but due to the presence of known politically sensitive terms, which are deleted considerably more frequently. In addition, if the contents were shown as videos and images, the filtering would be

14 For political reasons, Facebook and Twitter have been blocked since 2009 in mainland China (Chen *et al*., 2013; MacKinnon, 2009), some alternative social media platforms offer interfaces and operations similar to those of Facebook and Twitter (Gao *et al*., 2012; Chen & She, 2012), such as Fanfou, Tencent Weibo, Renren Wang, Sohu Weibo, Wangyi Blog, and Sina Weibo. Among all these social media platforms, Sina Weibo has become the leading one in the last several years, and it had 337 million users and 190 million daily active users at the end of June 2018 (The 42nd Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, 2018). Sina Weibo is a hybrid of Twitter and Facebook which was established in 2009, and it resembles Twitter in several respects. Logging into Sina Weibo, all users can share their opinions, post original weibos and comments, follow other users, and forward other users′ weibos (Chen & She, 2012; Chen *et al*., 2013). Each Sina weibo uses texts to show what you are doing or thinking, and sometimes the tests may be accompanied by pictures, URLs, videos, @mentions, and #hashtags (Chen *et al*., 2013; McDougall, 2011: 57). At the end of 2016, Sina Weibo cancelled the limitation on the length of the text.

15 Ref. https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2012/05/08/sina-weibo-community-management-regulations-trial/

16 If one searches for a word which appears on the blacklist, no results but the following message will be displayed - '根据相关法律法规和政策，搜索结果未予显示' (based on Chinese laws and regulations, search results are not shown).

17 Ref. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1UTP9MU80r_N5WPhQ5-4AjM0ebW1eMxyDlRe_vaYy9IM/edit#gid=0

18 Ref. https://blockedonweibo.tumblr.com/tagged/list

performed manually (Larmer, 2011; Bamman *et al*., 2012; King *et al*., 2013).

Overall, researchers have focused mainly on cyberbullying problems both globally and in China. Owing to the prevalence of cyberbullying and the harms caused by it, legislation, technical methods and education were considered as approaches to preventing it. Although legislation and technical methods were both used in the Western countries and in China, the focuses are different. The measures for regulating online contents in China mainly focus on the general problems, that is, the practices in the globe have reference meanings for the practice of addressing cyberbullying in China (see Chapter VII for a detailed discussion).

1.3 Social media: A new platform for cyberbullying

Recently, a considerable body of research has shown how both the internet and social media have profoundly affected intra-personal communication (Steinmueller, 2000; DeLisle, *et al*., 2016: 1). However, with the development of social media, offensive language has become a social phenomenon in daily life and has steadily increased since its inception (Razavi *et al*., 2010). There are a plenty of offensive online language problems on social media that can easily affect the internet users, such as cyberbullying, hate speech and profane speech (see subsection 2.2.3 for a detailed discussion). Consequently, it is vitally important, and timely to review the research on social media features and the reasons why these behaviours, especially cyberbullying, have become prevalent (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014).

Briefly, social media can be regarded as a special kind of online community[19] which employs computer-mediated communication (Romiszowski & Mason, 1996)[20]. It is constructed by internet companies based on the various interests of online user bases (‘commnities’). That is, social media platforms offer multiple services, including social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Sina Weibo), instant messaging

19 An online community is viewed as an essential part of the group’s interaction takes place through CMC (Wellman, 1997; Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Paolillo, 2001). The internet users in one online community always have a particular purpose and are governed by policies and supported by software (Preece, 2000; De Souze & Preece, 2004). The key components of online communities are people, purposes, policies, and software (Axelrod, 1984; Wenger, 1998; Preece, 2000). The significant effect of these four components is that each of them contributes to the formation of a central online community (Preece, 2000). In other words, different online communities consist of different individuals, and have different purposes, types of policies and supporting software, such as blogs, bulletin boards and social networks (De Souza & Preece, 2004).

20 Computer-mediated communication is any human communication that can be realised via an electronic device. The formats of computer-mediated communication include instant messaging, email, chat rooms, online forums and social network services (Romiszowski & Mason, 1996). The research on CMC mainly focused on the social presence theory (Short et al., 1976) and the media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986) which investigate the interactions between different individuals.

services (e.g. Whatsapp and Wechat), video and photo sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube and Instagram), and blogs (Aichner & Jacob, 2015). Among these, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, WeChat, and Sina Weibo were the most popular globally as of July 2019[21]. These platforms provide multiple new types of communication, many of which are radically different from traditional communication forms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011).

There are many factors that will affect the prevalence of cyberbullying and cyber aggression on social media. The main reason social media has become a platform for offensive behaviour is the open environment it offers (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011; Hutson, 2016). Using a social media platform to disseminate information, users can post vast numbers of messages every minute of every day due to such platforms' 24/7 nature. This information diffusion ability allows both positive and negative content to be spread widely and rapidly, and offensive language behaviour is thus more likely to occur on social media (Schwartz *et al*., 2013). Specifically, social media provides a more convenient environment for cyberbullying than other social networking communities (Hutson, 2016). Much of the research in this area has found that offensive or swear words take various forms on social media and people use this kind of language on social media more easily than in written communication and verbal communication (e.g. Chen *et al*., 2012; Dynel, 2012). Moreover, certain forms of cyberbullying (e.g. rumour and gossip) also expand particularly rapidly and widely on social media, due to the large user base and the constant availability of information of varying levels of accuracy and veracity (Al-garadi *et al*., 2016; Selkie *et al*., 2016).

Besides, anonymity is another critical feature and reason for explaining the prevalence of cyberbullying on social media, as well as distinguishing traditional bullying from cyberbullying (Huang & Chou, 2013; Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Watts *et al*., 2017; Barlett *et al*., 2018). In the virtual environment, anyone can use a phone number or an email address to create an account, and they can choose to provide completed information about themselves in their online profiles or not (Peersman *et al*., 2011; Nguyen *et al*., 2014). Although some social media platforms seek to identify their

21 According to Statista, in 2019, it is estimated that there would be around 2.77 billion social media users around the globe. As of July 2019, the top 10 leading social networks were Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Instagram, QQ, QZone, TikTok, and Sina Weib. (ref. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media)

users' real personal information, it remains difficult to check and trace this kind of information (Galán-García *et al*., 2016). As a result, anonymity works as an umbrella for cyber perpetrators. The difference between offensive language use in normal communication and in the online environment is that anonymity make internet users feel less ashamed to use offensive language (Razavi *et al*., 2010). That is, the greater anonymity and the quantity of comments flooding social media platforms have made cyberbullying one of the most severe problems faced by the society, generating more side effects than traditional bullying due to its more significant impact.

1.4 The significance of researching cyberbullying on social media

According to the background information, it can be speculated that cyberbullying has become a serious global problem, deserving much attentions. Although the relevant methods of managing cyberbullying in both China and many other counties in the world have been developed, the existing research into cyberbullying cannot fully address the problems of cyberbullying, especially with reference to addressing cyberbullying problems met in China. With the development and the increasing use of social media, cyberbullying poses more challenges and becomes a more critical issue. Therefore, analysing cyberbullying through new frameworks, new perspectives and new variables is important and timely. Briefly, the significance and challenges of researching cyberbullying, especially taking China's situation as a case, are as follow: 1) Cyberbullying has become a serious problem in China, but there is a lack of focus on it (significance); and 2) The existing research with certain limitations does not fully analyse and discuss cyberbullying on social media generally (challenge).

1.4.1 Significance: Cyberbullying in the Chinese context

Although the internet developed later in China than in Western countries, it has developed rapidly in recent years and has penetrated every aspect of Chinese society (Yang, 2006; DeLisle, *et al*., 2016: 2). In China, according to the *43rd Statistical Report on Internet Development in China* (China internet Network Information Center, 2019a), by the end of 2018 China had 829 million internet users, of whom 817 million accessed the internet using a mobile device. In terms of frequently used online applications, the top six were Instant Messaging Applications (15.6%), Video

Applications (12.8%), Music Applications (8,6%), Short-video Applications (8.2%), Audio Applications (7.9%), and Online Reading Applications (7.8%) (China Internet Network Information Center, 2019a). Sina Weibo, the leading microblog social medium in China had about 337 million users at the end of June 2018 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2018b).

Owing to the features of social media and the large number of internet users, cyberbullying occurs easily, and the pattern of information dissemination on social media makes the cyberbullying content spread quickly. This research summarises the typical cyberbullying issues from Sina Weibo between January 2011 and December 2019 (see details in Appendix II). As I will establish, cyberbullying is a very serious problem on Weibo, affecting the children, the young, and ordinary internet users (see Chapter VII for a detailed discussion). That is, the serious consequences and social problems caused by cyberbullying cannot be ignored. Meanwhile, Chinese social media features[22] and Chinese words features bring more complex situations for the analysis of cyberbullying, especially considering that the features, usages and functions of Chinese cyberbullying words have may different characteristics than those of English swear words. However, the focuses in the practical and the academic angle are limited to language practices and online language theory aspects in the Chinese context. At this point, China is an important case for cyberbullying analysis.

1.4.2 Challenges: Detecting and preventing cyberbullying on social media

Social media has encouraged new avenues for cyberbullying. Although most counties use legislative means, advanced machine techniques and educational approaches to detecting or preventing cyberbullying, most of these are not fully efficient. In particular, the methods which rely on the certain databases in English (e.g. Dadvar & De Jong, 2012; Vanhove *et al*., 2013) cannot be used to detect or prevent cyberbullying in other languages or backgrounds. Not only in China, but also in many other non-English speaking counties, the lack of public datasets or the unstructured

22 For example, the relationship between 'fans' (the equivalent terminology of Twitter 'followers') and publishers on Sina Weibo is different from that on Facebook and Twitter, as it is not a generic 'followee-follower' relationship. Sina Weibo users can follow others, and the individuals who are followed need not to follow back, and they can post comments to their followers. Besides, more and more 'grassroots' users are becoming posters (Guo *et al*., 2011; Guo *et al*., 2012; Sullivan, 2012; Li & Lin, 2015). In this way, the flexible relations among users makes it easier for people to communicate with others, express opinions and get information (Lin *et al*., 2012; Hao *et al*., 2011; Guo *et al*., 2013).

data make it more difficult to analyse cyberbullying. At the same time, there are not many studies which explain how the cyberbullying datasets were constructed, with little reference to cyberbullying criteria (see Chapter II for a more detailed discussion). Thus, describing the cyberbullying phenomenon, including the reasons for establishing a cyberbullying database and the necessities of regulating cyberbullying, are important for an efficient discussion of cyberbullying.

Another challenge is the regulatory approaches for cyberbullying owing to the social media features. Given the open environment of social media, internet users post a considerable volume of content and comment every single minute. Sometimes they adopt morphs of words (such as analogies, metaphors, satire, homophones, homonyms and homographs) as a means of expressing what they want and avoiding censorship (Chen *et al*., 2013; King *et al*., 2013). Meanwhile, social media supplies a more anonymous environment to perpetrators to carry out cyberbullying activities directly toward their victims within varying harassing and harming contexts, at any time of the day (Dinakar *et al*., 2012; Huang & Chou, 2013; Whittaker & Kowalski, 2014; Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Thus, considering the typical features of social media, although the popularisation of social media provides challenges to detect or prevent cyberbullying, it provide opportunities for collecting the tremendous volume of online posts and contents to investigate and analyse cyberbullying from a more objective angle. At this point, some researchers (e.g. Ensslin, 2011; Kelly-Holmes & Milani, 2011; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011) have done general analysis in language use and language management in multilingual social communities and in a wide range of online environments (e.g. gaming, messaging, discussion forums, media-sharing sites, blogs, and encyclopedias). These studies provide possibilities for a social science and a sociolinguistic analysis and a thorough investigation of cyberbullying behaviour.

1.5 Thesis outline and overview

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter II Literature Review: Review of Descriptive and Empirical Literature of Bullying and Cyberbullying undertakes critical assessment on relevant studies of cyberbullying to provide a general view of this field. In this chapter, the notions of

cyberbullying, traditional bullying and cyber aggression are described, as well as the relevant research and theories for analysing cyberbullying are introduced. The key points are reviewing the theoretical research and empirical research on cyberbullying. Based on these reviews, the gaps and limitations in the existing literature are pointed out to provide a clear direction of this project.

Chapter III Theoretical Framework: A New Socio-ecological Framework for Analysing Cyberbullying reviews the main theories that are used to solve cyberbullying problems, and highlights how the original framework emerges from the theoretical literature. This chapter first briefly introduces the existing theoretical frameworks for analysing cyberbullying, including the research angles, and strength and limits of the theories. According to the advantages and limitations, this research will choose the socio-ecological theory and the social cognitive theory as base frameworks to establish a new theoretical framework suitable for solving cyberbullying problems. The supplemental theories for the socio-ecological theory and social cognitive theory, including semantics and pragmatics theory, language management theory, and language policy and planning, are introduced.

Chapter IV Methodological Approach describes the research design and research methods (content analysis, social network analysis and interviews) in detail, including data source, data preparation and labelling, data analyses and date management. In addition, ethical research considerations, text translation, data validity and reliability and data management are also mentioned.

The following two chapters present the findings to answer the central research question and sub-research question one. *Chapter V Cyberbullying on Social Media in China* will delve into cyberbullying language features on Sina Weibo. I will use content analysis to summarise the word categories of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words, and also specify what language features and functions are. The main finding of this chapter is the classification of different word categories and using these words features and functions to analyse the general features of cyberbullying and the motivations for cyberbullying.

Chapter VI Assessing Contextual and Sociolinguistic Factors on Cyberbullying on

Social Media in China is another core findings chapter. This chapter will provide in-depth analysis of the effects of contextual and sociolinguistic factors on cyberbullying. In this chapter, I will analyse the relations between cyberbullying word usage in different contexts, by different individuals and to different targets.

Chapter VII Cyberbullying: Context, Effects, and Implications for Practice from China is the discussion chapter, cycling back to current literature limitations and theories of cyberbullying in light of research findings. The main contributions of this chapter are a more explicit discussion about how to use the socio-ecological framework to analyse cyberbullying at different layers and how these can underpin the modification needed by existing theories. Based on the general discussion of the conceptualization of cyberbullying, this chapter also discuss the social issues caused by cyberbullying and the potential approaches for addressing cyberbullying problems.

Chapter VIII Conclusion is the summary of the whole thesis, including findings and contributions, research strength and limitations, and future work recommendations.

1.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter began by describing the research questions, purposes and contributions, and summarising the background information of cyberbullying. Owing to the challenges and the serious situation met in cyberbullying, it is essential to find a new aspect for analysing cyberbullying, especially in the Chinese language. Therefore, considering the broad data diversity and the possibility of data acquisition, this research uses Sina Weibo as a case to study cyberbullying behaviour in the Chinese context. The first aim of this research is to define cyberbullying, and then to use the combined theoretical framework to answer research questions. The next two chapters - the literature review chapter and the theoretical framework chapter - provide reviews of the current research and theories on traditional bullying and cyberbullying, and it also provides principles for the establishment of a new original theoretical framework to analyse cyberbullying. The focuses of the literature review chapter are the descriptive and empirical literature of bullying and cyberbullying, while Chapter III highlights how the original socio-ecological framework emerges from the treatment of the existing theoretical literature, so as to analyse cyberbullying on multiple levels.

Chapter II Literature Review: Descriptive and Empirical Literature of Bullying and Cyberbullying

2.1 Introduction

The growth in the use of information and communication technologies has led to a new type of bullying called cyberbullying which has received substantial attention from scholars, educators, and the general public in the last decade (e.g. Willard, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Smith *et al*., 2008; Walrave & Heirman, 2011; Genta *et al*., 2012; Kowalski *et al*., 2014; Sari & Camadan, 2016; Gaffney, *et al*., 2019; Campbell *et al*., 2020). Much of the research has been on cyberbullying among young people and stems from a psychological perspective (Kofoed & Staksrud, 2018). However, in spite of the growing body of literature advancing the study of cyberbullying, this is still disparate and limited, leaving some oversights, including regarding cyberbullying separately from traditional bullying and discussibg and preventing cyberbullying in different cultural backgrounds. To acquire a more in-depth understanding of cyberbullying in the Chinese context, this research will consider the literature review into two main threads: 1) defining cyberbullying, and 2) traditional bullying and cyberbullying.

The first thread would include the notions of traditional bullying, the definition of cyberbullying, and differences and relationships between cyberbullying and other cyber aggressive behaviours. The second thread would address differences and relationships between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, including the characteristics and consequences of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, and the study approaches to both of them (e.g. theoretical research and empirical research). The following sections will provide a comprehensive explanation about the above questions, besides, the limitations and gaps on cyberbullying in the existing research will be discussed as well.

2.2 Definition cyberbullying: The notions of traditional bullying, cyber aggression and cyberbullying

Bullying is an aggressive act, but the differences between bullying and aggression are that bullying includes factors like intention to harm, repetition, and power imbalance, whereas aggression is related to behaviour that is carried out to harm others, such as proactive and reactive aggression (Olweus, 1986, 1993). To understand and distinguish the differences between the *traditional bullying*, *cyber aggression* and *cyberbullying*, this section will introduce the terms of cyberbullying and traditional bullying, and highlight the relations and differences between cyberbullying and other relevant cyber-based aggressive patterns of behaviour, starting from early studies conducted using the definition of traditional bullying proposed by Olweus (1986, 1993), up to recent contributions specifically focused on cyberbullying.

2.2.1 Defining traditional bullying

The relative systematic research on bullying began when Olweus (1978) published a book titled *Aggression in the schools: Bullies and whipping boys*. In the 1980s, Olweus (1986) developed a self-report questionnaire to analyse bullying, following the suicide of three adolescents after severe bullying by peers in Norway, arguing that 'a student is being bullied or victimized when he/she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students' (Olweus, 1993: 9). In his definition, the features of bullying are intentional, repeated and hurtful actions, and a power imbalance (Olweus, 1986, 1993). Since then, the nature and extent of bullying among young school students has been discussed by researchers, the media, and policymakers (Smith & Brain, 2000; Olweus & Limber, 2010).

Analyses of the causes of bullying problems have been pursued in several different ways. Individual personality characteristics or typical reaction patterns, in combination with physical strength or weakness in the case of boys, are important for the development of these problems (Olweus, 2005). At the same time, environmental factors such as the attitudes, routines, and behaviour of adults in the school environment play a major role in determining the extent to which the problems will manifest themselves in a classroom or a school (Limber, 2012).

2.2.2 Defining cyberbullying

From 2004, the research on cyberbullying has been undertaken (e.g. Belsey, 2004; Beran & Li, 2007; Smith, 2012; Barlett *et al*., 2016; Olweus & Limber, 2018; Baldry *et al*., 2019; Paciello *et al*., 2020). Table 2.1 presents the cyberbullying definitions that has progressed from 2004 to 2020 to show how researchers have defined cyberbullying with different elements. All the definitions which have been chosen have one thing in common - they show the features of different approaches which researchers have adopted to explore cyberbullying.

Table 2.1 Definitions of Cyberbullying that are Widely Used in the Main Research

Author (Year)	Definition of Cyberbullying
Belsey (2004)	Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies...to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others (p. 3).
Patchin & Hinduja (2006)	Wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text (p. 152).
Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber (2007)	Using the internet to harass and bully others (p. S59).
Kowalski & Limber (2007)	Bullying through e-mail, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through digital messages or images sent to a cell phone (p. 22).
Willard (2007)	Sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the internet or other digital technologies (p. 1).
Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, & Tippett (2008)	An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and overtime against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself (p. 376).
Slonje & Smith (2008)	Aggression which occurs through modern technological devices, and specifically mobile phones or the internet (p. 147).
Li (2008)	Bullying via electronic communication tools such as e-mail, cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), instant messaging, or the World Wide Web (p. 224).
Besley (2009)	The use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.
Tokunaga (2010)	Any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicate hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others (p. 278).
Erdur-Baker (2010)	Aggression using ICT is referred to as cyberbullying (also called electronic bullying or online bullying) when it is identified as intentional and repeated aggression (p. 109).
Wade & Beran (2011)	Cyberbullying is an online bullying, online harassment, and cyber harassment, which occurs when an individual is causing harm toward someone else through the use of an electronic medium.

Langos (2012)	Involves the use of ICTs to carry out a series of acts as in the case of direct cyberbullying, or an act as in the case of indirect cyberbullying, intended to harm another (the victim) who cannot easily defend him or herself. An intention to harm is established where a reasonable person, adopting the position of the victim and having regard to all the circumstances, would regard the series of acts or an act as acts or an act intended to harm to the victim (p. 288).
Bauman *et al*. (2013)	Behaviour aimed at harming another person using electronic communications, and perceived as aversive by the target (p. 41).
Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner (2014)	Aggression behaviour that is intentionally and repeatedly carried out in an electronic context against a person who cannot easily defend himself or herself (p. 1073).
Hinduja & Patchin (2015)	Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (p. 11).
Sari & Camadan (2016)	It is defined as a deliberate, repetitive, and permanent behaviour pattern against a defenseless victim mostly by an unknown group or individual through electronic environments (p. 317).
Watts, Wagner, Velasquez, & Behrens (2017)	Any electronic means to repeatedly harass, intimidate, or embarrass another person (p. 272)
Ira-Katharina & Franz (2018)	Cyberbullying is using information and communication technologies (ICT) to repeatedly and intentionally harm, harass, hurt and/or embarrass a target (p. 359).
Olweus & Limber (2018)	Cyberbullying is a form of repeated, aggressive and bullying behaviour through electronic means, for example, mobile phones or the internet (p. 139).
Baldry, Sorrentino & Farrington (2019)	Cyberbullying is known problem defined as ‘a direct or indirect aggressive act or attitude that is carried out using electronic means by a group or an individual repeatedly and overtime against a victim who cannot easily defend himself or herself (p. 302).
Clark & Bussey (2020)	Cyberbullying is defined as an act of recurring and intentional aggression towards someone less capable of defending themselves using electronic means.

According to these cyberbullying definitions, the common feature of them is that most of these definitions incorporate the criteria of traditional bullying, which regards cyberbullying as a repeated behaviour, based on power imbalance, to hurt others intentionally. Briefly, two directions of defining cyberbullying are summarised: 1) building on Olweus's work on traditional bullying features to define cyberbullying (see Table 2.2); and 2) considering some new features, such as anonymity and timeliness, to identify cyberbullying.

Table 2.2 Defining Attributes of the Main Definitions of Cyberbullying

Author/year	**Defining attributes**					
	Gro/Indi	Aggr	ICT	PI	Rep	Int
Belsey (2004)	√	√	√		√	√
Patchin & Hinduja (2006)		√	√		√	√
Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber (2007)		√	√			
Kowalski & Limber (2007)		√	√	√	√	√
Willard (2007)		√	√			
Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, & Tippett (2008)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Slonje & Smith (2008)		√	√			
Li (2008)		√	√	√	√	√
Besley (2009)	√	√	√		√	√
Tokunaga (2010)	√	√	√		√	√
Erdur-Baker (2010)		√	√		√	√
Wade & Beran (2011)		√	√			
Langos (2012)		√	√	√	√	√
Bauman *et al*. (2013)		√	√			
Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner (2014)		√	√	√	√	√
Hinduja & Patchin (2015)		√	√		√	√
Sari & Camadan (2016)	√	√	√	√	√	√
Watts, Wagner, Velasquez, & Behrens (2017)		√	√		√	
Ira-Katharina & Franz (2018)		√	√		√	√
Olweus & Limber (2018)		√	√		√	
Baldry, Sorrentino & Farrington (2019)	√	√	√	√	√	
Clark & Bussey (2020)		√	√	√	√	√

NB. Gro/Indi - Group/Individual; Aggr - Aggression; PI - Power Imbalance; Rep - Repetition; Int - Intention

On the first point, besides the researcher following the existing definition of cyberbullying directly (e.g. Balakrishnan *et al*., 2019; Rosa *et al*., 2019; Yot-Domínguez *et al*., 2019; Clark & Bussey, 2020), many others choose to use all or

only certain criteria of the traditional bullying definition based on the researchers' own research purposes (e.g. Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Smith *et al*., 2008; Clark & Bussey, 2020). Olweus has also agreed that cyberbullying overlaps significantly with traditional bullying, covering the features of traditional bullying, such as repetition, intention to harm, and power imbalance (Olweus, 2012; Olweus & Limber, 2018). Following this view, the most current and novel definition of cyberbullying shown in Table 2.1 has been posited by Ira-Katharina and Petermann (2018), Baldry *et al*. (2019), and Clark and Bussey (2020). In the article *Cyberbullying: A concept analysis of defining attributes and additional influencing factors*, Ira-Katharina and Franz (2018) have selected 24 definitions from various studies between 2012 and 2017 in order to review the definitions of cyberbullying; and in which 15 characteristics of cyberbullying are also analysed. They also regard cyberbullying as a repeated and intentionally harmful behaviour pattern applied through ICT.

Obviously, based on the cyberbullying defining attributes summarised in Table 2.2, it can be seen that using traditional bullying elements is a relative mainstream way to define cyberbullying. Some of the definitions just added a 'medium' to the traditional bullying definition, developing it to a cyberbullying definition (e.g. Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Smith *et al*., 2008; Li, 2008; Langos, 2012; Kowalski *et al*., 2014; Sari & Camadan, 2016). Besides, some researchers defined cyberbullying as deliberate and repeated behaviour by an individual or group intended to harm others (e.g. Belsey, 2004; Besley, 2009; Tokunaga, 2010; Sari & Camadan, 2016; Baldry *et al.*, 2019). Meanwhile, the latest cyberbullying research also incorporated the two components of traditional bullying to define cyberbullying as a repetitive and power-imbalanced aggression behaviour (Clark & Bussey, 2020)

In addition, as for the second point, there are some researchers who pointed out that apart from the traditional bullying elements, cyberbullying has developed due to many new features, arguing that the characteristics and types of cyberbullying are different from traditional bullying (e.g. Agatston et al., 2007; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Wade & Beran, 2011; Cross *et al*., 2012; Bauman et al., 2013). For instance, Bauman *et al.* (2013) evidenced that repetition and power imbalances are not cyberbullying's typical features. Instead, they identified two

criteria, namely that individuals intend to cause harm and that victims feel hurt. In these definitions, researchers only agreed that cyberbullying is an aggressive behaviour through ICTs (see Table 2.2).

However, there is no clear cyberbullying definition in the Chinese literature. Under the latest law in the country, the *Provisions on Ecological Governance of Network Information Content*[23], the lack of a definition for 'cyberbullying' or 'harmful language behaviour' is still a problem. The widely used definition of cyberbullying in most of the Chinese-language studies is the explanation posted on the official Weibo account *Chinese Online Police* (@中国警方在线), defining cyberbullying as harmful online behaviour that contains damaging or insulting information, and pictures or videos to hurt targets.[24] The main forms of cyberbullying in China are attacking and insulting, rumour and gossip, disclosures of private information (吴艳芳, 2016).

In saying this, most of the recent studies agree with Olweus's view that cyberbullying overlaps a lot with traditional bullying, and cyberbullying is regarded as a subcategory of bullying, as well as is measured with the traditional bullying elements. Allowing for minor variations, most scholars agreed that cyberbullying entails 'willful and repeated harm between different participants inflicted through the use of electronic devices' (Smith *et al*., 2008: 376). However, there are many limitations if we use the core elements of traditional bullying to analyse cyberbullying because of the unique nature of cyber-based features (see subsection 2.4.1 for a more detailed discussion). This research claim that it is not accurate that cyberbullying and traditional bullying have been treated together. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish the differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying (see subsection 2.2.4), which would help organise a cyberbullying definition that can be used in this or future research (see subsection 2.2.5 for a detailed discussion).

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23 The *Provisions on Ecological Governance of Network Information Content* came into force on March 1, 2020. These Provisions are hereby developed in accordance with the *State Security Law of the People's Republic of China*, the *Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China*, the *Measures for the Administration of Internet Information Services* and other laws and administrative regulations for the purposes of regulating online harmful information, creating a good network ecology, protecting the legitimate rights and interests of citizens, legal persons and other organizations, and safeguarding national security and public interests. (ref. https://www.pkulaw.com/en_law/dc8a694ae08ed787bdfb.html?tiao=1)

24 The verified Weibo account @中国警方在线 took the cyberbullying definition given by Jinan Intermediate People's Court as a reference to state that cyberbullying is an attacking behaviour involving harmful and insulting contents, pictures and videos. (ref. https://www.weibo.com/2328516855/HzGbHbaQV?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1573262814250)

2.2.3 The differences and relations between cyberbullying and other cyber-based aggressive behaviour

In addition to cyberbullying, there are some other kinds of offensive online language behaviour which have both similarities and differences to cyberbullying (Corcoran *et al*., 2015). It is essential to identify the relations with and differences between cyberbullying and other related cyber-based aggressive patterns of behaviour, because this is an important way to understand the typical features of cyberbullying, as well as to support better intervention and prevention efforts to reduce cyberbullying (Corcoran *et al*., 2015).

In the previous studies, several of the concepts which are similar to cyberbullying are cyber aggression (e.g. Grigg, 2010; Smith, 2012), hate speech (e.g. Djuric *et al*., 2015; Davidson *et al*., 2017), profanity (e.g. Selnow, 1985; Coyne *et al*., 2011; Sood *et al*., 2012), rumour (e.g. Michelson & Mouly, 2000; Nekovee *et al*., 2007), toxic language or comment (e.g. Hosseini *et al*., 2017; Mohan *et al*., 2017), swearing (e.g. Morrison, 1993; Jay, 2000; Mc Enery, 2005), taboo words (e.g. Jay, 1992; Janschewitz, 2008; Ozanne *et al*., 2019), extremism (e.g. Pressman & Ivan, 2019; Jasko *et al*., 2019), and radicalization (e.g. Neumann, 2003). Table 2.3 shows the definitions of these concepts as well as the differences and relations from cyberbullying.

Table 2.3 Comparison between Definitions of Cyberbullying and Related Concepts

Terms	Definition of Terms	Distinction from Cyberbullying
Cyber Aggression	Cyber-aggression is defined as intentional harm carried out through electronic means to an individual or a group of individuals of any age, who perceive(s) such acts as offensive, derogatory, harmful or unwanted (Grigg, 2010).	Cyber aggression is a behaviour through ICTs for intentions to harm. Cyber aggression might be a way of cyberbullying, but cyberbullying is not always a form of cyber aggression.
Hate Speech	Hate speech is defined as an abusive speech targeting specific group characteristics, such as ethnicity, religion, or gender (Djuric *et al*., 2015).	Cyberbullying is offensive focused in general, and not always focuses on stereotypes.
Profanity	Definition of profanity includes cursing, swearing, and all terms and expressions considered taboo (Jubilado *et al*., 2015: 137).	Cyberbullying can use profanity, but not necessarily.
Rumour	A currently circulating story or report of uncertain or doubtful truth.[25]	Rumour is a form of cyberbullying when it hurts the targets.
Gossip	Casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details which are not confirmed as true.[26]	Gossip is a form of cyberbullying when it hurts the targets.
Toxic language or comment	Toxic is defined as a rude, disrespectful, or unreasonable comment that is likely to make you leave a discussion (Risch & Krestel, 2019).	Not all cyberbullying contain toxic language or comments.
Swearing	Swearing is the utterance of emotionally powerful, offensive words or emotionally harmful expressions that are understood as insults (Jay, 2000:9).	Swearing in negative functions can be seen as a cyberbullying behaviour in certain situation.
Taboo	Taboo refers to a proscription of behaviour for a specifiable community of one or more persons, at a specifiable time, in specifiable contexts (Allan & Burridge, 2006: 11).	Taboo can be seen as a language feature of cyberbullying, but not all cyberbullying contains taboos.
Cyberthreats	Cyberthreats are either threats or "distressing material" (Willard, 2007).	Cyberthreaten is a form of cyberbullying.
Cyberstalking	Repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear (Willard, 2007).	Cyberstalking is a form of cyberbullying, but the sphere of influence is more narrow than cyberbullying.

25 According to the online dictionary explanation of rumour, it is a currently circulating story or report of uncertain or doubtful truth. (ref. https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/rumour)
26 According to the online dictionary explanation of gossip, it is a casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true. (ref. https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/gossip)

Briefly, all the related concepts presented in Table 2.3 may contain offensive or sensitively offensive words, which are distinct from cyberbullying. In general, cyberbullying is any negative behaviour that has targets; however, it may not necessarily contain offensive words (Willard, 2007). Among language-based cyberbullying forms, language features mainly focus on words showing strong emotions (e.g. offensive, harmful, or ironic speech) that are directed at certain targets. However, while offensive language concepts are related to cyberbullying, they may have different directions, purposes, scopes, or targets. For example, cyber aggression and profanity are types of offensive language behaviour with a wider scope, which may include hate speech and other aggressive behaviours (Grigg, 2010). Hate speech, discrimination, and toxic language or comments are typically elements of behaviour which contain certain negative kinds of words or language (Djuric *et al*., 2015), and the targets of these behaviour may be individuals or groups. In comparison with such direct offensive concepts, rumours and gossip, cyberthreats, and cyberstalking, while also potentially types of cyberbullying, may not always utilise offensive words, and they may or may not have particular targets. Furthermore, swearing and the use of taboo words are very similar behaviours. Taboo words is a form of offensive emotional language, which are normally restricted due to social custom or aversion (Pinker, 2007; Jay, 2009), while swearing has both polite (e.g. reducing stress) and impolite functions (e.g. mocking or insulting people) within varying communication situations (Stapleton, 2003; Rasavi *et al*., 2010). These behaviours' features and functions have both differences and connections to cyberbullying.

To summarise, cyberbullying and other cyber aggressive behaviours have both differences and connections. For connections, we can regard most types of behaviour, such as cyberbullying, hate speech, obscene language, profanity, bad language, dirty words and swear language, as offensive language behaviours (Jay, 2009; Stone *et al*., 2015). These kinds of behaviour include discriminatory expressions, scared or shocking texts, or the words which are used in certain situations or to particular people, to express strong emotions (e.g. anger, dissatisfaction, frustration and shocked feelings) and sometimes to offend others (Jay & Janschewitz, 2012; Cressman *et al*., 2009; Sinambela, 2010). However, in comparison with various types of offensive

language behaviour, cyberbullying has its own categories, features and functions. The distinct differences are two: cyberbullying has clear targets, and cyberbullying may not always contain offensive words or phrases. Thus, we need a clear definition of cyberbullying for further analysis. In this way, the subsection 2.2.4 will combine the existing studies that focus on the differences and relationships among traditional bullying, cyberbullying and other cyber aggression, to define cyberbullying in this research.

2.2.4 Definition of cyberbullying used in this research

According to the notions and features of cyberbullying and traditional bullying, as well as the comparison with cyberbullying and related concepts, it is of great importance to point out three focuses to provide an explicit definition of cyberbullying which would be an appropriate and consensual reference for researchers and participants in surveys. The focuses include: 1) the specific criteria that are embodied in common definitions; 2) whether these criteria have been applied to an online environment, and 3) if there are any associated challenges to the application of these standards. To this end, it is obvious that there are many limitations with respect to using traditional bullying criteria (repetition, power imbalance, intention to harm) to define cyberbullying (see subsection 2.4.1 for a detailed discussion). However, besides these three elements, cyberbullying is also regarded as an aggressive group or individual behaviour which has targets (e.g. Tokunaga, 2010; Sari & Camadan, 2016; Baldry *et al*., 2019). These features are similar with the cyber aggression and hate speech.

Consequently, this research combines the cyberbullying typical features with the characteristics of the cyberbullying related concepts to provide an explanation of cyberbullying, defining cyberbullying as *an aggressive individual or group language behaviour via electronic communication tools, referring to the direct offensive or indirect offensive behaviour in a social interaction to targets* (Li, 2019a/b). The forms of cyberbullying include, but are not limited to, posting of offensive comments, forwarding sexual content, and sending threatening messages.

This definition has carefully considered three aspects to make the further analysis

meaningful and valid:

1) the specific criteria of cyberbullying that were mentioned in the existing definitions are ‘aggressive individual or group behaviour’. This research agrees with this view, making it possible to analyse cyberbullying in a social interaction through sociolinguistics variables;

2) the updated definition focuses on the linguistic aspect, which has been applied to an online environment to analyse similar behaviours (e.g. swearing, hate speech, taboo and etc.). This aspect allows for using contextual variables to study cyberbullying, and can decrease the data biases owing to the cyber anonymity to a certain extent.

And 3) the updated cyberbullying definition is not only about the direct offensive language behaviour, but also the indirect offensive language behaviour,[27] to ensure the comprehensiveness of the research.

2.3 Theoretical research and empirical research on cyberbullying and traditional bullying

Cyberbullying was regarded as a sub-category of traditional bullying, but this research cannot fully agree with this view. Thus, this section will address differences and relationships between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, and explain the study approaches to both of them.

2.3.1 The overlaps and differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying

As explained previously, most of the studies agree that cyberbullying is a subcategory of bullying, but I believes that it is unhelpful to analyse cyberbullying by using traditional bullying approaches, and an explanation of the differences between cyberbullying and traditional bullying is necessary. That is, Table 2.4 presents the criteria, types, media, characteristics, prevalence and consequences of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, and also shows the distinctive features of cyberbullying.

27 In the existing literature or related classifications of cyberbullying, some researchers regard rumours, gossip, pictures/videoe/memes containing ridicule or attack information, and the human flesh search as forms of cyberbullying. This research agrees with this view, and the definition does not conflict with the above cyberbullying types. Briefly, the above behaviour also contains linguistic information, and it can be considered as the specific language behaviour (see Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion).

According to the information shown in Table 2.4, the overlaps or connections between traditional bullying and cyberbullying are that they are both prevalent and cause serious consequences. In details, in the existing research, most of researchers agreed that cyberbullying is a prevalent problem, similar to traditional bullying (e.g. Nansel *et al*., 2001). Meanwhile, both cyberbullying and traditional bullying create serious problems which may have negative consequences (Li, 2007). There are many quantitative studies which have found that cyberbullying and traditional bullying have similar consequences, such as emotional problems (e.g. suicidal thoughts and symptoms of anxiety), mental problems (e.g. depressive symptoms and psychological distress), or behavioural problems (e.g. lower levels of life-satisfaction) (Ybarra *et al*., 2007a/b; Moore *et al*., 2012; Bonanno & Hymel, 2013; Campbell *et al*., 2013).

Table 2.4 Criteria, Features and Other Elements of Cyberbullying Compared with Traditional Bullying

Terms		Traditional Bullying	Cyberbullying
Variables (Victims and Perpetrators)		· Gender, age, educational level, and culture.	· Gender, age, educational level, technology usages, online risk behaviour, violent tendencies, and culture.
Features	**Repetition**	· Key component (Li *et al*., 2011); · Bullying behaviour occurs over a period (Olweus, 1986; Smith *et al*., 2013).	· Acting out bullying behaviour repetitively; · Group bullying behaviour (Langos, 2012; Hutson, 2016).
	Power Imbalance	· Refers to physical strength or age (Grigg, 2010); · The number of perpetrators (Smith, 2011); · A feature to discriminate between perpetration and victimisation (Dooley *et al*., 2009).	· More advanced technological skills or media expertise of cyber perpetrators over those of their cyber victims (Grigg, 2010; Nocentini *et al*., 2010); · The inability of the cyber victim to escape cyberbullying (Dooley *et al*., 2009; Mishna *et al*., 2012).
	Intention to Harm	· Someone intentionally inflicts or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort on another; · A feature to distinguish bullying behaviour from other aggressive actions (Olweus, 1993: 9).	· Be difficult to differentiate
Types		· Physical bullying forms (e.g. hitting, kicking, punching or pushing); · Verbal bullying forms (e.g. name-calling, taunting or teasing); · Psychological bullying forms (e.g.social isolation or exclusion from groups) · Sexual bullying forms; · Social bullying. (e.g. Olweus, 1993; Beran & Li, 2007; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Menard & Grotpeter, 2011; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011;	· Photo and video clip bullying (Smith *et al*., 2008; Willard, 2005; Ackers, 2012); · Electronic messages or flaming with angry, offensive, threatening and vulgar language (Li, 2005; Willard, 2005; Wang *et al*., 2012; Kowalski *et al*., 2012); · Excluding someone from an online group (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008; Steffgen *et al*., 2011); · Impersonation: posting material which contains private or personal information (Willard, 2005); · Rumours and denigration (Willard, 2007; Katzer *et al*., 2009; Slonje *et al*., 2012; Yang *et al*., 2012); · Cyberstalking and cyberthreats (Willard, 2007); · Online harassment (Wolak *et al*., 2007).

	Cuadrado-Gordillo, 2012)	· Sexual insulting (Staude-Müller *et al*., 2012; Wang *et al*., 2012; Freis & Gurung, 2013; Kwan & Skoric, 2013);
Mediums	--	· Eletronical technologies, including email, instant messaging, chat-room, text messaging, blogs, online bulletins, and social media platforms (Kowalski *et al*., 2008; Kwan & Skoric, 2013; Pieschl *et al*., 2013; Bellmore *et al*., 2015)
Characteristics	· Occurring fact to face (Olweus, 1986).	· Anonymous (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Shariff, 2008); · Publicity (Nocentini *et al*., 2010; Menesini & Nocentini, 2009); · Occurring at any time from anywhere (Sari & Camadan, 2016); · Limited feedback to cyber perpetrators (Slonje & Smith, 2007; Smith *et al*., 2008).
Prevalence[28]	The earliest estimates of bullying prevalence were based on the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire in 1983 (Olweus, 1986, 2010), to show that 15% of the students from Grade 3 to Grade 10 in Norway were involved in bullying or being bullied. A large-scale survey in 2001 in 40 countries found that 26% of adolescents had been involved in bullying with some regularity (Olweus, 2002).	The Cyberbullying Research Center's reported that from 2007 to 2019, on average, 27.8% of the participants (surveyed more than 25,000 students from middle and high schools from across the United States in thirteen unique projects) who have been the victim of cyberbullying at some point in their lifetime, and about 16% on average of the students who have admitted that they have cyberbullied others at some point in their lifetime.[29]
Consequences[30]	Aggression; Isolation; Lower self-esteem; Poorer academic performance; Increased aggressive and risky behaviour; Increased reporting of depressive symptoms; Psychosocial problems; Negative moods; Suicide or attempted suicide (Moxey & Bussey, 2019; Berne *et al*., 2019)	
Other relevant research: Whitney & Smith (1993); Anderson & Bushman, (2002); Solberg & Olweus, (2003); Ybarra & Mitchell (2004); Beran & Li (2005); Raskauskas & Stoltz (2007); Kowalski *et al*. (2008); Ramirez & Andreu (2008); Dooley *et al*. (2009); Craig *et al*. (2009); Mishna *et al*. (2012); Slonje *et al*. (2013)		

28 Prevalence rates of cyberbullying vary considerably with studies and countries within which the data were collected. As a result, the prevalence of cyberbullying are different. In the current research, the main variables include the time parameter, the conservative versus liberal criterion and demographic characteristics of the sample (Kowalski *et al*., 2019). Since it is difficult to obtain the prevalence of cyberbullying, the prevalence rate in this research is the general rate provided by Cyberbullying Research Center.

29 Cyberbullying Research Center has been collecting data from middle and high school students since 2002. The research has surveyed more than 25,000 students from middle and high schools across the United States in thirteen unique projects. (ref. https://cyberbullying.org/summary-of-our-cyberbullying-research)

30 The consequences of traditional bullying and cyberbullying are similar and mainly involves victimization, as both traditional bullying and cyberbullying are kinds of bullying behaviour and individuals who involved in cyberbullying are also often involved in traditional bullying behaviour (Kowalski *et al*., 2019).

However, it should be quite careful to regard cyberbullying as a subcategory of traditional bullying. In general, traditional bullying behaviour always occurs in a face-to-face context so that the identity of the perpetrator and the direct social contact which supports the regulation of the perpetrator's behaviour are clear, while cyberbullying is behaviour through online technology that can occur at any time and come from anywhere. Meanwhile, online anonymity makes the cyber perpetrator's identity difficult to establish and creates challenges to protecting cyber victims. Besides the obvious differences between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, the types of cyberbullying have become more complex because of different media. Furthermore, according to the social network analysis and the interview results did in this research (see Chapter VII for a more detailed discussion), it is noteworthy that this study speculates that the consequences of cyberbullying might be more serious than traditional bullying. Therefore, in the light of the above considerations, it is very reasonable and important to define cyberbullying based on more objective elements.

2.3.2 The study approaches to studying traditional bullying and cyberbullying

With regard to the existing research on cyberbullying in the past 15 years, theoretical research and empirical research are the two main directions. For the theoretical direction, a plethora of research has used systematic review studies or traditional bullying theoretical frameworks to understand cyberbullying, including individual differences and cyberbullying features. Regarding the second angle, surveys are the most common research method used to analyse how do the cultural, gender and age factors affect cyberbullying, and role differences between perpetrators and victims during the process of cyberbullying. In the computer science field, there is also some other empirical research which has focused on detecting cyberbullying through the technological approaches. In this section, the most relevant theoretical research and empirical research focusing on different aspects of cyberbullying are explored critically to provide a foundation for this research.

Traditional bullying, cyberbullying, and community/group identity

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory is a term derived from the field of social

psychology, and moral disengagement is an important starting point for the study of bullying behaviour. Moral disengagement provides a framework for traditional bullying, especially regarding personal morality and individual differences. For example, Hyde *et al*. (2010) pointed out that moral disengagement is associated with antisocial behaviour. Meanwhile, Bandura *et al.* (1996: 364) defined moral disengagement as a cognitive process during which a person justifies his/her harmful or aggressive behaviour by loosening his/her inner self-regulatory mechanisms. These mechanisms are guided by moral self-sanctions, such as feelings of guilt and shame, which usually keep behaviour in line with personal standards (Bandura *et al*., 1996; Bandura, 1999).

In addition to moral disengagement, Ken Rigby's individual difference theory is another main theory in researching bullying behaviour because of the imbalanced relationship between victims and perpetrators (Olweus, 1993). Ken Rigby (2004) concurred with this view and identified different theoretical perspectives to explain bullying behaviour. From Rigby's (2004) view, there are five major theoretical perspectives on bullying, but all of them focus on traditional bullying in schools. These can be broadly described as 1) bullying as an outcome of individual differences between victims and perpetrators; 2) bullying as a developmental process; 3) bullying as a socio-cultural phenomenon; 4) bullying as a response to peer pressures[31]; and 5) bullying from perspectives of restorative justice.

These two theories can be used to clarify the participants' identity during the process of traditional bullying. Traditional bullying is always a face-to-face behaviour, so that traditional bullying shows a higher level of moral disengagement with respect to victims and outsiders (Menesini *et al*., 2003). Meanwhile, Olweus's (1986) standards (repetition, power imbalance and intention to harm) makes it easy to clearly identify different groups or individuals during the process of cyberbullying. In this way, it will be easier to track the identity of traditional bullying perpetrators and victim (Theriot *et al*., 2005).

31 Peer pressure is the direct influence on people by peers, or the effect on an individual who gets encouraged to follow their peers by changing their attitudes, values, or behaviour to conform to those of the influencing group or individual. (ref. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_pressure)

However, in cyberspace, Menesini *et al.* (2003) stated that in comparison with traditional bullying perpetrators, cyberbullying perpetrators share similar characteristics in connection with morality, such as a lack of guilt and disobedience. Thus, when moral disengagement is used in analysing cyberbullying, there are five specific practices described in the early work of Bandura *et al.* (1996): moral justification[32], euphemistic language[33], displacement of responsibility[34], diffusion of responsibility[35], and distorting the consequences[36] are often used to discuss cyberbullying. However, the individuals' identities cannot be identified with ease because of the online anonymity. Under such circumstances, cyber community or groups can be regarded as a way to identify individuals with similar interests. Short *et al*., (1976) and Daft and Lengel (1986) stated that traditional communication is proposed as the method with the highest degree of social presence, whereas the social presence continuum of communicating via technical ways falls down. Thus, individuals in cyberspace try to establish an online community which can be viewed as a new type of speech or discourse community that is an essential part of the group's participation taking place through CMC (Wellman, 1997; Wellman & Gulia, 1999; Paolillo, 2001). In this way, individuals can improve the social presence in cyberspace, and the higher the social presence is, the more significant the social influence that the communication partners will have on each other's behaviour.

The main connections between cyberbullying and online communities are two:

Firstly, the sociability characteristics of each online community may occur different kinds of cyberbullying (Preece, 2000). In details, sociability focuses on social interactions in the online community, so that different online communities have different individuals, purposes, types of policies and software supports, which allows participants to take part in certain kinds of cyberbullying behaviour (Axelrod, 1984; De Souza & Preece, 2004) (see Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion).

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32 Moral Justification: People consider their destructive behaviour as socially and personally acceptable behaviour, which serves a higher moral purpose when they take part in harmful conduct (Bandura, 1999; Robson & Witenberg, 2013).
33 Euphemistic Language: It is widely used to make harmful conduct appear respectable and look acceptable, and it can also reduce perceptions of personal responsibility when people carry out harmful behaviour (Bandura, 1999; Robson & Witenberg, 2013).
34 Displacement of Responsibility: People view their actions as a result of societal or authority pressures and believe they are not the actual agent of their efforts in order not to feel personally responsible for their harmful behaviour (Bandura, 1999; Pornari & Wood, 2010; Robson & Witenberg, 2013).
35 Diffusion of Responsibility: moral control will be weakened (Kelman, 1973).
36 Distorting the Consequences: It is an additional way of weakening moral control (Bandura, 1999).

Secondly, cyberbullying is the outcome of individual difference and can be seen as a socio-cultural phenomenon (e.g. O'Moore & Hillery, 1991; Olweus, 1993; Slee & Rigby, 1993; Sutton & Keogh, 2000). According to this view, physical and psychological factors are associated with taking part in cyberbullying or being cyberbullied. Here, the major emphasis is on gender differences. Numerous studies have indicated that males are more likely than females to engage in bullying (e.g. Olweus, 1993). That is because males are seen as being stronger than females as a consequence of pervading social beliefs (Rigby, 2004), which points to a power imbalance. However, some research findings on gender differences in cyberbullying sometimes diverge from this conclusion, depending on different samples. The relations between cyberbullying and gender differences will be explained in section 2.3.2.

Celebrity, Fandom, and Cyberbullying

The relations between celebrity, fandom and cyberbullying are complex and mutually influencing. In terms of traditional ways, expressing fan identities (self-awareness) is the main feature. One earlier research on fan identity is Sandvoss's (2005) study on the connection between fans' identities and their fannish text. In light of the advent of digital technology, the digital space has clearly augmented the practices and methods of interpersonal connection amongst fans, and online fandom provides a more convenient means of expressing traditional fan identities and a sense of self-awareness (Booth & Kelly, 2013). The notion of fans identities online is described by Booth (2010) in reference to how fans use social network sites to show themselves, in which they create profiles to build friendship and persistent dialogue. Furthermore, fans' identities can be constructed not just through the fan community that gathers at conventions, but also through the complex interactions with which they engage online (Booth & Kelly, 2013). In this way, although the fan practices and features in online fandom do not change a lot (Booth & Kelly, 2013), two questions to be explored for cyberbullying analysis include what is the new feature between celebrities and fans in cyberspace and how is fan identity owned, explored, and performed by fans themselves.

As the internet has widened the scope of fan practices, researchers have focused on different parts of online fandom. For example, Baym's (2000) discussed the messages that fans posted online; Bury's (2005) analysed the functions and structures of fan internet communities; Booth's (2010) analysed the fandom on social media; and Booth and Kelly (2013) explained the changes to fandom. One typical feature that the online fandom has is that it becomes more well-known and more visible, and this feature may increase fan awareness of their own online representations (Jenkins, 2007). Thus, to discuss celebrities, fandom and cyberbullying, the focus should be on fans' attitudes towards the celebrities and fans themselves as the site of discursive power.

Social media have become a platform of value to celebrities and fans; they provide a convenient platform for celebrities to interact with a large number of fans (Booth & Kelly, 2013). The celebrity-fan interaction on social media tend to be a two-way interaction. Celebrities can promote their movies and concerts, create awareness of charity events or share their live with fans (Stever & Lawson, 2013), and at the same time, fans can also send the celebrities a message directly, which would give the fans the 'direct communication' illusion (Lee & Jang, 2013). Sometimes, celebrities would selectively read or respond to their fans' messages or comments (Stever & Lawson, 2013). This relation between celebrities and fans can be regarded as one kinds of 'parasocial relationships'[37] (Rubin & Mchugh, 1987; Booth & Kelly, 2013).

In China, many celebrities use various social media platforms (e.g. Sina Weibo, bilibili, and Lvzhou) to engage in constant conversation with their fans. Among all these social media platforms, Sina Weibo is one of the social media which enjoy the largest number of monthly active users (Li *et al*., 2016). The use of Sina Weibo for online communication strengthens the connections between fans and celebrities (Labrecque, 2014). On Weibo, celebrities post their personal pictures and feelings, which satisfies fans' curiosity about celebrities' private lives (Wood & Burkhalter, 2013) and make their fans to feel they 'know' the celebrties (Christine, 2010; Wood & Burkhalter, 2013). In this way, the fans treat the celebrity like a close friend, and the

37 Parasocial relationships is the relationships between social media interactions and source trustworthiness, and the self-disclosure on social media influenced parasocial relationships (Booth & Kelly, 2013).

regular following of the celebrity's updates may enhance their intimate illusion with the celebrity (Hung, 2014). These kinds of activities between celebrities and fans can excite fans and encourages them to remain dedicated to the celebrities they follow because of fans' recognition of the image, attitude and philosophy created by their followed celebrities.

Briefly, celebrities use the social media to show themselves to their fans, and fans use their selected 'text' as a means of getting closer to other fans in typical issues, expressing attitudes or showing their feeling to celebrities (Tukachinsky, 2010). At this point, one typical behaviour of fandom is based on the projection of their own image of the celebrity. In this sense, the fan 'text' works rather like a mirror to show the features of the fandom group (Stern *et al*., 2007). Considering the relations and connections between celebrities and fans online, cyberbullying can be regarded as an extreme approach chosen by fans to show their attitudes to or protection of celebrities, regardless of the risk of self-disclosure. However, fans may not think this is an unacceptable expression, but regard it as a 'reasonable' conduct which is in line with the expectations and conventions of a fan community. A sense of identification with the same behavior or result has strong meaning and significance in a fan community. That is why the cyberbullying occurring between fandom groups always involves a large scale.

Summarising, fandom exists as a group of individuals, each different from the other. The main connection between celebrities and fans is self-disclosure. That being said, when cyberbullying occurs in fandom group, it can be seen as an extreme behaviour with power. However, the different views of fans about cyberbullying may bring challenges to measure or identify cyberbullying. That is why this research focuses on the language features and functions, and discusses the power imbalance or the power shift features for celebrities in cyberbullying (see section 7.1.2 for a detailed discussion).

2.3.3 Community in Cyberspace: Gender differences, traditional bullying and cyberbullying

Gender differences in internet use

Gender differences in internet use have been well introduced in the past, in which researchers have found that the attitudes toward internet and internet usage patterns between males and females are different (Kirkup, 1995; Comber *et al*., 1997; Kirkpatrick & Cuban, 1998; Li & Kirkup, 2007; Hussain & Griffiths, 2008; Lou *et al*., 2013). For example, Kirkpatrick and Cuban (1998) pointed out that females always have more negative attitudes of using the internet than those of males, and sometimes females become more anxious than males when they faced the sensitive information in cyberspace (Li & Kirkup, 2007). Meanwhile, Morahan-Martin (1999) found that females went online less frequently, and used the internet for fewer purposes (e.g. social movements or learning) than males. Wagner *et al*., (2019) also stated that there is a consistent gender gap in typical online behaviour, for instance, males generally tend to be more politically engaged than females because they have greater levels of political knowledge and more interest in politics.

However, recently, 'cyberfeminisms' are one of the new phenomenon owing to the radical potential of cyberspace (Wongthawatchai, 2000). More and more females have taken part in the online issues, such as e-business, education and social movement. The effects of new electronic technologies for females are emerging to reshape, redefine, and reclaim by 'cyberfeminist' theorists (Wongthawatchai, 2000). With regarding to the reasons of these changes, variations in available resources and societal norms are the two main aspects (Flora & Lynn, 1974; Verba *et al*., 1997; Wongthawatchai, 2000; Kivikangas *et al*., 2014; Humphreys & Vered, 2014). In details, cyberspace or the online community is a shared community of communication and exchange without limits. In this way, cyberfeminists view the internet as a potential tool for empowering women and transforming social relations. At the same time, the internet offers unique opportunities for new forms of gaining knowledge and sharing information, which promote female's rights and create a more gender-equitable culture.

Considering the factors affecting gender differences and gender role changes in cyberspace, there is no doubt that gender differences and online behaviour are also different from countries or regions because of the varying social experience, attitude formation and cultural backgrounds (Chen, 2016). For example, researchers found

that both males' and females' attitudes towards the internet in western countries were more positive than other countries (McDuff *et al*., 2017; Stodt *et al*., 2018; Wagner *et al*., 2019; Baloğlu *et al*., 2020). Yet, due to the social and cultural structures, China has relatively high gender equality in cyberspace (Wagner *et al*., 2019). This is a large difference between females' behaviour in cyberspace and in traditional ways.

In China, traditionally, confucianism has had a profound influence on the gender and sexuality structures of China (Feng *et al*. 2012); and confucianism expected females to observe three obediences and four virtues (Hu & Li, 2019). These required females to obey various rules and social norms in society (see section 7.1.2 for a detailed discussion). This may be a result of the establishment of gender roles within a society. Females are often socialised into conflict avoidance (Ridgeway, 2011), in which the result is typically a lesser engagement of females in social conflict (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2017). However, internet platforms such as social media have provided a more convenient way to search information and express views which results in increased awareness and knowledge (Saldana *et al*., 2015). In this way, the gender gap in internet use or the boundaries of gender role in cyberspace has begun to diminish quite rapidly. Internet users are now gradually becoming evenly divided among gender lines (Weiser, 2000). Females have more opportunities to express themselves (Boulianne, 2019). This phenomenon can be called media exposure in shaping individuals' attitudes in media and communication field, in which people may select the reasonable media to express their beliefs and predispositions (Hu & Li, 2019).

In this research, I consider whether the exchange of information on the internet, especially the offensive or negative contents, presents a stimulus, which will boost the level of cyberbullying engagement among females. The directions of discussion include the females attitudes towards offensive word usage online and offline, and the social media features affecting the individuals' behaviour in cyberspace (see section 7.1.2 for a detailed discussion).

Empirical research for studying gender differences in traditional bullying and cyberbullying

Empirical research is an important component in the study of cyberbullying. In the

psychological field, researchers (e.g. Monks *et al.*, 2012; Doane *et al.*, 2013; Li, 2007; Alhajji *et al*., 2019; Smith *et al.*, 2019) prefer to use surveys to analyse the causes and consequences of cyberbullying among certain samples (mainly focusing on adolescents), while in the computer science field, researchers prefer to use machine techniques to find approaches to detecting or preventing cyberbullying (see subsection 2.3.3 for a more detailed discussion). There are several variables (e.g. gender, age, internet skills and time spent on using the internet) that are used in questionnaires to analyse cyberbullying. Among all these studies, gender and age variables are most widely used. In particular, considering the research questions and purposes, this research will also employ gender variables as the key element to analyse cyberbullying behaviour between different individuals. This subsection will focus on the main existing results on the basis of the gender variables to achieve deep insights and provide foundations for further research.

In general, summarising the results of the previous studies, there were two main aspects of analysing cyberbullying by gender variables: the difference between two genders in offensive language behaviour (e.g. Scheithauer *et al*., 2006; Bowie, 2007; Letendre, 2007; Lapidot-Lefler *et al*., 2015; Sun *et al*., 2016; Kasahara *et al*., 2019; Pittaro, 2020) and the effects of offensive language on each gender (e.g. Mehl & Pennebaker, 2003; Li, 2006; Thelwall, 2008; Jay, 2009; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Zsila *et al*., 2020; Gao *et al*., 2020).

For the first aspect, the frequency of taking part in cyberbullying between boys/males and girls/females is the main issue that researchers have focused on. For example, from the perpetrator's angle, Olweus (1993, 2012) indicates that males or boys were more likely than females or girls to engage in bullying or cyberbullying. However, several studies have found that teenage girls were as likely as boys to cyberbully (e.g. Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Beran & Li, 2005, 2008; Li, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Slonje & Smith, 2007; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Sun *et al*., 2016; Pittaro, 2020), but other studies have claimed that males/boys were more likely than females/girls to engage in cyberbullying because males/boys were seen as stronger than females/girls, which can be explained by power imbalance (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2004; Kasahara *et al*., 2019). Moreover, from the victim's angle, some

research has concluded that girls were more likely to be victimised, while boys were more likely to perpetrate bullying (Dehue *et al*., 2008; Smith *et al*., 2008; Wang *et al*., 2009). In contrast, Mishna *et al.* (2012) found no gender differences between students who bullied others and students who were victimized online. Above all, there were many different conflicting results of the gender differences in cyberbullying behaviour, making it hard to reach a relatively consistent conclusion, because each survey mainly focused on the individual's behaviour, and the samples were different.

In addition to the research on the difference between different genders in offensive language behaviour, gender variables are also important to analyse the effects on individuals (e.g. Feldman *et al*., 1998; Mehl & Pennebaker, 2003; Thelwall, 2008; Jay, 2009; Stapleton, 2010; Kapoor, 2016). For example, Beers-Fägersten (2012) presented detailed qualitative analyses of gender differences in spontaneous swearing behaviour to find distinctions in swearing patterns, and in ratings of offensiveness and the strength of the taboo/swear words based on gender. Moreover, Rieber *et al.* (1979) concluded that swear (offensive) words were stronger, more potent, and more active for female targets than for male targets. More interestingly, a significant quantity of existing research has found that people carry out cyberbullying more often in same-gender contexts than in mixed-gender contexts (e.g. McEnery, 2004; Jay, 2009), as well as some offensive words or language containing gender-related meanings (Ortner & Whitehead, 1981; Cameron & Lalonde, 2001; Thomas *et al*., 2019).

Besides the above two main directions of using gender variables to discuss the offensive language behaviour, Risch (1987) did an analysis of swearing and taboo language used by different genders. Risch (1987: 354) collected lists of obscene expressions from 44 female undergraduates to determine whether women really are 'more inhibited about the production of linguistic taboos'. According to Risch's finding (1987), these women listed 279 expressions, most of which were used by themselves. Apparently, women do not avoid taboo words when referring to men, regardless of the range of expression (e.g. references to body parts, body processes, etc.) or the classes (cohorts were a mixture of working, middle- and upper-class women). Risch (1987) reported that the women preferred not to use swear words in public or in mixed contexts, but it may not mean that women would not use swear

words in private places where taboo language seems to be comparatively freely used.

Overall, according to the research on gender differences in cyberbullying or other offensive language behaviours, the common feature is that the gender variable is mainly about the speakers' gender, while few studies have focused on the targets' gender to analyse language behaviour. The general conclusion is that the offensive words were used more by men (e.g. Williams & Guerra, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008), and they were also more likely to use stronger offensive words than females (Mehl & Pennebaker, 2003). However, the gender of both the speaker and target would influence how, when, and where these kinds of language behaviour would be employed in an online conversation (Rieber *et al*., 1979; Selnow, 1985). This research will make up for this shortcoming (see Chapter VI for a detailed discussion).

2.3.3 Empirical research: The approaches of detecting cyberbullying

The strategies for detection/prevention of cyberbullying are another important field of empirical research based on the vast volumes of posts and contents. Regarding cyberbullying detection, the main focuses are on two perspectives: 1) content-based features and textual detection (e.g. Chelmis *et al*., 2017); and 2) using advanced machine techniques to remove cyberbullying contents (e.g. Balakrishnan *et al*., 2019).

The first approach is the simplest way, applying keyword matching based on current datasets or dictionaries that enable the collection of a set of offensive keywords. The principal focus of this approach is the analysis and tracing of texts written by users. For example, Bag-of-Words (BOW) and the lexicon of Warriner, Kuperman and Brysbaert (WKB) (Kontostathis *et al*., 2013; Chelmis *et al*., 2017). This method is based on analysing linguistic features, focusing on specific words found in dictionaries or datasets. In general, content-based features and textual detection are principally about the lexicon-based approach. In a further word analysis and image analysis, Bag of Words (BoW) and Bag of Visual Words (BoVW) are the two sources and models. Specifically, the BoW model is incorporated with the Naïve Bayes classifier and is a simplifying representation used in natural language processing and information retrieval (Wang *et al*., 2014). The working process of BoW is to disregard grammar to check whether offensive words are contained or not (Zhang *et al*., 2010),

and each word in BoW is associated with a count of occurrences (Wallach, 2006). Based on BoW, BoVW is the model for classification of adult images and analysis of text messages (Liu, 2013). These two models are the simplest method for the majority of popular social media to filter and block offensive content through linguistic features (Ding *et al*., 2008; Taboada *et al*., 2011; Yadav & Elchuri, 2013). However, the keyword matching approach has low accuracy and may generate many false positive alerts because a simple lexicon-based automatic filtering approach cannot detect offensive language efficiently (Haidar *et al*., 2017). Furthermore, users' language is not only words and sentences but can also be images. Resultantly, many researchers have pointed out that it is crucial to adopt advanced machine techniques to detect offensive content, including using Natural Language Processing (NLP)[38] and Support Vector Machine (SVM)[39] to remove offensive materials or words automatically (Vanhove *et al*., 2013).

As for the advanced machine learning-based automatic offensive content detection techniques, they can be divided into two parts: machine learning for collections and machine learning algorithms for analysing data and classifications. As for the first category, Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a famous machine technique learning algorithms which has been successful in a variety of text-based tasks through sentiment analysis and topic detection, such as machine translations, understanding the natural language, extracting grammatical structure and meaning from input text (Chowdhury, 2003; Rosa *at al*., 2019). Instead of hand-coding large sets of rules, NLP can rely on machine learning to automatically learn these rules to summarise a text, create a chatbot, generate keyword tags and so on (Nadkarni *et al*., 2011).

NLP is the principal way for computers to analyse, understand, and derive meaning from human language, and there are several well-known algorithms such as Naive Bayes (McCallum & Nigam, 1998), Sentiment Analysis (Pang & Lee, 2008) and Support Vector Machine (SVM) (Hearst *et al*., 1998) that are used in the existing research. Typically, SVM uses supervised learning models associated with classifying

38 Natural language processing (NLP) is a field of artificial intelligence in which computers analyse, understand, and derive meaning from human language in a smart and useful way. By utilizing NLP, developers can organise and structure knowledge to perform tasks such as automatic summarization, translation, sentiment analysis, speech recognition, and topic segmentation. (ref. https://blog.algorithmia.com/introduction-natural-language-processing-nlp/)

39 Support Vector Machines (also support-vector networks) are supervised learning models with associated learning algorithms that analyze data used for classification and regression analysis. (ref. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Support-vector_machine)

new contents or images into the abusive class or otherwise (Meyer & Wien, 2001) and learning algorithms that analyse data and recognise image patterns (Hearst *et al*., 1998; Meyer & Wien, 2001), and BoW and BoVW have recently been mostly used with a SVM classifier. Moreover, Sentiment Analysis is also a widely used technology related to offensive content detection. This is a textual analysis technique used to define the polarity, subjectivity or features of a particular text (Dinakar *et al*., 2015).

In recent years, both keyword matching approaches and machine learning algorithms which have been widely used in detecting cyberbullying, whether in English or few other languages, are mainly about the currently-used advanced methods for text mining paradigms of the large-scale offensive information, online sexual harassment, or spams on different social media channels. The widely used databases are Twitter API, LIWC, Waseem and Hovy's dataset (2016), the HATE dataset created by Davidson *et al.* (2017), or the researchers' own datasets. The main machine learning techniques for detecting cyberbullying is shown in Table 2.5, and the strength and limits of these automatic detection methods which extract features at different conceptual levels will also be critically assessed (see subsection 2.4.3 for a more detailed discussion).

Table 2.5 Main Machine Learning Techniques for Detecting Cyberbullying

Researchers	Dataset	Characteristics	Machine Learning Techniques
Mishne, G., Carmel, D., & Lempel, R. (2005)	Blog	·Detection of splogs based on link-based features ·English language	SVM
Kolari, P., Java, A., Finin, T., Oates, T., & Joshi, A. (2006)	Blog	·Filtering spam comments based on language models ·English language	--
Yin, D., Xue, Z., Hong, L., Davison, B. D., Kontostathis, A., & Edwards, L. (2009)	CAW 2.0 (My Space, Slashdot, Congregate)	·Detection based on content, sentiment, feeling, and contextual features ·English language	SVM
Sanchez, H., & Kumar, S. (2011)	Twitter	·Classifying Twitter messages (identification of syntax errors, emotions, slang, sentiment analysis and opinion mining) ·English language	Bag-of-words Naive Bayes algorithm
Reynolds, K., Kontostathis, A., & Edwards, L. (2011)	Formspring.me	·The number of "bad" words (NUM) and the density of "bad" words (NORM) features ·English language	--
Dinakar, K., Jones, B., Havasi, C., Lieberman, H., & Picard, R. (2012)	YouTube comments	·Sensitive issues (sexuality, race/culture, intelligence or physical characteristics). ·English language	SVM
Dadvar, M., Trieschnigg, D., Ordelman, R., & de Jong, F. (2013)	YouTube comments	·Not only on content features, but also users' features ·English language	SVM
Nahar, V., Li, X., & Pang, C. (2013)	CAW 2.0 (My Space, Slashdot, Congregate)	·Semi-supervised approach for cyberbullying detection ·English language	Fuzzy SVM
Margono, H., Yi, X., & Raikundalia, G. K. (2014)	Twitter	·Rules and FP-Growth based detection of cyberbullying ·Indonesian language	--

Huang, Q., Singh, V. K., & Atrey, P. K. (2014)	CAW 2.0 Twitter	·Textural features and social network features (number of friends, relationship and network embeddedness) ·English language	J48; Naive Bayes SMO; Bagging and Dagging
Haidar, B., Chamoun, M., & Serhrouchni, A. (2017)	Twitter	·Prevention and awareness of cyberbullying ·Identifying predators with their victims ·Arabic language	ML NLP
Nurrahmi, H., & Nurjanah, D. (2018)	Twitter	·Rules for feature extraction to label data ·Indonesian language	--
Rosa, H., Matos, D., Ribeiro, R., Coheur, L., & Carvalho, J. (2018)	Twitter	--	Fuzzy Fingerprints
Arango, A., Perez, J., & Poblete, B. (2019)	Wassem and Hove dataset Davidson *et al.* dataset SemEval dataset	·A systematic review of hate speech detection ·English language	State-of-art methods
Balakrishnan, V., Khan, S., Fernandez, T., & Arabnia, H. R. (2019)	Twitter	·Presenting a detection model based on user personality ·English language	Big Five Dark Triad
Cheng, L., Guo, RC., & Liu, H. (2019)	Formspring; Twitter Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)	·Causal transportability for cyberbullying detection ·English language	State-of-art Evaluation
Mouheb, D., Abushamleh, H. M., Abushamleh, H. M., Aghbari, Z., & Kamel, I. (2019)	Wassem and Hove dataset Badjatiya *et al.* Dataset 2017 Agrawal and Awekar dataset, SemEval dataset, 2019	·Prevention of cyberbullying in Arabic community ·Arabic language	Deep learning methods State-of-art methods
Pascucci, A., Masucci, V., & Monti, J. (2019)	Researchers' own dataset	·Testing the performances in terms of Precision, Recall and F-Measure for gender and age detection in cyberbullying. ·English language	Computational Stylometry Machine Learning support

Detection of cyberbullying on Twitter

Table 2.5 shows that detection of cyberbullying on Twitter is the main focus of the existing research because of Twitter's timeline and APIs which make it easier to extract data and find many available APIs for interacting with Twitter (Sanchez & Kumar, 2011).

The first aspect of the research is classifying social media content. For example, following the existing data mining approaches, Sanchez and Kumar (2011) deliver a new Twitter content classification framework and expand the existing understanding of message detection on Twitter. They applied the Bag-of-Words model and Naive Bayes algorithm to develop an innovative Twitter content classification framework, which combined cyberbullying contextual features with emoticon labels to classify contents into syntax errors, emotions (especially negative emotions), and use of slang. The combination of the cyberbullying contextual features and emoticon labels is an important advantage of Sanchez and Kumar's research. Their model for detecting cyberbullying is based on the sentiment of Twitter based on 54 million users, 1.8 million tweets and 1.9 billion links by using sentiment analysis and opinion mining, which offers broad categorisation (e.g. general offensive language) and specific subcategories (e.g. sentiment of Twitter) for deeper insight into the real world application of the service with a split-level classification scheme.

Besides the content classification approach for detecting cyberbullying, combining the textual features with users' or social network characteristics is also important for analysing cyberbullying detection approaches. In this field, following Sanchez and Kumar's study, Huang *et al.* (2014) observed that social network characteristics were as significant as the message itself for detecting cyberbullying. They used classification algorithms (e.g. J48, Naive Bayes, SMO, Bagging and Dagging) to analyse the Twitter corpus which contains 4,865 messages and user features from the CAW 2.0 dataset, finding that detecting cyberbullying can be significantly improved by integrating the textual features with social network features (Huang *et al*., 2014).

Moreover, some researchers have analysed cyberbullying words on Twitter in other languages than in English. For example, Margono *et al.* (2014) were the first to make

a step towards detecting cyberbullying in Indonesian using association rules and FP-Growth. They focused on some taboo words in the Indonesian language and used them as keywords when searching Twitter. Meanwhile, Nurrahmi and Nurjanah (2018) followed Sarna's (2017) general rules for feature extraction to label data in the Indonesian language, and expanded and provided a good reference for the current research, that is, how to label data. Moreover, Haidar, Chamoun and Serhrouchni's (2017) research into cyberbullying in the Arabic language covered several areas, including the detection of cyberbullying before it occurs, prevention and awareness of cyberbullying and identifying predators with their victims. The contribution of Haidar and his colleagues is the development of a cyberbullying detection system in both English and Arabic based on Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing.

Detection of cyberbullying in messages

Besides researching cyberbullying detection on Twitter, detecting cyberbullying in messages is also an important aspect. The main focuses are detecting harassment and spams. For the former, content analysis for Web 2.0 is usually used. One of the most important studies is from Yin and her colleagues. Yin *et al.* (2009) focused on content, sentiment and contextual features to train an SVM to classify users' posts, enabling harassment detection for three different datasets, namely MySpace, Slashdot and Congregate. The major criterion to classify whether the content is harassment or not is the feature of the post. Yin *et al.* (2009) combined standard text mining techniques, rule-based systems and the strengths of terms together to demonstrate a new model to test feelings and improve the detection of harassment.

For the latter, advanced machine techniques are always being developed. For example, Mishne and colleagues (2005) investigated how SVM models based on local and link-based features could be used for detecting splogs (false blogs). They examined the use of language in the blog post, a related comment, and the page linked to from comments, and used language models to effectively classify comments as spam or non-spam. In comparison with Mishne's research, Kolari and colleagues (2006) expanded the scope of the research. They moved the blog comments from the blogs themselves. They discussed how SVM models based on local and link-based features

could be used to detect splogs, and they presented an evaluation of learned models and their utility to blog search engines; systems that employ techniques differing from those of conventional web search engines.

Detection of cyberbullying in comments from YouTube video clips

In comparison with Twitter and messages, the offensive comments on video clips are more complex because these comments may contain more information according to users from different cultural backgrounds. YouTube is a famous video-sharing website, and there are sometimes sensitive and offensive comments displaying cyberbullying behaviour between audiences or users (Dadvar *et al*., 2013). Regarding this problem, researchers (e.g. Dinakar *et al*., 2012; Dadvar *et al*., 2013) used the comments' characteristics to detect cyberbullying on the YouTube platform.

Dadvar *et al.*'s (2013) research is a seminal study in which they used an SVM classifier to devise a method for detecting cyberbullying in YouTube comments. They summarised and labelled the sensitive cyberbullying YouTube comments by the following criteria: physical appearance, sexuality, race/culture and intelligence. They found that identifying frequent cyberbullying content was possible based on words regarding minority races, religion and physical characteristics. However, the limitation of Dinaker's research was that the authors only considered the features of comments themselves and did not consider other aspects such as different meanings within different contexts and feelings and emotions.

In addition to Dinaker's research, Dadvar *et al.* (2013) also use the SVM classifier to develop the method of detecting cyberbullying in comments from YouTube. They used sentiment analysis to analyse the number of profane words, the number of emoticons, and the ratio of capital letters in the comment (Dadvar *et al*., 2013). The further improvement of Dadvar *et al.*'s (2013) research was the combination between cyberbullying content characteristics and users' features, which developed an enhanced model for tackling social media-based cyberbullying problems. They found that users' context features and users' characteristics (e.g. age and gender) improved the cyberbullying detection accuracy (Dadvar *et al*., 2013).

Detection of cyberbullying on other social media platforms

Besides the main social media platforms mentioned previously, there are also some researchers choosing other social networks as cases to analyse cyberbullying detection. For example, Nahar *et al.* (2013) proposed a semi-supervised approach for cyberbullying detection automatically in MySpace, Slashdot and Congregate through user context, linguistic knowledge and baseline keywords on the datasets provided by content analysis for Web 2.0. Reynolds, Kontostathis and Edwards (2011) proposed a machine learning technique approach for detecting cyberbullying from Formspring.me. The development of their research is that they assessed the number of 'offensive' words and the density of 'offensive' word features, and assigned a severity level to the offensive-words list and reported the accuracy on the range of classifiers. Furthermore, in 2019, Pascucci and colleagues developed a cyberbullying detection platform with gender and age factors through Computational Stylometry (CS) and Machine Learning (ML) support based on their own dataset. Their result showed that writing style in cyberbullying was different between males and females which showed an efficient evaluation measure of the gender detection.

To sum up, according to the information shown in Table 2.5 and the reviews summarised previously, it can be concluded that researchers have used different machine learning technique algorithms to develop an effective cyberbullying detection system on social media. The main strength of these approaches is that machine learning technique algorithms can help detect cyberbullying through different variables, such as text features, users' characteristics, and society and cultural differences. This is a very flexible measure that can be used for various social media or online platforms.

However, the obvious limitation is that most of these algorithms are based on the existing databases in English (e.g. LIWC, Waseem and Hovy' dataset and the HATE dataset). The standards of establishing dataset for cyberbullying analysis in substantial research were not explained clearly with regard to how they were constructed. This makes it difficult to address the key challenges of detecting cyberbullying in different background, because the conception of cyberbullying may be reflected in different

languages. This is also why the existing studies of detecting cyberbullying can play as references in the Chinese context, but with limitations (see subsection 2.4.3 for a more detailed discussion).

2.4 Limitations and gaps in the existing literature.

Based on my analysis of existing research, I identify the following limitations and gaps.

2.4.1 The challenges of using traditional bullying criteria to analyse cyberbullying

There has been a surge of research devoted to the definitions and criteria of cyberbullying by following traditional bullying criteria and approaches. Among all the definitions of cyberbullying mentioned in Table 2.1, the key differences that exist between various researchers are based on their research objectives, but it is clear that researchers prefer to plug into some or all of the traditional bullying criteria in a cyberbullying definition (see Table 2.2). Although discovering and explaining how these criteria apply to an online environment, and how the roles these criteria play in differentiating cyberbullying from traditional bullying are quite common within the cyberbullying context in various studies, the principal limitation is that these three features are somewhat subjective and there is more difficulty in applying them to cyberbullying. Besides, in Olweus and Limber's (2018) current research, they stated that cyberbullying is conceptualised as a subcategory of traditional bullying. However, this research cannot fully agree with this view, arguing that cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying in a variety of ways.

Firstly, repetition in cyberbullying is problematic to measure and explain. The repetitive nature of traditional bullying can be measured by the amount or frequency of harm (Olweus, 1993: 9-11), but in cyberspace, repetition has a complex representation and is not as straightforward. During the process of cyberbullying, a great number of offensive communications sent to one target can be seen as repetitive behaviour, as well as the abusive or humiliating communications which become 'snowballs' and spread around a wide audience (e.g. 'happy slapping', Grigg, 2010),

so constituting repetition (Slonje *et al*., 2013). Therefore, it is difficult to identify whether the 'repetition' is a single act from one netizen repeated many times, or behaviour which is out of control and is accessed by many people. On this point, we cannot only use the high volume of posted offensive comments or information from senders to receivers to measure repetitive features in cyberbullying, but should consider how many times the targets experience the abuse.

Secondly, the intention to harm is also a challenging feature to evaluate in cyberspace. It is no doubt that 'intention to harm' is an important element to identify perpetrators of traditional bullying behaviour (Olweus, 1993: 9-11), but it is difficult to measure in cyberbullying. On the first point, each target has their own feeling and understanding of being hurt, which makes it challenging to distinguish 'the level of harm' from various samples. On the other point, perpetrators always claim that their comments are made in jest with no intention to harm, assuming that the cyberbullying victim is unaware of, and therefore unharmed by their actions (Willard, 2007). Moreover, the cyberbullying messages can be sent from the perpetrator to the target directly, but at the same time, the same message from a third party may also have an increased likelihood of being cyberbullying. At this point, it is challenging to identify the third party's motivation. Generally, intention to harm is a fundamental component of crime, but cyberbullying is not always for criminal purposes (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). When using the 'intention to harm' element to analyse cyberbullying, a uniform standard for identifying the extent of *intention* and the extent of *harm* is required.

Thirdly, the power imbalance becomes unclear between online actors and targets, although it is a fundamental aspect to define the physical strength or psychological weaknesses between perpetrators and victims in traditional bullying (Olweus, 1993: 10). With traditional bullying, most researchers agreed that boys or older people were more likely to bully others because they had more power than girls or the young (e.g. Nansel *et al*., 2001; Ybarra, 2004; Li, 2006;). When considering the power imbalance feature in cyberspace, Slonje and his colleagues (2013: 27) considered that the power imbalance can be attributed to an imbalance in technological skills between the parties during the cyberbullying process. In other words, the more advanced technological skills or media expertise the cyber perpetrators have, the greater the possibility that

their cyber victims would be cyberbullied (Grigg, 2010, Slonje *et al*., 2013), and also the inability of the cyber victim to escape cyberbullying if their perpetrators have advanced technological skills (Dooley *et al*., 2009). Clearly, knowing how to use technological devices may give perpetrators a sense of power over a targeted person, and the more time is spent online, the more opportunities there are to perpetrate or experience acts of cyberbullying. However, in fact cyberbullying victimization and perpetration may be both positively related to computer proficiency and the amount of time spent online. It is difficult to say if the target does not use the internet then the potential cyberbullying behaviour will not exist.

To this end, this research claims that cyberbullying differs from traditional bullying, especially within three aspects: 1) the relations between perpetrators and targets of cyberbullying are complex; 2) the role of bystanders in cyberbullying is complex; and 3) cyberspace provides a more complex environment for cyberbullying than traditional face-to-face bullying because of anonymity (Spears *et al*., 2009). At this point, the updated definition of cyberbullying used in this research can overcome some limitations, enabling the cyberbullying analysis being more objective. Therefore, the frameworks and variables that are used to analyse cyberbullying should be re-considered owing to the more complicated backgrounds (see Chapter III and IV for detailed discussions).

2.4.2 Limitations of the theoretical research on cyberbullying

As described previously, moral disengagement theory and individual difference theory have been well developed to analyse traditional bullying, and they are the main models used to investigate moral effects in understanding individual differences during bullying behaviour (Malti & Latzko, 2010). However, when using these theories to analyse the cyberbullying phenomenon, the research findings have limitations and diverge somewhat, so that many elements in these theories should be reconsidered or updated (Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; Wachs, 2012; Bussey *et al*., 2015). For example, the analysis of the relation between moral disengagement and individual differences in the cyberbullying phenomenon is always based on typical samples, finding that these relations in cyberbullying is weaker than

in the traditional bullying (Pornari & Wood, 2010; Robson & Witenberg, 2013; Runions & Bak, 2015). The problems here were the different findings according to various sample groups, and variables for the same phenomenon. A similar limitation is also faced by Ken Rigby's (2004) individual difference theory. Although Rigby (2004) gave a framework to explain which factors (e.g. power imbalance and peer pressure) would affect traditional bullying, the vast majority of these principles are not entirely applicable to cyberbullying. The reason is that some variables (e.g. age and education level) of cyberbullying cannot be easily measured in cyberspace.

2.4.3 Limitations of the empirical research on cyberbullying

Besides the limitations of the theoretical research on cyberbullying, the challenges of these current empirical research on cyberbullying are also obvious.

Generally, the main weakness of such findings is the lack of consideration of the social relations and social interactions between speakers and targets. Indeed, cyberbullying is a language behaviour that may in certain social interactions be affected by different relations (Campbell *et al*., 2020). At this angle, although the gender variable has been the key factor to analyse both traditional bullying and cyberbullying, when it is used to study cyberbullying, the single gender factor cannot fully answer questions relevant to the relations between cyberbullying and gender differences.

Currently, researchers mainly focused on the speakers' genders and claimed that males used offensive words more frequently than females (e.g. Gao *et al*., 2019; Pittaro, 2020; Zsila *et al*., 2020). However, cyberbullying is an individual or group behaviour in a social interaction. The target gender or the communication context will also affect the speakers' language behaviour. The lack of considerations of such factors can easily lead to deviations in research results. However, it does not mean we do not face the challenges of using new variables. For example, the anonymous in cyberspace makes it difficult to analyse cyberbullying through internet users' characteristics. Therefore, one area where cyberbullying needs to be explored more thoroughly is the domain of interactions and relationships between different individuals and groups. This can be carried out by examining quantifiable factors with

the aim of addressing the limitations on describing the cyberbullying phenomenon. Thus, this research will combine gender factors with language features and usages to answer the following questions to better understand the relations between gender differences and cyberbullying behaviour on social media: 1) whether males actually use offensive words during the process of cyberbullying more than females; and 2) whether the effect of gender differences in using offensive words is not only related to the speakers' genders (see Chapter VI for a detailed discussion).

In addition, machine learning methods have a narrow scope of application concerning the detection or prevention of cyberbullying. Although cyberbullying may operates in similar way, its format and manifestation can vary and may change rapidly. That is, a dataset in the local language or an effective and comprehensive explanation of how to establish a structured database with reference to cyberbullying criteria is needed. Recently, a plethora of research have considered text-based and machine technique methods for cyberbullying detection on the majority of social networks, classifying social media contents as 'bullying' or 'non-bullying', and the machine techniques relying on text or language features were only conducted in English and a few other languages. However, cyberbullying is usually undertaken via different languages and has significant cultural differences. That is why the existing studies based on the English dataset cannot solve the cyberbullying problems on Chinese social media, because Chinese words are totally different from English words.[40] For example, an obvious feature of a Chinese word is that a same word may have opposite meanings depending on the context. Although both comments - '*这是个畜生*' ('This is a brute') and '*你是个畜生!*' ('You are a brute') include the word 畜生 ('*brute*'), the second is more likely to be an example of bullying. With regard to this point, the 'foul' words in Chinese are more complex, depending on the word functions and context. This situation might be faced not only in Chinese, but also in other languages which make it even more difficult to use the existing database for analysing or detecting cyberbullying.

In conclusion, according to these three main limitations from the existing research on

40 A Chinese word is more complex in certain senses, because one Chinese word could consist of words borrowed from other languages, as well as homophones and homographs, and sometimes even be formed from a new word created by Chinese Internet users owing to the pronunciation or glyph, event backgrounds or topic features.

cyberbullying, the main restriction is that the current perspective on cyberbullying is somewhat reductionist, focusing more on individual-level explanations. Although personality variables and individual psychological conditions have been proven to be relevant, there is a lack of clear explanation of what the cyberbullying content is, what is the relation between language usage and personality, and there are few effective approaches within theories and practices to analyse cyberbullying through its own language features. Moreover, the current machine learning methods potentially help provide better understanding of the detection of offensive language automatically, but there is still a lack of samples in languages other than English.

Moving to the cyberbullying behaviour and relevant research in China, the rise of domestic Chinese social media has provided an excellent opportunity for a detailed exploration of the practice of social media censorship. Using China as a case to analyse cyberbullying content characteristics, factors that affect cyberbullying, and policy patterns on cyberbullying are meaningful. Therefore, to solve the literature's limitations, new framework and variables that can solve the cyberbullying problems in China must be considered.

2.5 Chapter summary

Cyberbullying, as a new type of offensive online language behaviour, has its own characteristics. According to the reviews of traditional bullying and cyberbullying, this chapter has pointed out the three main limitations and challenges on analysing cyberbullying in China: firstly, using traditional bullying elements cannot solve cyberbullying problem; secondly, using traditional bullying theory cannot fully analyse cyberbullying; and thirdly, the databases in English cannot discuss cyberbullying in other languages. Therefore, there are three main branches related to this thesis: the first one is analysing the cyberbullying language features, usages and functions on social media through a preliminary database in the Chinese context; the second one is analysing how contextual and sociolinguistics factors affect cyberbullying; and the third one is analysing social issues caused by cyberbullying, as well as approaches for detecting or preventing cyberbullying based on the general findings. Therefore, a new theoretical framework will be highlighted and established

to ensure that cyberbullying is analysed from individual angles to social angles. In particular, grounded in the discipline of social science, combining the existing powerful research framework with relevant language theories is the most reasonable way to analyse the cyberbullying phenomenon, so that an interdisciplinary study will be conducted. In the following chapters, a socio-ecological theoretical framework which relates to social cognitive theory and relevant language theories will be introduced.

Chapter III Theoretical Framework: A New Socio-ecological Framework for Analysing Cyberbullying

3.1 Introduction

This research seeks to elucidate the cyberbullying language features and functions, the variables affecting cyberbullying, the social problems caused by cyberbullying, and the various approaches to addressing cyberbullying problems. The research approach is considered based on the limitations of using traditional bullying ideas to examine cyberbullying. As stated in Chapter II, the limitations of using traditional bullying variables and theories to analyse cyberbullying lies in the theoretical framework and the methodology. Briefly, the approaches of traditional bullying cannot be used to study cyberbullying, because the traditional bullying theories, as well as the factors, have limitations when they are used in cyberspace. Besides, the lack of database in Chinese for analysing cyberbullying was another problem. Thus, the thesis proposes to utilise a set of socio-ecological theoretical frameworks with an aim to better understand the complexity of cyberbullying as a new form of bullying.

At this point, in order to establish a new theoretical framework to analyse cyberbullying, the existing theoretical frameworks that have been utilised in cyberbullying research are firstly considered (see section 3.2). Considering the strengths and limitations of the previous psychological and sociological research (see section 3.3), this research will combine different theories together to address cyberbullying problems. In this way, this project is an interdisciplinary study. The theoretical framework design is using the socio-ecological theory as a base framework, and then combines it with supplemental theories, including the social cognitive theory, semantics and pragmatics theories, language policy and planning and language management theory, to answer research questions. The main factors, such as the linguistics elements (e.g. word features and functions) and the sociological elements (e.g. genders) are explored in the following sections.

In details, for the context-based cyberbullying analysis, the principles of the semantics and pragmatics theories will be chosen to provide a conceptualised framework to analyse the cyberbullying features, variables affecting cyberbullying and motivations

of cyberbullying (see section 3.4). Meanwhile, language policy and planning and language management theory are drawn on for further research undertakings, such as the social problems caused by cyberbullying and potential managements to address this problem (see section 3.5). To this end, it does not mean single theory approach cannot solve the cyberbullying, but a combined theoretical framework does help to provide a model for simultaneous analysis of cyberbullying on multiple directions. The following sections will provide detailed information about how to establish an efficient theoretical approach to exploring cyberbullying.

3.2 The existing theoretical framework in various fields in studying cyberbullying

Besides the traditional bullying theories, there are some other theoretical frameworks which are shifting or transformation from traditional psychology approach towards behavioural and social contextual analysis. The majority of them originate from conceptual frameworks of the psychological and sociological domains or overlaps with theories from psychological and sociological areas. In comparison with using traditional bullying frameworks to analyse cyberbullying, the psychological or sociological framework on researching cyberbullying have attempted to determine the behaviour directly, such as cyberbullying attitudes and risk perception (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2014). Therefore, this section aims to summarise the key focuses and the limitations and strength of the current frameworks which are grounded in different aspects of cyberbullying. This helps to choose one or two existing theories as a base to establish a combined theoretical framework to understand the cyberbullying phenomenon, particularly in light of the increased concerns about the social problems caused by cyberbullying (see section 3.3 for a more detailed discussion).

3.2.1 Psychological theories

Psychological theories are heavily favoured to investigate the motives for cyberbullying and the consequences for victims (e.g. Tokunaga, 2010; Festl & Quant, 2013; Olweus, 2013). Social identity theory, socio-ecological theory and theory of planned behaviour are widely used in the existing studies due to the fact that bullying and cyberbullying can be explored in a fuller context related to the individual. Briefly,

the two former theories focus on the connections between groups that make up the lives of young people (Tajfel, 1972), while the latter is widely used to analyse different factors' interplay between facets (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Therefore, this subsection will use these three widely used theoretical frameworks as examples to explain how psychological theories relate to the cyberbullying phenomenon.

Social identity theory

Social identity was defined as 'the individual's knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership' (Tajfel, 1972: 292), describing how individuals are motivated to seek a positive social identity within an identified group of peers. Social identity theory is the approach to analysing the connections between the social groups and the identities in groups, discussing the establishment of identities during certain types of behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Killen & Rutland, 2013: 62). Besides the traditional way that individuals use their identity to contact others, in cyberspace individuals can engage in social interactions with peers by establishing their own blogs, personal websites and/or social media accounts to show their identities (McDonald & Kim, 2001; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005). Both traditional bullying and cyberbullying are behaviour patterns between individuals or groups. At this point, social identity theory is a powerful theoretical lens to study bullying behaviour's causes, frequencies and impacts (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008).

Mason (2008) suggested that individual online identity is a new context for social interaction. The main and most important focuses of social identity theory to analyse cyberbullying behaviour are the connections or processes for people to maintain group status, as well as to foster their sense of identity during the process of cyberbullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). The basic principle is that people (including the relations between them) use their sense of self to foster a feeling of identity within or outside of the group by attacking others with different identity through cyberbullying, while they can also take part in other groups with similar motivations, or find others to participate in their groups for cyberbullying (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). This view is also evidenced by Duffy and Nesdale (2009). They

stated that individuals seek similar identities to establish membership within a particular group, and if the group norm is to be abusive and aggressive online, they are more likely to behave in a similar manner to participate in cyberbullying.

A deep relationship between identities and cyberbullying was presented by Hoff and Mitchell (2008: 656-657), classifying cyberbullying behaviour as 'out-group abuse' and 'object abuse' according to the social identity theory principles. This was a typical piece of research that focused on both the participants and the relations between them. Besides, considering CMC anonymous features, individual's identities becomes a key element within a group, resulting in them conforming to the group's norms and behaving in a manner accepted by the group (Reicher, 1982; Mason, 2008). At this point, individuals in one group may have similar interests or goals. Therefore, the social identity theoretical framework has shown that a social identity is an useful element in analysing the empirical data on the causes and consequences of cyberbullying, and would be helpful in understanding the identity of individuals in certain groups for cyberbullying.

Socio-ecological theory

Socio-ecological theory is defined as 'a framework which views youth behaviour as shaped by individual characteristics and a range of nested contextual systems of schools, adults, neighborhoods, and society' (Swearer *et al*., 2010: 42). The reciprocal social-ecological model (see Figure 3.1) is the socio-ecological theory-based framework for clarifying how people situate themselves and behave within the society to which they belong and elucidates the interactions between personal and environmental factors (Swearer & Doll, 2001).

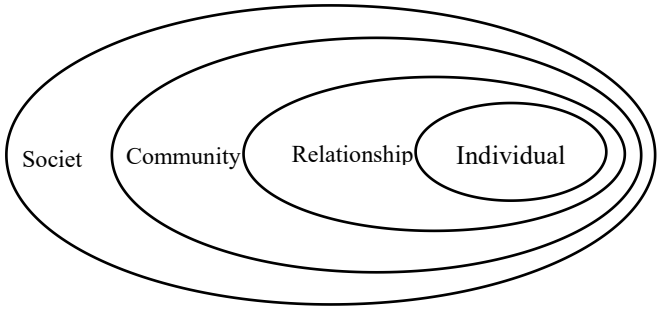


Fig. 3.1 The Social-ecological Model

In this model, the individual is placed at the centre and relationship, community and

society are the overarching features surrounding him or her (Görzig & Machackova, 2015). That means the individual is the source of interaction which influences and reinforces particular attitudes and behaviour (Swearer *et al*., 2010). Beyond this, the relationship (e.g. home, family, school and peer groups), community (e.g. the living environment and the workplace) and society (e.g. the social norms, and the broader societal, cultural, political and economic ideologies) are the systems that indirectly affect the individual's behaviour (Swearer *et al*., 2010). Moreover, these four circles and the relations between them can be identified as a microsystem (referring to individuals and their peers, family, community, and schools), a mesosystem (referring to the interaction between components of the microsystem), a exosystem (referring to the social context), a macrosystem (referring to social, cultural, and political contexts), and a chronosystem (referred to consistency or change) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). No matter what kinds of identity are used, the closer the system is to the individual circle, the more direct the influence is. Therefore, an individual's behaviour is not only affected by the characteristic of the person but also by the relationships they have or the environment in which that person lives (Swearer & Doll, 2001).

Originally, socio-ecological theory was used successfully to research traditional bullying for assessing risks and protective factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Cross *et al*., 2015). Involvement in bullying has been shown to result from a complex interplay between individuals and their wider social environment (Swearer & Espelage, 2010). With the development of ICTs, some researchers (e.g. Espelage & Swearer, 2004; Cowie & Jennifer, 2008; Cross *et al*., 2015; Machackova & Görzig, 2015; Hawkins, 2019) favoured this theory for researching cyberbullying behaviour. In these studies, different levels of the socio-ecological model were used to analyse differentiating cyberbullying risk experiences (i.e., victimisation and perpetration) and response to cyberbullying victimisation (i.e., coping and harm). For example, Swearer and Doll (2001) concluded that the way to intervene in cyberbullying behaviour requires online agencies to cooperate with any recommendations, along with schools and parents. Besides, Swearer and Espelage (2010) stated that the individual, peers, the family, the school, the community and the culture are the factors that relate to the level of cyberbullying. Moreover, Festl and Quandt (2013) use the socio-ecological model to

explain and explore the socio-demographics (the groups and classes) of the schools involved, showing that boys tend to be perpetrators and girls tend to be victims. Furthermore, the social-ecological model is an efficient model to help address the causes of cyberbullying (Cowie & Jennifer, 2008), the risks of cyberbullying (Machackova & Görzig, 2015), as well as assist in the understanding of shaping and changing policies and procedures for preventing cyberbullying (Swearer & Doll, 2001; Cross *et al*., 2015).

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The theory of planned behaviour was originally developed by Ajzen (1991) to predict and explain human behaviour and explain which influences affect individual participants in specific behaviour through social attitudes and personality traits. There are three main determinants of behavioural intention in TPB to determine the intention: attitude[41], subjective norm (SN)[42] and perceived behavioural control (PBC)[43]. The general rule of these three elements is that the more favourable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behaviour pattern, the greater the perceived behavioural control, and the stronger and more direct the function of behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). As Ajzen (1991) stated, behaviour-specific factors in the TPB framework could be designed to predict and explain behaviour in a specific context, such as drinking or smoking. Therefore, Tokunaga (2010) suggested that the theory of planned behaviour offers a theoretical framework to understand the motivation/intention of cyberbullying and to predict cyberbullying.

Considering using TPB with cyberbullying, the three TPB elements need to be introduced separately. Firstly, TPB proposes that individuals would have desirable outcomes with a positive attitude, while negative attitudes result in negative behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This can be regarded as a result of the individual's intention. In the research on traditional bullying, some researchers found that individuals would target someone when they thought it was justified and they deserved it (e.g. Bosworth *et al*., 1999, Pabian & Vandebosch, 2014). As with cyberbullying, Calvete and colleagues

41 The attitude-concept is defined as the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question (Ajzen, 1991: 188).
42 Subjective norm is the perception of what others think of the behaviour and is formed by normative beliefs (Ajzen, 1991: 188).
43 Perceived behavioural control is defined as the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991: 188).

(2010) and Williams and Guerra (2007) found a positive relation between respondents' scores on a 'justification of violence' scale, with high scores reflecting the respondents' tendency to think of aggression as appropriate.

Secondly, the typical relationship that has been found in previous studies between subjective norms and bullying behaviour is that the more an individual thinks that others will react in a negative way, the less motivated the individual will be to carry out the bullying (Ajzen, 1991). This is an obvious finding in both traditional bullying and cyberbullying studies. For example, individuals who enjoy sharing positive attitudes towards bullying are more likely to act as perpetrators themselves (Fleming & Towey, 2002; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Moreover, Williams and Guerra (2007) found that cyberbullying among adolescents was significantly related to normative beliefs held by peers approving of cyberbullying.

Thirdly, according to the theory of planned behaviour, perceived behavioural control, together with behavioural intention, can be used directly to predict behavioural achievement (Ajzen, 1991). That is, in the traditional bullying research, researchers could use the situation or individuals' intentions to predict traditional bullying or find approaches to preventing traditional bullying, but the difficulty of using perceived behavioural control on cyberbullying is the anonymity factor, which 'encourages' individuals to change from traditional bullying to cyberbullying (Kowalski *et al.*, 2008). An additional aspect potentially facilitating cyberbullying in comparison with traditional bullying is the 24/7-availability of digital media. This means that boundaries of time and place no longer exist to prevent potential bullies from reaching their targets (Kowalski & Limber, 2007).

Overall, TPB points out that attitude has a mainly positive influence on cyberbullying, so that intention to engage in cyberbullying is positively related to the participants' attitudes and subjective norms (Pabian & Vandebosch, 2014). As for the application of TPB, examining the three TPB factors on cyberbullying can provide valuable information by which prevention programmes and intervention strategies are appropriate in tackling cyberbullying. The intention of cyberbullying and prediction of cyberbullying perpetration are two key aspects of analysing cyberbullying based on

TPB, which are the advances in analysing cyberbullying beyond sociodemographic characteristics and elements of personality traits.

3.2.2 Sociological theories

Sociology is the study of human social life, which thus includes society, patterns of social relationships, social interaction and the culture of everyday life (Turner, 1981). Cyberbullying, as a special online social problem, is researched from sociological angles. Understanding cyberbullying sociologically means understanding the practices of perpetrators (Bansel *et al*., 2009; Faris & Felmlee, 2014), analysing both overt and covert types of cyberbullying (Faris & Felmlee, 2014), and the cyberbullying consequences to individuals (Søndergaard, 2012: 362). These sociological perspectives of cyberbullying have focused on motivation, power relationships, and the role of cyberbullying in social climbing (Chatzitheochari *et al*., 2016: 4).

There are some theories and explanations of cyberbullying which are closely connected with the sociological theoretical framework (Bansel *et al*., 2009; Søndergaard, 2012; Pascoe, 2013), for example, social cognitive theory (SCT, Bandura, 1986), routine activities theory (RAT, Cohen & Felson, 1979) and general strain theory (GST, Agnew, 1992). In order to gain a better understanding of using sociological perspectives for studying cyberbullying, this subsection is to offer an overall introduction to the main sociological frameworks/models for studying cyberbullying.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Social cognitive theory (SCT) offers a theoretical explanation of the sociology, health, education and media fields to understand human behaviour, including development, adaptation, and change (Bandura, 1986; Orpinas & Horne, 2006). Originally, SCT was similar to Social Learning Theory[44], but with the development of the subject's needs, SCT has become an updated and expanded version of social learning theory, and now is an independent and important theory, focusing on self-reactive influences, self-regulation, and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

44 Social learning theory proposed that individuals learn not only through direct instruction but also by observing others' behaviours and the consequences that follow. For learning to occur, individuals must (a) attend to the observed behaviour, (b) encode images of the observed behaviour, (c) reproduce those images, and (d) be motivated to perform the behaviour (Bandura, 1977).

Within social cognitive theory, behaviour is an observable act which may be affected by both personal factors and environmental factors (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). In addition the performance of behaviour is determined, in large part, by the expected outcomes of behaviour (Chen *et al*., 2017). As for the personal factors in SCT, it could include personality traits, belief, skill level, available effort, and experiences (Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014), while parents, peers, and other persons who are important or provide feedback/values to an individual are referred to as environmental factors (Xiao & Wong, 2013). The environmental factor can be regarded as social influence, which is similar with the concept of social norm that makes people think that he/she should or should not perform certain behaviour (Xiao & Wong, 2013). That is, personal factors affect individual behaviour directly, and the environmental factors affect it indirectly (Bandura, 2002).

Social cognitive theory has been applied to explain aggressive behaviour for a long time (Bandura, *et al*., 1961; Bandura, 1978), including being applied to traditional bullying to understand how individuals learn to bully, to explain the complexity and social nature of traditional bullying (Mouttapa *et al*., 2004; Hymel *et al*., 2005), as well as to discuss cyberbullying with personal and environmental factors (Xiao & Wong, 2013). Typically, both traditional bullying and cyberbullying have been heralded as a social relationship problem, and the characters of participants and the social environment surrounding them may affect their behaviour in choosing to take part or not. Therefore, using social cognitive theory factors can examine cyberbullying from multiple angles, considering factors relating to human cognition and the online environments in which it occurs. For example, Baldry (2003) and Bowes *et al*. (2009) state that people who are exposed to domestic violence in their homes are significantly more likely to bully others than those who are not exposed to domestic violence, and Mouttapa *et al*. (2004) point out that adolescents who socialise with aggressive peers are more likely to perpetrate acts of aggression.

Besides, the most important implication of SCT is the help in guiding the development of an individualized intervention for bullying or cyberbullying perpetrators. In social cognitive theory, human behaviour is heavily motivated and regulated by the ongoing exercise of self-influence (Mouttapa *et al*., 2004). That is,

self-regulation is the key approach for describing how individuals monitor their own behaviour (self-monitoring), judging it in relation to personal and social standards (judgmental process), and applying self-reactive incentives to moderate their behaviour (self-reaction) (Bandura, 1991). At the same time, self-efficacy plays a central role in the exercise of self-regulation by its strong impact on thought, affect, motivation, and action (Bandura, 1991). When applying social cognitive theory on cyberbullying behaviour as a powerful model to prevent it, the principles of SCT are that they find that this behaviour is unacceptable, and then motivate themselves and guide their actions in an anticipatory proactive way (Bandura, 1991: 248). Therefore, observing one's pattern of behaviour is the first step to self-regulation. Combining self-efficacy and self-regulation mechanism makes it possible to provide implications for cyberbullying prevention practices (see section 3.6 for a more detailed discussion).

Routine Activities Theory (RAT)

The routine activities theory was first proposed by Cohen and Felson (1979) to explain crime rates, but soon after the focus moved to explain victimization risks among individuals (Cohen *et al*., 1981). The central tenets of the routine activity theory was that opportunities for victimization arise when motivated offenders encounter suitable targets in environments lacking capable guardians (Cohen *et al*., 1981), stating that a motivated offender, a suitable target, and lack of a capable guardian were the three key factors for crime (Cohen & Felson, 1979). If any of the components missed, the crime is less likely to occur (Pino & Johnson-Johns, 2009).

In recent years, the routine activities theory has become one of the most powerful criminological theories in the field of cybercrime (e.g. Wilson & Backhouse 2006; Choi, 2008; Spano & Freilich, 2009; McNeeley, 2015; Choi *et al*., 2019), with some particular success with online victimization (e.g. Holt & Bossler, 2013; Navarro & Jasinski, 2013; Reyns, 2013; Reyns & Henson, 2015), in predicting the likelihood of cyberbullying (e.g. Marcum, 2008; Mesch, 2009) and evaluating cyberbullying risks (e.g. Navarro & Jasinski, 2013). When using the routine activities theory to analyse cyberbullying, the key angle is explaining cyberbullying within the cybervictimology (Arntfield, 2015). With respect to proposing cybervictimology as an extension of the

routine activities theory, the routine activities of victims in social media environments are key facilitators in the cyberbullying process (Arntfield, 2015).

Regarding the successful practice of using RAT for cyberbullying analyses, for example, Marcum (2008) and Mesch (2009) used the routine activities theory to predict cyberbullying incidences. Marcum (2008) found RAT useful in predicting 15.4% to 30% of the variation in cyberbullying among college students, while Mesch (2009) used a nationally representative sample to claim that RAT was useful in the analysis of cyberbullying experiences among adolescents. Moreover, Holt and Bossler (2013) clarified the relationship between the theory and online victimization, suggesting that a new direction in the utilization of RAT was to focus on specific cybercrimes. Thus, according to the specific cyberbullying examples analysed through RAT, it can be found that RAT is more applicable as a theoretical perspective when researchers were not analyzing cyberbullying from a general perspective, but with cybervictimology angles. That is, RAT can be successfully applied to cyberbullying, when researchers used RAT to discuss cyberbullying behaviour, evaluating the applicability of RAT and considering incorporating other perspectives such as context are important steps to reach a more comprehensive finding.

General Strain Theory (GST)

General Strain Theory (GST) is a theory originally put forward by Robert King Merton (1938), and developed by Robert Agnew (1992). This theory states that individuals who experience negative emotions, or are under strain or stress, are more at risk of engaging in criminal or deviant behaviour as a coping strategy, and also for them crime may be a way to reduce strain (Agnew, 2010). Agnew (1992) supported this assumption and described four conditions of strain: 1) strain is perceived as unjust; 2) strain is perceived as high in magnitude; 3) strain is associated with low social controls; and 4) strain is imposed as a result of others. In addition, Agnew (2001) provided more precise direction on this issue by identifying specific forms of strain. He proposes that there are gender differences in responses to strain, and stressful social dynamics would increase one's feeling of negative emotions, which in turn may increase the likelihood of bullying, especially under particular circumstances.

Therefore, based on general strain theory, much research has examined cyberbullying as a source of stress, stating that engagement in cyberbullying is the results of physical, emotional, or psychological strain (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Hay *et al*., 2010; Moon *et al*., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2011; Jang *et al*., 2014). For example, Hay *et al.* (2010) collected data from 400 young students to examine the criminogenic effects of cyberbullying on criminal and non-criminal behaviour, showing that although there was no clear reason to explain why young people engage in cyberbullying, cyberbullying as a source of strain could lead to other forms of victimisation. Moreover, Patchin and Hinduja (2011) used GST to analyse participation in cyberbullying through strain-based factors (e.g. receiving bad grades, being treated unfairly by someone, financial issues, victimization, moving to a new school, and relationship issues). They hypothesised that young people may engage in cyberbullying activities as a response to strain in their lives. Furthermore, Gottfredson (2008) and Lianos and McGrath (2017) used GST to prove a correlation between low self-control and engagement in cyberbullying. This states that low self-control determines whether an individual would commit a wide range of antisocial activities during their lifetime, including, but not limited to, acts of force or fraud as well as excessive alcohol consumption, bullying, truancy, dangerous driving, and promiscuous sexual behaviour.

Overall, the approach using general strain theory as a framework to explain cyberbullying analyses the engagement in cyberbullying based on the strain-based factors (Agnew, 1992, 2011). A considerable body of research has supported general strain theory as a powerful framework to analyse criminal offences (e.g. Nagin & Paternoster, 1993; Pratt & Cullen, 2000; Cauffman *et al*., 2005). According to GST, individuals who suffer from strain were more likely to engage in bullying behaviour (Jang *et al*., 2014). Moreover, the widely agreed finding from the use of general strain theory to analyse cyberbullying is that negative emotions such as anger, revenge or stress may easily affect individuals participating in cyberbullying (e.g. Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008, 2013; Wang *et al*., 2009).

3.2.3 Advantages and limitations of the current psychological and sociological theoretical frameworks for analysing cyberbullying

The previous two subsections have summarised the main psychological and sociological theoretical frameworks to study cyberbullying. The general feature is that either psychological or sociological theories have their own main focuses of one or several aspects for analysing cyberbullying, such as the individuals' relations, environmental effects and the negative consequences of cyberbullying. Given the increasing uses and new features of technology, most of the current theoretical frameworks have expanded or changed the approaches in order to adopt suitable perspectives to understand cyberbullying. Briefly, according to these frameworks, cyberbullying behaviour is seen as a social interaction behaviour that can be influenced by personal, cyber community and social factors, and at the same time, cyberbullying will also influence social relations and norms. However, all these frameworks have both advantages and limitations when they are used to analyse cyberbullying separately, although some of the limitations do not have a significant impact on the results.

Understanding Cyberbullying

Bullying or cyberbullying can be considered as an ecological phenomenon that has emerged from individual, social, physical, institutional, and community contexts (Swearer & Doll, 2001: 9). Therefore, the socio-ecological theory, which is a psychological theory, provides a powerful model to analyse the interaction between individuals' behaviour, which is often reflected in a corresponding relation of factors across all levels of the socio-ecological system. This allows for an understanding of risky opportunities, for coping with and resilience to cyberbullying through the interaction of different levels or factors based on the social-ecological model, but anonymity is still a problem faced by the socio-ecological theory. Meanwhile, social identity theory is a useful framework that allows for using peoples' identities to analyse the connections between social groups and identities during the process of bullying or cyberbullying, explaining why aggressive group behaviour can easily affect an individual who are participating in cyberbullying.

Furthermore, sociological theories are also helpful to understand cyberbullying. In comparison with psychology, sociological theories focus more on a specific point to study cyberbullying. For example, the social cognitive theory mainly focuses on using personal and environmental factors to understand human behaviour. This angle helps to analyse cyberbullying from new perspectives and provides possibilities for prevention. Both the routine activities theory and the general strain theory analyse cyberbullying within criminogenic aspects, explaining the motivation for cyberbullying and what kind of people are more likely to become cyberbullying targets.

However, we cannot ignore these theories' limitations while using them to explain the nature or other aspects of cyberbullying. For example, social identity theory can be used to analyse identify, but in cyberspace, the 'identity' is not only the status of an individual in a group, but also the similar views or interests of other members. Because of online privacy and anonymity, it is difficult to establish individuals' precise identities to show that individuals or groups with similar identities/views have similar language behaviour during the process of cyberbullying. Meanwhile, it is challenging for the social-ecological model to measure the individual level factors[45], the social level factors[46], as well as the cultural level factors[47] in the original socio-ecological system in cyberspace. Furthermore, the theoretical limitations are not only faced by psychological theories, but also by the theoretical sociological frameworks. Sociological theories are used to explain the reasons of certain behaviour, but unlike smoking, eating healthily or losing weight, the participants in cyberbullying always have their own reasons, motivations, behaviour, understandings and reactions (see Chapter V for a more detailed discussion). It is challenging to use one typical model to analyse the motivations in different forms of cyberbullying. Specifically, the targets' understanding of cyberbullying depends on their tolerance of cyberbullying. It is also difficult to identify a relatively consistent conclusion from

45 The individual level factors incorporate all variables that are directly associated with the youth. They consisted of demographic variables such as age and gender as well as psychological factors which included self-efficacy, sensation seeking, ostracism, and psychological difficulties (Görzig & Machackova, 2015).
46 The social level factors involve variables relevant to young people's social background and social relationships (Görzig & Machackova, 2015).
47 The cultural level comprises abstract influences such as economic, social, educational, legal or political systems which can elicit indirect influences upon individuals, as well as other levels of the ecological system that they are part of (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Görzig & Machackova, 2015).

different samples with various backgrounds. Therefore, if findings are going to be applied to an intervention designed to decrease cyberbullying, the exact type of objective individual behaviour is crucial.

Preventing Cyberbullying

As introduced previously, psychological theories and sociological theories provide perspectives to explain cyberbullying, and have moved attention from understanding cyberbullying to preventing it. For instance, the theory of planned behaviour uses attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control to analyse the motivations towards and prevention of a specific type of behaviour. The outcomes have focused not only on the central concepts, but also on the prediction and understanding of particular behaviour in specified contexts. However, although there is plenty of evidence for significant relations between behavioural beliefs and attitudes toward the behaviour; between normative beliefs and subjective norms; and between control beliefs and perceptions of behavioural control in cyberbullying research, there are still some issues that cannot be resolved. The existing studies do not provide information about the beliefs underlying the attitude (Why are attitudes positive or negative?), subjective norms (Which reference groups ultimately generate a positive or negative influence?) and perceived behavioural control (What makes cyberbullying easy or difficult to prevent?). This challenge is also related to the difficulty of establishing the exact factors in the virtual environment.

To sum up, the advantages of using the current psychological or sociological theories to analyse cyberbullying are regarding cyberbullying as different behaviour from traditional bullying, which focuses on a specific but objective point to explain this phenomenon. However, a crucial missing piece in these current frameworks is the factor to discuss the connection between the individual's features and their language use during the cyberbullying process. Instead, researchers have focused primarily on identifying subjective factors (e.g. personal and environmental factors) for cyberbullying without such a theoretical framework to guide objective analysis or to interpret results in a general way.

While the socio-ecological theory may have its uses in gaining an understanding of

different aspects of cyberbullying, the limitations of the social-ecological model may be remedied through new elements. The main reason for these limitations is that theories of disinhibition in computer-mediated communication are often quite complex. In this way, considering the advantages, limitations and the successful practices of using both psychological and sociological frameworks for analysing cyberbullying, I will employ a combined theoretical framework, combining social-ecological model with social cognitive theory, language-relevant theories and language management theories, for researching cyberbullying in this thesis. This is a useful way to reduce the limitations to realistically address cyberbullying problems.

3.3 Theoretical framework design: Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches

In the light of the supports presented and the limitations outlined previously, as well as owing to the different effects on online language behaviour (language usages) through various variables (Back *et al*., 2010), it is important not to employ only one relevant theory or model, because restricting the search for a determinant to one theory may cause other relevant factors to be ignored. Therefore, this research suggests considering the complex interplay between individual behaviour, context features (including social media) and society across different levels of the socio-ecological system to analyse cyberbullying, including intervention or prevention efforts. The new theoretical framework - *Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches* - will integrate the socio-ecological theory as the base, it then combines social cognitive theory with semantics, pragmatics and language management theories to address cyberbullying problems.

There are two considerations of using the above theories to establish a new theoretical framework: 1) both the socio-ecological theory and the social cognitive theory are widely used as an umbrella under which many of the other theories fit; and 2) the supplementary theories have similar measurements but different focuses on the relations of language behaviour between individuals and society. Briefly, drawing from the socio-ecological theory, it is a powerful framework to analyse individuals'

behaviour at different layers. Therefore, the new socio-ecological theoretical framework will not only follow these three layers, but also add new variables to each layer to overcome the limitations on cyberbullying analysis. It is worth mentioning that the selection of each variable has corresponding theoretical support.

In details, at the microsystem level, individuals' language usages can reflect their behavioural motivations. That is, the analysis of the cyberbullying language meanings and functions can be regarded as one of the individual features to discuss the motivations for the cyberbullying behaviour. At this point, semantics and pragmatics become more relevant as they focus on the word meanings, features and functions, which are the powerful supplements to the socio-ecological theory.

Secondly, at the mesosystem level, the socio-ecological theory focuses on the relations between individuals and the influences of these relations on individuals' behaviour. In cyberspace, the virtual relationship becomes a key point to elucidate the social interactions and relations between individuals. The composition of a virtual relationship includes participants, communication environments and context situations. That is, based on the social cognitive theory, the new elements/variables or data (e.g. contextual variables and sociolinguistics variables) are added into the socio-ecological model to discuss how do the social interactions or the virtual environment affect the cyberbullying behaviour.

Thirdly, at the macrosystem level, the socio-ecological theory contributes to the cultural and social aspects. However, most of the existing studies are at the single direction, showing merely how the cultural or social factors affect the individuals' behaviour. Consequently, the important contribution of the social cognitive theory is providing another angle to examine cyberbullying from multiple levels, considering how do the social media features and social norms relate to cyberbullying, social problems and cyberbullying interventions. Moreover, the related-language management theories are providing possibilities to discuss the implications of revealing the main predictors to prevent or reduce cyberbullying. At this point, the socio-ecological theory findings will show a two-way picture, and the implement aspects can be expanded into other language problems.

To this end, the new socio-ecological theoretical framework focusing on cyberbullying language features, the relations between cyberbullying and various variables, and the connections between language behaviour and society can be fully discussed. Overall, the following sections will introduce each supplemental theory of the theoretical framework of this study in details.

3.4 Semantics and pragmatics: Word meaning and word function in context

As stated in the Literature Review chapter, one notable feature is that cyberbullying involves different offensive or mildly offensive words to express varied meanings between individuals or within groups (Kempe & Brooks, 2016). To the extent that this is the case, the significant point that the Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches will solve is the language features and functions of the cyberbullying. As such, the more relevant and powerful language-related theories are the semantics and pragmatics theories, which will be identified as one of the theoretical approaches based on the socio-ecological theory (Thomas, 2014). There are many different principles of semantics and pragmatics theories, focusing on various aspects of language, including word meanings and relations between word meanings (Thomas, 2014; Mey, 1993). The main focuses of this research are word meaning and word function principles.

3.4.1 Principles of semantics: Word connotative and denotative meanings

The term semantics is often defined as the study of word meaning or the relationship between linguistic form and meaning (Jaszczolt & Jaszczolt, 2002; Mey, 2010; Thomas, 2014). Word senses are the important distinction for semantics (Goddard, 2011). In daily communication, a word may have different senses in different contexts, while two expressions which have word senses may have the same or similar meanings. It is difficult to distinguish the word forms and lexemes without context. At this point, the word's denotative and connotative meaning are the key principles of semantics when we analyse word meanings or senses (Cruse, 2011).

Denotative meaning is the mental representation which includes the objects,

characteristics, or events that a word refers to. At this point, the word meaning is the information given in the dictionary (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). In contrast, connotative meaning is the affective or emotional representation commonly associated with the denotative meaning (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). The differences between connotative and denotative meanings are easy to recognise, and these two aspects are always put together to analyse a word or a phrase. When we hear or use a word or a phrase in our daily life, the denotative meanings will be first recognised, and then the connotative meanings that are associated with it.

Word connotative and denotative meanings approaches have been successfully used to analyse swear words in English. To be specific, the connotative use of swear words is offensive (Allan & Burridge, 2006), while the literal meaning may sometimes not be offensive (Gao, 2013). As for most of the swear words, their expressions are typically interpreted in the connotative sense (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). Besides, word connotative and denotative meanings approaches are also used to analyse the changes or expansions of the word meanings over time. Morrison (1993) stated that the developments of society, and social interactions between groups, changes and expands the meanings of words. For example, profanity and blasphemy are the words that originated from the church and were used against God (Mercury, 1995; Mohr, 2013). However, in recent years, these words have been widely used to show a wish for misfortune to others (Pinker, 2007). Therefore, the word denotative and connotative meaning principles, focusing on the word meaning changes within different aspects, provide theoretical supports to analyse words in different contexts.

3.4.2 Pragmatics principles: Word usages, effects and functions

Besides the semantics-related denotative and connotative meanings approaches, words always have different usages, effects and functions in various contexts or situations. The pragmatics theory is essential for mainly working on the variables that affect word meanings and usages (Mey, 2010). The variables include the context (topics and social-physical environments), and social and cultural factors (the relations between speakers and listeners and the cultural differences) (Cruse, 2011). Based on pragmatics theory, these factors provide approaches to answering the

questions of why speakers choose or use certain sets of words for expression, what kind of word, phrase or sentence functions are used in certain contexts, and how the same word provides different meaning in different communication contexts. At this point, word appropriateness is the result of variables that affect the words in a particular context.

As for single words, the meanings and usages are different because of different backgrounds (Thomas, 2014). For example, the swear word 'motherfucker' is a strongly offensive slang invented by African-Americans, which then spread to the UK, but it is rarely used in the meaning of one who engages in sexual activity with another person's mother (Jay, 1992: 162). However, this word in Chinese has its Chinese forms and seems widely used for sexual activities. When this word came into China, a new word '肏你妈' (*cào nǐ mā*, refers to fuck your mother) was formed. This was the result of a verbatim translation that fitted the Chinese expression. Meanwhile, the literal sense of 'motherfucker' was translated into '混蛋' (*hún dàn*) in Chinese, as well as the slang 'fuck you' was shown as '操' (*cāo*) or '肏' (*cào*) in Chinese. All these words' senses become more complex than the English words, and the functions can be both negative and positive. That is, as for the word in context, the same word may have different meanings and functions depending on the cultural backgrounds, communication context and the situation of speaking. At this point, pragmatics theory provides references to word usage and effects. For example, the usages of swearing refers to the taboo words that are offensive or impolite and are used to express or evoke strong emotions (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990).

3.4.3 The strengths and limitations of using semantics and pragmatics principles with the problem of cyberbullying

Semantics is the study of the word meaning and the relationship between words, while pragmatics is concerned with the use of language in social contexts and the ways people produce and comprehend meanings through language (Mey, 2010). That is, the way to understand a word, phrase or utterance is not as a separate entity. It has to do with the context in which it is being used and a scrutiny of the intention of the language user behind the words (Mey, 2012). With regard to the key focuses of this

research, the word meaning principle in semantics, as well as the context effects, functions and interaction principles in pragmatics are chosen to analyse cyberbullying language meanings, features, functions and effects in the Chinese context.

The advantage of using semantics and pragmatics principles to solve cyberbullying problems is that they both have provided powerful and successful principles to analyse swear words in English. Although there are some differences between swear words in English and cyberbullying words in Chinese, the framework can be used as a reference, combined with the features of the Chinese context, to solve cyberbullying problems in that context. There are three aspects of the semantics and pragmatics theory principles which will be considered.

Firstly, the analysis of the cyberbullying words' denotative and connotative meanings. Similar to swear words, cyberbullying expressions are typically interpreted in the connotative sense, especially cyberbullying words in Chinese where the narrow focus of semantics on swearing can provide references to study cyberbullying. For example, some of the words with cyberbullying functions are ordinary words that can be used in daily communication or are not offensive in most contexts (see Chapter V for a detailed discussion). This demonstrates that cyberbullying words' connotative meanings are dominant over denotative meanings, and these two aspects of meaning can be easily separated. Besides, the outcomes of studying swear words based on the semantic approach also provide references for the classification of cyberbullying words. As Olweus (1994) stated, strong or negative offensive words to others can be regarded as offensive actions because the purposes of using swearing words are inflicting injury or discomfort on others. In this sense, although it seems likely that many words used in cyberbullying behaviour are not only offensive words but also mildly negative or ordinary words used for a cathartic effect, the classification of cyberbullying words based on the words' connotative and denotative meanings is a more feasible way to identify all the selected words.

Secondly, word meaning changes or expansions for cyberbullying purposes. There are many words that are used in a certain situation to show offensive meanings with typical backgrounds, as well as some words that change their meanings to show

offensive functions directly. At this point, the word's connotation and denotation affects the expressions. For example, if the meaning of a message containing an emotional word is interpreted connotatively, the message usually expresses negative emotions. Interpreted denotatively, the cyberbullying word should not express such a strong negative emotion toward the referent (Wilson & Sperber, 2012). This difference depends on the semantic interpretation (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). At this point, the word's connotative and denotative meanings' principles would provide a fundamental and clear direction to analyse cyberbullying words. At the same time, understanding the cyberbullying or other offensive word's semantic usages can make a clear distinction between words and enhance the appreciation of the semantic.

Thirdly, according to the pragmatics principles, for the word used in context, the same word may have different functions depending on the communication context or the situation of the word used. At this point, pragmatics is a powerful theory that can be used to determine whether the word usage is for cyberbullying or not, to analyse the likelihood of how variables affect word usages, or how words' usages relate to different groups, and to describe how these words' changes vary from context to context. Although there is no exact focus on how contextual variables affect cyberbullying directly, plenty of related research on swearing and taboo words may provide a reference to the further analysis of cyberbullying behaviour.

Table 3.1 presents the principles of how contextual factors influence swear and taboo words in different aspects. It shows that both the relations between words and the conversation situations will affect swear and taboo words' connotation and denotation, and sometimes the context may lead to different offensiveness ratings. Extending this premise, different functions and categories of swear and taboo words can also be identified based on different words' connotation and denotation and the purposes of swearing. Meanwhile, the description and analysis of the swearing category will provide a clear understanding of how they are used. Considering the analyses of cyberbullying, there are 2,000 selected words from different samples that were used to analyse cyberbullying in the Chinese context (see Chapter IV for an explanation of database establishments). When the word functions in different contexts are analysed, the contextual factors can take the variables that were used to discuss swear and taboo

words as a reference to analyse cyberbullying. Besides the contextual variables, sociolinguistic variables (e.g. gender, age, and status) and features of China's social media are considered when analysing cyberbullying (Murphy, 2009, 2012) (see Chapter VI for a detailed discussion).

However, both semantics and pragmatics theories focus on single word meanings or functions. Both theories have limits for analysing the social interactions among language usages and the motivations of why these words are used. At the same time, semantics and pragmatics theories can analyse various aspects of the words, but they cannot describe the problems caused by abusing offensive words, and it is challenging to find an approach to solving these problems. However, cyberbullying is not a separate language problem, but a social problem that may have some consequences beyond language. Therefore, the combination with social cognitive theory and language management theory can decrease the limits and solve the implementation problems.

Table 3.1 Contextual Factors that Influence Swear and Taboo Words in Different Aspects

Author/Year	Focuses	Principles	Results
Ross, 1969	Annoyance swearing; Social swearing.	Annoyance swearing is associated with greater transgression where the swearer is stressed; Social swearing is associated with social context, where the swearer is relaxed.	It helps to promote social bonding and enable the formation of coalitions.
Rieber *et al*., 1979: 221	Swearing words - Obscenities	The rating of swearing words are related to both of the connotation and denotation.	Obscenities used denotatively can be considered far more harsh and offensive than those used connotatively.
Spinney, 2007	The process of swearing	Contextual variables (communication context) are critical for predicting how swearing will occur.	While swearing crosses socioeconomic statuses and age ranges and persists across the lifespan, it is more common among adolescents and more frequent among men.
Jay & Janschewitz, 2008	The usage of swearing words.	Contextual factors clarified the intention of swearword usage, and might have attenuated its offensiveness	Reactions to offensive words were explained in terms of an "offensiveness threshold" based on the individual's sensitivity to profane language.
Jay, 2009	Inequalities between taboo words	Words' connotation and denotation.	*Fuck you!* has a strong emotional loading, but might have different emphases in conversational and hostile contexts; Denotative ratings of swearing and taboo words are affected by the context of their use.
Related works: Ljung, 1983; van Lancker & Cummings, 1999; Karjalainen, 2002; Schapiro, 2002; Leech, 2003; Bell & Reverby, 2005; Allan & Burridge, 2006; Allan, 2007; Stokoe & Edwards, 2007; Beers-Fägersten, 2007, 2012; Barbieri, 2008			

3.5 Language policy and planning and language management theory: Definitions and principal approaches

Besides analysing the cyberbullying language features and functions according to the semantics and pragmatics principles, analysing the social problems caused by cyberbullying behaviour based on socio-ecological theory and social cognitive theory are also important. Besides, the consideration of using language management theories to consider the approaches for detecting or regulating cyberbullying are another key points of this research. In order to answer the sub-research question three, language policy and planning and language management theory will be described, including definitions, principal approaches and how they can be employed to address cyberbullying.

3.5.1 Definitions of language policy and planning (LPP) and language management theory (LMT)

Definitions of LPP

Language policy and planning (hereafter LPP) became an important field during World War II, but it is a relatively new discipline in academia (Richard & Baldauf, 2012; Garcia, 2015). There are two closely related but different theoretical perspectives of LPP. The first view regards LPP as the promotion of linguistic change carried out by the state or government (Haugen, 1959, 1966; Fishman *et al*., 1968; Fishman, 1971; Cooper, 1989; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997); the second view is from post-structuralist and critical researchers, pointing out that there are beliefs, practices, and regulations that impact the ways in which people use language (Ricento, 2006; Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004, 2012). In this research, language policy recognises the multiple forces that influences behaviour toward language, and both language changes instigated by the state or government, and beliefs or attitudes toward language developed and used in society are considered. The first part of this section examines and synthesises definitions already in circulation (see Table 3.2) and then looks at types of language policy and planning to see how these definitions hold up.

Table 3.2 Definitions of Language Policy and Planning Used in Research

Author (Year)	Definition of LPP
Tollefson (1991)	[L]anguage planning-policy means the institutionalisation of language as a basis for distinctions among social groups (classes). That is, language policy is one mechanism for locating language within the social structure so that language determines who has access to political power and economic resources. Language policy is one mechanism by which dominant groups establish hegemony in language use (p.16).
Kaplan & Baldauf (1997)	The exercise of language planning leads to or is directed by, the promulgation of a language policy by the government (or other authoritative body or person). Language policy is a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system (p. xi).
Schiffman (1996)	[L]anguage policy is primarily a social construct. It may consist of various elements of an explicit nature - juridical, judicial, administrative, constitutional and/or legal language may be extant in some jurisdictions, but whether or not a polity has such explicit text, policy as a cultural construct rests primarily on other conceptual elements - belief systems, attitudes, myths - the whole complex that we are referring to as linguistic culture, which is the sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, religious strictures, and all the other cultural 'baggage' that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their background (p. 276).
Spolsky (2004)	A useful first step is to distinguish between the three components of the language policy of a speech community: (1) language practices - the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire, that is, what people actually do; (2) language beliefs or ideology - the beliefs about language and language use, that is, what people think should be done; and (3) language management - also known as language planning, language intervention, language engineering, or language treatment, and referring to any specific efforts to modify or influence language practice beyond just government (p. 5).
McCarty (2011)	I have characterised language policy as a complex sociocultural process [and as] modes of human interaction, negotiation, and production mediated by relations of power. The 'policy' in these processes resides in their language-regulating power; that is, how they express normative claims about legitimate and illegitimate language forms and uses, thereby governing language statuses and uses (p. 8).

Among these five main definitions of LPP, language policy and planning is a general

term used in the literature (Johnson, 2013). The word 'policy' infers that it is government behaviour or law or some regulation that comes from those in power, and LPP is a conclusion which draws on the causal relationship among language, policies, and the cultural construct (Schiffman, 1996). The difference in these definitions depends on the discrepancies between the focuses, processes, authoritative bodies, linguistic cultures, affects, language beliefs, attitudes and ideologies within a speech community (Schiffman, 1996: 5). Based on the review of definitions, and types of LPP from different researchers, the definition of language policy and planning which is best suited to this research is: Language policy and planning is a policy mechanism that influences the function, structure, or acquisition of languages or language variety within a speech community. It is often associated with government planning (i.e., official regulations) but is also used by a range of non-governmental organisations and individuals (i.e., unofficial regulations). In this way, government planning which intends to influence economic, political and educational opportunity, and unofficial regulations, are connected to language beliefs and practices that have regulating power over language use and interaction within communities, workplaces and schools. In addition to these, LPP can also be regarded as processes that are driven by a diversity of language policy agents across multiple layers of policy creation and interpretation.

Definitions of LMT

As previously stated, language policy and planning is a policy mechanism that influences behaviour toward languages. The main goal of LPP is problem-solving, particularly in specific social, economic and political contexts (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005; Nekvapil, 2006). There are four basic approaches that scholars have found to achieve this goal, these are: *classical* (e.g. Haugen, 1983; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), *language management* (e.g. Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987; Nekvapil, 2011), *domain* (e.g. Fishman, 1974; Spolsky, 2009) and *critical* approaches (e.g. Tollefson, 2006; Phillipson, 2012). Based on these, the *language management approach* is one method of LPP, which focuses on solving language problems.

Language Management Theory (hereafter LMT) (Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987;

Nekvapil, 2006; Nekvapil & Nekula, 2006) originated alongside LPP to solve language problems (Schiffman, 1996; Cooper, 1989; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). From the 1960s to the 1970s, Neustupný (1974) found that problem-solving recommendations could not be made without commitment to value judgements, because different social groups assessed different criteria for establishing language policies (Neustupný, 1968). It can be concluded that LPP is the link between language problems and various kinds of decision-making, and that the language problem-solving is in the interests of different groups, particularly at the state level (Nekvapil, 2006). Neustupný (1994) suggested that:

> Any act of language planning should start with the consideration of language problems as they appear in discourse, and the planning process should not be considered complete until the removal of the issues is implemented in discourse.

Following Neustupný, there are some changes in linguistic research, slowly moving towards a better understanding not only of how people use language but also how people interact with it. The processes of interaction can be called *language management* and were first introduced into sociolinguistic literature by Jernudd and Neutupný in 1987. Therefore, as suggested by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997: 207-209) and Nekvapil and Nekula (2006), LMT differs from LPP not only in name but because it is a different framework based on different theoretical approaches and arguments. Jernudd (1993) also claimed that language management was a way to seek to explain how language problems arise in the course of people's use of language. To sum up, the definitions of LMT move from 'socioeconomic management' to 'communicative management' to 'linguistic management'. In recent decades, researchers have defined LMT as an approach within LPP, which is essentially linguistic, or more precisely a sociolinguistic theory to illustrate an important aspect of language use and language management.

3.5.2 Principle approaches of language policy and planning (LPP) and language management theory (LMT)

There are various main approaches (see Table 3.3) of LPP (Johnson, 2013), but considering the research aims and research questions, ***top-down*** and ***bottom-up***

approaches are used in this research. The terms *top-down* and *bottom-up* are relative, depending on who is responsible for creating the policies. According to Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) definition of LPP, language policy is part of the whole process of language planning, and portrays language policy as a set of laws or regulations or rules enacted not only by the government, but also by other organisations. That is, if macro-level policies are developed by some governing or authoritative body or person, they are top-down policies, and if policies are generated at micro-level or grassroots for and by the community that it impacts, they are bottom-up policies. Sometimes, a policy can be both top-down and bottom-up (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Sutton & Levinson, 2001; Hornberger, 2006).

Table 3.3 Principal Approaches of Language Policy and Planning based on Contents

Principle Approaches	Terms	
Genesis	***Top-down*** Macro-level policy developed by some governing or authoritative body or person	***Bottom-up*** Micro-level or grassroots generated policy for and by the community that it impacts
Means and goals	***Overt*** Overtly expressed in written or spoken policy texts	***Covert*** Intentionally concealed at the macro-level (collusive) or at the micro-level (subversive)
Documentation	***Explicit*** Officially documented in written or spoken policy texts	***Implicit*** Occurring without or in spite of official policy texts
In law and in practice	***De jure*** A policy 'in law'; officially documented in writing	***De facto*** A policy 'in practice'; refers to both locally produced policies that arise without or in spite of *de jure* policies and local language practices that differ from *de jure* policies; *de facto* practices can reflect (or not) *de facto* policies

As for language management theory, the word 'management' focuses on language problems and communication, emphasising the connections between simple language management and organised language management, aiming to incorporate a wide range of language systems, as well as language use, in addition to the traditional narrow

sense (Nekvapil, 2006). Although simple language management occurs in individual interactions and organised language management is performed by more substantial bodies, both simple and organised language management approaches link closely with power (Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987; Nekvapil, 2006).

Simple language management focuses on issues of everyday interpersonal communication and behaviour towards language (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015). There are several phases for simple language management processes: these include notes, evaluations, identifying inadequacies, adjusting the design, and implementation (Nekvapil, 2016). However, language problems and communication gaps are not only found in everyday interactions but also occur in various social networks or state organisations. In such cases, it is the institutions or organisations of varying degrees of complexity that focus on language-related matters, which is called organised language management.

Organised language management involves attempts to solve emerging language problems by a large number of participants (including financial bodies, institutions, educational bodies, or governments), and many of these participants reference various theories and ideologies (Nekvapil, 2006). In LMT theory, the features of the structure of organised language management have something in common with simple language management, but its main characteristics are not based on a single interaction. In summary, organised language management can be characterised by the following features: 1) trans-interactional management acts; 2) the management agents are the social network or the institution which holds the corresponding power; 3) communication about management takes place; 4) theorising and ideologies intervene; and 5) the object of management is language as a system (Nekvapil, 2012). Besides the general explanation of the principles of LPP and LMT, there are also some existing practices of LPP and LPM on social media, which are described below.

3.5.3 The strengths and limitations of using language policy and planning (LPP) and language management theory (LMT) in preventing cyberbullying

As mentioned in the previous section, LPP and LMT are traditional ways of explaining particular language policies and management. The lack of experience of

using these two theories to solve online language problems can be counted as the main limitations for explaining the approaches to addressing cyberbullying. Although the CMC has increasingly provided new norms and rules to solve language problems through different types of electronically mediated communication, a focus on offensive language policies is still rare.

For example, on searching 'Language policies on social network sites', the articles mostly referred to one social media preference in particular – Facebook (e.g. Jones *et al*., 2011; Lee, 2011; Di Capua, 2012). Research on language policies and the management of Facebook addresses a wide range of language situations, such as a variety of language policy contexts on Facebook (Hendus, 2015) and the language policies of individuals or groups and specific contents on Facebook (Phyak, 2015; Sherman & Švelch, 2015), and few have focused on the offensive language problem policy practices. However, according to the current main articles included in the search of language management on Facebook, one clear point is that research on the practices of LPP and LMP has progressed in recent decades from a focus on the top-down language policies (macro-planning language management) of government agencies to policies within a much broader range, such as social media platforms and social media users (micro-planning language management) (Nekvapil, 2006; Spolsky, 2009). Therefore, there are two main research directions in using LPP and LMT to analyse cyberbullying: top-down approaches (organised language management) and bottom-up approaches (simple language management), showing the relations between language policies and language practices to establish policies and rules for managing language behaviour.

Regarding the top-down approach, there is a widespread acceptance that policies should be understood in the context where the target audiences use language and reveal their language ideologies. A more extreme form of this view goes so far as to claim that the 'language policy' of a particular setting can only be perceived as the sum of all the policies; practices as well as ideologies that operate within the specific environment (Spolsky, 2004). Cyberbullying is a new offensive language form that is encountered globally. Although the language features and usages in cyberbullying behaviour are varied, the key point of this specific behaviour is the spread of abusive

language. Using cyberbullying as a case, the analyses of the relevant language policies, especially top-down language management, is the focus of research based on language policy activities in specific online language activities and shows how these activities influence language policy offline.

Regarding the bottom-up point, simple language management focuses on social media and its users, which can be used to identify or track the sensitive social media accounts which use offensive or sensitively offensive words or phrases more to regulate cyberbullying or cyber aggression. Within the existing views and examples, it is apparent that language policy has never been simply linear. It is a dynamic composite of elements, constantly under construction, and always subject to change based on the changes in language practices, especially considering the language use in complicated cyberspace (Varis & Wang, 2011). Therefore, if the notion that practices make up an essential part of any language policy on social media or other online platforms is taken seriously, every interaction in which people participate can be counted as an instance of language policy activity. From this, the logical conclusion is that online language policies and forms of management have arguably become indistinguishable from language use itself. At this point, how to make language policies with language features becomes a meaningful question. Indeed, it is important to focus on the various issues that individuals or groups engage in and then attempt to manage language behaviour from the bottom-up angle.

To summarise, this section has reviewed the principle approaches of language policy and planning and language management theory. According to the research questions and research purposes, the top-down and bottom-up principles of LPP, and the simple and organised language management principles of LMT will be used to discuss the social problems caused by cyberbullying, as well as potential prevention strategies for cyberbullying through language features or functions in this research.

3.6 Summary: A combined socio-ecological framework for analysing cyberbullying on social media

According to the socio-ecological theory, the combined theoretical framework, *Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches*,

is fully considered to answer the central research and three sub-research questions, which offers further opportunities for analysing cyberbullying on multiple levels. Table 3.4 shows a summary of the principles of each theory that will be used to establish the theoretical framework in this research.

Table 3.4 A Summary of the Theoretical Framework Principles: Strengths and Weaknesses

Theory	Principles	Strength	Weakness
Socio-ecological Theory	The relations between the individual, the community and society.	Different levels of the socio-ecological model help understand motivations, risk and consequences of cyberbullying.	Socio-ecological theory analyses the interaction between individuals behaviour but faces challenges of anonymity in cyberspace.
Social Cognitive Theory	Internet self-efficacy and participant self-regulation	The important contribution of social cognitive theory is the implication that revealed the main predictors to prevent or reduce cyberbullying.	Social cognitive theory uses psychological, cognitive, and social contributing factors to reduce cyberbullying, but is difficult to focus on language approaches.
Semantics	Word denotative and connotative meaning	The principles of word denotative and connotative meaning will provide a clear approach to analyse unique language meanings.	The semantic is narrow to analyse offensive (swearing) words because the swearing word denotative and connotative meanings are always separated
Pragmatics	Word usages and functions	Different social and cultural variables will affect the word meaning and usages. The analyses of these variables will help to understand the language behaviour.	It is actually difficult to analyse the peoples' speaking purposes, goals, and the kinds of actions.
Language Policy and Planning	Top-down and Bottom-up language policy	Language policy and planning and Language management theory apply a way to detect or prevent cyberbullying via language features on social media.	The weaknesses are mainly about the lack of dataset in the existing research and the practices of using these two theories to analyse online language.
Language Management Theory	Simple and organised language management approaches		

Briefly, the basic framework would follow the Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979) socio-ecological system, but the exosystem and the chronosystem of the socio-ecological system would not be considered because these two kinds of relations

rarely react in cyberspace. Within this combined theoretical approach, language-related theories and language management theories help to provide contextual and sociolinguistic variables to specify and address the typical ecologies for solving cyberbullying problems. Meanwhile, social cognitive theory provides possibilities to use personal and environmental perspectives to analyse the likelihood of cyberbullying.

The three-layer framework will posit a series of overlapping systems to illustrate the potential impact of both the immediate and indirect factors on cyberbullying. Although all of the chosen theories have their limitations in analysing cyberbullying behaviour, combining them will reduce their shortcomings, and make it possible to achieve research goals. Therefore, the explanation of the connections between each theory and the new elements that are added to this framework are important to be stated, which are shown as below:

Microsystem: The individual level

The microsystem is the most immediate level for individuals, which includes demographic variables such as age and gender as well as psychological factors which included self-efficacy, self-regulation, and psychological difficulties. As for cyberbullying, the individual is the key focus during the cyberbullying process. In the current socio-ecological theory model, the main elements for analysing individual behaviour are the socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, personal motivations and personal skills and knowledge (Bronfenbrenner, 2009). To provide an in-depth understanding of the relations between individuals' features and cyberbullying, language usage and features are considered as the direct reaction to the individual's personality and motivation. Hence, the key principles of semantics and pragmatics, as well as the relevant studies on swear and taboo language are used as references and supplements to the socio-ecological theory to summarise the cyberbullying word categories for analysing the word multiple meanings, features, and functions in various usages through content analysis. Furthermore, these cyberbullying language features are also one element to analyse motivations for engaging in cyberbullying.

Mesosystem: The online interactions and community level

A mesosystem is the direct interaction between individuals and the environment that they live in. In general, a mesosystem encompasses interrelations among two or more microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). These interactions influence and reinforce particular individuals' attitudes or behaviour (Lee, 2009). When using a socio-ecological model to analyse traditional bullying, the differences between the interactions and the environment is clear. However, this kind of difference is indistinct in cyberspace because the cyber community is established from the social interactions between individuals or groups, while in addition the cyber community features will affect the interactions. It is difficult to differentiate between these two when we analyse online behaviour. At this point, besides using the features of cyberspace to discuss word usage changes in different periods, the main study focuses on the social interaction and the significant interconnections between individuals engaging in similar behaviour through social network analysis.

It is difficult to use the traditional relations between individuals (e.g. student-teacher relation or child-parent relation) to discuss cyberbullying because it is challenging to identify the real relations between individuals due to anonymity. At this point, this research extends to encompass how the online ecological environment affect individuals' online language-related activities, mainly focusing on the online contacts (social relationships) individuals make and the content or issues they access. Therefore, the variables affecting cyberbullying that are measured are contextual variables (e.g. communication context and topic) and sociolinguistics variables (e.g. genders) (see Chapter IV for a detailed discussion). Based on the socio-ecological model, the pragmatics theory studies cyberbullying language functions as well as the relations between different language usages, and the social cognitive theory helps to explain how do the online environments and communication context, as well as the individual differences affect cyberbullying. In other words, for the socio-ecological mesosystem, the interplay between variables and online materials among certain kinds of individuals or groups or in a certain context are analysed, but it is also significant to look beyond the common phenomena within a specific social relationship in the online community.

Macrosystem: The society and cultural level

The macrosystem level comprises the broader societal, cultural, political and economic ideologies that help determine the social structures and activities that may affect individual's behaviour indirectly (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). Among the commonly used social level factors (e.g. an individual's social background, culture, politics and economic ideologies), the social norms and cultural differences are agreed by most of the researchers to have more influence on individual behaviour (Leach, 2003). According to the results based on these first two systems, the macrosystem mainly focuses on discussing how different cultures or social backgrounds affect language usage, analysing the consequences and social problems caused by cyberbullying, as well as the approaches to maintaining social norms in both cyberspace and in the real word to address cyberbullying problems.

First, word meanings, usages and functions will change within different cultural settings or at different periods. This research will compare cyberbullying words in Chinese and swear words in English, as well as the cyberbullying words in Chinese during different periods, to provide a brief explanation of the influences of cultural and social backgrounds.

Second, the social norms theory proposes that the main issue that affects an individual's involvement in cyberbullying behaviour was a 'misperception' of norms (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986). This misperception may cause people to believe that cyberbullying behaviour is quite common, resulting in increased engagement in this behaviour to conform (Espelage *et al*., 2014; Sasson & Mesch, 2014). According to the Literature Review chapter and the interview results in this research, the negative consequences of cyberbullying not only affect individuals (both perpetrators and targets) but also society (see Chapter VII for a more detailed discussion). At this point, socio-ecological model and social cognitive theory make it possible to combine individual's behaviour with social problems to discuss how social norms affect individual online behaviour

Third, socio-ecological theory and social cognitive theory help to demonstrate the links between the current social norms and cyberbullying at each of these levels that

have an impact on the likelihood of increasing the risks and conflicts (social problems). This is beneficial to the policymakers and practitioners to establish social norms for cyberspace. The main focuses of social cognitive theory are using self-reactive influences, self-regulation, and self-efficacy to discuss the way to address or decrease these conflicts (Hymel *et al*., 2005). In previous studies, users have the power to self-regulate Internet usage if they can observe their patterns of behaviour (Hymel *et al*., 2005). That is, the approach for truly reducing cyberbullying is the interventions for addressing individuals' views of cyberbullying behaviour, in which they recognise that their behaviour is unacceptable. Based on these considerations, this research attempts to integrate social cognitive theory to identify how to prevent cyberbullying through educational protective strategies. Meanwhile, internet self-efficacy is also found to have a significant positive influence on cyberbullying behaviour (Xiao & Wong, 2013). Therefore, language policy and planning and language management theory provide full consideration of practices from research in social cognitive theory to find a legislative approach to achieving satisfactory results in solving cyberbullyng problems.

In practice, language policy and planning and language management theory provide a theoretical basis and a possibility to explore the top-down (organised language management approach) and bottom-up (simple language management approach) policies based on the particular problems we meet (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). These two aspects of LPP and LMT that will be combined with social cognitive theory to answer the sub-research question three: 1) at the top-down level, the language problems can be regulated by means of legislation and policies; and 2) at the bottom-up level, the organizations (internet self-efficacy) and individual (self-regulations) note language problems that appear in discourse and adopt a certain behaviour towards them. These can be seen as the ideal approach to enhancing the internet self-efficacy, individual self-regulation and social norms at the same time. Therefore, the legislation, technique and educational approaches for regulating cyberbullying can be established as a combination of influences emanating from central government (top-down policy), as well as from individuals and internet companies (bottom-up policy) (see Chapter VII for a detailed discussion).

Overall, the intention of this research is taking socio-ecological theory as a base to combine relevant theories' principles to incorporate a new theoretical framework called *Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches* to addressing cyberbullying problems. The main contribution of this combined theoretical framework is that it can be employed to solve cyberbullying problems through comprehensive directions and it also provides a relatively comprehensive and conceptualised approach for researchers in future research undertakings. The construction of this theoretical framework will also help researchers and practitioners develop a possibility to aid future research on and practice of language behaviour in similar situations with different backgrounds.

The following chapter is the methodology chapter. Content analysis, social network analysis and interview approaches will be introduced, including data collection and data analyses. Based on the new theoretical framework, content analysis is a powerful research method to analyse data and arrive at general findings according to the principles of the semantics and pragmatics theories. Following the results of content analysis, social network analysis will help to discuss the variables affecting cyberbullying. Simultaneously, following the social cognitive theory and the language-related management theories, the interview will help to gather data for proposing a model to describe the managements of cyberbullying.

Chapter IV Methodological Approach

According to the *Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches*, this research raises questions of what kind of language features occur during the processes of cyberbullying, and how do the contextual and sociolinguistics variables affect cyberbullying on social media. Due to the limited research on cyberbullying within the negative online language behaviour view in the Chinese context, I employ multiple methods to address my research questions and achieve the research goals.

In the field of social science, surveys, observations, group focus, and content analysis are effectively to describe phenomena, to observe their interrelationships, and to predict these interrelationships (Sofaer, 1999). It is argued that as for the process of understanding a phenomenon empirically, there are three stages: conceptualisation of the inquiry, gathering needed information, and data collection and analysis to get results (Riffe *et al*., 2014: 32). To this point, the thesis uses China as a case study, examining cyberbullying on Sina Weibo. The research methods are content analysis for examining words and comments, as well as social network analysis for analysing interactions between individuals or groups and interviews for gathering views.

4.1 Research design

In this research, cyberbullying is regarded as not only an individual behaviour, but also a group behaviour. Sina Weibo is used as a site for data collection because it is one of the most popular social media platforms in China, and an arena in which large numbers of original posts and public debates take place around different kinds of issues.[48] At this stage, content analysis, social network analysis and interview approaches will be used as the powerful research methods address research questions.

Content analysis is a widely used research approach that may be used with either qualitative or quantitative data. In this research, content analysis serves as the most

48 As discussed in the Introduction Chapter, the main social media can be classified into social networking sites, instant messaging services, and video and photo sharing platforms. In China, WeChat and Sina Weibo are widely used (Gan, 2018). The main functions of these two social media are different, which has become a direct cause of cyberbullying. WeChat (similar to WhatsApp) is an instant messaging that supports multiple communications between two or more individuals, while Sina Weibo is a microblogging that enables the creating and sharing of information with more people (Gan, 2018). Different ways of communication and information transmission determine that cyberbullying is more likely to occur on Sina Weibo. Moreover, Sina Weibo has an easily-accessible source on a large-scale. This is also the main reason that this research takes Sina Weibo as a case and data lab.

critical step for providing a general view of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word features and functions, as well as describing the cyberbullying words in different periods and the patterns of cyberbullying motivations. In order to ensure the research accuracy and comprehensiveness, some machine techniques are used to help collect and summarise the data. Based on the collected data from chosen sample, I used content analysis to establish a preliminary dataset of cyberbullying words in Chinese. As for data analysis, inductive content analysis and deductive content analysis are the two major methods employed.

Briefly, inductive content analysis is a qualitative method which uses written texts as the primary data to describe the phenomenon and identify themes or patterns (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Researchers always use this method in cases where there are no previous studies dealing with the phenomenon or when it is fragmented (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). Deductive content analysis is a quantitative analysis based on statistical measures for studies whose general aim is to test a previous theory in a different situation or to compare categories at different time periods (Catanzaro, 1988; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In terms of specific operations, the grouping of words or context, documents, recordings and other verbal material are used for inductive content analysis to build up a model, conceptual system, conceptual map or categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008), while deductive content analysis refers to the systematic examination of written texts through the predetermined categories (Morgan, 1993; Sandelowski, 2000).

In this research, inductive content analysis categorised the data by word meanings and functions through close reading to establish a cyberbullying language database used in this research and to get general findings of cyberbullying. The findings of the inductive content analysis are the word features of different types of offensive language usage and the relations between word usage and motivation during the process of cyberbullying. All the inductive content analysis findings are the basic data for deductive content analysis and social network analysis. For deductive content analysis, frequency of cyberbullying language use and the changes of the cyberbullying words during different periods are contained and discussed. Overall, the important achievement of content analysis is summarising cyberbullying content

features and usages. However, content analysis does not wholly answer the research questions. Hansen *et al*. (1994) state that content analysis can be coupled with other research methods to illuminate factors influencing the content. Therefore, social network analysis and interview approaches are used to answer other sub-research questions.

According to the mesosystem of socio-ecological theory, social network analysis is used to discuss the influences of social media and social interactions between individuals and groups during the process of cyberbullying. Social network analysis has developed since its emergence, becoming a powerful tool for analysing relationships among people and organisations (Cartwright & Harary, 1956; Harary *et al*., 1965; Scott, 2002). Social network analysis has two main aspects: using a set of theoretical perspectives and analytic techniques to examine the exchanges to the relationship between individuals, and embedding individuals into a larger context to analyse the relations (Carolan, 2013). Thus, the key social units for analysing relationships and social interactions between different units are strength and ties (Adamic, 1999; Herring *et al*., 2005). In the traditional way, there were some general principles (e.g. attitudes, self-efficacy, and other characteristics) of social network analysis for demonstrating how to conduct and interpret common procedures using one of the more popular software applications (Prell, 2012). However, in cyberspace, especially during the process of cyberbullying or other aggressive online behaviour, it is challenging to get the individuals' characteristics, and the variables that affect the individual's behaviour become complex. In this way, it is urgently to integrate traditional research methods with new variables or 'context' which help to achieve research goals.

Briefly, in this research, there are two main aspects of social network analysis that are used to analyse cyberbullying on social media: 1) studies based on the structure of the relationship of the members of a group in order to understand the social behaviour (Laumann & Pappi, 1976; Anderson & Jay, 1985; Pattison, 1993); and 2) studies based on the link between the properties and the behaviour of an individual and the environment in which he or she is located (Granovetter, 1985; Wellman, 1988). In the first case, social network analysis focuses on individuals' relations in typical online

issues; in the second range, a larger context to analyse the individuals' relations is considered, so that social network analysis is used as a tool to explain what contextual and sociolinguistics variables affect the individual's behaviour during cyberbullying. Thus, the new direction of using social network analysis in this research is regarding language (including its features and functions) and the contextual as well as sociolinguistics variables as elements to discuss how do they affect or reflect the tie or strength between individuals in cyberbullying (see section 4.3 for a more detailed discussion).

Furthermore, in order to find the challenges of regulating cyberbullying, the interview is used to gather primary data on views about cyberbullying, including the forms of cyberbullying, the consequences of cyberbullying and the regulation problems on Sina Weibo. As such, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews are combined with the existing results in literature to answer the sub-research question two. The data from the focus group interview approaches focused more on individuals' opinions of cyberbullying, while the semi-structured interview mainly focused on the views of the existing policies, management, and the limitations and challenges of regulating online contents. Based on the macrosystem of the socio-ecological theory, the social cognitive theory and relevant-language management theories, the data collection from both semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews will help explore the challenge of regulating cyberbullying, as well as elicit approaches to preventing cyberbullying. The following three sections are the details about how content analysis, social network analysis, and interview approaches work, including data collection and data analysis.

4.2 Content analysis: Data collection and data analysis

Content analysis tools can be used to analyse qualitative and quantitative data to develop an understanding of the meaning, structure, features and function of the information contained in texts (Lederman, 1991; Cavanagh, 1997; Forman & Damschroder, 2008). Holsti (1969: 14) offers a broad definition of content analysis as 'any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages'. From Holsti's definition, it can be found that

content analysis is not restricted to the domain of textual analysis (e,g., Stigler *et al*., 1999; Wheelock *et al*., 2000).

Content analysis can enhance understanding of large scale corpora by compressing many words of text into fewer content categories, based on explicit rules of coding to discover and describe the focus of individuals, groups, institutions or society (Weber, 1990; GAO, 1996; Cavanagh, 1997). Content analysis also allows for inferences to be made, and then uses other methods of data collection (Stemler, 2014). Briefly, content analysis is a systematic and objective research method employed to describe and quantify written, verbal or visual communication messages, with the purpose of providing new insights (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). The outcome of the investigation is a set of condensed concepts or categories describing the phenomenon through qualitative or quantitative data (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Sandelowski, 1995; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011: 227).

In this research, based on socio-ecological theory and the principles of semantics and pragmatics, content analysis is used to categorise cyberbullying words through the language meanings (establishing the database), to examine the frequencies of cyberbullying words, and to explain the differences of word features in various contexts. To address the central research question and ensure the data reliability and validity, the critical considerations of choosing the type of text are, acquiring the appropriate text, establishing clear data screening standards, and determining which specific approaches are important for data analyses. Therefore, the sample selections, data collections and screening, data labelling, and the approaches of data analyses are discussed in the following subsections.

4.2.1 Preparation phase: Selection of samples from Sina Weibo

There are three main preparation phases for both inductive and deductive analysis processes: preparation, organising and reporting (Kyngas & Vanhanen, 1999; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The preparation phase starts with selecting the sample of analysis (Cavanagh, 1997; Guthrie *et al*. 2004). The sample must be representative of the universe from which it is drawn (Duncan, 1989; Forman & Damschroder, 2008). That is, the important points of the sample selection are an understanding of the differences

between different cases (Stake, 2000; Patton, 2002), as well as the principles and approaches to selecting the samples (Gillham, 2000; Mahrt & Scharkow, 2013). Depending on the research questions, the sample which is related to cyberbullying will be selected, and a letter, word, and sentence which have (sensitive) cyberbullying functions will be considered as data.

To ensure the data reliability and validity, the data completeness and comparability is considered. At this point, there are two kinds of samples that will be chosen in this research: cyberbullying cases and 'contentious debates'[49]. On the one hand, if the issue on Weibo has been defined as a cyberbullying case by official media in the past, and has triggered a heated discussion at the same time, it will be selected as a sample. On the other hand, if most of the words used in the contentious debates were humiliating and abusive, this kind of case will also be selected. The same features of these two kinds of samples are that they are highly discussed, and have high levels of public participation. which would be interpreted as participants in a certain debate holding different views and opinions. At this stage, the information exchanges are the reactions to the interaction between individuals with different opinions. Through this continuous interaction and exchange of information, further ideas and debates are catalysed. Choosing these kinds of samples, and collecting data from such cases can garner more information and decrease the bias for data analysis, so proving a more effective way to maintain the data validity in order to understand cyberbullying language features and usage comprehensively. At this point, the most intuitive way of identifying the highly-discussed and high levels of public participation is the number of comments and retweets. Although there is no exact standard to state how many comments or retweets can be counted as a 'high-level of participation', in this research the standards used are that the total number of comments is more than 3,000 and the total retweets volume is over 2,000[50] (Li, 2019b).

Appendix II lists cyberbullying events on Sina Weibo from 2011, however, this research selected nine samples (four in 2018, two in 2017, one in 2016 and two in

49 The view of contentious debates was originally used in online political debates, but the criterion can also be expanded to other online debates. Yang Guobin (2009: 1) stated that contentious debates result from the interaction of multiple forces which include not only the crucial actors' involvement in the communication, but also the interaction among other users.

50 The standard is subject to the judiciary's determination of a 'high number of retweets' in a criminal case. Generally, 500 reposts of a rumour can constitute an online slander. (ref. http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/0910/c49154-22865415.html)

2015) from the Sina Weibo platform (see Table 4.1), and comments of these samples are crawled for analyses. Meanwhile, there were 6 supplemental links from 2018 to 2019 on Sina Weibo. The total number of their comments or retweets did not meet the chosen samples standards, but the typical comments were also worth analysing (see Table 4.2). These samples were used as examples for further analyses, including the relations between cyberbullying language usage and context. In addition to the participant-level standards of choosing samples and data diversity stated previously, the rationale for choosing these cases/samples used in the analysis is not that cases before this period were not necessary, instead, to have up to date information, it is essential to understand and review previous studies and keep up with emerging cases, as online communication is in a continuous process of transformation. Besides, the cases occurred before 2015 cannot easily be found, since most of them were deleted by the Weibo system, and the full information and content cannot be collected for analysing.

Heat Microblogs (Chinese: 微博热搜榜) and search engines are the basis for two main approaches to selecting representative samples. Firstly, Heat Microblogs is a real-time list for selecting samples that meet the criteria, and then researchers can crawls the comments from these samples. This is the primary source because it can rank the topic automatically based on the popularity amount public, and can easily attract individuals' attentions to generate more discussions. However, historical samples are not shown on the Heat Microblogs list. In this way, search engines based on a keyword search help to find the samples. Although there are some problems with online sampling content, which emerge from the digital nature of the internet (Karlsson, 2012; Stempel & Stewart, 2000), by focusing on specific issues, the sampling in this research creates fewer challenges. Therefore, the keyword search system used in this research is the professional search engine on Weibo. The author would combine different conditions[51] to confirm the selection of reasonable samples.

All the selected samples were based on the identification of three crucial types of issues: (i) contentious debates between individuals and society, including social

51 The keyword search conditions included the keyword 'cyberbullying', date information, and the poster's status (verified user or official media).

hotspots (*labeled as A*)[52]; (ii) contentious debates around the events, which are moral issues (*labeled as B*)[53]; and (iii) contentious debates about real-time events (*labeled as C*)[54]. The cases selected from each kind of contentious debate, were ones that generated more discussions among the public, or had been regarded as cyberbullying issues by official media accounts, for example, *Qiao's Expression of Tianjin Explosions* (social hotspots in 2015) sparked over 100,000 comments and was identified as a cyberbullying case by People's Daily (Weibo account: @人民日报), and *Li's statement of cheating scandals* (entertainment issues - 'Yesumen issue' in 2017) sparked over 1,000,000 comments with the most offensive words. The total number of comments[55] from the nine main samples were in excess of more than 2,400,000, with 1,267,190 effective comments[56].

52 The Annual Report on Development of New Media in China (2018) defined social hotspots as the events which generally cause widespread concern in the society and arise public's strong participation and repercussions in discussions, including government activities, network governance, security of personal information, public policy, justice and entertainment events (Annual Report on Development of New Media in China, 2018: 53-56). The criteria of social hotspots often consist of the large number of comments, the great amount of reposts, the quantity of media articles and a discussion period exceeding one week (Annual Report on Development of New Media in China, 2016: 199).

53 This kind of case is an example of ethical issues that arise extensive discussions, and the public are more likely to take part in discussions about entertainment events.

54 Timeliness events are summarised as a group behaviour that focuses on different social events. Because of the short duration of contentious debates, they could not be regarded as social hotspots.

55 All comments are public comments shown on the comment walls. To the date of writing the thesis, these comments were not deleted.

56 Effective comments are comments that remove the substance of the advertisements, spams, images and links. This is also the case for comments below the effective retweets.

Table 4.1 Choosing Samples from Sina Weibo

No.	Year	Date	Issue	Types	Total Comments	Effective Comments
1	2018	08.18	A singer was harassed on the show, and the singer's fans chastised and attacked the superintendent.[57] https://weibo.com/2723838314/Gv7u2iGSn?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment	C	10,516	9,084
2	2018	06.14	Da Zhang Wei's wrong expressions during the World Cup live show.[58] https://weibo.com/1746664450/Gln5Hjl2M?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1529835039525	C	5,737	4,780
3	2018	03.03	A young host took part in a famous TV programme but did not do well.[59] https://weibo.com/3159005875/G5IDWD4pp?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1529840320168	C	3666	3,193
4	2018	--	A woman killed a dog, and the host published the woman's personal information online.[60] (1) https://weibo.com/1974576991/FDYQI0YfY?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment (2) https://weibo.com/1974576991/FECXLcm30?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1531195276437	A	(1) 4,067 (2) 1,349 (3) 2,329	(1) 3,611 (2) 1,053 (3) 2,124

57 A stranger rushed onto the stage and tried to kiss a singer during the show. The singer's fans thought that this behaviour was an insult, and the singer's work team was unable to protect the singer. At this point, the singer's fans used offensive words and phrases to chastise and attack the superintendent. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

58 During the World Cup in 2018, some audiences posted offensive and curse comments on Da Zhang Wei's Weibo account wall because of his awkward speech about a dead German football player. Then, Da Zhang Wei apologised immediately to the public for his improper speech and said he actually did not know what happened to the famous German football player. But some of the internet users did not want to end the fighting. Some Weibo users continued to attack him with offensive words and hoped he would go to suicide. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

59 A young host took part in a very famous TV programme, but the audience was not satisfied with the host's performance. They criticised the host on the his/her Weibo comment wall firstly, and then used very offensive and rude words to insult and attack him/her. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

60 Death of the Corgi (hashtag on Weibo is #走失柯基犬被摔死事件#) is a legal and civil event. In this event, a woman picked up a puppy and threatened the dog owner for money. When she failed to get any money, the woman threw the puppy out of the window and killed the dog. Because of the puppy's death, the corgi's owner posted the whole process including the chat record and the woman's name online (the original Weibo has been deleted), and then internet users attacked the woman online and quickly found out her personal information and posted all the information online, including her ID card numbers, the residence address, the company address and the phone number. Apart from the online attacking, a large number of people bought sacrificial supplies online and delivered them to the woman. The result was that the dog owner received a sentence of seven-day administrative detention for disclosing the above-mentioned personal details and the woman also received a sentence of seven-day administrative detention for sending threatening messages. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

			(3) https://weibo.com/1974576991/GbimBcTCg?refer_flag=1001030103_&type=comment#_rnd1531195032529			
5	2017 - 2019	--	#江歌案# (Jiang Ge Tokyo Murder Case: An international student was killed in Japan)[61] (1) https://weibo.com/2143324323/FAC7Zyt8f?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1531196513464 (2) https://weibo.com/2143324323/FFSskCIzb?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment (3) https://weibo.com/2143324323/FFTICnpp1?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1531196638506	A	(1) 18,843 (2) 24,230 (3) 37,350	(1) 16,220 (2) 20,987 (3) 32,180
6	2017	12.31	Li's statement of the cheating scandals[62] https://weibo.com/1191044977/FCdI0wqsy?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment	B	1,001,448	853,953
7	2016	08.20	Ma's speech after extramarital affair[63] https://weibo.com/1828817187/E4oFI0GJT?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1529839320888	B	205,570	161,157

61 Jiang Ge, a 24-year-old Chinese student, was killed outside her apartment in Tokyo. The murder case has attracted wide attention online, and the hashtag #江歌案# (refers to #Murder case of Chinese student in Tokyo# in English) initiated a heated discussion. This is a legal and criminal event which generated extremely heated debates. A large number of comments and retweets were generated on Weibo. A flood of offensive comments were targeted at Jiangge' roommate - Liu (the murderer's ex-girlfriend) because internet users thought she was the accomplice and punished Liu by moral trial, then the battle changed from cyberbullying to traditional bullying. The latest development of the Jiangge Tokyo Murder Case was on April 3, 2020, Jiang Ge's mother filed a lawsuit against Liu for the dispute over the right to life. The incident once again got high public discussion on Sina Weibo, causing condemnations of Liu. (ref. https://rmfygg.court.gov.cn/web/rmfyportal/noticedetail?paramStr=0032501374500475) (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

62 Li's statement was posted on Weibo after the cheating scandals had broken out online. In the statement, Li said that she did not have any unethical issues with the guy (not her husband). However, the entertainment reporters released more photos and videos to prove she was lying. Under such circumstances, Internet users did not believe her statement and began to attack her. The main directions of the attack has been her behavior and her failure as a mother. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

63 The 2016 split between Chinese movie star Wang Baoqiang and his wife Ma Rong, the mother of Wang's two children, made big news in China after Wang himself exposed that his wife had an extramarital affair with his agent Song Zhe. The story unfolded itself on Weibo as the public posted comments. The majority of Weibo's users sided with Wang Baoqiang, making rounds of curses and abuses of Ma Rong, no matter what she said or posted on Weibo. The latest postings were on 15 November 2018. Ma posted four weibos and the total number of comments of these four weibo exceeded 200,000, and undoubtedly, most of them were offensive languages. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

8	2015	08.13	Qiao Renliang's wrong expressions of 2015 Tianjin warehouse blasts[64] https://weibo.com/1648764935/CvBi22we2?type=comment	B & C	102,938	89,748
9	2015	01.22	Chen's speech after extramarital affair.[65] https://www.weibo.com/1574684061/C0Oki37Va?from=page_1001603801934577404615&type=comment#_rnd1551901566909	B	1,030,286	72,711
				Total	**2,444,980**	**1,267,190**

64 Tianjin Ruihai warehouse blasts: on Aug. 12, 2015, two explosions ripped through a Tianjin Ruihai warehouse, killing 165 people, including 99 firefighters. Before the explosions taking place, many firefighters were already at the scene and tried to prevent a warehouse blaze. At this time, an actor, Qiao Renliang posted a weibo, asking for help to ferret out the families of firefighters to tide over the crisis. However, in this weibo, he used some Chinese idioms like 'human flesh search' and 'self-destruction'. Because of the inappropriate use of words, he did not express what he really wanted to express, and was then attacked by internet users - humiliating and threatening messages flooded in his blog site within 30 minutes after the original had been posted. Qiao's case was a long-term event because although he apologised to the public and donated 1 million yuan ($149,900) to the firefighters' families, the criticism and offensive words lasted in the next one year regardless of what he did. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

65 Chen He and a female (not his wife) were photographed by the entertainment companies. Internet users believed that Chen had extramarital affair, and the online attacking did not stop after Chen announcing that he had signed a divorce agreement with his ex-wife. (Accessed by September 2018 to February 2019)

Table 4.2 Choosing Specific Comments from Sina Weibo for Further Cases Analyses

No.	Year	Date	Issue	Types
1	2019	6.25	A passenger complained about airline service on her own Weibo account but was verbally abused by flight attendants.[66] https://weibo.com/2894838257/HAsBQkwMv?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1564660312247	C
2	2018	Continuous Event	Yuan chunwang's issue: An actor was defamed because he acts a villain in a TV series.[67] (1) https://weibo.com/1310255983/GwfYJn2Jx?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1535622968908 (2) https://weibo.com/1310255983/GwoGGvnUL?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1535612666332	C
3	2018	Continuous Event	Sun qian's issue: An actress was attacked for her 'poor' performances in a reality show.[68] (1) https://www.weibo.com/1265926601/GCn7NnGnA?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1539551608583 (2) https://www.weibo.com/1265926601/GC4wPmtDj?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1539551655420 (3) https://www.weibo.com/1265926601/GBXe5ol9G?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1539551699794	C

4.2.2 Data collection and screening

Currently, a common problem for analysing cyberbullying in the Chinese context is that there is no public cyberbullying dataset.[69] Here, data collection is the key process for summarising harmful or offensive words (or probably harmful words), to provide a structured database for further analyses. Nevertheless, it is difficult to gather large-scale natural online language data because they spread and change quickly in

66 A passenger complained about airline service on her own Weibo account, but her original weibo was published in one of WeChat official accounts with a large number of reading. At this moment, the readers and flight attendants verbally abused her on Weibo. (Accessed by June and July 2019).

67 Yuan was attacked for playing a villain in a TV series. On the Weibo comment wall, Internet users did not criticise the role he played, but insulted the actor himself. The Internet users thought that if you can play such a villain in a TV series, you might behave like this in the real life. In additional to the attack to the actor himself, his family was also insulted. (Accessed by August to October 2018)

68 In a cooperative performance, Sun paid more attention to its own performance and ignored the feelings of collaborators. This detail was magnified under the lens. The audience thought Sun was a selfish person and was dissatisfied with everything she did after that. As a result, every weibo from Sun, such as birthday celebration for her father or the picture draw by her children, was met with a lot of abuse and curses. (Accessed by October and November 2018)

69 The two existing offensive lists of violent words consist of the official document named the Report of Vulgar Using of Language on the Internet and the Top 50 common-used offensive words summarised by Internet users.

cyberspace (Mc Enery & Xiao, 2004). At the same time, from these samples, not all comments or single words are offensive ones, and some words can be used in both cyberbullying and non-cyberbullying contexts. At this point, to achieve high precision in identifying cyberbullying expressions, this research kept the words that were mostly associated with cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying connotations that were related to the research aims. Therefore, considerable effort is needed to collect sufficient data from a large-scale corpus, and criteria for data screening are required.

Data Collection from Samples

In this research, there are three kinds of data that will be collected from samples, or based on samples: comments and single words from different samples, manually labelled word offensiveness levels[70], and data from a short demographic questionnaire (see Appendix VI), to keep the comprehensiveness and objectiveness of the research.

Above all, users' comments from samples and the gender variables are the foundation of the data for further analysis. The machine techniques that would be used for data crawling are Yisurvey (a paid for automatic technical Chinese system, for samples with a small number of comments) and the Python (Scrapy) system (for samples with more than 10,000 comments). These two systems helped to crawl comments (including textual comments, the posting time, the Weibo account names and status, the amount of likes and replies etc.) from the designated samples, and generate the content list within Excel spreadsheets.[71] It is worth mentioning that users' comments contained in Chen's and Ma's corpora were direct comments to the target[72], and the gender labelling is the registered gender of the Weibo user account and shown to everyone.[73] Although there still might be a bias in the gender data collection because some users may not fill in the real ones, the large amount of original data and the real-name system of Sina Weibo have reduced the occurrence of bias as much as possible (see subsection 4.4.2 for a detailed discussion).

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70 The selected comments and single words and the manually labelled word offensiveness levels were not provided as the thesis appendix because there were over 100 pages, but the data will be made available on request.

71 All the Excel spreadsheets with comments will be made available on request.

72 The direct comment to the target means the data is only the one to the targets, excluding replying or forwarding comments. This standard is only used for the gender analysis case.

73 On Sina Weibo, for the gender information, Weibo users must fill in their gender information when they create the account, so that this is open data which is not affect by anonymity.

Covering a variety of topics, a total of 1,267,190 effective comments were obtained from 13 links within nine samples. To ensure the objectivity of the research, and comprehensiveness of the word database, Natural Language Processing Information Retrieval (NLPIR)[74] is a professional Chinese Lexical Analysis System used to divide the entire sentence into single words with Chinese-compliant usages (Li, 2019b). All the single words were displayed directly in the system and could be copied into an Excel spreadsheet for data screening. A simple example of this system in practice can be seen from the following comment:

听说那晚屁股还买了两盒 byt.

'I heard that pg bought two boxes of condoms'[75]

This may be represented in the following model:

听说 / 那晚 / 屁股 / 还 / 买 / 了 / 两盒 / byt

'I / heard that / pg / bought / two boxes of / condoms / that night.'

Based on this sample, it can be found that 屁股 (*pì gu*, refers to bottom) is a negative epithet for one of the Li's case protagonists, but this word can be offensive or not in daily life, depending on the context. These kinds of words, which seem negative, or have special meanings, would also be selected according to the requirements of 'offensive language'. The detailed standards for data screening will be shown later.

In addition to collections of comments and single words, the volunteers' manual labelling and a short demographic questionnaire, were also gathered in order to have a clear understanding of individuals' opinions of the selected words. As for manual labelling, the author found eight anonymous volunteers (four females and four males, aged 22-29) to help label the offensiveness degree of the 2,000 words in the database. These eight anonymous participants were selected conveniently, considering the geographical reason and the time of the participants. In order to ensure the reliability of data, the gender balances and academic backgrounds were considered. To ensure that they have certain knowledge (e.g. the academic and folk knowledge) to

74 NLPIR is a prerequisite for Chinese information processing which includes word segmentation, Part-Of-Speech tagging and unknown words recognition. (ref. http://www.ict.ac.cn/jszy/jsxk_zlxk/mfxk/200706/t20070628_2121143.html)

75 The word 屁股 is the insult calling of the protagonist, and the term *byt* is the acronyms of the Chinese word *bì yùn tào*

understand these single words, cyberbullying or Weibo, all of them are native Chinese speakers and post-graduated students or current postgraduates, as well as having used Weibo above three years before December 2018. Because of the large size of the word set, volunteers were allowed to take a break halfway through the labelling process, but when re-starting, they were required to maintain the same standards for labelling: 1) the word is mostly used for attacking or cursing; 2) the word can be used for both cursing and non-cursing purposes; and 3) usually the word is an ordinary word. The order of the word presentation in an Excel spreadsheet was randomised.

During the process of offensiveness labelling, it is difficult to be consistent with the normative ANEW ratings (a five-point scale), because all of the selected words had or probably had offensive meanings. There seem to be no 'median values'. Thus, if a word's offensiveness score was higher than the volunteer's personal offensiveness threshold, the word would be considered inappropriate and offensive; but if the individual person's tolerance for the word was high, and the word's offensiveness score did not exceed his/her threshold, it might not be likely to be perceived as offensive. Thus, the offensiveness score of each single word based on the volunteers' personal threshold is from 1 to 5, where rating 5 is the most strongly offensive word, rating 3 is the mid offensive word and rating 1 is the lightly offensive or the ordinary word. Therefore, the *offensiveness score/rating* of each word ranges from 1 to 5. The higher the offensiveness score/rating is, the lower the tolerance for the word is. Each single word's offensiveness score/rating is computed by the Entropy Weight Method (EWM)[76] and Weighted Average Calculation (see subsection 4.3.2 for procedures).

In addition, there was a short demographic questionnaire given to these eight volunteers for two reasons. Firstly, different individuals have different understandings and views of these single words outside of a context. A short demographic questionnaire can help the author to understand the volunteers' opinions when they faced these single words; and secondly, different individuals have their own tolerances for offensiveness words. This is a very important factor that would affect

76 The entropy weight method was developed as an objective method of allocating weights based on the decision matrix without affecting the preference of the decision maker (Zeleny 1982). The entropy weight method is one of the objective fixed weight methods and it determines the index's weight based on the amount of information (Li, *et al*., 2011). For an indicator with a higher dispersion degree, a larger weight parameter is assigned; and vice versa.

their labels. For understanding of the tolerances of volunteers, it is helpful to provide a general view to do a further analysis of the relations between gender factors and language usages (see Chapter VI for a detailed discussion). Therefore, this short questionnaire included two questions (see Appendix VI): What do you think about these words, for example, are they offensive and related to cyberbullying? Do you think cyberbullying words are the most suitable way to express anger or hate online?

Data Screening and Database Establishment

Data screening is based on the semantics and pragmatics, identifying all the word forms and categories of offensive or negative language found in the Sina Weibo corpora and NLPIR results. However, there exist criteria to measure or define what swear and taboo words are, but only a few studies employ a uniform measurement standard when analysing cyberbullying, especially a clear criteria for defining and classifying cyberbullying words in the Chinese language. That being so, I took the identifications of the swear and taboo words in English as references, combining with the features and social media features of the Chinese words, to establish the standards of data screening within the three considerations in this research.

Firstly, the easiest method to distinguish offensive or inoffensive language is mentioned by Dinakar and his colleagues, and is a method that is based on the word or the content meanings (Dinakar *et al*., 2011). They figured out that when a comment or a message tends to involve sensitive topics that may be personal to an individual or a specific group of people, it becomes a worthy candidate that may qualify as cyberbullying (Dinakar *et al*., 2011). In other words, a single word could be a form of cyberbullying if one of the sensitive features, such as abusing, attacking physical appearance and intelligence, cursing or sexuality, was contained within it. At this point, the author first manually collected the single words with obvious offensive meanings or functions from the comments.

The second criteria is about the characteristics of swear/taboo words both in English and in Chinese. In English, there are clear swear and taboo word categories to identify what kind of words are offensive and rude. Although in the recent literature, there is a lack of cyberbullying word categories in both English and Chinese, the approaches

used to identify swear/taboo words could be used as the basis or references of the definition and methods of data screening (see Appendix VII). Therefore, this research claims that swear and taboo words have shown adverse effects or characteristics (including, but not limited to the offensive, cursing, and rudeness) that can be considered as cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying language in Chinese.

The last criteria to be considered is that of the word meanings, which are based on how the words are used in the Chinese context. On the one hand, cyberbullying words may have different meanings or different offensiveness levels in a special or typical communication context or situations, or to different objects, or in a different time period (Trudgill & Andersson, 1990). On the other hand, some of the cyberbullying words can be used on their own or in portmanteau formations, not just in English, but also in Chinese (Hughes, 1991: 24). These features make it important to consider the Chinese word senses, formations and characteristics for data screening and to identify whether a word is offensive or not.

Consequently, based on these three considerations, the data screening criteria used in this research are focusing on some swear and taboo word categories in English, as well as typical features of the Chinese language and the Chinese context. Full consideration of data screening is beneficial to data reliability and validity, as well as further analyses of the social network analysis and prevention approaches. Therefore, the steps for data screening followed four standards:

The first point, *cyberbullying or offensive behaviour features*. This feature consists of a word with a negative or offensive meaning, and aims at identifying frequent cyberbullying topics, such as flaming and attacking, online harassment and online rumours and gossip. In details, it consists of: 1) if a word has a negative or offensive meaning, which assumes one is abusing, attacking physical appearance and intelligence, cursing or showing sexuality visibly. This kind of word would be chosen in the dataset directly. 2) if some words have their formations and probably show negative or offensive meaning, they will also be considered for inclusion; and 3) if the words are related to the typical issues or events and have negative or offensive meanings, they are also considered as cyberbullying words.

Second point, *swear and taboo word features*. This feature shows words that are extremely offensive or negative in English, or that fit the criteria of swear or taboo words in English. At this point, Pinker's (2007) and Stong and colleague's (2011) swear word classification principles would be used as references (see Chapter V for a detailed discussion). It is worth mentioning that Weibo users may use different variations of the same word for insulting, so this research compares potential words against all the words in the NLPIR database. If there is no match, the single word will not show in the NLPIR results and will not be collected; and if the frequencies are at the very lower level, such as the forms of digits or symbols in a word to their original letters, these kinds of words will also not be chosen.

Third point, *context-dependent features*. As Jaszczolt and Allen (2012) stated, logical functions focus on language use in context rather than consider the meaning of a language as a separate entity. Context-dependent features in this research are based on two angles: 1) the background of the word, that is, the context of the cases in this research is the Chinese context; and 2) the contents or communications in which the word is used. The second angle includes three features: i) the words might have strong emotions, when they are considered in the way that exceeds their meaning; ii) the words might be some ordinary words or daily-used words but have specific meanings to be offensive or emphasise offensiveness when considering them with other comments; and iii) when the same word is combined with a different word to became a phrase, it might also have varied meanings.

Fourth point, *tagging features,* the least but not an unimportant feature. The 'at' symbol (@) allows users to mention each other and 'hashtag' (#) is used to create a topic. With these two social media features it is also complicated to identify 'repetition' of cyberbullying. In this case, the event protagonist is a phrase that might occur at high frequency, and this can be explained by the tagging feature.

Following these four data screening standards, there are two kinds of data collected: manually collected data and NLPIR supplemental data. These primary words, which have, or possibly have offensive or negative meanings establish a 2000-word database (see Appendix III). The brief information of this database is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 The Number of Words from NLPIR and Manual Word Lists of Different Samples

Issues	The Amount of NLPIR Result	The Amount of Manual-Word	The Amount of Final Choosing Words
A Chinese pop singer's case.	13161	45	159
A young host's case	5827	21	168
The Da Zhang Wei's awkward expression on Weibo	6558	124	213
The Qiao's awkward expression on Weibo	70777	66	497
Jiang Ge Tokyo Murder Case I	18456	50	304
Jiang Ge Tokyo Murder Case II	15864	39	345
Jiang Ge Tokyo Murder Case III	22304	50	327
Li's statement of 'Yesumen issue'	127386	103	707
Chen's speech after extramarital affair	67934	102	452
Ma's speech after extramarital affair	53986	81	627
Death of the Corgi I	6241	52	146
Death of the Corgi II	4321	8	86
Death of the Corgi III	6987	44	167
The Number of words of the Final Dataset (remove duplicate)			**2000**

4.2.3 Sina Weibo corpora lexicon coding: Data labelling and coding

As for the chosen single words from comments, labelling data is an important step before organising, examining and analysing data. This is also the key step for identifying the offensive features and classifying the word category. There are three considerations of the final data offensiveness levels to ensure the data reliability: offensiveness scores, frequency of usage and word functions.

As for the word offensiveness score, it will be calculated through the Entropy Weight Method (EWM) and Weighted Average Calculation based on the volunteers' manual labelling. Firstly, the Entropy Weight Method is used to standardize the single word's entropy weight, which can then be used to calculate the offensiveness score/rating labelled by volunteers. In this research, the entropy weight method is the primary step to determine the weight of the index for statistical analyses, as well as further analyses about the word category classifications and automatic detection cyberbullying approaches. The calculations are shown as follows.

The standardized indexes of the *j*th words was labelled by the *h*th volunteers,, and can be calculated by (1).

$$r_{jh} = \frac{c_{jh}}{\sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{m} c_{jh}^{2}}} \times 100_{\circ} \qquad \text{j= 1,....,2000; h= 1,....,8, m=2000} \qquad (1)$$

The specific weight of the *j*th words was labelled by the *h*th volunteers, and can be calculated by (2).

$$p_{jh} = \frac{r_{jh}}{\sum_{j=1}^{m} r_{jh}} \qquad \text{j= 1,....,2000; h= 1,....,8, m=2000} \qquad (2)$$

After standardization of indexes, entropy of the *h*th index is determined by (3).

$$e_h = -\frac{1}{\ln m} \sum_{j=1}^{m} p_{jh} \cdot \ln p_{jh}, \ln 0 \equiv 0 \qquad \text{j= 1,....,2000; h= 1,....,8, m=2000} \qquad (3)$$

Entropy weight of the *h*th index is determined by (4).

$$w_h = \frac{(1-e_h)}{\sum_{h=1}^{v} (1-e_h)} \qquad \text{j= 1,....,2000; h= 1,....,8, m=2000} \qquad (4)$$

Finally, the weighted average calculation are for the offensiveness level of each words of males and females' labelling, and the final offensiveness level of the eight volunteers' labelling.

Based on the weighted average calculation results, all these words are defined into three classes: strongly offensive, mildly offensive and lightly offensive. Strongly offensive words had ratings of 4.0 or higher, lightly offensive or ordinary words with special meanings had ratings of 2.0 or lower, and mid offensive words had a rating of 3.0. Classifying the words' preliminary offensiveness level helps us to identify the appropriate action to take, such as coding data, further analyses and advice for detecting or regulating cyberbullying.

As for the frequencies of word use, the deductive content analysis used a program written in Python language to count the occurrence of the word and its frequency in

the comments. At this point, some strongly offensive words might not be widely used, but some mildly/lightly offensive words occurred at high frequencies. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the 'name' in the word list should also be given careful consideration, because Weibo allows users to tag each other using the 'at' symbol (@). Where a specific user is tagged, and then offensive language is used, this could be regarded as cyberbullying with repetitions. At this point, the frequencies can be considered as an element to identify the final offensiveness level.

With regard to the word functions, this element is mainly about whether a word works as being offensive, swear, taboo, or an ordinary word with special meanings. Being swear, or taboo was defined as the extent to which the use of the word is offensive or negative in general; but ordinary words with special meanings were defined as words that have typical meanings when used to attack or insult.

For the combination of the above three standards, the final level of each of these 2,000 single word's offensiveness would provide an objective and comprehensive approach to identifying and presenting the degree of negativity or offensiveness, because the focus was not only the literal meaning, but also about the word multiple usage and functions in contexts, or by multiple types of speakers, to determine whether they are strong offensive words, mild/light offensive words or ordinary words. Moreover, explicitly providing this direction might have eliminated some confusion in the raters and made specific data clearer (especially for sensitive cyberbullying words, emotional words and words with special meanings). That is, if a word ranks 4.0 or higher, it is classified into the cyberbullying word database initially, while the others are classified into the sensitive cyberbullying word database.

After data labelling, lexicon coding helps summarise such 2,000 words into different categories that have similar features. This is the key step in analysing this data to show general findings. Therefore, inductive content analysis was used for lexicon coding, including open coding, creating categories, and abstraction (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Generally, open coding means making notes and creating headings, while reading the text to describe all aspects of the content (Burnard, 1991, 1996; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). There are different ways of coding, such as coding the contents

physically, regarding their natural or intuitive borders, coding the contents syntactically, and coding the contents by using referential units (Krippendorff, 1980). In this research, the open coding included the date of the events, the category of the event, the word offensiveness levels, word meanings, and the word functions.

After the open coding, the lists of categories are grouped under higher-order headings (Burnard, 1991; McCain, 1988). The purposes of grouping data is to reduce the number of categories by integrating words of similar meaning (Burnard, 1991; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992), to describe phenomena, increase understanding, and generate knowledge (Cavanagh, 1997). In this research, the words with similar meanings or functions will be summarised into one category/subcategory. The final step is abstraction, which means a general description of the research topic (Burnard, 1996; Polit & Beck, 2004; Robson, 1993). All the cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words' features will be summarised and analysed in Chapter V. Overall, during the first two steps, each category is named according to figurative features. The abstraction process is a step to describe the general phenomenon under investigation through these features (Elo & Kyngas, 2007).

4.2.4 Data analysis methods: Inductive content analysis and deductive content analysis

Briefly, the difference between inductive content analysis and deductive content analysis is that they focus on the different aspects of data (qualitative and quantitative) to explain the same phenomenon. That is, for the single word database, inductive content analysis focuses on identifying and classifying word features, usages, and functions (e.g. Lauri & Kyngas, 2005), while deductive content analysis focuses on the data descriptive statistics to show word changes during different periods (e.g. Kyngas & Vanhanen, 1999; Chinn & Kramer, 1999; Burns & Grove, 2005).

As for the analysis process, first of all, the comment list material from different weibos was reviewed by inductive content analysis, and a set of features were identified through a close reading of the comments. The typical cyberbullying comments will be analysed in detail. Meanwhile, inductive content analysis integrates language usage in comments. After formulating word categories (coding), the word

functions in different categories are introduced, such as abusing words, sexual words, curing words and others. At the same time, the words in each category might have different natures or language features (e.g. abuse, alphabet, analogies, curse, metaphors, satire and idiom words). Therefore, more detailed information would be discussed through inductive content analysis, such as the usage and functions of the words in sentence structures or contexts. Moreover, inductive content analysis will also help to determine how a specific word, or content that is relevant to the motivation or event in the process of cyberbullying, as well as the word usage due to social and cultural differences. For the deductive content analysis (quantitative methods - EXCEL statistics), the main focus is analysing the word usage changes in cyberbullying phenomena from 2014 to 2019. The comparative case used in this research is the *Report of Vulgar Language on the Internet* in 2014.

Overall, content analysis is a powerful research method used to analyse cyberbullying within qualitative and quantitative data based on the socio-ecological model, semantics and pragmatics. The different angles for discussing cyberbullying on social media are beneficial to provide a comprehensive understanding and findings. The general findings of both inductive and deductive content analysis are also the bases for social network analysis and interviews to understand social interactions during the cyberbullying process and social problems caused by cyberbullying.

4.3 Social network analysis: Data collection and data analysis

Social network analysis is developed primarily as a methodology to solve social problems by sociologists and psychologists (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988; Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1993) within the mathematics, science studies and computing fields (Ben-David & Collins, 1966; Mullins, 1972; Rogers & Kincaid, 1981; Richards & Barnett, 1993). With the rapid development of formal analytical techniques, social network analysis is also a tool used in other disciplines, such as economics, marketing and social sciences (Scott, 2017). According to social network analysis, every social aggregation might usually be represented according to the units composing this aggregation, in addition to the relations between these units. This representation is called a ‘social network’. Park (2003) provides a detailed

explanation of social networks, regarding them as sets of people connected by a set of relationships, where relationships are any kind of social relation; a communication network is composed by interconnected individuals linked by patterned flows of information. That is, within a social network, every unit (a person, an organisation, or a group) is typically characterised as a 'social actor', being represented as a node (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). These relations defined by linkages among units/nodes are a fundamental component of social network analysis (Scott, 2017).

To recap the previous chapters, social network analysis is a powerful empirical analytical tool to investigate the resources being shared or sought during the process of cyberbullying within the socio-ecological mesosystem. Cyberbullying, as an online unique information-based relationship language behaviour, is also affected by social interactions. These interactions resulted in the dissemination of information (both offensive and non-offensive information) from one to another, illustrating the degree to which various types of detail can be shared among different parties. At this point, the use of social network analysis in this research can be attributed to three factors: 1) a few studies focusing on a larger context to analyse individuals' behaviour; 2) Online anonymity makes it become difficult to use the traditional variables (e.g. views, attitudes, education level and economy); and 3) the social network data can be analysed due to advances in computing technologies. Thus, based on socio-ecological theory, social network analysis will be used to answer the sub-research question one - *how do the contextual variables and sociolinguistics variables affect individual's behaviour of using cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying language on social media*?

Although social network analysis will use new variables to focus on individuals' interactions during the cyberbullying process, the core foundational direction of social network analysis will not be changed. This research will discuss relations between individuals, and regard these individuals as members of overlapping networks to examine relations between individuals in a specific context. Considering these, using social network analysis to discuss the pattern of relationships between participants who take part in cyberbullying can reveal the possibility of people being introduced to information of a particular nature. The following sections introduced the approaches

of data collection and data analysis to make it more clear what is 'new' for social network analysis in this research, and described a way to use contextual and sociolinguistics variables to analyse the individuals' relations and behaviour in typical cyberbullying issues.

4.3.1 Data collection: Subsample and variables for social network analysis

Regarding the definitions of social network analysis, it can be found that the 'relationship' is the main focus of social network analysis. Relationships are characterised by content, direction and strength, indicating a connection between two or more people or things, and a tie connects a pair of individuals by one or more relationships (Garton *et al*., 1997). There can be one relation only which maintains a tie (e.g. members of the same group), or many relations based on a multiplex of ties (e.g. sharing information within a group) (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). In particular, *Tie*s and *strength* between social actors employ the relationships between the dissemination of information and social actors (Goddard, 2015). Therefore, in order to provide a clear relationship to the cyberbullying process, the data that is used should indicate what information is being exchanged, between whom, in what kind of situations or backgrounds, and to what extent (Barnes & Harary, 1983).

However, it is challenging to use the whole database (2,000 words) to analyse the social interactions and relations, because the document is too large and some words in the database are not typical ones for cyberbullying. The ideal research approach is to use the judgement sampling[77] (the subsample) to analyse in its entirety (GAO, 1996). Therefore, according to the classifications through content analysis, Chinese idioms have fixed expressions, besides, other word categories may change the expressions and uses in different ways due to different context. Thus, there are six word categories, which are related to cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words in this research. To the extent that this is the case, the subsample mainly focuses on the word categories, which have been summarised previously, except for Chinese idioms. The standards of each category are as follows to reduce the data bias:

77 Judgment sample, or Expert sample, is a type of random sample that is selected based on the opinion of an expert. Results obtained from a judgment sample are subject to some degree of bias, due to the frame and population not being identical. The frame is a list of all the units, items, people, etc., that define the population to be studied (GAO, 1996). (Also see ref. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judgment_sample)

1) The word must be used highly frequently, ranking in the top 150 in the whole database;

2) The word must have exact offensive or mildly offensive meanings, which do not include names, typical meanings for the specific events or issues, nor be in the crossover word categories;

Based on these two standards, seven typical words were chosen from each category and established as a subsample (see Table 4.4, and the meanings of the subsample words are shown in Appendix III).

Table 4.4 Subsample for Social Network Analysis

Category	Character/Word/Phrase						
Abusing words	畜生	脑残	滚	丑	傻	人渣	渣
Sexual words	贱人	狗男女	骚	烂	婊子	贱	贱货
Cursing words	死	死了	去死	去死吧	报应	没死	自杀
Emotional words	恶心	不要脸	失望	不喜欢	讨厌	配不上	无耻
Emphatic words	你妈	妈的	你他妈	他妈的	卧槽	我去	特么
New emerging words	打脸	垃圾	吃瓜	封杀	洗白	作死	屎
Ordinary words	出轨	道歉	人肉	背叛	没文化	离开	取关

The key claim is relating this subsample (49 single words in total) to the contextual and sociolinguistic factors in order to answer the sub-research question one. Besides the subsample, Ma's and Chen's cases with gender data labelling are used to analyse the gender differences for word usage during the process of cyberbullying. Similarly with the data collection and screening steps stated in section 4.2, the typical comments and single words are chosen as supplemental examples for further analysis (see Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion).

4.3.2 Variables and data analysis

In the previous literature, researchers preferred to analyse the speakers' genders, the speaker-listener relationships and the social-physical setting of the communication to describe how cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words were used in different contexts, or to different targets (e.g. Dewaele, 2007; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Goddard, 2015). This research will follow socio-ecological theory, as well as the subsample and the typical examples to provide a reasonable empirical analysis.

Combining with the variables commonly used, and social media features in the Chinese context, there are two main kinds of variables: contextual (e.g. cyberbullying forms and event natures) and sociolinguistics variables (e.g. genders) (see Table 4.5) measured by social network analysis to analyse the relations between cyberbullying word usage and cyberbullying forms, and the cyberbullying word usage differences between different genders.

Table 4.5 Variables for Social Network Analysis

Factor	Variable		Focus
Contextual Factor	Context		The relations between different context and word preferences.
	Cyberbullying forms		The relations between different cyberbullying forms and word preferences.
	Event Variable	Legal Event versus Moral Event	The relations between different events and word preferences.
Sociolinguistics Factor	Gender Variable	Speaker's Gender	How do gender variables affect the cyberbullying word.
		Target's Gender	

Contextual variables: Communication context, cyberbullying forms and event natures

Specifically, contextual factors are important for analysing the interpretation, and the evaluation of a message as a result of the integration of several pieces of contextual information in most forms of communication, because words in expressive language are also affected by the persistence of difference in contextual changes. According to the claims by Jay and Janschewitz (2008), the major contextual variables include the situations of swearing, the purpose of speakers, the communication context, the social-physical setting and the topic of discussion. In this study, combining the cyberbullying and social media features in China, the situations of cyberbullying (cyberbullying forms), the communication context, and the topic of discussion (event natures) are chosen.

It is worth mentioning that for situations of cyberbullying, there is a broad spectrum of behaviour that may fall within cyberbullying. The chosen standard of the situations

is the correlation with language behaviour. In other words, the chosen forms or situations of cyberbullying must be more related to language abuse. Regarding the topic of discussion, cyberbullying language can be considered as demonstrating a special form of language usage and might be influenced through different issues, because different events have different features and public concerns based on the pragmatics theory. This research will use the topic event nature as a key factor to analyse the different word usage in discussion of various issues. For the data analysis, the main tool is the Excel statistical analysis that deals with the frequencies of the word usage and the top used words, and this tool is supplemented by content analysis (see Chapter VI for a detailed introduction).

Sociolinguistics variables: Gender variable

Along with the contextual variables, the sociolinguistics variable is another important factor in analysing cyberbullying with social interaction features in socio-ecological theory. Sociolinguistics is the descriptive study of the relationship between different individuals, and sociolinguists have analysed the effect of independent variables such as gender, age, social class and importantly, culture on the variations in the existing research (Murphy, 2009, 2012). As for sociolinguistics research on gender[78] and swear, taboo or other offensive language behaviour, the gender variable was chosen as the key sociolinguistic factor to analyse the relations, differences of word usage and power imbalance between males and females in the existing studies.

The difference between the previous research and this study is that this research is connected to pragmatics theory and draws attention to both the speaker's and the target's gender to state claims, depending on the methodology, the samples used, etc. Therefore, the research would like to compare two moral cases about extramarital affairs, which are related to cyberbullying on Sina Weibo, and to discuss gender differences in using offensive words, to analyse the tolerance for offensiveness between single-gender groups and mixed-gender groups, and to trace the theoretical development of gender studies in the cyberbullying research.

78 With regard to the difference between the two terms - gender and sex, the first point that should be cleared up is that the definition of the term 'gender' in this research would follow the view of Anthony Giddens (1989: 158). Giddens considered gender as the psychological social and cultural differences between males and females. This research will follow this definition for the term 'gender'.

At this stage, the two-stage statistical analysis will be used. The measurement methods are Excel statistical analysis, Stata 14.0 version and SPSS 22.0 version.[79] For the first stage, the Stata 14.0 version uses data descriptive statistics, Paired T-test, and Kruskal-Wallis Test for measuring individual's different offensiveness tolerance of the 2,000 word. In detail, Paired T-test was used to determine both male and female word offensiveness tolerance. The observations were analysed using one-way analysis of variance, using the Kruskal-Wallis Test rank to determine the difference between both male and female groups in their tolerance of a word's offensiveness. Finally the one-way analysis of variance used volunteered observation to estimate differences between individual groups. For the second stage, the Excel statistical analysis will use pie and bar charts to show how the differences of the cyberbullying word usages are related to targets' gender differences. Meanwhile, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test through SPSS 22.0 version was used to analyse the different frequency of using the subsample words between females and males in Ma and Chen cases. The results of SPSS can also be regarded as the proof or supplement to Stata results. For both Stata and SPSS statistical analysis, a P value <0.05 was required for statistical significance.

Moreover, sociolinguistics is also used to study and explain how different social classes affect the variety of language from place to place (Wardhaugh, 2011:6). The results can also be used to analyse the effects on society, including social norms, expectations, context, the way of using language, and society's effects on language (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2008; Wardhaugh, 2011:1). Therefore, combining with the socio-ecological theory and the social cognitive theory, the findings can be used to study the further influences, as well as the predictions of cyberbullying.

Overall, firstly, social network analysis will use the contextual variables to analyse the relations between context and cyberbullying language behaviour, mainly focusing on how different different variables affect cyberbullying. In details, combining with content analysis, the social network analysis will find the relations showing how different communication context, cyberbullying forms and event affect cyberbullying behaviour. Secondly, social network analysis identifies the word usage between males

79 The reason for using two different statistical measurements is that there are two sets of data and the data capacity is different. The data for SPSS contains the word frequencies, which can be measured more conveniently.

and females. At this point, based on the subsample database and the Ma's and Chen's samples, social network analysis will be used to discuss the relations between cyberbullying behaviour and different genders, especially the cyberbullying word in same-gender and mixed-gender groups. All of these findings are beneficial for discussing social problems that may be caused by cyberbullying.

4.4 Focus group interviews and semi-Structured interviews: participant, procedure and data analysis

The interview has become one of the most widespread research methods in social science. There are many different interview forms and structures, such as the face-to-face interview or computer-mediated communication interview, and structured interview or unstructured interview (Opdenakker, 2006; Cohen *et al*., 2012; Brinkmann, 2014). The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to understanding and knowledge that is based on the interviewees' personal opinions and experiences (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). From the existing research, most qualitative research interviews are semi-structured, because the researcher can pose more structured questions based on the research aims, but work flexibly to tailor interview questions the interviewee's experiences and responses during the interview process (Brinkmann, 2014). In order to analyse cyberbullying behaviour, this research used interviews to organise discussions on topics, including exploring personal attitudes, actions and experiences of cyberbullying. Such features of the qualitative approach are central to understanding the experiences of both active users of Weibo and cyberbullying bystanders, as importance is also placed on some professionals' experiences and views of cyberbullying. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were conducted with the university students and some professionals to explore the sub-research questions two.

4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy and an empirical method on which the researcher proposes to rely, and is usually arranged in advance around a series of predetermined questions, but while it relies on a certain set of open questions, other questions emerge from discussions between the interviewer and the

interviewee (Bernard, 1988; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011: 102). Semi-structured interviews are conducted only once for individuals or groups, and take anything from 30 minutes to several hours to complete (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The benefit of the semi-structured interview is that it is more flexible, allowing participant respondents the freedom to talk about what is of interest or importance to them, and the researcher has more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011: 102). When the researcher has a particular topic and a design to get deep information or knowledge from their participants, semi-structured interviews are a powerful method to achieve research goals (Johnson, 2002: 104). In this research, cyberbullying is regarded as a problem that everyone might meet in their daily life. Each participant may have their own information, knowledge, and ideas about cyberbullying which may not have been thought of in advance by the researchers. Therefore, semi-structured interviews help to organise views or opinions about cyberbullying behaviour and the management of cyberbullying, and sub-research question two can be elicited by these data.

In comparison with semi-structured interviews, the focus group interview is fundamentally different, because the data is generated in a group composed of the researcher and the participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011: 166). Focus groups are an innovative approach to understanding participants' experiences, and have been defined as a 'carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment' (Krueger, 1994: 6). Unlike semi-structured interviews, multiple participants are interviewed together. In other words, focus groups with participants remove the emphasis of the interviewer-interviewee relationship in data collection methods by providing participants of similar ages the opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions among their peers (Heary & Hennessy, 2002). Although participants' interactions and conversations will affect each other, communications are an essential source of data to understand the under-researched topic. In this research, because of the exploratory nature of cyberbullying in the Chinese context, the research aim was to reach major groups of Weibo users to obtain a wide range of opinions about and experiences with cyberbullying. Thus, the focus group interview is extremely useful for providing

insights into the cyberbullying behaviour of complex views (Morgan, 1996: 139), as well as to identify the concepts and consequences of cyberbullying in the participants' daily life experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Overall, considering the differences in the interviewees' experiences and views about cyberbullying, the focus group interview is the method to understand general aspects about the topic, such as definitions, forms or individuals' views about cyberbullying, while the semi-structured interview is the best format for a deep discussion, including the challenges or potential approaches to detecting or regulating cyberbullying. The section below introduces the participants and the procedure of the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews, and also explains how the data are analysed.

4.4.2 Participants and procedure

Depending on the nature of the research questions and the limitations of time and funding, *convenience sampling*[80] was used. The standards of the participant selection were also based on the research aims and participants' availability and interests. The interviewees were all required to have the kind of knowledge, experience, and information that are relevant to the research topic (cyberbullying or preventing cyberbullying on social media).[81] That is, the interviewees for focus group interviews are undergraduate students, and the interviewees for semi-structured interviews are Weibo users and professionals (see Table 4.6). Although the interviewees in both focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews constitute a small sample, the results are not subject to further impacts. For the interview data, categorising and codifying will be considered more carefully during the data analysis process (see section 4.4.3). Besides, the interview data obtained only provides partial evidence for the considerations of the definition of cyberbullying, the influences of cyberbullying, and the challenges and regulations of cyberbullying. The project will combine the

80 A convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact or to reach. The criteria to the sampling method is only that people is available and willing to participate (Saunders, 2011).

81 The general active Weibo users might not necessarily be familiar with cyberbullying. However, in this research, the active Weibo users for focus group interviews were selected from one university. In this way, before selection, the researcher would ask the participants about their personal information and experiences to ensure that these interviewees were familiar with Sina Weibo and cyberbullying. For the interviewees who took part in semi-structured interviews, all of them were known by the researcher. Being similar with the participants for focus group interviews who have worked on their own position for at least four years, can ensure that they have enough knowledge to understand cyberbullying and relevant offensive behaviour, as well as having their own ideas about addressing cyberbullying problems.

relevant findings in the existing literature, as well as the results drawn on content analysis and social network analysis to address the sub-research question three (see Chapter VII for a more detailed discussion).

Table 4.6 Participants for Focus Group Interviews and Semi-structured Interviews

Types of Interview		Interviewees	Number
Focus group interview	Active users of Sina Weibo (Male)	Undergraduate students from School of Law in Sichuan	5*
	Active users of Sina Weibo (Female)	Undergraduate students from School of Law in Sichuan	5*
Semi-structured Interviews	Active Weibo users	Individuals who are known by researcher	9 3*
	Social media content manager	X Company's Content Management Department	1
	Psychology counselor	Individual	1
	Teachers	Primary School	1*
The term with asterisks (*) was recorded with consent, and others were with oral consent			

As for the focus group interviews, the undergraduate students who were from the School of Law attended. They were active in using Sina Weibo or had relevant experience (i.e., perpetrator, victims, or bystanders) of cyberbullying on Sina Weibo. Males and females might have different tolerance of offensive words or cyberbullying. Considering this, the 10 students were divided into two homogeneous single-sex groups to reduce the interference caused by participants' interactions and conversations during the interviews. Group one was the male group with an average age of 21.5 years, while group two was the female group with an average age of 21 years. Once these participants had agreed to participate, face-to-face interviews, to ensure that the author did not miss any non-verbal forms of communication, were organised in their supervisor's office. At the same time, the focus group interviews would be conducted by using electronic recorders with the participants' oral consent (Cresswell, 2007).

As for the individuals who took part in the semi-structured interviews, the participants were active Weibo users or professionals who work in different fields (e.g. social media company, psychological department, and schools). Among the 15 individual participants (six males and nine females) aged 24-34 years, four participants agreed to

be recorded[82]. Once they agreed to take part in the survey, the interview was conducted with them at the participants' convenience, with most of them choosing to be interviewed via real-time video calls, or telephone. The semi-structured interviews were organised to take place in the public library.

To put the participants at ease, both of these two kinds of interviews started with a self-introduction made by the author, the definition of cyberbullying, research aims, and initial questions, such as their job and how long they have used Weibo. Both kinds of interview used the same interview structure, following four key questions (see Appendix IV): 1) How do you define or identify cyberbullying? 2) What are the main types of cyberbullying on social media? 3) What are the serious problems or social questions caused by cyberbullying? And 4) In your view, what are the challenges of preventing cyberbullying on social media? However, the main focuses of these two types of interviews differ. The semi-structured interviews mainly focused on consequences of cyberbullying and challenges of regulating cyberbullying, while the focus group interviews mainly focused on the general views of cyberbullying, such as definitions, participants' experiences, or attitudes towards cyberbullying.

4.4.3 Data analysis

Numerous scholars have identified categorising and codifying the interview transcripts as the most effective method to analyse interview data (Bryman, 1988; Field & Morse, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1986). For transcripts, gaining information, and understanding individuals' views on a focused topic are the main aims. There are four general steps in examining interview data: conduct and record the interview, write transcriptions, code the data into themes, and generalise from the themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse & Richards, 2002). Due to the small sample size, this research follows the steps to analyse the interview transcripts manually to gain results (Creswell, 1998).

Firstly, the interviews transcriptions[83] with records were typed up in Microsoft Word directly. As for the interviews with no audio recording, after transcriptions had been

82 Because some of the participants refused the voice recording, the author was preoccupied with writing while the participants were talking. After finishing the interview, the author requested the participants to check the written records.
83 The transcriptions were not provided as the thesis appendix because there were nearly 120-page transcriptions. Nevertheless, the themes of the interviews were provided in Appendix VI, and the full transcriptions (data) will be made available on request.

typed up after interviews, participants were emailed so that they could validate that the content that had been recorded was an accurate reflection of what they had said. All the transcripts would be read in full without making any notes in order to get a sense of the participant's experience and views. Then, the transcript was read a second time, and during this process, some simple memos would be made in order to attract the researcher's attention when the transcript was reread.

Secondly, all the transcripts would be read a third time to make detailed notes and highlight all the information relevant to the research, such as definitions of cyberbullying, types of cyberbullying, the experiences of cyber perpetrators, cyber victims or cyberbullying bystanders, cyberbullying consequences, and the suggestions for preventing cyberbullying. First all the notes would be highlighted with different colours in the original transcripts, and then copied onto separate pieces of paper with different themes (e.g. definition, experience, consequence, and suggestion). At this stage, note taking and identification of themes were complete.

Finally, the transcripts with notes and themes (see Appendix V) would be read for the last time in the writing up of findings and discussions. The results will be presented in Chapter VII. The findings of the interviews relate to the individuals' opinions of cyberbullying, challenges of detecting cyberbullying, and advice for regulating cyberbullying; that is, the interviews would provide a clearer version of the participants' experiences and offer a deeper understanding of the social problems (negative consequences) caused by cyberbullying; they would also provide ideas and suggestions about how to prevent and manage cyberbullying.

4.5 Other key principles of the methodology

Besides the introduction of the research method approaches, there are some other key methodology principles that should be stated to keep the research ethics and ensure data validity and reliability. This section will provide brief, but important statements about the research ethics, text translation approaches, data validity and reliability and data managements.

4.5.1 Research ethical considerations: Consent

Written consent was challenging to get for this research, for two reasons: firstly, because cyberbullying is a sensitive topic to most of the participants in China, so there are those who may not want to sign the consent form or be recorded, because of the fear or embarrassment associated with exposing their status; secondly, some of the interviewees worried about their privacy. Therefore, when either the volunteers who helped data labelling, or the interviewees were contacted by Wechat or emails, those who were willing to take part in the survey, were asked to give oral consent. The oral consent contained details of the research topic, the researcher and the supervisors' information, the interview procedure, details of anonymity, guaranteed data confidentiality, and the right to withdraw,[84] which made the participants know the research topic/purposes and ensure the authenticity and objectivity of surveys. Moreover, if the participants agreed to be voice recorded during the interview, the oral consent was recorded, but if there was no voice record, the oral consent would be recorded through WeChat or email communication.

Another important research ethic issue is protecting participants' rights and minimizing harm to the participants. The most important consideration was that cyberbullying might be a trigger of the negative emotions during the interview for those who have experienced cyberbullying. In order to reduce restrictions, firstly, the interview questions were designed indirectly and the interviewer thought about how to make the participant feel relaxed enough to share their experiences. Secondly, the interview was not recorded, and the researcher told the participant that they were free to stop at any time if they did not want to continue the interview. Moreover, the protection of the interviewees' identities would also be considered during the process of analysis. At this point, the interviewees' identities would only be shown as occupations (e.g. teachers, students, workers of media and so on) and gender.

4.5.2 Text translation

In this research, single words or some comments as examples, were used to describe and analyse cyberbullying language behaviour in Chinese. To ensure that the research

84 All participants were fully informed of their rights to withdraw at any time if they want to do so.

findings and results can be better understood by other non-Chinese researchers, text translation from the Chinese to the English is an important step to ensure the word has the correct meanings. Considering the complex meanings of one Chinese word and the cultural differences between the Chinese context and the English context, references and manual inspections were used simultaneously to ensure relative accuracy of translations.

The main references for the text translations are the Modern Chinese Dictionary,[85] the New Century Chinese-English Dictionary,[86] the websites (*www.urbandictionary.com* and *translate.google.cn*), and the online swearing/taboo/vulgar words dictionary (including *wiktionary.org*, *www.noswearing.com*, and *www.cs.cmu.edu*). Besides the main references, the books, including *The Little Book of Essential Foreign Swear Words*, *The Little Book of Foreign Swear Words* and *How to Swear in English*, would be used as the supplementary materials to determine and validate the semantic referents and meanings of the swearing/taboo/vulgar words.

Since it was possible to get a variety of different meanings for a swear/taboo/vulgar word from these references, the author chose the one with the most suitable context as the translation. Actually, translation equivalents did not exist for all the Chinese words, so all the translated words would be checked by supervisors or English-language native speakers, especially the key words that were used as examples in the thesis.

4.5.3 Data validity and reliability

There are three kinds of data in this research: content analysis data, interview data and translation data. At the same time, the method of data collection is complex, ensuring that data validity and reliability is maintained in order to decrease research bias (Cohen *et al*., 2011).

Reliability in content analysis requires that the data is repeatable at a different time, or by different researchers, through the same methods and procedures (Cohen *et al*.,

85 The Modern Chinese Dictionary (Chinese name: 现代汉语词典), first published in 1978, is a normative dictionary which provides discriminatory explanations for certain words and phrases. This research takes the Modern Chinese Dictionary (6th Edition) as a reference to check the meaning of Chinese words.

86 The New Century Chinese-English Dictionary (Chinese name: 新世纪汉英大词典) is a bilingual dictionary published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and recommended by experts of China Accreditation Test for Translators and Interpreters. The consultant of the dictionary was the US scholar Charles Crow. This dictionary contained nearly 150,000 terms, including Internet phrases and cultural phrases. This research took the New Century Chinese-English Dictionary (2nd Edition) as a reference to check the English translation of Chinese words and phrases.

2011; Lacy, *et al*., 2015). In this research, the research design, the procedures for collecting sample/data, and data analysis methods were explained clearly, and the establishment of a database were explicit and transparent. This was the first step in keeping the data reliability, as it makes it easier for the study to be repeated. Secondly, the procedures of data screening, labelling, and coding were within strict rules. These rules followed the standards stated in the previous literature, as well as the social media and word features in the Chinese context. Moreover, although the interview sample is small, the findings will combine with the previous studies' results for further discussion.

Validity refers to the extent to which the research actually measures that which it sets out to measure, and includes the research design, data collection methods and data analysis (Bryman, 2008; Bell, 2010). In this research, both internal validity and external validity were considered. The internal validity concerned the rigour of the research design and in constructing measurements. Therefore, different data collection methods were used to show validity through consistency of findings, especially, the sample for content analysis and social network analysis, which were fairly representative of the population. The sample was relatively large and covered a wide range of cases from 2015 to 2018, and the supplemental samples in 2018 and 2019. Although most of these samples were selected by keyword searches, the author established strict standards to decrease the data bias and to keep the completeness and comparability. External validity refers to the degree of generalisability of the research database, or research findings to the wider population (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). Thus, the sample collection in this research almost covered typical cyberbullying cases over the last six years, and the large number of comments and the selected words presented common expressions used for cyberbullying. All of these samples and processes can be used not only for analysing cyberbullying on Sina Weibo, but also for discussing other offensive language behaviours on other social media platforms. Moreover, the author developed a coding scheme that consists of coding rules that tell other coders how to put their observations into the correct data categories. Furthermore, different references are used together to enhance the credibility of translations for the observation results. Therefore, not only the

methodology for this research, but also the procedures were comprehensive, conducting research in the wider population or representing different facets of the same concept would be practicable.

4.5.4 Data management

Data management is a key step to ensure data security and the smooth progress of the research. In this research, there are three kinds of data: raw samples and data; data collected from content analysis and social network analysis, and interview transcriptions and notes. All of these three kinds of data were saved in separate folders with passwords. For the interview with recordings, the recordings were downloaded to a file in the researcher's computer, and then named with numbers and kept in another file folder with passwords. All these data also had backup copies, which would be stored on password-protected devices, to protect the data in case of loss.

4.6 Summary: Methodological approach

This chapter firstly describes the brief research design, and then explores the detailed research methodologies. In general, the research aims influence the subsequent choices of research methods. That is, the content analysis, social network analysis and interviews were chosen as powerful methods to analyse cyberbullying in a comprehensive way in the Chinese context.

In details, content analysis is a powerful data analysis method for providing an overall view of cyberbullying language features in Chinese. The data includes large volumes of comments and single words. The processes of the whole content analysis were related to the principle of connotative and denotative word meanings to support the data for understanding and describing the cyberbullying phenomenon, including motivations of cyberbullying and the changes of offensive word usage, with language features from the specific to the general (see Chapter V for a more detailed discussion). However, content analysis cannot solve all the research questions. At this point, social network analysis and interview approaches were chosen to answer the sub-research questions.

Social network analysis focused on using contextual and sociolinguistics variables to

analyse how social interactions affect individual or group behaviour. Based on pragmatics and socio-ecological theory, the main points that will be analysed are the relations between cyberbullying language, cyberbullying forms, event natures, and gender differences through statistical analyses. Meanwhile, the design of the interviews (focus group and semi-structured) was illustrated.

Following the findings of the content analysis and social network analysis, interview results will combine the current studies to discuss the negative consequences caused by cyberbullying and the challenges of regulating cyberbullying. According to the social cognitive theory and relevant-language management theories (LPP and LMT), all the findings shown in this research are of primary importance to the reconsideration of cyberbullying features, to the discussion of the social problems, and to the considerations of the potential research implications of detecting or preventing cyberbullying. Furthermore, the other key principles, such as research ethical considerations, text translations, data validity and reliability and data managements were stated. Overall, the results and discussions will be shown in the findings chapters (Chapter V and VI) and the discussion chapter (Chapter VII).

Chapter V Cyberbullying on Social Media in China

5.1 Analytical research lenses

According to the research questions and aims, three analytical lenses in this research have been identified as necessary to the empirical study.

The first lens is cyberbullying language features and classifications in the Chinese context, as well as cyberbullying word changes and motivations of cyberbullying. At this angle, the corpora and datasets used in this research which were established through an adequate selection of samples consists of both cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words.

The second lens, contextual and sociolinguistics variables through social network analysis are used for a comprehensive analysis of cyberbullying behaviour on social media. To this lens, the focuses are not only on the communication and contextual features, but also on the relations between cyberbullying language use and different genders.

The third lens, analysis of social problems caused by cyberbullying, is important. Although cyberbullying is a typical online problem, it causes serious social problems and consequences to both individuals and society. The analyses and discussions of the social problems caused by cyberbullying will answer the sub-research question two, as well as providing some basic research findings for potential approaches to detecting or preventing cyberbullying (the sub-research question three).

In this chapter, the focus is on the first lens, with Chapter VI and Chapter VII having a detailed analysis of the other two lenses. All the example characters, words and phrases used in this chapter follow two standards: typical ones and high frequency use. The findings will mainly focus on the general features of the cyberbullying word categories, the relations between motivations and language usage, the cyberbullying word changes, and the differences and relations between cyberbullying (sensitive cyberbullying) words in Chinese and swear/taboo words in English.

5.2 Cyberbullying word categories in Chinese

According to semantics and pragmatics principles, words can be classified into different categories based on their meanings and functions. There is a lack of cyberbullying word categories, so this research took the swear and taboo word categories and the Chinese word features and usages, as a point of references to identify the cyberbullying word classifications in the Chinese context.

As stated in the methodology chapter, the data screening procedure is followed by four criteria for data collection. These criteria considered cyberbullying features, swear and taboo word meanings and functions, and Chinese words and Chinese social media features. For the categorisation procedure of cyberbullying language, these four elements are also important to identify word categories, although many of the Chinese words have complex functions, and some of their functions are crossover.

Briefly, cyberbullying features are the primary consideration. In this way, the purposes for word using is particularly used to caterorise the words. For example, the word 不要脸 (*bú yào liǎn*, refers to shameless) can be used as an emotional word and an abusive word, but during the cyberbullying process, this word is often used to express strong emotions, not for attacking, so that I identify it as an emotional word for further analysing. Thus, although word category crossover is one of the main features of the cyberbullying words included in the 2000-word database, the artificial categories focusing on one particular angles would reduce the contestable crossover caused by flexible usage of one word. Combining with the Chinese word features/usages on social media, all of these 2,000 words were classified into six main categories: abusing word category, sexual word category, cursing word category, emotional, emphatic and cathartic word category, newly-emerging word category, and idiomatic set phrase and ordinary words with special meaning category (see Appendix III). The details are presented below:

> An abusing word is a word that is derogatory, or involves metaphoric curses, and is always considered obnoxious and rude, directly when it is used to intimidate or humiliate someone (Sollid, 2008). The main purpose of these words are abusing or insulting others (e.g. fuck you asshole!) (Stong *et al*.,

2011). In this way, the usage of this category can be counted as direct cyberbullying behaviour, which contains metaphors, accusations and other offensive language (Wang, 2013).

A sexual word is a kind of obscenity or is harmful language with sexual features or relating to sexual acts, including sexual body parts or behaviour (Pinker, 2007). This category contains the most offensive words referring to anatomy and sex, and words even rudely suggesting anatomical or sexual matters (Battistella, 2005: 70-71).

Cursing words is a category that the speaker uses to express a wish or invoke harm on another person with certain words or phrases (Sollid, 2008). These expressions act like powerful threatening utterances to show punishing, injuring or destroying to something or somebody (Mercury, 1995).

Emotional words and emphatic and cathartic words can be considered and used together. An emotional word expresses an emotion (e.g. happy or angry), emotional processes or function (e.g. to worry), to either describing (e.g. he is happy) or expressing feelings directly (e.g. I feel delighted) (Quan & Ren, 2010). In some contexts, emotional words can also be abstract words to describe behaviour related to particular emotions without naming the actual emotions, such as cry, tears and laugh (Cervantes, 2002), and emotion-laden words to express or elicit emotions from the interlocutors (Pavlenko, 2008). Emphatic and cathartic words are used as bridge functions to describe an event or person in a negative or positive way, with emphasized emotions (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). In details, emphatic words are used to emphasise something (e.g. It was so fucking big!) and cathartic word is often used when something terrible happens and the speaker is undergoing a negative emotion (e.g. Damn this coffee!) (Pinker, 2007; Stong *et al*., 2011)

The newly-emerging word category contains words/phrases created by internet users, or the words/phrases that have changed their meanings based on social culture or specific events. This category includes some mildly offensive words, such as disgusting objects and excretory words.

Idiomatic set phrases and ordinary words with special meaning category contains words that are actually neutral in daily life. The main purposes of them are used to arouse interest or to show off, thus, they are not necessary for analysing directly offensive words separately, but should be considered in the context to identify the part of speech (Pinker, 2007; Stong *et al*., 2011).

Furthermore, the classifications of swear and taboo words are also the references for the categorisation of words in Chinese. In the existing research, the categorisation of swear and taboo words were mainly based on meanings, or were classified as targets or functions (Hughes, 1991: 3). Different researchers have their own views of classifying swear and taboo words (see the summary in Appendix VII). For example, Napoli and Hoeksema (2009) pointed out four main topics of swear words, including religion, health, sex, and bodily excretion. Ljung (2010) also provided some other themes for swear words, such as mothers, animals, death, prostitution, ethnic backgrounds, and levels of intelligence. Moreover, Jay (1992, 2000) points out that when the target of swearing is a person, the utterance of emotionally powerful and offensive words is widely used to produce an emotional impact on the targets, such as bastard, slut and bitch. Besides, there are also some examples that evoke strong emotions and offence indirectly, for example, hell, damn and bullshit. In this research, the classification of swear and taboo words will be used to summarise the sub-categorisation of cyberbullying words.

In details, the subcategory of each word category of these 2,000-word database includes attacking and insulting words (e.g. fuck or fuck you!), sexual reference/anatomy/deviation words (e.g. bitch and cunt), scatological and disgusting objects (e.g. shit and crap), slurs and vulgar terms (e.g. motherfucking), dark meaning words (e.g. green hats), ancestral allusions (e.g. son of a bitch) and animal names (e.g. dog and pig). Besides these, the single characters/words or word formation features in each category can be summarised as Pinyin, English words, transliteration, abbreviations, homophonic words, homophones, homonyms, analogies, metaphors, satire, idioms, portmanteau formations, coined new words, some common words with negative or offensive meanings and the protagonists' names. Generally, the offensive meaning is not the only criterion for judging whether it is a cyberbullying word. At

the same time, all the cyberbullying word usages also reflect the relations between language and context, and new cyberbullying words can emerge based on typical topics or motivations.

5.3 The language features of cyberbullying words on Sina Weibo

This section presents the results of the content analysis according to the principles of semantics theory - the word connotation and denotation, to analyse the cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying word meanings and features, and classify them into different categories. The following subsections will use typical characters/words/phrases and subcategory features as examples to answer the central research question: what are the cyberbullying language features, characteristics and usages on social media in China? Briefly, all the examples were the ones widely used for cyberbullying purposes, and had strong offensive meanings or had typical meanings during the cyberbullying process.

5.3.1 Abusive word category

The abusive words from the chosen samples can be divided into two main classifications in this research: attacking and insulting. According to the frequency statistics, the top five popular abusive words are: 逼 (*bī,* homophone of 屄, refers to cunt, 9,143 times), 操 (*cāo,* the homonym of 肏, refers to fuck, 7,764 times), 脑残 (*nǎo cán*, insults, refers to shithead, 7,418 times), 滚 (*gǔn*, refers to fuck off, 6,881 times), 傻 (*shǎ*, refers to stupid, 4,815 times). These five high frequency words cover the main functions of the abusive word category: attacking, insulting or putting pressures on targets. The summary of the typical abusive examples, *fuck* and *cunt* in Chinese, are presented in Table 5.1 that will be introduced in detail, because these two words not only have strongly offensive meanings and are widely used in Chinese, but are also related to the most strongly offensive words in English (Millwood-Hargreave, 2000: 9-10; McEnery, 2004).

Table 5.1 The Offensive Characters/Words/Phrases of 'Fuck' and 'Cunt' and Their Variants in Chinese

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Fuck</th><th colspan="4">Cunt</th></tr>
<tr><td>Chinese Original Form</td><td colspan="2">肏</td><td>Chinese Original Form</td><td>Female</td><td colspan="2">尻</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="8">Variants</td><td rowspan="5">Pinyin</td><td>Cao</td><td rowspan="2">Variants</td><td rowspan="2">Pinyin</td><td>Female</td><td>Bi</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Homophonic Words</td><td>操</td><td>Homophone</td><td colspan="2">逼</td></tr>
<tr><td>曹</td><td rowspan="7">Phrase</td><td rowspan="5">Intellectual Attack</td><td rowspan="2">Original Form</td><td>傻尻</td></tr>
<tr><td>槽</td><td>傻屌</td></tr>
<tr><td>草</td><td rowspan="3">Homophonic Words</td><td>傻逼</td></tr>
<tr><td>艹</td><td>傻 B</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">English</td><td rowspan="4">Fuck you</td><td>煞笔</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Phrase</td><td rowspan="4">I + Fuck</td><td>我操</td><td>蠢逼</td></tr>
<tr><td>(我) 操你妈</td><td>Appearance Attack</td><td colspan="2">逼脸</td></tr>
<tr><td>我操你妈</td><td rowspan="3">Show Attitudes</td><td colspan="2">不要逼脸</td></tr>
<tr><td>我操你妈逼</td><td colspan="2">狗逼烦</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Initial Abbreviation</td><td>CNM (操你妈)</td><td colspan="2">逼嘴</td></tr>
<tr><td>WC (我操)</td><td colspan="2">装逼</td></tr>
</table>

Table 5.1 shows the formations and forms of *fuck* in Chinese. There are four kinds of usages of the term *fuck*: 1) uses the English phrase directly (e.g. fuck you), 2) uses the original Chinese character directly (e.g. 肏 *cào*[87]), 3) uses the Pinyin, homonyms of 肏 (e.g. 操 *cāo* and 草 *cǎo*), and 4) combined *Cao* or *Fuck* with other words into abbreviations, phrases, and portmanteau formations (e.g. caonima and CNM). In comparison with the swear word *fuck* in English, the word formations of *fuck* in Chinese become more complicated, with the meanings and functions expressing emotions or 'sexual acts'.

In detail, the first function is shown as the first three usages of abbreviations and homophonic words, which give enhanced attention to negative emotions, including feelings of anger and sadness (Dewaele, 2004). From the selected comments, the

87 In China, the *Basic Rules of Hanyu Pinyin Orthography* is issued by the Chinese State Bureau of Technical Supervision. There are seven specific rules, including labeling the pronunciation one by one, labeling the pronunciation by words, and etc. Taking into account the characteristics of the research example words and the purpose of the phonetic method, all the Chinese examples in this thesis will be labelled based on the pronunciation one by one. (ref. https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%B1%89%E8%AF%AD%E6%8B%BC%E9%9F%B3%E6%AD%A3%E8%AF%8D%E6%B3%95%E5%9F%BA%E6%9C%AC%E8%A7%84%E5%88%99)

character 操[88] (*cāo*, 7,764 times) is the synonym of the character 肏[89] (*cào*, 57 times), and all its morphological variants such as 曹 (*cáo*, customarily used as a surname in Chinese, 185 times), 槽 (*cáo*, refers to groove, 97 times), 草 (*cǎo*, refers to grass, 2,060 times) and 艹 (customarily used as a radical in Chinese, 2,830 times) were used to show offensive meanings or attacking purposes. However, some of these words are ordinary words, but it is difficult to distinguish the offensive meanings without the context, and sometimes the functions are similar with the word *fucking* in English to express emotions (see subsection 5.3.4 for the explanation).

Secondly, when the term *fuck* is used with the first-person plural pronoun as a phrase. This kind of lexeme is more impolite. The most common one is 我操 (*wǒ cāo*, refers to I fucked/fuck, 414 times), and the forms related to Pinyin, abbreviations and homophonic words. In comparison with the character 操 (*cāo*), the literal or denotative uses can be seen as emotional functions, which is stronger and might cause direct harm. Moreover, the term *fuck* is often used with a subject and an object to become a portmanteau formation. At this stage, it is vulgar to use it to deliberately attack someone, as in a face to face threat (e.g. 操你!, *cāo nǐ*, refers to fucked you!, 1,071 times); ruder when used to aggressively bully someone's family member, especially females (e.g. 操你妈!, *cāo nǐ mā*, 865 times, refers to fuck you mother! or 我操你妈!, *wǒ cāo nǐ mā,* 187 times, refers to I fucked your mother!); and rudest when occurring as the result of combining the term *fuck* with both a subject, an object or the term *cunt* (e.g. 操你妈逼! or 我操你妈逼!, refers to fuck your mother's cunt! or I fucked your mother's cunt!).

The lexeme *fuck* and its different forms in Chinese were commonly used online, especially the fourth usage. Besides the term *fuck* and its portmanteau formations, the lexeme *cunt* is also the rudest and most strongly offensive word in both English and Chinese. In the Chinese context, the character *cunt* (Chinese: 屄[90] *bī*) is rarely used directly, but used in homophones (e.g. *B*, and 逼 *bī*) combining with other words to

88 The character 操 is not a Polyphone in Mandarin, but when it is used in the phrases such as 我操 and 操你妈, the more common pronunciation is *cào*. One reason is that the character 操 is the homonym of 肏 (*cào*); and another reason is that in the dialect, the character 操 can be pronounced as *cào*.

89 In the Modern Chinese-English Dictionary (ed. 2), the denotative meaning of the word 肏 is a taboo word which means fuck, and the dictionary points out that its synonym is 操 (p.158).

90 In the Modern Chinese-English Dictionary (ed. 2), the denotative meaning of the word 屄 is an original taboo word which means cunt (p.75).

provide strong offence, because the word 屄 is not be recognised by everyone. In this way, internet users use the Chinese word 逼 (*bī*) to replace 屄 which becomes the most commonly used sexual word (9,143 times) to abuse others.[91] The corpora and the portmanteau formation of *cunt*, is a more complex word in different contexts. Its three common usages are summarised: 1) using with f-words and first-person or second-person plural pronouns; 2) using with 'stupid' to attack one's intelligence or behaviour; and 3) using with verbs, adjectives or nouns to abuse someone directly (see Table 5.1).

The first form, 我操你妈逼 (*wǒ cāo nǐ mā bī*, refers to I fucked your mother's cunt) is a more strongly offensive expression than the phrase *fuck you*. This kind of expression is usually used to show strong emotions, and the function is always offensive and negative. The second form is using *cunt* together with the character *stupid*. At this point, the expression, 傻屄 (*shǎ bī*, refers to dopey cunt), becomes a negative Chinese slang word to attack intelligence or behaviour.

There are several 'interesting' features of this word. 傻屄 is translated into 'stupid female reproductive system'. At the beginning, this word was used to attack a female who did not refuse any sexual acts, but later this word became be used for both females' and males' unpleasant or stupid behaviour. In comparison with the original form 傻屄, internet users prefer to use its variants including homophonic words and abbreviations. The most widely used variants are the word 傻逼 (*shǎ bī*) and its homophonic and morphological variants, such as the initial abbreviation 'SB', the word 傻 B (*shǎ B*, a combined word), 煞笔 *(shā bǐ*, originally used as meaning the end of an article in Chinese), 沙比 (*shā bǐ*, a new coined word), 沙壁 (*shā bì*, refers to sand wall), and etc.[92] More interestingly, although the word 傻屄 can be used for females and males, the term 傻屌 (*shǎ diǎo,* refers to fuckstick, and 屌 is the male reproductive system) is also commonly used to attack a male. Similar to the word 傻屄, 傻屌 is the most common cuss word to describe a male who is intellectually or morally harmful towards society or who has done something idiotic.

91 Ref. https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%82%BB%E5%B1%84

92 All of these word formations are homophonic. The pronunciation of the word '屄' (cunt) is '*bī*', which is the same as the English alphabet B.

The final form of *cunt,* as an abusive word, is used with verbs, adjectives or nouns. As one might see from the selected comments, there are a significant number of portmanteau formations made with 屄 or 逼 to show offensive or negative meanings and attitudes. The typical usages are shown as threefold.

Firstly, the formulaic use is the form of *逼 + noun*. In this formation, the part of speech of 逼 is an adjective, which means something like the female reproductive system. For example, the word 逼脸 (*bī liǎn*, 脸 refers to the face, similar to the homophonic words of 碧莲 *bì lián* and 碧脸 *bì liǎn*) is used to attack one's appearance or behaviour (similar with the vulgar *assface* or *clitface*),[93] while the most offensive expression is used with negative words to attack targets, such as 不要逼脸 (*bù yào bī liǎn*, referring to lose your assface).

Secondly, the formulaic use of *逼 + noun* works as an emphasis function. One of the examples is the phrase 狗逼烦 (*gǒu bī fán*, 烦 refers to irritated). This phrase enhances the offensiveness in two ways: 1) 狗逼 (*gǒu bī*, refers to a dog's reproductive system) is used to describe a person's behaviour or character is like the dog's reproductive system, and 2) it is also used to modify the attitude word 烦 (*fán*, refers to annoying), which means 'fucking annoying'.

Thirdly, the formulaic use of *verb + 逼* is to express irony. At this point, the word 逼 (屄) works as its original meaning, and the phrase 装逼 (*zhuāng bī,* 装 refers to the verb pretend, similar to the homophonic words of 装比 *zhuāng bǐ* and 装叉 *zhuāng chā*) is used to describe a person who pretends as a reproductive system. It is used as satire to refer to someone whose behaviour is stupid. It is worth mentioning that although the character *cunt* and its phrases have offensive meanings, their functions are similar with the lexeme *fuck*. Internet users do not always use them singly and directly to show offensive purposes, and the exact functions of these words, or the level of offensiveness should be considered in context (see Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion).

Besides the typical forms and morphological variants of the terms of *fuck* and *cunt*,

93 The meaning of the Chinese word 逼脸 is totally different from the English vulgar cuntface. Although the word formation of the word 逼脸 is 'cunt + face', the meaning and function are used to attack the appearance or behaviour.

there are some other words with offensive, or probably offensive meanings or functions, for abusing or insulting. These words can be summarised into five subcategories: insulting people's appearance, insulting people's intelligence, attacking people's behaviour, epithets, and animal names. The word formations include insults, sarcasm, and offensive emotional outbursts of words or phrases.

Insulting people's appearance

The commonly used character to attack someone's physical appearance is 丑 (*chǒu*, refers to ugly). When the single or the 'light' derogatory adjective does not indicate the strength of insulting, the degree words[94] (e.g. 太 *tài,* 真 *zhēn* and 很 *hěn*, refers to very or real) would be used, such as 太丑 (*tài chǒu*, refers to very ugly). In addition, there is the strongest derogatory word of using the term cunt and its variants to insult people's appearance, like 丑比 (*chǒu bǐ,* refers very ugly and looking like a reproductive system). This kind of phrase can be seen as a direct attack, which is similar to the first formulaic use of the character 屄.

Insulting people's intelligence

Similar to the words that are used to insult peoples' appearance, the characters and words that are used to attack peoples' intelligence are also commonly used. The single characters include 笨 (*bèn*, refers to foolish) and 蠢 (*chǔn*, refers to stupid), while the widely used metaphorical words contain 脑残 (*nǎo cán*, refers to shithead) and 弱智 (*ruò zhì*, refers to mentally handicapped). There is also a phrase that is combined with *cunt*, such as 蠢比 (*chǔn bǐ,* homonym of 蠢逼 *chǔn bī*, refers to peckerhead/dildo) to show offensiveness.

Attacking people's behaviour

In addition to the expression related to insulting physical appearance and intelligence, expressions that are used to attack people's behaviour are also widely deployed. The typical forms are noun descriptions. For example, the words, such as 坏蛋 (*huài dàn*, similar to 坏人 *huài rén*, refers to badass) and 混蛋 (*hún dàn*, refers to asshole) can be used for an unpleasant or despicable person, and the words 背叛者 (*bèi pàn zhě*,

94 In Chinese, degree words appear with high frequencies and are associated with the intensities of emotions. Generally, the degree word is used to directly modify emotional words, adjectives or phrases to express a stronger emotion (Quan & Ren, 2009).

refers to betrayal), 诈骗犯 (*zhà piàn fàn*, refers to fraudster) and 杀人犯 (*shā rén fàn*, refers to murder) relate to the target who has certain negative behaviours. Moreover, the words like 人渣 (*rén zhā*, refers to scumbag), 野种 (*yě zhǒng*, refers to son of a bitch) and 败类 (*bài lèi*, refers to scum of a community) are always with stronger offensive emotions to describe or attack a person having, or probably having contemptible or objectionable behaviour. All these examples are regardless of gender.

Epithets

Jay (2009) defined epithet as a powerful burst of emotional language due to sudden anger or frustration, or to express the speaker's rage or attack someone. The forms of epithet could refer to gender, religion, ethnic origin, sexuality, disabilities, appearance of a person and other characteristics (Greenawalt, 1989; Battistella, 2005: 95), but in Chinese, they are always coined with sexuality, terrible issues and some animal names. As for the epithets themselves, they can be positive, negative or have neutral qualities, but when considering epithets for cyberbullying, most of them are negative. According to the epithets from the selected samples, they always had particular targets and were coined from the features of the targets or the targets' concerns. The forms could be summarised into two types: the bitch-related *words* with surnames (e.g. 马婊 *mǎ biǎo* and 李婊子 *lǐ biǎo zi*, the word 婊 (*biǎo*) refers to *bitch* in English), and the epithets based on the issue feature (e.g. 潘金蓉[95], *pān jīn róng*).

Animal names

Broadly speaking, there are three main animal name roots used to insult someone in the Chinese context: 狗(*gǒu*, refers to dog), 驴 (*lǘ*, refers to donkey) and 猪 (*zhū*, refers to pig). The common features of them are that they are created from Chinese culture or ancestral allusions, and are used as derogatory terms to attack/satirise/insult people directly. For example, the word root *dog* and its word forms have wide meanings and are often used to insult people's behaviour regardless of gender, because the image of a dog in Chinese ancestral allusions was worthless.[96] In

95 'Pan Jinlian' or 'Jin Lian' is the name of a female fictional character in a Chinese novel. This fictional character betrayed her marriage and had sex behaviour with another male. Nowadays, people prefer to use this name to describe and satirize a female who had unacceptable behaviour.

96 In ancient China, dogs were not regarded as companions but mostly as work animals for shepherding and assisting some of the farm labour. Although these dogs were considered useful, they weren't generally considered pets. From a Confucius perspective, the image of dogs was unrelated to courage and docility and was always used to sacrifice. Besides, dogs did not enjoy a high status in the past and this has only changed since modern times. (ref. https://xw.qq.com/cmsid/20190227A0FUXJ/20190227A0FUXJ00)

comparison with the word root *dog*, the word root *donkey* and *pig* are always used to satirise people as despicable or foolish, such as 蠢驴 (*chǔn lǘ*, refers to moron) and 蠢猪 (*chǔn zhū*, refers to idiot). Therefore, it can be found that epithets with animal names are created based on culture, or the animals' features, and have different functions. Some of them can be used as other kinds of epithets to attack the targets, while others can be used directly to insult a person's personality.

Overall, taking all the abusive expression examples as a whole, it can be observed that some of the character, word and phrase formations cover the extremely offensive words (e.g. the characters *fuck* and *cunt* and the relevant phrases). Although some of them are ordinary words and do not have obvious offensive or negative meanings, they still have negative functions in typical context. From all the examples shown in this subsection, the common feature is that most of the abusing words are used to attack the targets directly. It can be speculated that these expressions (e.g. rude phrases, metaphors and epithets) should be directly regarded as cyberbullying words, as they can be easily recognised in the comments or context.

5.3.2 Sexual word category

Sex is a taboo topic in many cultures and countries. People find it difficult to discuss sexuality (e.g. menstruation, masturbation, and intercourse), and sex talking is avoided in most situations because it is likely to cause anxiety (Goldenberg *et al*., 1999). However, sexual words or phrases do not always have offensive functions depending on the cultural differences or the context. Following the category structure put forward by Mabry (1974),[97] the sexual words in this research are classified into two categories: directly sexual words (including personally demeaning words and sexual obscenities) and words/phrases with sexual connotations (including technical expressions, latent sexual terms and euphemistic expressions). Table 5.2 shows the typical examples of the sexual characters *whore* and *bitch* and their variants, which are selected from the corpora in the Chinese context.

97 Mabry (1974) chose 283 college students as the respondents of a questionnaire on personal use of 'sexual vernacular' in a conversation, aiming to investigate the dimensions of profane language. The ratings were produced on the basis of five separate factors: abrasive, technical, abrasive-expletive, latent, and euphemistic. Mabry found that two elements are exemplified by taboo words which were then labelled as sexual obscenities (e.g. cock and cunt) and personally defaming words (e.g. bastard and bitch). The other three factors can be used in polite company or mass media, i.e. technical expressions (e.g. penis and vagina), latent sexual terms (e.g. behind and goose) and euphemistic expressions (e.g. make love and go to bed).

Table 5.2 The Offensive Characters/Words/Phrases of 'Bitch' and 'Whore' and Their Variants in Chinese

贱		婊	
Chinese Form	贱	**Chinese Form**	婊
Pinyin	jian	**English Form**	bitch
	jian ren	**Pin Yin**	biao
Typical Phrases	贱人	**Typical Phrases**	婊子
	贱货	**Typical Phrases with *贱***	贱婊
	贱骨头		
	贱妇		
	贱娘们		
	贱女人		
Typical Phrases with *Cunt*	贱屄/贱逼		贱婊子
Typical Phrases with Degree Words	很贱		
	最贱		
	真贱		

Among all the selected examples, the characters 贱[100] (*jiàn*, refers to bitch or slut, 20,340 times) and 婊[101] (*biǎo*, refers to whore, 3,812 times) are the most prominent exemplars, and are relatively simple and common initial examples of the sexuual word category. Briefly, the usage frequencies of the lexeme 婊 and its morphological variants covered 14.39% of all the selected sexual words, ranking at the top, while the lexeme 贱 and its morphological variants were the second most highly used (12.26%). The widely used variants of these two word roots included English words (e.g. bitch), Pinyin (e.g. *jian* and *biao*), homophonic words (e.g. 婊砸 *biǎo zá*, a homophonic word of 婊子 *biǎo zi*), and transliteration words (e.g. bichi, a transliteration from the English word 'bitch'). The visual feature is that the relevant expressions of 贱 and 婊 have stronger offensive emotions, not only when used in phrases, but also when used separately. However, in comparison with the lexeme 贱, the lexeme 婊 is more offensive in both the Chinese and English contexts. This is because the expressions and phrases with 婊 are especially used to abuse a woman who feels or reveals an obvious sexual desire, or behaves like a prostitute, and they

100 According to the denotative meanings of the character 贱 in the Chinese dictionary (Modern Chinese Dictionary, ed.6), this character refers to humble and despicable, as well as mean and cheap (p.226). Therefore, the character 贱 has an offensive meaning in Chinese originally.

101 According to the denotative meanings of the character 婊 in the Chinese dictionary (Modern Chinese Dictionary, ed.6), this character is used to insult and abuse others, especially females (p.31).

are always used with abusive words which have sexual features.[100]

However, compared with the character 婊, although the offensive level of the character 贱 is lighter, but the expressions are various. Considering forms that use the expression 贱, the word can be inserted into general pronouns, or be used for modifying them. For the first usage, the character 贱 always works as an adjective without gender features, and focuses on a person who did a despicable or very unpleasant thing, including, but not limited to sexual behaviour. The typical examples are the words 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, refers to slut), 贱货 (*jiàn huò*, refers to schlock), 贱骨头 (*jiàn gǔ tou*, refers to miserable wretch) and 贱事 (*jiàn shì*, refers to the fucking things). All of them can be used to insult others if their behaviour or characters are unsatisfied or unacceptable.

For the second usage, the words in which the character 贱 is inserted are always strong expressions, describing the target with certain sexual or despicable behaviours, and are always used for female targets, such as the words 贱妇 (*jiàn fù*), 贱娘们 (*jiàn niáng men*), 贱女人 (*jiàn nǚ rén*) and 贱婢 (*jiàn bì*)[101] which all refer to *hussy*. At this point, the character 贱 always has a similar meaning to *whore* to insult a woman. Besides the pronouns for females, the rudest example is combining 贱 with the character *cunt* to make a new word (e.g. 贱屄 *jiàn bī* and 贱逼 *jiàn bī*, refers to fugly cunt). At this point, the word *cunt* refers to females, and with the strongest functions (e.g. fucking women), so that the phrases are the most offensive words, stronger than the words *bitch* and *lascivious.*

Besides the typical examples of the strong, offensive sexual words, there are some subcategory words that have offensive or mildly offensive meanings with sexual features. These words have three different kinds of targets: females, males and sexual minorities, and the functions of these words are to describe or insult target features, sexual ethics, and sexual behaviour.

Insulting words with target features

100 From Appendix IV The Summary Table of Cyberbullying and Sensitive Cyberbullying Words from the Chosen Samples, it can be found that compared with all issues, the usage frequencies of the characters 婊 and 淫 are higher when the events' protagonists are females.

101 The words 妇, 娘们 (娘), 女人 and 婢 are all different pronouns of female in the Chinese language.

As for these kinds of words, the commonly used ones to females are the characters 淫 (*yín*, refers to lascivious), 骚 (*sāo*, refers to coquettish), 浪 (*làng*, refers to dissolute), 荡 (*dàng*, refers to dissolute), and 烂 (*làn*, refers to dissipated). These expressions are mainly about insulting females who are believed to involve in frequent sexual behaviour. The more offensive expressions are using these characters with the female personal pronoun (e.g. 女人 *nǚ rén* and 妇 *fù*), to show direct insults. Besides the direct expressions, there are also some sexual epithets with target features, such as 泼妇 (*pō fù*, refers to shrew/vixen), 三八 (*sān bā*, refers to nosy parker) and 破鞋 (*pò xié*, metaphors, refers to loose woman), which work as rude and disrespectful expressions to insult females' behaviour or characters.

Insulting words with sexual ethics

Sexual ethics is another widely used point for insulting. For instance, the characters 娼 (*chāng*, refers to prostitute/slut) and 妓[102] (*jì*, refers to prostitute), as well as the word 卖淫 (*mài yín*, refers to prostitution), are always used to describe a person who works as a prostitute, or engages in sexual behaviour without ethics. Moreover, the words 乱伦 (*luàn lún*, refers to fornication), 姘头 (*pīn tou*, refers to paramour), 姘夫 (*pīn fū*, refers to male paramour), and 姘妇 (*pīn fù*, refers to mistress) are used to insult the targets who are believed to be in an unacceptable sexual relationship.

Insulting words with sexual behaviour

In addition to the words to insult a female's features and her sexual ethics, some sexual words related to sexual activities sound ironical, rather than angry. The most commonly used is the character *fuck* and its variants with the personal pronouns phrase, including sexual characters 贱 and 婊. They have similar abusive functions and strong emotions. Besides this, there are some sexual behaviour-related words to show offensiveness or satire, including the direct expressions (e.g. 嫖客 *piáo kè*, refers to brothel frequenter) and the indirect (metaphor) expressions (e.g. 春药 *chūn yào,* refers to aphrodisiac). These words are impolite expressions, but not widely used in the corpus (6.84%). Some of them can be considered as direct sexual attacks, but

102 It is worth mentioning that the character *chicken* and all of its forms sometimes refer to a whore. Because the pronunciation of 鸡 (*jī*, refers to chicken) is very similar to the pronunciation of 妓 (妓女 *jì nǚ* or 妓 *jì*) that refers to the whore.

others should be checked in context to identify whether they are offensive or not.

To sum up, in general, the sexual words with slang features in the Chinese context are very similar to strongly abusive words, while other terms with target or sexual features are sometimes mildly offensive. Although these sexual expressions are related to different targets with various functions, all of them have the same structural meanings: gender-related meanings or sexual behaviour-related meanings. Needless to say, a high proportion of the sexual words are aimed almost exclusively towards women, while only a small number of sexual words or expressions are related to males (1.89% of all the sexual expression) and homosexuals (2.7% of all the sexual expression). This finding is very similar to other researchers' views (e.g. Schulz; 1975; Stanley; 1975; Miller & Swift, 1976; Hartman & Judd, 1978). They noted the growth in abusive or sexually contemptuous terms applicable to attacking females, rather than males, with most of these words in the semantic areas of illicit/casual sex, sexual insulting words, and animal terms. However, as for the functions or negative effects of such words, words that imply that men are sexually inadequate, socially inept, or otherwise undesirable include *motherfucker*, *bastard*, *prick*, *pussy*, and *son-of-a-bitch*, whereas women are insulted by words such as *whore*, *bitch* and *cockteaser*.

5.3.3 Cursing word category: Words for cursing or wishing harms

Cursing words are more like words that *call on God* inappropriately, often to harm someone, or for some other ungodly purpose in English in earlier times (Mercury, 1995), but now are seen as simply a wish of misfortune or harm on others, such as the examples like *damn you* and *eat shit and die*. Therefore, there are few differences between cursing words in English and in Chinese nowadays, but cursing words in the Chinese context have their own features, meanings and word formations. In this research, the typical cursing expressions from the corpora (7.37% of the total number of the selected words) will be introduced. All of these expressions can be classified into four classes (see Table 5.3): 1) the direct expression relevant to 'die' or 'death'; 2) a description relevant to 'die' or 'death'; 3) the cursing of family members; and 4) the expression of bad wishes, including the expression of disease, or other results of poor health. Among all these four classes, the most commonly used class (near 80%) is the

expression relevant to ‘die’ or ‘death’, including the direct expression (42.57%) and the relevant description (37.16%).

Table 5.3 The Typical Cursing Expressions in Chinese from the Selected Samples

Terms	Typical Examples					
Direct expression relevant to ‘die’ or the ‘death’	死	死绝	死了	去世	去死	离世
Description relevant to ‘die’ or the ‘death’	车祸	撞死	暴毙	安葬	烧纸	骨灰
Curse to the family members	全家死了	孤儿	没爹没妈	司马	死妈	死娘
Expression of bad results	脑死亡	绝症	不治之症	脑积水	癌症	脑瘫

As for the direct expression relevant to ‘die’ or ‘death’, the character 死 (*sǐ*, refers to die/dead/death) and its phrases are typical examples. In addition to using the English word *die*, the expressions of ‘death’ or ‘die’ in Chinese have various forms. The most straightforward way is using the term 死 (16,799 times) to show cursing directly, but actually its word nature is neutral. That is why, when people use the character 死 to curse someone, they prefer to use phrases.

The top three phrases from chosen samples are 死了 (*sǐ le*, refers to died, 7,536 times, similar to 死去 *sǐ qù* and 死亡 *sǐ wáng*), 去死 (*qù sǐ*, refers to go to hell, 5,753 times), 去世 (*qù shì*, refers to pass away, similar to 离世 *lí shì*) and 去死吧 (*qù sǐ ba*, refers to go to hell, 3,371 times). One point that can be found is that some of these phrases can be also used in daily communication of a neutral nature (e.g. joking or describing a state), but mostly, they are negatively used for cursing. However, the strongest and most offensive cursing words, such as the word 死绝 (*sǐ jué*, refers to all of your family members die) and the phrase 死无葬身之地 (*sǐ wú zàng shēn zhī dì*, refers to die without a burial place), are the most negative ones for cursing purposes, because in Chinese culture, cursing family members, or cursing people to die and not have a burial place are not tolerable for most people.

The description relevant to ‘die’ or ‘death’ is the second commonly used formation to

indicate cursing purposes. This subcategory focuses on the words that relate to some sacrificial activities or behaviour, some cursing behaviour and profane or blasphemous terms. For example, the words 安息 (*ān xī*), 出殡 (*chū bìn*) and 烧纸 (*shāo zhǐ*) are used to describe sacrificial activities or behaviour in China, but for cyberbullying, they are used as cursing targets involving death. Descriptions of the manner of dying, including strong and stronger expressions of the means of dying, and wishing suicide on someone, are other ways to curse or wish harms. The word formations are 'accident for death', 'die tragically' or 'suicide'. For example, the words 撞死 (*zhuàng sǐ*, refers to knocked to death) and 饿死 (*è sǐ*, refers to starve) are the meanings of car accident and starving to death. The words 必死 (*bì sǐ*, refers to be certain to die) and 暴毙 (*bào bì*, refers to sudden death) mean that the speaker wishes the target to die tragically. Moreover, there are also some similar words to 'damn' and 'hell' in Chinese, such as the phrases 遭报应 (*zāo bào yìng*, refers to get the retribution) and 下地狱 (*xià dì yù*, refers to go to hell), which are also widely used to show bad wishes.

The third subcategory is used to curse a person's family members, which for most people is intolerable. Although this kinds of expressions is at a small percentage of the corpus, the word formations are flexible. The usages can be using any family members' name with the word *death* or any words that suggests that family members have died. However, there are two words that need a deep description: 孤儿 (*gū ér*, refers to orphan) and 司马 (*sī mǎ,* a homophonic word of 死妈 *sǐ mā*, refers to your mother died). The original meaning of the former is orphans, but when it is used as '你是个孤儿' (You are an orphan), it is a metaphor cursing word for saying that someone has become an orphan because family members have died. The latter one is a homophonic word of 死妈 (*sǐ mā*). 司马 is a surname in Chinese originally, but when it is used as '司马货' (*sī mǎ huò*), this phrase is a rude homophonic cursing word that means *your mother died*.

Finally, the fourth subcategory is about wishing a bad situation or result on someone. It is worth mentioning that this kind of expression always focuses on more serious situations or results. That means, 'getting illness' can be seen as a bad result, but it may not be seen as a cursing expression. From the selected samples, the typical words

in this subcategory are 绝症 (*jué zhèng*, refers to incurable disease), 脑死亡 (*nǎo sǐ wáng*, refers to brain deaths), and 不治之症 (*bù zhì zhī zhèng*, refers to incurable diseases). These, and other words seen as cursing expressions, show a bad situation or a disease that relates to death, and has negative emotions.

In conclusion, the cursing word category is also a direct approach to cyberbullying, because most of the cursing expressions have harmful meanings, and many Chinese people believe expressions are closely related to what they symbolise. A notable feature of cursing expressions in the Chinese context are that most of them relate more to death, or relate to certain diseases with death. These rude expressions are not only to the target, but also among family members.

5.3.4 Emotional word category and emphatic/cathartic word category

Most of the emotional, emphatic and cathartic words/phrases are neutral and commonly used in daily life. In comparison with the previous three categories, the usage and characteristics of emotional, emphatic and cathartic expressions are relatively simple when considered as cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words. The relationship between offensive or negative words, and emotional, emphatic and cathartic words is for enhancing emotions (Harris *et al*., 2003). Jay (2009) suggested that the primary purpose of using swear or taboo words is to express emotions, and several researchers (Lamendella, 1977; Jay & Janschewitz, 2007) have argued that the emotional or emphatic words themselves are not the offensive or negative words, but they can enhance the strength of aggressive or mildly aggressive functions. At this point, emotional, and emphatic and cathartic expressions are the 'bridge' from ordinary or mild offensive word usage to offensive or strong offensive usages, or from plain tones to strong emotions. Moreover, emotional words can be used separately to express anger or hate. Therefore, when emotional words and emphatic and cathartic words are regarded as cyberbullying words, most of them should be checked within the context-specific meanings, or the frequency of their use. Following this view, this subsection will only introduce the typical examples that have obvious offensive functions or enhancing functions.

Emotional words

Emotional words in Chinese are divided into different categories, and have a high number of forms, but the seed emotion words are eight: joy, love, expectation, surprise, anxiety, sorrow, anger and hate (Quan & Ren, 2010). Based on these seeds, different forms of emotional words/phrases can be indicated. The criteria of choosing emotional words based on these seeds were the high-frequency of use and relevance to negative emotions. In other words, some low-frequency emotional words such as 无感 (*wú gǎn*, refers to do not care) and 挂气 (*guà qì*, refers to angry) were used less than five times in the whole comment corpora, and the words 大笑 (*dà xiào*, refers to laugh loudly) and 哈哈 (haw-haw) are the positive emotional words, which are not relevant to cyberbullying behaviour. Therefore, all of the chosen words were classified into two classes: expressions of negative attitudes and putting pressure on targets. The main examples are summarised in Table 5.4, but this subsection only introduces the typical ones from each of the class.

Table 5.4 The Typical Emotional Words in Chinese from the Selected Samples[103]

Seed words	**Expressions of Attitudes**	**Emotional Expressions for Direct Attacking**
Joy (乐)	**不**乐意	--
Love (喜)	**不**喜欢	--
Expect (盼)	**不**欢迎	不要原谅
	看**不**惯	不要放过
	看**不**上	--
Anxiety (愁)[104]	嫌	--
	烦	--
Anger (怒)	作呕	不要脸
Hate (厌)	讨厌	可耻
	失望	无耻
	恶心	没教养

Among the emotional words that are used for expressing negative attitudes, the first feature is that the seed emotional words, or phrases always have negative meanings. In Chinese, negative words can be placed almost everywhere in a sentence to change the sentence meaning, as well as to change its emotions (Quan & Ren, 2010).

103 If negative words are used with the seed words, the negative words will be labelled in bold.

104 If we regard 嫌 (*xián*, refers to cold-shoulder) and 烦 (*fán*, refers to irritated) as emotion lexicons, emotional phrases such as 惹人烦 (*rě rén fán*), 惹人嫌 (*rě rén xián*), and 讨人嫌 (*tǎo rén xián*) are examples of negative attitudes or expressions showed by emotion holders to emotion targets. Although there is no obvious personal pronoun, these words would generally be interpreted as expressing 'I felt....' or 'you are/were....'. Therefore, the intention of the speaker who uses such emotional words is expressing his/her negative emotions (including hate and anger) to the target.

However, based on the chosen examples, it can be found that when users use this model, the most common and direct negative word form is '不 (*bù,* refers to no or dis-)', and the typical example is 不喜欢 (*bù xǐ huān*, refers to dislike, 6,333 times, similar to 讨厌 *tǎo yàn*, refers to hate). This word can be used separately, as well as with emotion holders and/or emotion targets. When the word 不喜欢 is used separately, it is a normal expression without strong emotions, but when it is used with emotion holders and/or emotion targets, it might be identified as an attack, or offensive to the emotion target. The structure, or feature of 不喜欢 also applies to other words (in bold) such as 不欢迎[105] (*bù huān yíng*, refers to did not welcome), 不乐意[106] (*bù lè yì*, refers to not happy with), 看不惯 (*kàn bù guàn*, refers to could not endure), and 看不上[107] (*kàn bù shàng*, refers to not being pleased with). These words can be used as daily words or as sensitive cyberbullying words.

Regarding the second type, putting pressure on the targets, the typical feature is that the words are mildly offensive or insulting words, or have offensive meanings. The difference between the emotional words with offensive or insulting meanings and the abusive words, is that the former are less strong and attack indirectly. For example, the most commonly used emotional word 不要脸 (*bù yào liǎn*, refers to shameless, 32, 597 times, be similar with 厚脸皮 *hòu liǎn pí*, 没脸没皮 *méi liǎn méi pí* and 没脸见人 *méi liǎn jiàn rén*) is defined as a word for attacking and applying pressure.[108] However, this word has a lighter offensive function than the word 不要逼脸 (*bù yào bī liǎn*, the abusive words), which is used for insulting emotional catharsis or applying pressure to a targets' behaviour, rather than attacking the protagonist who is truly shameless, or has done something wrong. Moreover, words with similar functions, such as 不要放过 (*bù yào fàng guò*, refers to don't forgive) and 不要原谅 (*bù yào yuán liàng*, refers to don't forgive), can be used in daily communication. However, when these words are for cyberbullying, the function is to impose pressures on the targets. In comparison with the words having similar functions in the abusive word category, emotional words are more lightly offensive, or

105 The seed word of 欢迎 is 'love' or 'joy'. The meaning of 欢迎 in the Chinese language is 'I am pleased about what you are doing.'.
106 The seed word of 乐意 is 'joy'. The meaning of 乐意 in the Chinese language is 'I am willing to do something'.
107 The seed words of 看惯 and 看上 are 'expect'. The meanings of these two words in the Chinese language are 'I agree with what you do.' or 'I appreciate what you do.'
108 Ref. https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%8D%E8%A6%81%E8%84%B8/7050664?fr=aladdin

just natural words.

In addition to the two main classes of emotional words, the typical subcategories of satirical words, and sentimental lexicons, are also used to attack others, and mainly focus on sentiment. For the emotional satirical words, the typical feature is extending the word meaning, such as the word *LowB* and its variants. The character *low* in English means *below the average*, for example in the height, amount, or extent, but when the character *low* is combined with the letter *B* (the replaced word of 屄 and 逼), it means a person who has terrible manners, or it is used as a self-deprecating word in the Chinese context. Moreover, for the sentimental lexicons, the words usually suggests direct emotions or opinions, such as happy or sad, dislike or love, but do not always contain direct emotional seed words. For example, high-frequency words that are in the top 50 in the corpora are 恶心 (*ě xīn*, refers to disgusting, 60,883 times) and 失望 (*shī wàng*, refers to disappointing, 13,826 times). They do not have direct emotion seed words, but do suggest strong dissatisfaction.

Emphatic and cathartic words

Emphatic and cathartic words work as a function of underlining the importance of, or as a means of emphasising feelings, when the single word is not adequate (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003). The modifying words can be of any nature (i.e., positive, negative or natural). There are 105 emphatic and cathartic words chosen from the corpora that do not include the controversial words in the abusing word category. To facilitate classifications and analyses of these words, the methods followed the process of seed words.

Briefly, the seed words of the emphatic and cathartic word category in this research are summarised as 妈的 (*mā de*, refers to God! or *oh, shit!*), 他妈 (*tā mā*, refers to shit!), and 你妈 (*nǐ mā,* refers to *your mother* with no offensive functions), based on the NLPIR results.[109] For these seed words, it can be found that some of them have no practical meaning in either English or Chinese, but some of the words' original meanings change when they are used as emphatic and cathartic functions. Following

109 The seed words of the emphatic and cathartic word category can only be summarised from the chosen corpora because of the lack of research in this field regarding the Chinese language.

the seed words and phrases, there are three classes of emphatic and cathartic words: 1) words that are only used separately, 2) words that are only used with combinations, and 3) words that can be used independently, as well as used with combinations. The examples are presented in Table 5.5, and the details shown below.

Table 5.5 Typical Emphatic and Cathartic Word in Chinese from the Selected Samples

Word Seed	**Words which are used separately**	**Words which are used with combinations**
妈的	妈的	--
	妈逼	--
他妈	--	真他妈
		去他妈(的)
		他妈的
		我/你他妈
你妈	尼玛	真你妈
		太你妈
		你妈的 (你妈逼)
		去你妈(的) (去你妈逼)

As for the words that are only used separately, the word 妈的 (*mā de*) is the typical one. In the Chinese context, this word can serve as a modal particle causing catharsis. There are two most commonly used structures: using it individually and adding it at the beginning of the phrase. For example, if the speaker says '妈的!' alone, it is an emotional self-expression which means 'Shit!'. At this point, the object of causing catharsis can be both the event and the person. Whether the attitude is positive or negative cannot be identified. However, if the speaker uses '妈的' in a sentence, the easier thing is that there is a context or scenario to classify the emotion. Examples of this are '妈的,真棒!' (*mā de zhēn bàng*, refers to *God, perfect!*) and '妈的,婊子!'(*mā de biǎo zi*, refers to *Shit! Bitch!*). The first phrase has a positive emotion, while the second phrase has an emphasis or a strong emotion of releasing anger or dissatisfaction, depending on the context in which this word is used. It is different from the English phrase *Shit!*, and the forms of 妈的 are various (e.g. 麻蛋 *má dàn* and 妈蛋 *mā dàn*), but most of them do not have practical meaning without the context. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that, the seed word 妈逼 (*mā bī*, refers to *fucking, shit!*) can be seen as the variant of 妈的, with stronger emotions that may

make the target feel uncomfortable, but it is still difficult to identify whether it is offensive or not.

For the words that are only used with combinations, the word 他妈 (*tā mā*) is a typical example that has some variants (e.g. 踏马 *tà mǎ*, 特妈 *tè mā* and 特么 *tè me*). Generally, the word 他妈 is an ordinary word that can be used in daily communication, not for offensive purposes, and means *his mother*. Regarding the structures or forms, the common usage collocations are used with the structural particle (的, *de*), personal pronouns (我, *wǒ*, refers to I and 你, *nǐ*, refers to you), and degree words (e.g. 真, *zhēn* and 太, *tài*, refer to very or really). That is, the phrases of 我他妈 (*wǒ tā mā*, refers to fuck!), 你他妈 (*nǐ tā mā*, refers to shit! or fucking), 真他妈 (*zhēn tā mā*, refers to *to hell with it!*) and 太他妈 (*tài tā mā*, refers to holy shit!) are used with further collocations that include verbs and adjectives to enhance emotions. Among all these collocations, 他妈的 (*tā mā de,* refers to shit!) or 去他妈(的) (*qù tā mā* [*de*]) can be used separately to mean 'shit!' or 'fuck off!', or used with objects to express emphasis or cause catharsis. The difference between 他妈的 and 妈的 is that the former is a modified intensifier adverb, but the latter is a modal particle, so when they are used with the same collocation, the emotion of 他妈的 is stronger. There are two comments as examples, '他妈的贱人 (*tā mā de jiàn rén*, refers to *fucking bitch!*)' and '妈的, 贱人! (*mā de jiàn rén*, refers to *Shit! Bitch!*)'.

The words that can be used independently, as well as with combinations, are intensifier words and cathartic words when the seed words have different combinations. Naturally, the usage and structures of 你妈 (*nǐ mā*) are the same as the word 他妈 in the Chinese context when used as an intensifier. The combinations can be fundamental particle and degree words. At this point, the phrases based on 你妈 can replace the same fundamental words of 他妈. However, when the word 你妈 is used separately, the function is similar to the word 妈的, but the offensive emotion is lighter. The fixed usage of 你妈 as a cathartic word is 尼玛 (*ní mǎ*, refers to fucking) and the variants (e.g. initial abbreviations, Pinyin and unsimplified Chinese Characters). Simultaneously, the commonly used offensive forms are the phrases like 你妈逼 (*nǐ mā bī*, similar to 尼玛逼 *ní mǎ bī* and the initial abbreviation nmb, refers to motherfucking) and 去你妈逼 (*qù nǐ mā bī*, similar to the initial abbreviation

qnmb, refers to motherfucking). These kinds of expressions, which have a similar meaning or scenario as the words *fucking* and *motherfucking*. are used separately, but work as intensifiers to strengthen the force of the offensive emotions or attitudes to achieve cyberbullying purposes.

To sum up, the results of this subsection have shown how emotional, and emphatic and cathartic words work and how they strengthen the force of emotions and attitudes. Taking the examples as a whole, it can be found that most of the words work as bridges between the normal emotion or attitude and the strong ones. When the speaker wants to express his/her immediate strong feeling by adding a particularly emotional, emphatic or cathartic word are added into what he or she is saying. At this point, both positive and negative actions or descriptions can be used together with these kinds of words, but when the effects or descriptions are adverse, then the emotion or attitude is more harmful or more aggressive. Moreover, in some scenarios and contexts, emotional words and emphatic and cathartic words may easily be used separately or together, depending on the purposes of the expression.

5.3.5 Newly-emerging word category: Newly-emerging word formations and words expanding or changing meanings

In the previous sections, abusing, sexual, cursing, emotional, and emphatic and cathartic word categories all have functions to strengthen the offensive or negative meanings. With the developments of CMC and social media, new words are constantly emerging and have brought about a new evolution in languages. From one of the Weibo account posts newly-emerging words occur every year based on typical issues called ‘annual hot words’.[110] Some of them continue to be used for a long time, but others are not used once the relevant event that inspired them has passed. These words are used for humour, irony, and exaggeration to express emotions, so that when used at a lower rate of frequency, people do not think it is a way of cyberbullying. However, when used frequently or with repeated features, it might become a cyberbullying behaviour. At this point, this research classified these words into newly-emerging word categories, including newly-emerging word formations created

110 Ref. https://www.weibo.com/1642591402/Gxbif5MRL?type=comment#_rnd1551977332133

by internet users, dark meaning words, and scatological or disgusting objects, which will be analysed with typical examples.

As for the first subcategory, newly-emerging word formations are the words that may expand the scope of existing words, or even serve as starting points for further research. The features of this subcategory are that they are used in most situations with similar event features, yet they are difficult to identify as cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words, because most of them do not have an offensive meaning visually. For instance, the phrases 双商感人 (*shuāng shāng gǎn rén*) and 人设崩塌[111] (*rén shè bēng tā,* refers to go against one's public persona), as well as the word 打脸[112] (*dǎ liǎn,* refers to slap your face) are typical examples for attacking a person's characteristics and expressing attitudes. In details, the phrase 双商感人 is a satirical or negative word in certain contexts. 双商 is a merged word that refers to emotional and cognitive intelligence, and 感人 is a satirical word that means very sympathetic. Therefore, the phrase 双商感人 is always used to explain that a person has a low level of emotional and cognitive intelligence, or a person does very stupid things. At this point, it can be found that it is difficult to distinguish whether they are offensive or not, because these words use humorous, or are jokes to express attitudes and emotions. They may have attacking functions, but not always.

For the second subcategory, the dark meaning word subcategory is for words that have hidden literal meanings. Dark meanings are tacitly understood between speakers, which could be seen as the approach of a change in word meaning. Although some of the words still keep the original meanings, their dark meanings conceal the original expressions and are widely accepted by the public. The feature of dark meaning words is that most of them are related to gender and show satire. For example, to female targets, the word 黑木耳 (*hēi mù ěr*, similar to 木耳 *mù ěr*, refers to black fungus) is a very rude and vulgar pictographic description of the woman's genitals, used to satirise a woman who is very debauched.[113] Similar functional words are 公交车

111 The phrase 人设崩塌 can be used to describe a person or a person's behaviour. 人设 is the abbreviation of 人物设定 (*rén wù shè dìng*, refers to public persona), and 崩塌 means collapsing. It is widely used to describe person, especially the celebrities, who prefer to set up a unique or perfect personality, such as enthusiastic, affectionate and talented, to get attention and benefits., but finally this kind of public persona is went against.

112 The word 打脸 refers to 'a slap in the face'. In the Chinese online context, it has a stronger meaning than 'an unexpected rejection or affront'. It is always used to satirize and ridicule a person who had said something or said to do something but finally failed to do it, and sometimes it could also be used to describe an event whose original descriptions were proven false in the end.

113 This word originates from a puzzling rumour which says that if a female had many sexual behaviour, her reproductive system would

(*gōng jiāo chē,* similar to 公共汽车 *gōng gòng qì chē* and 公交 *gōng jiāo,* refers to public bus) and 厕所 (*cè suǒ,* similar to 公厕 *gōng cè* and 公共厕所 *gōng gòng cè suǒ*, refers to toilet), which are used to insult females who are sexually promiscuous.[114] Meanwhile, to male targets, the dark meaning subcategory related to sexual activities or personalities is also widely used. For instance, a great number of words are relevant to the color *green* (绿, *lǜ*) to satirise a man whose wife is betraying the marriage, such as the phrases 绿帽子 (*lǜ mào zi,* refers to green hats, similar to 绿帽 *dài lǜ mào*) and 戴绿帽子 (*dài lǜ mào zi*, refers to wearing green hats, similar to 戴绿帽 *dài lǜ mào*)[115], as well as using the word 吃软饭 (*chī ruǎn fàn*, similar to 软蛋 and 软饭, refers to eating soft rice or dead beat)[116] to express ironic, mocking or disdainful emotions.

The third subcategory is the scatological or disgusting objects. The term 'disgust' in its simplest sense means something offensive to the taste. Objects of animal rather than plant origin arouse disgust, and waste and bodily excretions are universally found disgusting (Jones, 2000). Scatological or disgusting objects in English swear/taboo words are usually descriptions or names of disgusting things, such as *shit*, *crap* and *douche bag* (Jay, 2009). In Chinese, the most commonly used scatological or disgusting objects are waste objects (e.g. 垃圾, *lā jī*, refers to rubbish) and bodily excretions (e.g. 屎, *shǐ*, refers to shit), which are used as metaphors to satirise or insult the targets and always make targets uncomfortable, because human beings probably become particularly aware of offensive substances (Rozin *et al*., 1985).

In detail, the word 垃圾 is a widely used disgusting object (15,113 times) and its portmanteau formations are also used at a relatively high frequency (e.g. 辣鸡 *là jī* in 3,681 times and 腊鸡 *là jī* in 112 times). However, interestingly, if the words 垃圾 are used as variants, the offensive function is lighter owing to the humorous tone. Moreover, the similar word is 渣 (*zhā*, refers to slag, 2,152 times), which is slight or

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change into black and seems like a black fungus.

114 Internet users use the features of 公交车 and 厕所, i.e. everyone can take the public bus or use the toilet, to satire or insult a female who can do sex activity with anyone, especially the males.

115 The phrase 'wearing a green hat' means one's wife have shameful sex relation with people other than her husband. It can be traced back to the Yuan dynasty when the governor required that men work in the brothel should wear a green headband and the prostitutes should dress in purple to distinguish themselves from normal people. Nowadays, this kind of expression is used to satirize a person whose partner/husband/wife cheated on the marriage or relationship.

116 The phrase 吃软饭 is an ironic word used to insult males. It means that the male's life is supported financially by a woman. In China, it is widely believed that a man should be the breadwinner of the family, so if the wife plays the role, her husband will be called 'a man who eats soft rice.'

milder offensive than the word 垃圾. Both of these two words are widely used as adjectives or metaphors for describing a person who is a poor guy or has terrible behaviour (see Chapter VI for a detailed discussion).

Furthermore, the other scatological object 屎 expands its clinical meaning to a negative meaning.[117] Notably, it is widely used with verbs, and becomes as an abusive word or an aggressive interjection with high frequency of use in certain aspects to express anger or contempt, such as the words 吃屎 (*chī shǐ*, refers to eating that shit, 986 times, be similar with 吃大便 *chī dà biàn* and 食屎 *shí shǐ*) and 喷粪 (*pēn fèn*, similar to 喷屎 *pēn shǐ*, 326 times, refers to dookie)[118]. The meaning and usage of 吃屎 is very similar to the English rude slang term, *eating that shit*, while the meaning of 喷粪 is mainly about expressing opposition or disapproval.

Overall, this subsection has introduced typical newly-emerging words when they are used for cyberbullying. Generally, newly-emerging words are created on the basis of people's behaviour or attitudes, and tend to ridicule or criticise a person or a specific event. When they are used for cyberbullying, the connotative meaning is dominant over the denotative meaning, and these two aspects of meaning can be easily separated. Although sometimes the word usage and meanings are in humourous and emphatic tones, the newly-emerging words still have light offensive functions. The second feature is that the words with dark meanings and the scatological or disgusting objects are widely accepted, because their extended meanings have exceeded their original meanings. If a message contains such words, people often think of its extended meanings, whether there is context or not for expressing negative emotions.

5.3.6 Others: Chinese idioms and ordinary words with special meanings

There are abundant daily-used lexemes and a variety of set phrases of ordinary words with light offensive functions shown in the database. Chinese idioms[119] (also called

117 In the Chinese context, the word root 屎 (*shǐ*, refers to shit) and the word forms (e.g. 粪 *fèn*, 大便 *dà biàn* and 大粪 *dà fèn*) are rarely used in the formal written, and when they appear in the context, they may make the listeners feel uncomfortable. The interesting thing is that the word root 翔 (*xiáng*) a replacement of the word root 屎 in 2017. A netizen named Li Xiang (翔) flamed and argued with people on the Internet but finally he said 'I am just a shit'. Since then people have started to use 翔 instead of 屎 and got wide recognition. This is a typical example of extended meanings of the original ones.

118 The word 喷粪 (*pēn fèn*) means that someone's speech or view is just like the shit. This word can be used as a negative or disrespectful expression. No matter whether the target posts truth or offensive comments, or tell a lie, scatology word forms were used to show subjective emotions.

119 Chinese idioms are existing or fixed phrases whose definitions or meanings are provided or created by traditional stories or dictionaries (Wu, 1995).

成语 *chéng yǔ*) are ordinary words, but also a special category of lexical items in the Chinese language. The literal meaning is not enough to describe Chinese idioms, as they have their own constituent relations and types of intrinsic grammatical structures. Because the large number of ordinary words and idioms, as well as these kinds of words are not the main force of cyberbullying behaviour, this subsection just provide a brief introduction.

Chinese idioms and some ordinary words with special meanings can be seen as euphemisms to express and talk about unpleasant things or neutralize the unpleasantness. As for euphemisms in swearing in English, they are described as words/phrases chosen to replace any expression that is considered offensive or unpleasant for the listener (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Gao, 2013; Finn, 2017). A euphemism is usually used to lessen the inappropriateness of the reference, such as to sexuality, or death (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008), and it can also enable a speaker to talk about ideas that may have been avoided had a more offensive word been chosen (Bowers & Pleydell-Pearce, 2011). Similar to the euphemisms of swear and taboo words in English, the functions of idioms or ordinary words replace the offensive words with similar meanings or functions. That is, the subcategories of Chinese idioms and ordinary words with cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying functions follow the word categories that have been summarised and introduced above.

Although Chinese idioms and ordinary words (euphemisms) are the replacement for strong or mild offensive words, they are still considered to have light offensive functions when widely used. For example, the word 小学生 (*xiǎo xué shēng*, refers to primary school student) is an ordinary word, but can be used in certain contexts to satirise a person who has a low level of education or is uneducated. The word 烟熏妆 (*yān xūn zhuāng*, refers to smoky makeup) and other descriptions of makeup are used towards male protagonists, and have become an ironical way to describe the appearance, or image of a man who does not fit a traditional aesthetic. The typical examples are the words related to specific events, for example, the phrase 做头发 (*zuò tóu fǎ*, refers to hair cutting) is used as a metaphor to satirise a betrayal.[120]

120 In the Li's case, when her husband was asked where his wife was, the man said his wife was doing a hair cutting, but actually his wife was staying with anther man so this man was lying. After this, 'doing a hair cutting' or 'hair cutting' became a word to satirise a betrayal.

Other types of ordinary words are names. From the word corpus, the event protagonists' name and the initial abbreviation are always used at a higher frequency of use. This is largely due to the use of the symbol @. When internet users use the @ symbol to mention the event protagonist, and then use any one of the word categories to show negative emotions, this can be seen as direct cyberbullying behaviour to the protagonists. Hence, it is important to learn how to analyse cyberbullying behaviour based on the name features or the similar features of repetitions.

Overall, Chinese idioms and some ordinary words with special meanings can be used to avoid embarrassing situations and thus protect an individual's feelings when they work as metaphors, words for mocking or ironic expressions. In general, most of them are neutral words and have less emotional force in daily life communication, but when speakers use them in certain situations, their meanings might extend into undesirable perlocutionary effects. However, when these specific words are widely used in one event or aimed at typical targets, embarrassing emotions cannot be avoided, and it might increase attacks. As Talmi and Moscovitch (2004) stated, neutral words are a category of a word which the related meaning is important when considering this category as taboo words. It is really difficult to judge whether an ordinary word is offensive or not without the context, even if the word itself has a negative meaning. This research claims that to some extent, Chinese idioms and some ordinary words with special meanings only have the ability to attack in a specific context or in certain cases. When they are out of the event, the function of attacking or insulting will be smaller or even disappear.

5.4 Characterisation and classification of cyberbullying words and sensitive cyberbullying words in the Chinese context

Section 5.3 provided detailed introductions and descriptions of word features and compositions of the six word categories (abusive words, sexual words, cursing words, emotional and emphatic and cathartic words, newly-emerging words and ordinary words with special meanings) that are used for cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying functions. However, cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying word meanings are typically interpreted connotatively. That is, not all negative words are

used for cyberbullying behaviour, and by contrast, not all neutral words are not related to cyberbullying. Moreover, for the emotional and emphatic words, newly-emerging words, and ordinary words with special meanings, this feature is more obvious. These words can be used in daily communication, but when used for certain context or events, their connotations change into offensive or impolite meanings with sociocultural factors, and then are identified as cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words. This finding helps to examine cyberbullying language with multiple meanings and functions in difficult situations. Besides the general features, word category crossovers or word cross use are also typical features of cyberbullying in the Chinese context. A brief explanation of this aspect is provided below.

First, word category crossovers. According to 2,000 single words chosen from the Weibo samples, there are overlapping words and portmanteau formations among abusing words, sexual words and emphasis words with the same word root. For instance, the typical example is the word root 操 (*cāo*). It can be used as an abusing word, a sexual word, an emphasis word and an ordinary word, but as different parts of speech and with different word functions. When the word root 操 (*cāo*) or its variants is used separately, without objects or other sexual words, it is folded into a modal particle for emphatic intensifiers to enhance anger or displeasure, such as the character 操 and the word 我操 (*wǒ cāo*, similar to 我日 *wǒ rì*, 卧槽 *wò cáo*, 我擦 *wǒ cā*, refers to my gosh). However, when the f-word is used as an abusive word, the part of speech is a verb, and the objects can be both male and female. At this point, the word functions are more inclined to express anger. Moreover, the typical difference between the f-word in the abusing word category and in the sexual word category is the word function. When the expletive *fuck* is added to modify sexual words or objects (particularly in the structure *fucking/fuck* + *object* or *I* + *fucked* + *object*), the f-word works as a sexual word, which is combined with sexual acts, cues or names, with the object usually being females. At the same time, the visual word function is attacking the typical sexual character of a specific object. Notably, it usually has greater emotional force as an abusing word or a sexual word, which sounds rude, but is less offensive as an emphasis word, depending on the contextual factors (see Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion). However, this situation is

rarely seen in English because of the word formations' rules. For example, the word root *fuck* in English can be used as an abusing word or an emphatic word, but when it is used for enhancing emotions, the word form is *fucking*.

Besides the typical word root shown as an example, the word category crossover features also occur in epithets and animal names. For instance, epithets can be classified into the abusing word, the sexual word, and the ordinary word categories. The difference between them is the word formations or the words with which they are combined. Similar to epithets, this rule also applies to the classification of the animal names. If the animal name is a general concept, it is an ordinary word; however, if the denotations of the animal names relate to the abusing or sexual meanings or functions, this kind of word should be assigned to the corresponding word category.

Second, word cross use. As stated previously, different category words would be used together to appear as stronger insults or as aversive words. To be more explicit about how word categories are cross used, a brief explanation of the four common word category combinations is presented below:

1. abusing words + sexual words;
2. abusing words + cursing words;
3. sexual words + cursing words;
4. emphatic and cathartic word + abusing/sexual/cursing words.

The common feature of these combinations is that people prefer to combine strong offensive categories together, or use emphatic words to enhance the offensive meanings and functions. According to each element used to express stronger emotions, it is challenging to analyse emphatic and cathartic words separately, because other word categories have their own obvious meanings, but emphatic and cathartic words are always meaningful when they are used in context. As explained and analysed previously, emotional or emphatic words have the full range of the combinations, and they always work as bridges to enhance expressions to indicate more negative or powerful aggressive expressions, which might be more likely to cause harm to targets.

Overall, the general features of the selected characters/words/phrases have shown a clear claim that not all single words are related to cyberbullying directly, and by contrast, not all neutral words are not associated with cyberbullying. At the same time, word category crossovers and word cross use are the typical features of cyberbullying/sensitive cyberbullying words in the Chinese context. Apart from these, the relations between language use and motivations, the changes of the cyberbullying/sensitive cyberbullying during the period, and the relations and differences between cyberbullying words in Chinese and swear/taboo words in English, are also worth discussing, as they can provide a deep and comprehensive view of the cyberbullying behaviour. These features can also be used to derive risks and protective factors for further analyses. According to the three socio-ecological model systems, the following three subsections discuss these aspects in detail.

5.4.1 Microsystem angle: Different cyberbullying/sensitive cyberbullying word categories for achieving goals

As socio-ecological theory stated, the individual is the centre of relations. Apart from the demographic variables used to analyse individual influences, this research, based on the microsystem of the socio-ecological model, regards language use as one element of an individual's character when discussing individuals' motivations for cyberbullying. Bronfenbrenner (1994) stated that motivations can be seen as the 'force' of a person. When people intentionally use aggressive behaviour to hurt the targets, they can be a perpetrator (Smith *et al*., 2008; Olweus, 2013; Kowalski & Giumetti, 2017). However, the intention of cyberbullying is not always inflicting unpleasant feelings on the target, but just for self-expression. At this point, it is really difficult to identify the motivation of cyberbullying directly, because everyone has their own views and reasons for cyberbullying. Therefore, this study assumes that different language use is related to various motivations that can be further divided into intra-individual motivations and inter-individual motivations.

Firstly, intra-individual motivation is tied to a subjective component (Yeo & Neal, 2008). Individuals are more likely to engage in a behaviour they have learned has consequences that meet their purposes. As explained previously, most of the abusing

words, sexual words and cursing words have direct strong offensive meanings and functions. As for cyberbullying, when people meet an uncomfortable issue online, these kinds of words are the direct expression to demonstrate their strong emotions and attitudes (see Chapter VI for a more detailed discussion). Under such circumstances, the motivation of using the most abusive form or the inadequate respect words is to impose the maximum hurt (Greenawalt, 1989). Similarly, when a person has experienced a lower life satisfaction, or an associated state of elevated stress in real life, it is possible that this person uses offensive words to reduce the stress (Swearer, *et al*., 2014). Thus, for the 2000-words database used in this research, it can be regarded that the strong offensive words that occur at the higher rate, account for more than 50% of all the swearing occurrences (see Figure 5.1).

In detail, the statistical analysis of the numbers of words in each category and the word usage frequencies shows that the abusing word category (27.29%) has the highest frequency among the chosen corpora. Typical examples of abusing words provided were the terms 逼 (*bī*, 9,143) and 操 (*cāo*, 7,764). The sexual word category is ranked second (22.37%). The top three typical examples of sexual words used are 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, 35,539), 贱 (*jiàn*, 20,340) and 骚 (*sāo*, 5,734). In fact, abusing words and sexual words alone amount to nearly one half of all the words counted. Although, cursing words are ranked sixth, with a lower frequency of 7.41%, it is still a typical category related to cyberbullying, because the number of expressions relating to 'die' or 'death' in the Chinese context is rare. These strongly offensive or mildly offensive words are shown to be used for insulting or attacking others, and are relevant to expressing strong emotions, especially when showing anger and frustration towards targets. That is, these expressions towards others can be seen as cyberbullying behaviour. Therefore, the finding in this research is that the positive correlations between individual language usage and intra-individual motivations for cyberbullying show that the individual has their own preferences in using language, and the use of strong, offensive language can reflect their motivations for hurting others or for self-expression.

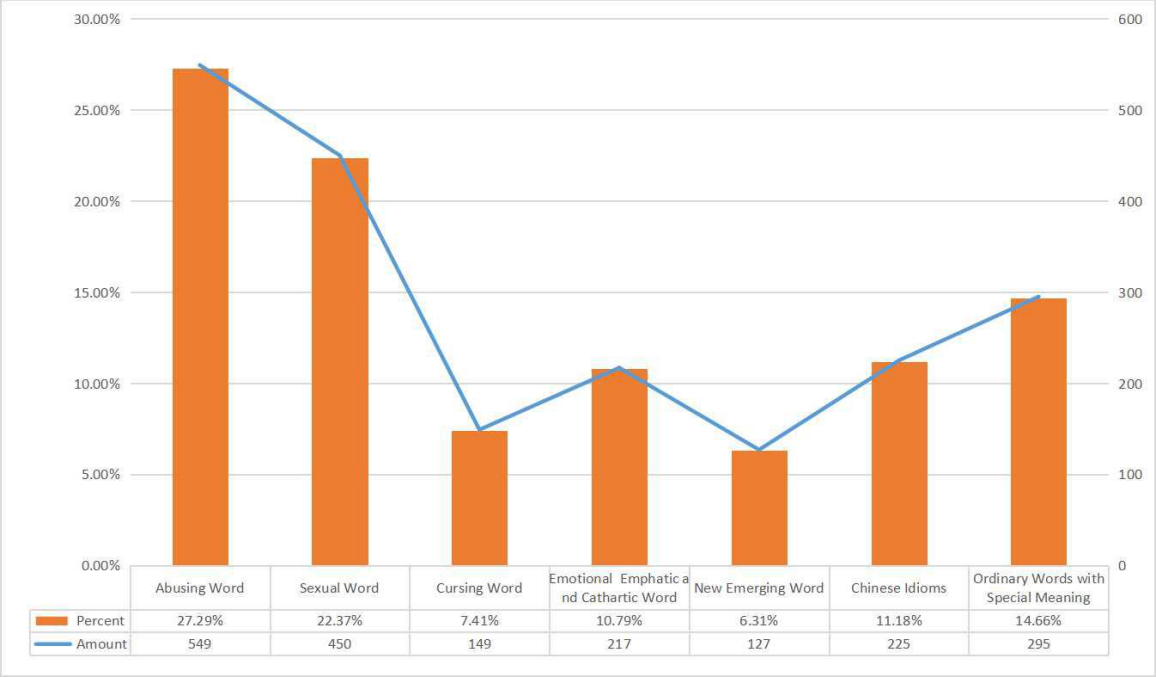


Fig. 5.1 The Number of Words in Each Category

Secondly, besides the intra-individual motivations, numerous inter-individual motivations have been found, which typically refer to the interpersonal context (Andersson & Trudgill, 2007). According to socio-ecological theory, individuals who have low self-efficacy and self-regulation may become more easily engaged in unacceptable behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Cyberbullying is an aggressive behaviour between different individuals or groups. At this point, people who saw the cyberbullying message or had similar views might follow the cyberbullying behaviour, such as posting the same or similar contents, forwarding the original post, or liking the posts, but the original motivation for their behaviour may not be cyberbullying, but for sharing and criticising. In other words, most of the people regarded posting offensive comments as an informal characteristic of criticism, and their motivations are to express their attitudes or criticism, especially towards celebrity or unacceptable social events. However, some cyber perpetrators intended to confuse the concept of rational criticism and cyberbullying, justifying their aggressive behaviour as ‘a joke’, ‘a sharing behaviour’, ‘a nicknaming’ or ‘humour’ rather than an offensive behaviour, and they would not feel any embarrassment. This assumption is similar to Willard’s research (2007). Therefore, the commonly used words for intra-individual motivation, may be related to epithets and animal names, ordinary words with event features or dark meaning words.

Overall, the preliminary findings of this study is that language usage and features can reflect the cyberbullying multiple intra-individual as well as inter-individual motivations in some aspects. The intra-individual and the inter-individual motivations, including expressing emotions, criticising, reducing stress, telling jokes and showing humour are related to different kinds of word usage. When language features and usage are linked to individual motivations to identify a behaviour, whether it is cyberbullying or not, we can analyse the results of the behaviour based on the functions of the words or comments. If the language contains strong rude/offensive words, no matter what the individual motivation is, this kind of behaviour can be counted as cyberbullying. This is how the socio-ecological microsystem provides a way to identify cyberbullying or motivations from an objective angle, and this finding will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

5.4.2 Mesosystem angle: The changes of cyberbullying words and sensitive cyberbullying words

According to the socio-ecological mesosystem, both social media and community developments can affect individual behaviour. Expertise in an area of cyberbullying has different practical significance inside and outside the community, because of the changes in the development of new technologies and the online environment. According to the 2,000 single words chosen from Weibo from 2015 to 2018, the 10 most frequently used terms 恶心 (*ě xīn*, 60,883), 不要脸 (*bù yào liǎn*, 32,597), 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, 35,539), 贱 (*jiàn*, 20,340), 打脸 (*dǎ liǎn*, 19, 347), 死 (*sǐ*, 16,799), 垃圾 (*lā jī*, 15,113) , 操 (*cāo*, 7,764), 死了 (*sǐ le*, 7, 536), and 脑残 (*nǎo cán*, 7, 418) were listed, excluding ordinary words and names. Obviously, the vulgar words from 2015 to 2018 were totally different from the ones used before 2015 (Figure 5.2).

排名	网络词	中文报刊检索结果（标题中使用）	原发微博提及量
1	尼玛	3	249,646,340
2	屌丝	818	181,216,808
3	逼比	276	150,043,492
4	砖家/叫兽	92/452	8,714,012/ 101,776,196
5	[illegible]	0	70,602,880
6	你妹	5	50,778,812
7	装逼	22	45,632,060
8	草泥马	81	41,516,308
9	我靠/我擦/我屮艸芔茻	3/4/0	39,103,768/32,847,660/932
10	妈蛋	0	36,934,544
11	逼格	65	30,109,324
12	他妈的/特么的	4	29,362,880/ 10,083,180
13	撕逼	7	20,356,064
14	滚粗	12	19,131,236
15	蛋疼	38	18,652,852
16	小婊砸	0	10,788,384
17	傻 X	11	7,691,260
18	跪舔	4	6,301,472
19	绿茶婊/心机婊	66	5,695,244
20	碧莲	0	5,245,728
21	碧池	0	5,159,124
22	土肥圆	28	3,224,968
23	你妈的/你 M 的	4	474,273/ 544,368
24	矮挫穷	28	65,984
25	梵蛋/放蛋	0	851/ 933

Fig. 5.2 Report of the Ranking of Vulgar Using of Language Uses on the Internet in 2014 (2014 年网络低俗语言调查报告)

Figure 5.2 shows the Official Report the *Ranking of Vulgar Language Uses on the Internet*[121] in 2014, which was published by the People's Daily Online in 2015, to show the most commonly used offensive words online. Among these 25 vulgar languages, some words (e.g. 尼玛 *ní mǎ*, 草泥马 *cǎo ní mǎ*, and 他妈的 *tā mā de*) are still commonly used nowadays, while some other words (e.g. 逼格[122] and 砖家[123]) are rarely used, because these words have lost their 'meanings' recently. Although the functions of these words are essentially the same, drawing mainly on abusing and attacking, the word forms are totally different. For example, highly offensive cursing words (e.g. die, death, hell) occurred relatively infrequently before 2014, but mild or lightly offensive words (e.g. 土肥圆[124], 逼格 and 砖家) were commonly used.

121 The Cyberspace Administration of China (Chinese name: 中华人民共和国国家互联网信息办公室) published a summary of the three main features of the online vulgar language and provided typical examples. (ref. http://www.cac.gov.cn/2015-06/02/c_1115491251.htm)

122 The word 逼格 (*bī gé*) is a homophonic word of the English word bigger that originated from a slogan 'bigger than bigger'. This word is mainly used to satire a person who pretends to be fashionable.

123 The word 砖家 (*zhuān jiā*) is a homophonic word of the word 专家 (*zhuān jiā*, refers to expert). This word is used to satire a person who always has stupid views and ideas.

124 The word 土肥圆 (*tǔ féi yuán*) is used to describe a person who is ugly and fat. Another word which has a similar function is 矮穷矬 (*ǎi qióng cuó*), and this word is commonly used to describe a person who is ugly, poor and short.

Based on the changes discussed above, it is apparent that online language is not static, but is rapidly changing with the community's features, the development of society or cyber cultures, and the changes in the people's purposes for online aggressive behaviour. Some strongly offensive words have completely faded away or are not as offensive as they once were, while newly-emerging words are frequently introduced into cyberspace, or society for new certain issues or cyber cultures. Therefore, the standards used to identify whether the situation, or the word, is cyberbullying or not, should consider the developments of social interactions and cyber community. At this point, the socio-ecological model and social cognitive theory make it possible to establish an efficient approach or implement evaluations to detect or prevent cyberbullying and other cyber aggression problems made through language features or usage changes (see Chapter VII for a detailed discussion).

5.4.3 Macrosystem angles: The relations and differences between cyberbullying words in Chinese and swear words in English

Following the summaries of the swear and taboo word categories in previous studies and the findings of cyberbullying words in this research, it can be found that both of these kinds of words include so many disparate functions and forms that some broad distinctions need to be made at the outset. Generally, the forms and functions of these two kinds of words mainly depend on the society and culture they have come from.

As for similarities, both of them can be considered as ways to express certain emotions. In fact, cyberbullying and swear words can both be used with positive and negative expressions. In general, researchers (e.g. Dewaele, 2004; Pinker, 2007; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Pavlenko, 2008; Stephens *et al*., 2009; Jay, 2009; Sabbath *et al*., 2014) state that the functions of swearing are not necessarily impolite (e.g. expressing anger, shock and frustration), and sometimes when used situationally appropriately in certain discourses (e.g. expressing joy and humour, or as a response to pain), they are polite, self-emotional expressions, or cannot be seen as either polite or impolite. As for words for cyberbullying, there are some ordinary words and emphatic/cathartic words that can be used with positive functions for self-expressions. At this point, they are similar to the swear words' functions in a positive way. Interestingly, there are also

many emotional words in Chinese that do not have exactly offensive or unoffensive meanings, not only in daily communication, but also in cyberbullying behaviour.

As for differences, although both cyberbullying and swear words are a part of language behaviour with primarily connotative and denotative purposes, the parts of speech, the word forms, and the connotative functions are unique (Jay & Danks, 1977). Firstly, as stated in section 5.4.1, the word forms or parts of speech are more easily recognised and identified in English than in Chinese, because of the different language systems of English and Chinese. In the English-language community, the word forms show clear distinctions of the parts of speech, such as *fucking*, *fuck* and *fucked*, but in Chinese, the distinctions are unclear, and most of these words are of the same forms, including some abusive words and emphatic/cathartic words. This feature makes it difficult to identify the word functions without certain situations or context.

Secondly, a Chinese word may have more complex connotative functions than English words. Wierzbicka (1987) describes swearing as a deliberate bad act when used for expressing emotions and attitudes, or a particular meaning towards somebody or something, but cyberbullying words can be offensive even when used alone, without targets. That is why the cyberbullying word categories summarised in this research are more general than the swearing word classifications, because a word's connotative functions are more complex than in English.

Thirdly, the same word categories may have different functions in English and in Chinese, because of the cultural differences. Meanwhile, the Chinese usage in different Chinese speaking cyberspaces are also different because China is a multi-ethnic country and each region has their typical culture. In this way, perhaps not all Chinese speaking words share the same meaning, which is in the same situation with English as well. Therefore, the discussion of this part considers the Chinese word usage in a broad sense. In details, in the English context, a great number of religious terms can be seen as rude or negative words widely used when people want to show offensiveness (Van Lancker & Cummings, 1999; McEnery, 2004), but religious terms are rarely used in Chinese because religious and geographical characteristics are not obvious in Chinese society. Moreover, some animals have friendly connotations in

English culture, but with exactly the opposite meanings in China, because of the cultural differences. Furthermore, cursing words in China are not tolerated by most people, because in Chinese culture, death is a 'taboo topic' or an unpleasant thing to discuss. Cursing or wishing someone a bad outcome to an event is the most serious and offensive thing in China. That is why, although there were only a small number of cursing words accounted for, they had strong offensive functions.

Based on these findings, according to the macrosystem of the socio-ecological model, cultural or background differences provide us a clear direction to analyse language behaivours. It can be found that although both cyberbullying and swearing focused more on emotional expression and could achieve a number of outcomes, the word meanings, usages, senses and functions are largely affected by society and cultures (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 205; Johnson & Rea, 2009; Speroni *et al*., 2014; Dewaele, 2005, 2017). This is especially true of the meanings of these kinds of words, while the word usages, senses and the regulatory approaches cannot be separated from the societal backgrounds and cultures where they are used. While connotative and denotative meanings of words affect the word functions, societal and cultural differences would also influence more on the word meanings, features, usages and functions. That is, in comparison with swearing in English, the meanings and functions of cyberbullying/sensitive cyberbullying words in Chinese are more complex, and the regulations must consider the China's backgrounds (see Chapter VII for a more detailed discussion).

5.5 Chapter Summary

According to the principles of semantics and pragmatics, the selected 2,000 words were consequently summarised into six word categories. Generally speaking, according to the multiple analysis of the connotation and denotation of cyberbullying words, this chapter fully supports that it is not only negative words that are used for cyberbullying, and by contrast, some neutral words are also related to cyberbullying.

In most people's views, the intentionality of the denotative meanings of many cyberbullying words are to cause harms based on their 'bad' status or are socially unacceptable, being regarded as aggression or aggressive behaviour, but actually

cyberbullying behaviour does not necessarily have to include words that are unambiguously offensive or negative. That is, the words with direct harmful meanings are classified as cyberbullying words (e.g. abusing word, sexual word and cursing word), while the words which have both negative and positive language features as their primary meanings, but are used for cyberbullying in certain situations, are considered as sensitive cyberbullying words. The boundaries of each category are somewhat fuzzy. From the explications, all these word categories are usually interconnected, and they cannot be completely separated from one another.

This research also highlights the relations between language usage and motivation. Based on the different levels of socio-ecological theory, it can be understood that the multiple meanings and functions of a word, preliminarily determine the individuals' behaviour. There is a positive connection between language usage and motivations stating that internet users prefer strong or stronger offensive words than mild or milder offensive words when they intend to attack others directly online. Meanwhile, more discussions were undertaken on how the social media and online community's developments, as well as the social and cultural differences, affect language features, forms, usages and functions. At this point, this research partly supports that both individuals and the environments in which they live, can affect their performance in cyberbullying.

According to these general findings, the following chapters will analyse effects of contextual and sociolinguistics variables, and the social problems caused by cyberbullying.

Chapter VI Assessing Contextual and Sociolinguistic Factors on Cyberbullying on Social Media in China

Chapter V classified the categories of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words from the selected samples, and showed the general findings of word features, usages and functions during the process of cyberbullying in the Chinese context. However, a focus on individual words is not adequate to analyse the cyberbullying phenomenon. Aside from a few words that have a definitive offensive or negative meaning when used separately, most words, especially the newly-emerging words, as well as some ordinary words, need to be understood within a given context. In addition, the use of cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words is best understood through different variables. On this point, Jay (1977) and Janschewitz (2008) stated that the pragmatics range of words and phrases is most effectively understood from a contextual or sociolinguistic point of view.

Regarding the second academical lenses, the following sections will use the contextual variables (e.g. context of communication, cyberbullying forms and event natures) to discuss how different contextual factors affect cyberbullying word usage. Meanwhile, the relations between sociolinguistic factors (gender variables) and cyberbullying language usage are also considered. Hence, analyses of contextual and sociolinguistic factors in cyberbullying behaviour can be expected to provide a window into deeper analyses of cyberbullying features, particularly providing a new approach to understanding the social issues caused by cyberbullying behaviour (see Chapter VII for a more detailed discussion).

6.1 Understanding contextual factors of cyberbullying behaviour

As for using contextual variables to analyse cyberbullying, this research proposes that people have context-sensitive knowledge of cyberbullying relating to a word's appropriateness in different situations, which amounts to the rules for cyberbullying word usage (Allan & Burridge, 1991). This claim is consistent with prior studies, which suggested that swearing or other offensive language behaviour is very sensitive to contextual influences (Jay, 2000). This view is also supported by this research. A majority of mild or moderate cyberbullying words are derived from the typical

context or event backgrounds, which are specific categories of use that fall under the rubric of such words. Therefore, there are two explanations of the contextual variable: ‘context’ is the parts of a conversation, and ‘context’ can also be considered as the circumstances that form the setting for an event, idea or statement.

As described indicated in the literature review, contextual variables in the analysis of swearing include the communication context, the situation of speaking, the purposes of the speakers, the social-physical setting and the topic of the discussion (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). Considering the cyberbullying and the cyberspace’s features, the purposes of the speakers would affect the word use, especially the offensive ones (see Chapter V), and the social-physical setting (a public or private location) does not have an obvious boundary in cyberspace because the roles between cyber perpetrators, targets, and bystanders are easy to transfer. Thus, in this research, the communication context, the situation of speaking and the topic of the discussion are chosen as elements to answer the subsection question one based on interview and qualitative comments collected from cases. The first one is the direct reflection of the context of a conversation, while the other two are the dialogue environment based on event background and features. It is worth mentioning that these three elements are not specific to the Chinese context. They are universal factors which can also be used in other cases, but when they are used in the Chinese context, some specific characteristics in China’s background will be considered.

6.1.1 The communication context

The communication context always refers to the surrounding environment and the framework within which a communication takes place or a word or a sentence uses in (Rigotti & Rocci, 2006). On Sina Weibo, comments are the direct reflection of the communication context. All the comments can be classified into cyberbullying content and non-cyberbullying content. Some offensive words are associated with negative emotions, such as sadness and anger, but there are also some non-offensive messages expressing cyberbullying emotions. Therefore, besides the literal or denotative uses of cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words, these words should be put into the communication context to identify their exact meanings and functions.

Thus, this subsection will use typical words from both cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word databases to show how these words work in different contexts to show various levels of offensiveness.

Firstly, the typical sexual characters 贱 (*jiàn*) and 婊 (*biǎo*) and their variants in Chinese are widely used in different communication contexts to attack targets, especially females. Explications [A] and [B] display the expressed meaning of the contents[125]:

[A] *Comments from the Li case using the lexeme of bitch:*

a. *贱* (Bitch/Slut)

b. *出轨的贱女人* (Loose bitch woman/ slut)

c. *贱 Li 这个年不好过了* (Bitch Li will not be good during the new year)

d. *Li 你个贱人 应(因)为你听不成好多嘻哈歌曲 真想给你两巴掌 以前就觉你不是个好人 勾引 pgone 贱女人* (Li, you are a slut and a bitch! I cannot listen to the hip-hop music because of you! I want to slap your face! I believe you were not a good woman in the past. Seduce Pgone! Bitch!)

[B] *Comments from the Ma case using the lexeme of whore:*

a. *草泥马。婊子* (Fuck you! Fucking whore!)

b. *这婊子又和 Song 搞一起了，卧槽泥马勒个黑 B* (This whore was fucked by Song again. Fuck you! A motherfucking cunt!)

c. *婊子就是婊子，逼谁都可以草，骂你我都想不到更毒的词了，只能用婊子来形容你了。* (The whore is always a fucking whore. Everyone can fuck you. I cannot think of more hurtful words to abuse you, but only use the word 'whore' to describe you.)

d. *(我) 好久没干你了婊子容* (I have not fucked you for a long time, fucking bitch Rong!)

e. *婊子给人家多少钱，才干你一下呢?* (How much does the donkey give you for fucking you once?)

These typical comments in the explications [A] and [B] were selected from Ma's and Li's cases. Both of them were about scandals. In this way, the comments were related to abusing words (e.g. 操, refers to fuck) and sexual words (e.g. 贱, refers to bitch and 婊, refers to whore) which can be used to express strong emotions. Under these

125 In order to protect the event protagonist, the full names mentioned in the chosen comments will be shown only in surnames, and this also applies to the following contents.

communication context, compared with abusing words, sexual words are more related to attacks suffered by female targets. However, in comparison with the character 贱, the character 婊 in the communication context always shows stronger emotions or offensiveness, because the common component 婊 is used with verbs which make people feel bad when they hear this word (Goddard, 2015). That is, the same feature of the comments in the explications [B] is the combination of the sexual word *whore* with the abusive word *fuck*. In other words, the effect of the forms of *whore* frequently appears in particular contexts and contains different ranges of functions, being dependent upon the way it is combined with other words.

Furthermore, although the character 贱 and the character 婊 have similar meanings and bear a close semantic resemblance to one another, the intensity of the emotions is different, which depend on the particular sentence structures. For example, the comments [Aa] and [Ab] are general abusive comments without exact targets, that is, these kind of comments are lightly or mildly offensive. The explication [Ac] used the epithets 'Bitch Li' (Li is the target's surname) to attack the target. At this point, the offensive level is higher than the previous two. Moreover, explication [Ad] is a full sentence with the strongest offensive functions which combines the character 贱 with other offensive words to express the speaker's anger or attack a particular target. Meanwhile, the comment [Bb] '*This whore was fucked by Songzhe again. Fuck you! A motherfucking cunt!*' is more offensive than the comment [Ba] '*Fuck you! Fucking whore!*'. Although these two comments contain the word *whore* and the lexeme *fuck* or *cunt*, [Bb] inserts more strongly offensive words into the utterance to represent a stronger and higher level of offensiveness to the targets. This is also the reason why the expression of 婊 is more offensive in most situations than the word 贱.

Secondly, in the events like harassment of a singer on the show, Corgi's death, and Jiang Ge Tokyo Murder Case, cursing words, such as the character 死 (*sǐ*) and all of its related expressions, are widely used. These were some ethical events, so that the functions of cursing words are usually for cursing or wishing death to someone. However, in cyberspace, these words have complex functions in the communication context. The interesting feature of these expressions is that most of them can be used as ordinary words in daily communication, but when they are used in typical events,

the functions may change into offensive ones. Meanwhile, in the sentences, the functions of cursing words are easier to be identify. For example, in the explication [C], the cursing words' (in bold) literal meaning in [Ca] is *died*, which is a general expression to describe death without a context. However, when it is used to curse others, it does not mean *died* but shows an evil wish. In [Cb] and [Cc], the cursing words are some death-related words which mean 'wishing you to die' or 'I want someone to die'. These are the general expression for internet users to use against targets they want to curse. In comparison with [Cb] and [Cc], the comment [Ce] is a stronger cursing expression because it combines different strong death-related words with certain objects.

[C] *Comments from selected samples*

a. ***死了*** (Died)

b. *C 位**出殡**，速度去死！*(In the main position of the funeral, to die quickly!)

c. *天黑了，赶紧进**棺材**吧，准备好了呢，早点**安息**吧* (It is getting dark now. Hurry into the coffin. Everything gets ready to die soon.)

d. *想给 Yang **烧纸*** (I want to burn sacrificial incense to Yang.)

e. *Yang 和 Ma 死绝了吗? 下午了，**骨灰**烧好了吗* (Are Yang and Ma and their family members dead? It is afternoon now, is the bone ash ready?)

Thirdly, the emotive words and ordinary words with special meanings are usually used in some events that have various focuses. Participants always have different views for one event, and in this way, the emotive words and ordinary words are more affected by contextual factors to show mildly offensive functions. The discussions below use two examples to provide in-depth explanations: the emotional word 不喜欢 (*bù xǐ huān*, refers to dislike, 6,333 times) and the disgusting word 垃圾 (*lā jī*).

[D] *Comments including '不喜欢' chosen from selected samples:*

a. *不喜欢你* (Dislike you.)

b. *我不喜欢你，你个丑八怪！* (I do not like you, ugly guy!)

c. *本来就不喜欢你，现在(我)更觉得你贱了。*(Did not like you, but now I feel that you are a slut.)

According to explication [D], when 'dislike' is used separately [Da], it is an ordinary expression without offensive function. However, when the word *dislike* is combined

with the emotion target or other negative words (including abusive words to attack appearance, sexual words or metaphor words for insults), the functions may change to show strong emotions. The examples [Db] and [Dc] have stronger emotions than the case [Da]. They included the emotion holders (e.g. *我* - I) and emotion targets, and they are also used with abusive words (e.g. 丑八怪, *chǒu bā guài*, refers to a very ugly person) or the sexual word (e.g. 贱) to attack the emotion target. Besides these three examples, an interesting thing is that sometimes the word *dislike* is used with the word *sorry*, as in 'sorry, I dislike you'. This may not be an apology, but an expression to cause psychological pressures on the recipient in cyberspace if it is used repeatedly. That is, when the emotional word 不喜欢 is used in different events, the emotions or functions vary with the context.

Meantime, when the event character is a person, the disgusting word 垃圾 (*lā jī*) changes its original meaning in some situations, and is used for satirising. With regard to this situation, the communication context is important to check whether the word 垃圾 is deemed a metaphor of the object, or an abusive and offensive word meaning to bully someone or not (see explication [E]).

[E] *Comments including '垃圾' chosen from selected samples:*

a. *你这个垃圾!* (You are rubbish!)

b. *你他妈就是个垃圾* (You are fucking rubbish!)

c. *垃圾，祝你全家马上爆炸* (Rubbish, hope you and your family explode and die.)

d. *死婊子，垃圾* (Fucking bitch, rubbish!)

In the explication [Ea], [Eb] and [Ec], the word *rubbish* is a metaphor for a person but the emotion is gradually strengthened. '你这个垃圾!' can be explained as 'you are bad and poor', and the word *rubbish* has a similar meaning to *bad man/guy*. In [Eb], *rubbish* is modified by an emphatic word *fucking*. At this point, the emotion is stronger than [Ea], and it can be translated as *jerk*. Moreover, in the comment [Ec], *rubbish* works as a personal pronoun or a metaphor for the object. In these typical comments, the word *rubbish* means *asshole* which appears within an abusive and 'goddamned' sentence to curse the target. A similar example is '你这个**垃圾**应该下地

狱’ (You are an asshole and should go to hell forever!). The stronger expression of the term *rubbish* is used with a swear word, or an emotional and emphatic word. In the comment [Ed], the term *rubbish* can be seen as an abusive word with sexual meaning to show more intuitive and aggressive functions, such as ‘a fucking whore, shit’ or ‘shit fucking whore’.

Overall, Chinese words have multiple meanings and some words’ parts of speech can be positive, negative or neutral depending on the context. The sentence structures provide relatively clear cues to the correct interpretation of the word category chosen that could be gleaned from conversations based on different purposes. Meanwhile, the communication context (event features) can also affect the word usage and functions during the conversations (see section 6.1.3 for a more detailed discussion). At this point, although a large number of users employ bad words or slang words as a habit to express their thoughts, strong single abusive words or these words used in the comments which are highly derogatory to targets in certain contexts are responsible for cyberbullying. It is evident that the interconnective and contextual factors provide a possibility to initially determine word usage through the perspective of the purpose of the behaviour, and vice versa.

6.1.2 The situation of speaking: Relations between cyberbullying forms and cyberbullying word usage

In the research on swearing, the situation of speaking is mainly about the situation where swearing would be offensive (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). When this element is used for analysing cyberbullying, it can be regarded as the situation that is mainly relevant to the cyberbullying forms.

In the previous research, several distinct forms of cyberbullying have been identified. These include: flaming and attacking (e.g. Willard, 2007; Li, 2007; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010), photo and video clip bullying (e.g. Willard, 2005; Smith *et al*., 2008; Ackers, 2012), online rumour and gossip (e.g. Willard 2007: 7; Langos, 2013), sexual insulting (e.g. Staude-Müller *et al*., 2012; Wang *et al*., 2012; Freis & Gurung, 2013; Kwan & Skoric, 2013), online harassment (e.g. Willard, 2007; Kiriakidis & Kavoura, 2010; Langos, 2013), cyberthreats and cyberstalking (e.g.

Willard, 2007), and excluding someone from an online group (e.g. Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008; Steffgen *et al*., 2011). In recent decades, some researchers have focused on the typical cyberbullying forms in the Chinese context, such as Egao (e.g. Gong & Yang, 2010) and the human flesh search engine (e.g. Downey, 2010; Yang & Zhang, 2010; Gao & Stanyer, 2014).

Among all these cyberbullying forms, the main types of cyberbullying behaviour on Sina Weibo are flaming and attacking, sexually insulting, rumours and gossip, online harassment, cyberthreats and cyberstalking, and the human flesh search engine (吴艳芳, 2016). In addition, the usage of insulting memes or photos and video clips can also be seen as a form of Egao or an attacking behaviour. To have a better understanding and deeper discussion of the relations between cyberbullying forms and cyberbullying word usages, the *direct cyberbullying form* and the *indirect cyberbullying form* will be first briefly introduced .

Direct cyberbullying form is behaviour in which a certain person or group send objectionable threatening material or abusive messages to the target directly (Langos, 2012; Vazsonyi *et al*., 2012; Menesini & Nocentini, 2013). The forms include sending insulting electronic mail/videos/pictures, making up nicknames, and revealing some personal information, or threats to use violence (Menesini & Nocentini, 2013a, 2013b). To the extent this is the case, the specific performance of direct cyberbullying behaviour on Sina Weibo are briefly classified as flaming and attacking, photo and video clip bullying, sexually insulting, online harassment, cyberthreats and cyberstalking.

In comparison, indirect cyberbullying is the behaviour by a person or group towards the targets indirectly, through interaction with the targets' circle of acquaintances, relatives, friends and colleagues, by sending harmful or insulting messages, or using indirect approaches to insulting the targets (Langos, 2012; Menesini & Nocentini, 2013a). The forms can be summarised as posting insulting information on the publicly accessible websites that everyone can see, spreading embarrassing images, posting rumours and gossip, or asking other people to attack the targets (Menesini & Nocentini, 2013a). In this respect, the main indirect cyberbullying behaviour on Sina

Weibo are Egao, online rumours and gossip, human flesh search, and some indirect offensive comments or forwarding, which spread widely and injure the targets.

Among all these cyberbullying forms on Weibo, the word usage and consequences in the direct and indirect cyberbullying behaviour are different. The most direct approaches to using offensive language behaviour to attack others are: flaming and attacking, sexual insulting, cyberthreats and cyberstalking, and online harassment. Although online rumours and gossip, Egao, and photo and video clips would also contain text sometimes, their main uses are spreading false information, memes or videos/pictures to or about the targets. Moreover, the human flesh search engine is about posting material which contains private images, but rarely containing insulting words. Therefore this subsection focuses on flaming and attacking, sexual insulting, cyberthreats and cyberstalking, and online harassment to provide a further analysis of the relation between cyberbullying forms and cyberbullying word usage.

Flaming and Attacking

Flaming and attacking have been defined as 'a heated but short-lived argument with vulgar language that occurs between two or more participants, which generally takes place in public communication environments such as discussion boards, chat rooms or games' (Willard, 2007: 5). This is typical direct cyberbullying behaviour which includes offensive, rude, angry and vulgar language (Willard, 2007). According to the interview results,[126] most of the participants agreed that flaming on Weibo is really bad behaviour in which the internet users use offensive language, and even sexual language to attack the targets and their family members. To the extent this is the case on Sina Weibo, whether flaming and attacking occur between different Weibo users or Weibo account owners, the obvious characteristic is that it is always short-lived behaviour consisting of direct offensive comments and vulgarities. Figure 6.1 is a screenshot about the flaming and attacking on an actor's Weibo comment wall.[127]

126 Some participants of the semi-structured interviews pointed out that flaming and attacking were common cyberbullying behaviour on Sina Weibo. Cyberbullying participants would use many offensive words to describe targets regardless of whether the latter is wrong or not. The purposes of flaming and attacking were expressing negative emotions, attacking, or making targets fell uncomfortable. (See the focus group interviews, and the semi-structured interview No. 001, 003, 004, 006, 008, 009, 010, 011, and 012).

127 This image is a screenshot of the top ranking comments from the actor's Weibo comment wall. The top-ranking comment is determined by the number of likes and replies received by a comment. In order to keep the privacy, all the Weibo account ID, the commentators' Weibo account ID are blocked, and the examples are labelled with keywords, such as bystanders and replies. The same is used in the following examples.



--- I don't know what you are retaliating about. A man without a penis retaliated about Yingluo not with you!

--- The role is a prince, and grandmother used tricks to make him thought he was not. Do not watch the TV program! You are a Nao Can (*idiot and foolish people* in English)!

--- It is just a role. Do not describe this to the actor.

--- I did not say anything about the actor.

--- Interesting!

--- You must be a idiot and so foolish. Use such word to describe the actor and post such foolish comments here. Mind your

Fig. 6.1 An Example of Flaming from An Actor's Weibo Comment Wall

The main meaning of the selected comment was that this actor in the TV drama programme was a villain role of eunuch, and audiences thought he should not be with a girl. Following this comment, there were several flaming and attacking episodes displaying different approaches. The first one (the blue and green square) was attacking the event protagonist and arguing with bystanders using offensive language directly; the second type (the red square) was a long argument between two commentators; and the third one (the purple square) was about some commentators who believed that other internet users were stupid because they could not distinguish the role from the actor.

All these three kinds of flaming are common and may occur everyday on Weibo. The differences between them are that the first type is directed at the target directly with strong offensive words, and the other two are between perpetrators and bystanders or just bystanders, in which the word usage began with a light/mildly offensive one and then changed into strongly offensive one (including hostile and antagonistic swearing). Taking the interactions between different kinds of flaming in this case as the whole picture, it becomes apparent that when participants join in the flaming and attacking, no matter who their targets are, the purpose is expressing their own strong emotions or causing harm. However, it is rare for the commentators or bystanders to reply or become involved in flaming repeatedly. At this point, flaming and attacking are always short-lived arguments with strong or offensive words and directly harmful purposes, but the forms of flaming are not fixed (Willard, 2007: 5).

Sexual Insulting

Sexual insulting is defined as sexual behaviour that is perceived as unwelcome and uncomfortable (Lipson, 2001). This kind of offensive behaviour depends on the perception of the action, rather than only the action itself (Lipson, 2001). The previous research pointed out that there were three main types of sexual insulting: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion (Barak, 2005; Fitzgerald *et al*., 1995). On Sina Weibo, gender harassment is the most common and frequent type, but unwanted sexual attention also occurs sometimes.

Gender harassment involves unwelcome verbal and visual gender-degrading remarks,

such as calling nicknaming, posting pornographic pictures in public or more private online places to deliberately insult, telling insulting sexual jokes, or making gender-humiliating remarks (Barak, 2005). It can be either directed toward a particular victim or to multiple potential receivers (Barak, 2005). On Weibo, the common forms of gender harassment include gender-degrading remarks such as slut-shaming (e.g. calling someone a whore, slut, or similar), homophobic comments, the use of sexual insulting or sex-linked words (e.g. negative or derogatory terms and epithets), or disseminating sexual rumours about someone.

According to the results given in Chapter V, there were 455 sexual words which were chosen from the selected samples, including *fuck*, *bitch*, *son-of-a-bitch*, and *bastard*, making up about one in four instances of coarse language. There were also many epithet formations combining the protagonist's name with the nature of the event or the characteristics of the protagonist, such as 刘渣 (*liú zhā*, refers to Crap Liu), 马婊 (*mǎ biǎo*, refers to Bitch Ma) and 淫璐 (*yín lù*, refers to Slut-shaming Lu), which were the typical sexual insults with unacceptable sexual words for females. Moreover, there are also some rude words used to describe male homosexuality, such as 基佬 (*jī lǎo*, which refers to gay), 基圈 (*jī quān*, which refers to gay community) and 伪娘 (*wěi niáng*, which refers to sissy, similar to 娘炮 *niáng pào*). Therefore, regarding the gender harassment, calling a woman a 'cunt' or 'whore' should be treated like calling a man a 'prick' or 'son-of-bitch'. The consequences for the targets are equal no matter what kind of sexual insulting words used.

In comparison with gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention is appraised as less severe, as one can easily remove these comments or requests. This is behaviour that refers to uninvited comments that communicate sexual desire or intentions from unknown people who clearly have sexual intentions (Barak, 2005). On Sina Weibo, some people post non-consensual use and sharing of (naked) pictures or memes for sex-related purposes on the comment wall, which does not cause much attention at all.

Online Harassment

In comparison with flaming and attacking and sexual insulting, online harassment is a one-sided but longer-lived attacking form which includes repeated and frequent

insulting or threatening behaviour by sending offensive and insulting messages to the targets repeatedly (Willard, 2007: 6; Burgess-Proctor *et al*., 2009). There are many different ways of online harassment but on Sina Weibo, but the widely used ones are sending messages through the Weibo private letter system or posting repeated harassment contents on the Weibo comment wall. The scenario (see Figure 6.2) below is illustrative of the online harassment in these two different ways which occurred to one female Chinese celebrity S[128], which shows the word preferences when online harassment occurs in different situations.

From Figure 6.2, the sentence which is marked with a red line in the original Weibo posted by S, showing that S was attacked and insulted by strangers over a long period, whenever and whatever S posted on the Weibo account wall. There were two kinds of online harassment: online harassment via the comment wall (the blue square) and online harassment through the private letters from strangers (the orange square). The main contents of the online harassment on the comment wall were direct attacks on S, while the online harassment through the private letters were about cursing S and S's family. From the typical cursing private letter posted by S (the orange square), it can be found that one of the strangers used very rude and strong offensive cursing words and sentences to S and S's family members at different times. At the beginning of the harassment, the word usages were indirect, which was shown as 孤儿 (*gū ér*, refers to orphan) to wish that the target S and her/his family members should die. However, in the harassment private letter sent on 29 September, 2018, the direct harassment and cursing were shown as *your father died*, *and your children must seek retribution*, containing the direct cursing word 阴间 (*yīn jiān*, refers to hell or infernal region).

Contrasting word usage in online harassment with flaming and attacking and sexual insulting, online harassment always includes strong offensive language (e.g. abusing words and cursing words) and mildly offensive words. The word usage has a progressive relationship during the process of online harassment. This is because online harassment is repeated and continuous behaviour and always uses repetition offensive words to insult targets or their family members, so that the word usage moves from indirect or light to direct and highly offensive.

128 This image is a screenshot from a celebrate S's Weibo account wall and the original contents was posted by S on Weibo.

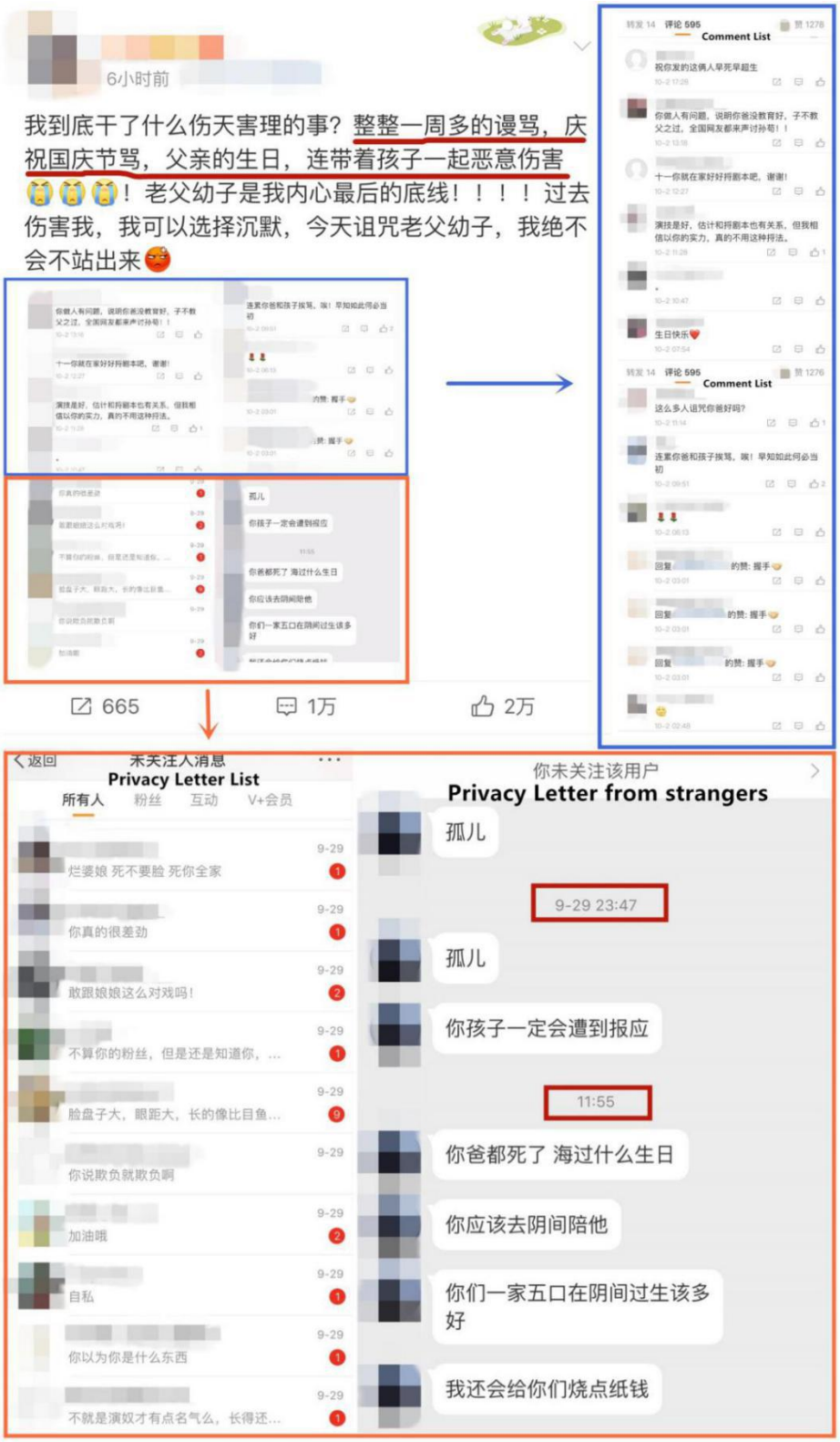


Fig. 6.2 An Example of Online Harassment by Repeated Comments and Private Letters

Cyberthreats and Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking is defined as a form of mental assault in which the perpetrator repeatedly, unwantedly and disruptively breaks into the life of the victim (Royakkers, 2000: 7). With cyberstalking, the perpetrator is 'watching' the target at any time from anywhere, and uses technology to communicate with the target (Royakkers, 2000). In extreme cases, cyberthreats are related to the concept of cyberstalking, which depends, to some extent, on the targets themselves due to the power of their immersion in cyberspace. The main actions of perpetrators are sending threatening or stalking-like messages (Willard, 2007).

Figure 6.3 is a screenshot example of cyberthreats and cyberstalking of an ordinary Weibo user. The content was about insults or cyberthreats from airline crews and some bystanders. The issue began with a complaint from the litigant regarding the airline service with a lack of blankets, but one airline's WeChat account posted an article to 'encourage' its readers to attack the passenger (the litigant). This behaviour was a typical example of cyberstalking by cyberthreats, and the screenshot example is labelled in different colours to show different types of cyberthreats.

The green squares show direct attacks about the complaint, like '*You could travel first class. If you do not have money, shut up!*', '*You can buy an airplane and then you will have enough blankets*' and '*Why don't you ask for blankets when you take buses, taxis or subways?*' Although these kinds of comment cannot be really seen as cyberthreats, they are still rude behaviour towards a passenger for his/her reasonable complaint. Next, the blue squares/lines are all about direct cyberthreats. Most of the comments labelled in blue squares/lines are about the cursing posting, such as '*Would you die if you did not have a blanket?*', '*Give you a body bag!*' and '*Do you want a fire axe?*' All these comments include the words ***body bag***, ***fire axe*** and ***die*** which are employed for cursing and attacking purposes. Moreover, the red squares/lines and the yellow squares may have been posted by bystanders. Some of them just say '*I was a bystander*' (in the red squares/lines), but others say '*When I saw that many people attacked you, I was really happy*' (in the yellow square). These two expressions would exert tremendous pressure on the targets.



Fig. 6.3 An Example of Cyberstalking and Cyberthreats

From this case, the word usage for cyberstalking and cyberthreats are more likely to be both strong and mild offensive words, because cyberstalkings' and cyberthreats' purpose is to make the target feel uncomfortable or wish them a bad result. Thus, the specific word usage feature is that the word chosen is more relevant to the issues or direct cursing words. That is why cyberstalking and cyberthreats may easily increase social dangers or psychological problems.

According to all of these four cyberbullying forms presented in this subsection, it seems reasonable to infer that the word usage during the process of cyberbullying is affected more by the context, especially the situations (cyberbullying forms) where cyberbullying words used in. The obvious features are that strong offensive word categories are mainly related to the short-term cyberbullying processes or direct attacking behaviour to express negative emotions. For example, in flaming and attacking or sexual insulting situations, people are always encouraged to send a relentless flow of strong offensive messages, which can result in the target receiving numerous negative messages every minute to make them feel uncomfortable (Shariff *et al*., 2006). However, in some long-term or indirect cyberbullying behaviour (e.g. online harassment), the light and mild offensive words are mainly used, but these words may also possibly be changed into strong offensive ones as the situations progresses. Therefore, the significant positive correlation has been shown between word usage and the different cyberbullying forms or situations. Thus, it is possible to use the words features or categories as references to track the cyberbullying behaviour or to distinguish the cyberbullying types, and vice versa.

6.1.3 The topic of discussion: Relations between the nature of the topic/event and cyberbullying word usages

The intuitive manifestation of the discussion topic is the nature of the event. In some cyberbullying issues, participants may choose or coin offensive words that are related to the topic they are dealing with. In this research, the chosen samples are social hotspot issues, moral issues and timeliness issues, which can be classified into legal events and moral events (depending on the event nature) and long-term events and short-term events (depending on the event period). Considering the research purposes,

the event natures are used as elements to answer the sub-research question one. Therefore, the dependent variables are language usage and word category preference; the independent variable is the event nature; and the control variable are the genders and the amount of comments (levels of participation) (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 The Dependent, Independent and Control Variables of Sociolinguistics on Events

Case	**Event**	**Dependent Variables**	**Independent Variables**	**Control Variables**		**Focus**
			EN	TG	AC[129]	
The Jiangge Tokyo Murder Case	Legal Event	Language usages and word category preferences	Criminal Case	Female	69,387	Relations between event natures and language behaviour
The Death of the Corgi	Legal Event		Civil Case	Female	6,788	
Ma's speech after extramarital affair	Moral Event		Sexual Case	Female	161,157	
Da Zhang Wei's wrong expressions during the World Cup live show	Moral Event		Ordinary Moral Event (Focusing on disrespect)	Male	4,780	
Qiao Renliang's wrong expressions of 2015 Tianjin warehouse blasts	Moral Event		Ordinary Moral Event (Focusing on 'education level')	Male	89,748	

NB. TG - Target Gender; EN - Event Natures; AC - Amount of Comments

Through the process of analysis, the subsample will be used to provide a general result. In addition to the typical example which is chosen for detailed analysis, some related cases are also chosen to help provide further discussion to support the findings. Thus, the statement of this subsection is, when the event protagonists' genders are the same, with similar levels of participation, the event natures may affect the language usage during the process of cyberbullying.

Legal Events - The Jiangge Tokyo Murder Case (criminal case) and the Death of the Corgi (civil case)

The Jiangge Tokyo Murder Case is a criminal case which initiated public discussion on Sina Weibo at the end of 2017. The period of maximum discussion and public

129 The amount of comments means the total number of the effective comments made by the event protagonists, internet users and bystanders. If one continued event has more than one link, the amount of the comments is the total comments of all these links. These clarifications apply to all subsequent further analyses, but if there are special circumstances, the standard will be described specifically.

participation was between December 2017 and February 2018. Most of the discussion took place on Jiang's mother's Weibo comment wall using the mention tag (@) to condemn the murderer's ex-girlfriend Liu.[130] In this criminal case, Jiangge and Jiangge' mother were the victims. Although the murderer was arrested by the Japanese police and was legally convicted, the internet users still believed that Liu had an inescapable responsibility for the crime. At this point, Liu became the sole target, and an online trial began. A summary of the word usage frequencies among the subsample during the process of discussions is shown in Figure 6.4.

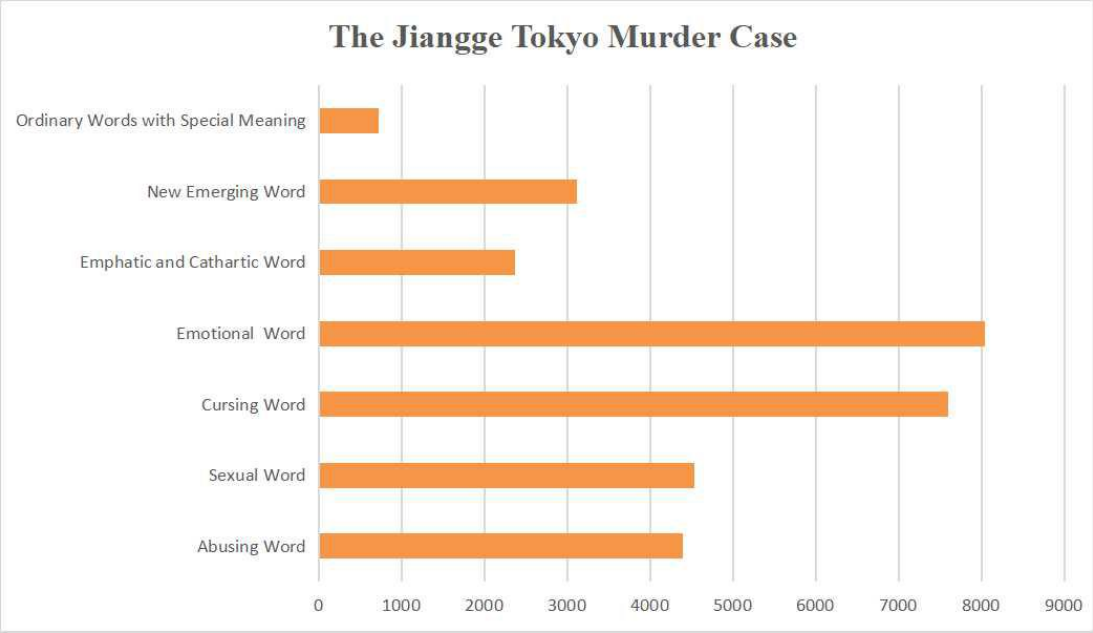


Fig. 6.4 A Summary of Word Category Usage among the Subsample of the Jiangge Tokyo Murder Trial

From Figure 6.4, it can be seen that emotional words were at the top of the usages, and in second ranking were cursing words. There was only a small difference between the usage of these two word categories. This is because the emotional words and cursing words were mainly about direct attacking and accusations to express anger since the online 'moral jury' believed that Liu was an accomplice in this criminal case and their focuses were the accusations, questions of morality, and curses on Liu after she was not punished by the law.

In detail (see Figure 6.5), cursing words (死 *sǐ,* 3,137; 报应 *bào yìng,* 1,327; and 去死 *qù sǐ,* 1,141) accounted for 30% of the top ten high-frequency words, as well as

130 When this criminal case was reported by the official media, the murderer's ex-girlfriend Liu disabled the comment function of her Weibo so that internet users could not post comments on her comment wall directly.

strong emotional words (不要脸 *bù yào liǎn,* 2,938; 恶心 *ě xīn,* 2,752; and 无耻 *wú chǐ,* 1,991). There were also some words in other categories that were at a high level of usage, such as the sexual word 贱人 (*jiàn rén,* 2,991), the abusive word 人渣 (*rén zhā,* 2,162), and the newly-emerging word 垃圾 (*lā jī,* 1,610). A common feature of these word usages is that they all conformed to the event background and were used to criticise and attack Liu's behaviour and character. In addition, the emphatic and cathartic words in the subsample were used more than 2,000 times. Although it is not at the high level, the use of such kind of words was an enhancement of offensive or negative emotions.

Overall, whether using emotional or cursing words separately or using them with emphatic and cathartic words, the word functions were directly venting dissatisfaction or negative emotions towards the target, to wish the target the same result (death) as the victim. Therefore, it can be inferred that in the legal criminal case, the internet users' main purposes were the expression of anger, dissatisfaction and criticism of morality to their targets.

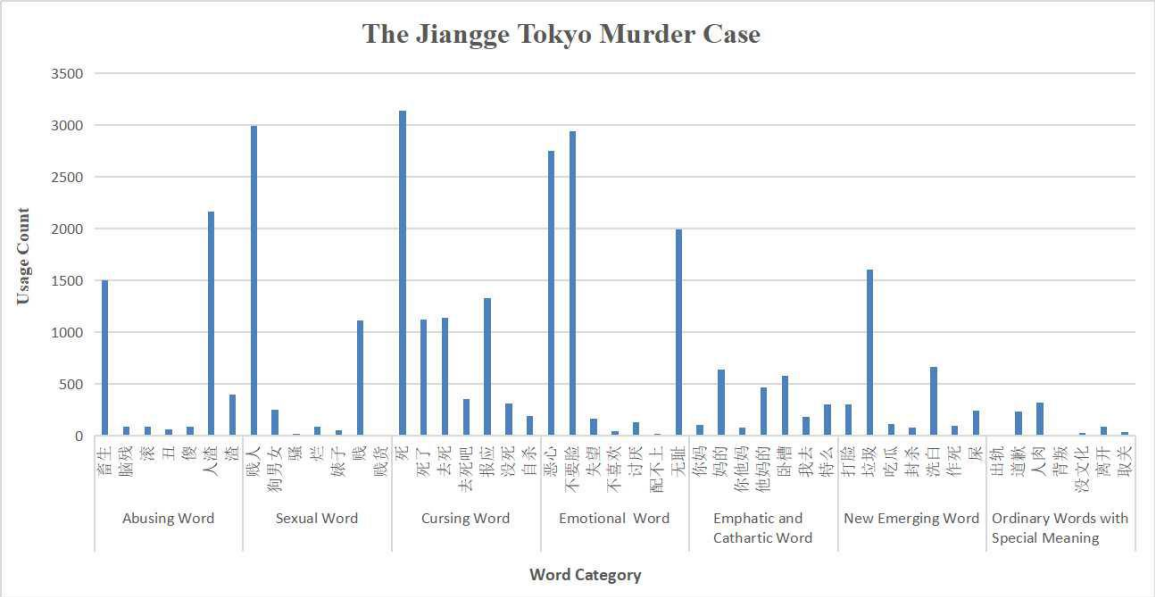


Fig. 6.5 The Usage Count of Single Words in Each Word Category among the Subsample of the Jiangge Tokyo Murder Case

The Jiangge criminal case shows the primary findings of the relation between word usages and event natures, which suggests that internet users tend to use the words that relate to the topic to express attitudes and emotions. This finding was also confirmed in the legal civil case known as *The Death of the Corgi*. In this case, the top 10 words

in the subsample were 道歉 (*dào qiàn*, 503, refers to apology), 恶心 (*ě xīn*, 300), 不要脸 (*bù yào liǎn*, 297), 死 (*sǐ,* 196), 人渣 (*rén zhā*, 175), 垃圾 (*lā jī,* 112), 死了 (*sǐ le*, 93), 人肉 (*rén ròu*, 89, refers to human flesh search), 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, 81), and 畜生 (*chù shēng*, 69). As in the Jiangge's criminal case, the most widely used words in the Corgi's case were for expressing anger, such as the abusive words (人渣 *rén zhā* and 畜生 *chù shēng*), the cursing words (死 *sǐ* and 死了 *sǐ le*) and the emotional words (恶心 *ě xīn* and 不要脸 *bù yào liǎn*). These three kinds of words accounted for 60% of the top 10 words. Moreover, other strong offensive words (e.g. 贱人 *jiàn rén* and 垃圾 *lā jī*) were also highly coincident with the word usages in the Corgi's case to attack the target's character and behaviour. An interesting feature is that in this civil case, the ordinary words 道歉 (*dào qiàn*) and 人肉 (*rén ròu*) were widely used for putting pressure on the 'puppy murderer' and coercing him/her into apologising to the public.

To sum up, based on the Jiangge criminal case and the Corgi civil case, although the focuses on the legal aspects are different, the public's main focus was expressing anger and criticism of the event protagonists. Therefore, the word usages were related to the event protagonists' behaviour or character and the public attitudes to the protagonist. In these two legal cases, the main public attitudes or emotions were anger, so that the most widely used word categories were strong negative emotional words and cursing words, as well as some abusive words and sexual words. Thus, the primary finding from legal cases is that the word usage during the process of cyberbullying was mainly related to the expression of strong emotions or attitudes (e.g. strong emotional words) or to attacking the target's behaviour or character directly (e.g. cursing words and abusive words). This is a feature of the cyberbullying words used in the moral events. For moral events, cyberbullying words can be used for joking or satirising, mainly focusing on the nature of the event.

Moral events – Ma's extra-marital affair, Da Zhang Wei's and Qiao's wrong expressions

In comparison with legal events, the relationship between moral issues and word usage displays some complex features. This is because of the difference between the

punishment for legal cases and the equivalent for issues of morality will result in different public attitudes. Illegal behaviour are always punished by the law, but moral issues are generally criticised by the public. That is, for moral issues, it is easier to generate considerable discussion, and moral judgments may flow to the ‘wrong side’. From this viewpoint, the Ma case is a typical moral issue for analysis.

Figure 6.6 and 6.7 is the summaries of the subsample word uses in Ma’s case. From Figure 6.6, the top-ranking word category is sexual words, which are used three times more than the cursing word category (ranked second). This is because sexual words are more relevant to the Ma’s event nature - an unacceptable extramarital affair. On this point, strong sexual words were the most direct way to attack targets, especially a female target. Besides the sexual words, emotional words and cursing words were at a similar level of usage to express emotions or attack the target’s behaviour.

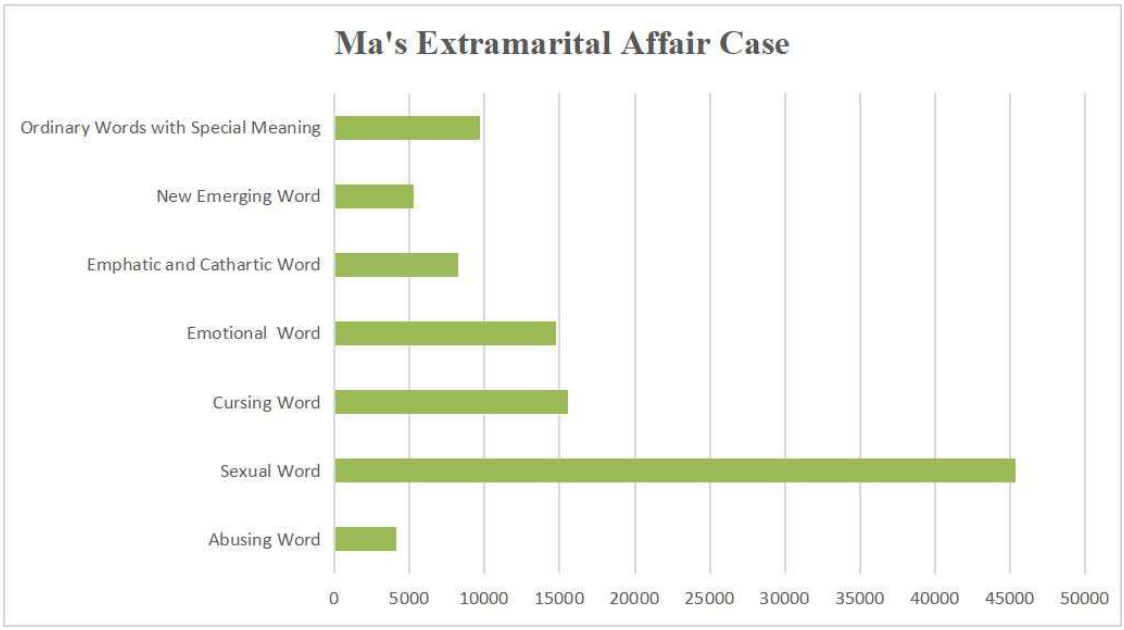


Fig. 6.6 The Usage Count among the Subsample Words in Each Word Category in the Ma Case

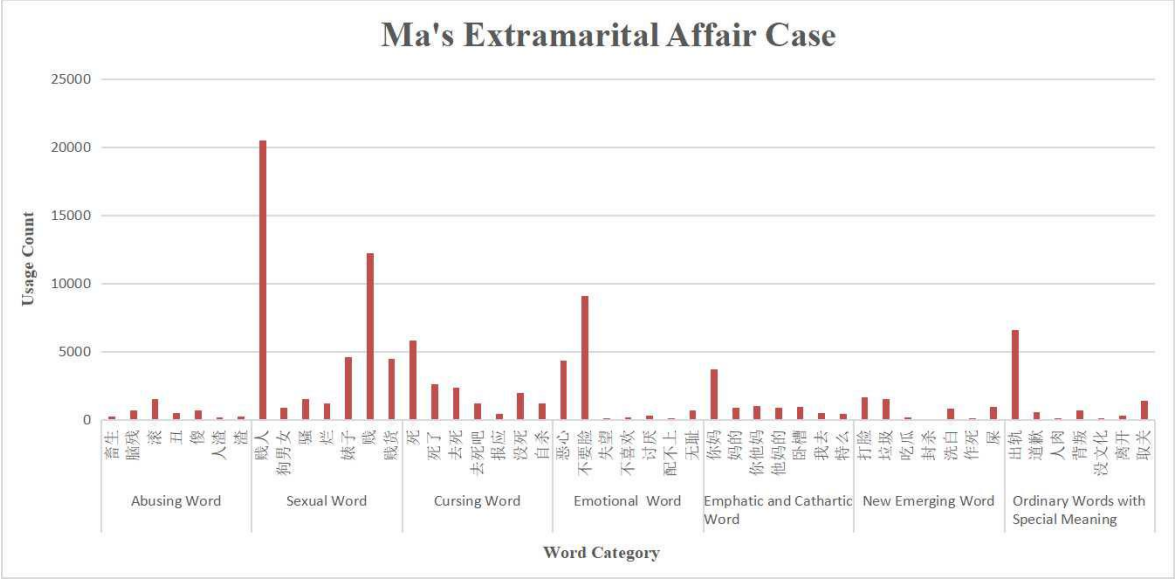


Fig. 6.7 The Usage Count of the Single Words in Each Word Category among the Subsample of the Ma Case

Figure 6.7 shows the details of every single word in the subsample that was used in the Ma case. Sexual words account for 40% of the top 10 words. In addition to the typical sexual words 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, 20,491 times) and 贱 (*jiàn,* 12,216), also widely used ones were the emotional words 不要脸 (*bù yào liǎn,* 9,094) and 恶心 (*ě xīn,* 4,335), the ordinary word 出轨 (*chū guǐ*, 6,572, refers to betrayed marriage), and the cursing word 死 (*sǐ,* 5,785). Although the neutral word 出轨 (*chū guǐ*) is a general expression of the event, it should be considered to have negative connotations

when used at a high level of frequency for putting pressure on the target. The word functions are similar with in the Jiangge case, that is, the emotional words, the abusive words and the cursing words were used to express anger. That is why the typical strong offensive words in such word categories were at a high level, but the total number of word usages was not at that high level. The primary result from the Ma case is that word usage in a moral issue during the process of cyberbullying is more relevant to the essence of the matter, and the public's attitude will also affect word usage sometimes.

Moreover, another two moral events: *Da Zhang Wei's wrong expressions during the World Cup live show* and *Qiao Renliang's wrong speech for the Tianjin warehouse blasts* also caused great discussion on Weibo, and work as the supplemental examples to show the relations between word usage and event natures. The Da Zhang Wei case and the Qiao case were both about wrong expressions, but the focus and the essence of the matter were different. The Da Zhang Wei case was about a wrong expression towards a dead player, and the public focus was the disrespectful speech. On this point, the top five words in the subsample of Da Zhang Wei's case were 道歉 (*dào qiàn*), 自杀 (*zì shā*, refers to suicide), 死 (*sǐ*), 垃圾 (*lā jī*) and 脑残 (*nǎo cán*). Among these five words, all of them are directly about cursing him and attacking his intelligence owing to his disrespectful speech to a dead football player.

In the Qiao case, although it was also about a wrong expression, the public focus was his 'low level of education' in using unsuitable words for a serious public emergency issue. On this point, the top five words in the subsample were 没文化 (*méi wén huà*, refers to being uneducated), 脑残 (*nǎo cán*), 人肉 (*rén ròu*), 打脸 (*dǎ liǎn*, refers to slap your face) and 道歉 (*dào qiàn*). Specifically, the word 没文化 (*méi wén huà*) is an ordinary word to describe someone who is not educated, but in Qiao's case, it was an ironic expression to satirise Qiao's wrong word usage. A word with a similar function is the word 人肉 (*rén ròu*). This word was used in Qiao's original Weibo, but internet users 'copied' this word many times to satirise Qiao's low educational level and suggest that he cannot understand this word's meaning. The stronger offensive expression was the abusive word 脑残 (*nǎo cán*), which was used to directly attack Qiao's intelligence. As with the Ma case, the term 道歉 (*dào qiàn*)

was a high-frequency word in both the Da Zhang Wei case and the Qiao case, to put pressure on targets.

Overall, with all these moral cases, the common feature is that the word usage during the cyberbullying process is most relevant to the event feature or the essence of the matter, rather than general cursing, attacking or emotional expressions. The *event feature* here is a narrow interpretation, rather than a general consideration of legal events or moral events. It is more relevant to the event topic, the target's behaviour or the target's character. Generally speaking, the main purpose of using strongly or mildly offensive words was expressing emotions or attacking targets in moral events. In these cases, internet users attacked the targets based on these event features or their personal thoughts, whether the target had made obvious mistakes which was worthy of being attacked or not. This finding was also evidenced in Chapter V. Each cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word category has its own focus in the context where internet users preferred to use the word that would be more in line with the event nature itself to achieve their 'attacking' goals. For example, abusive words are related more to unacceptable issues; sexual words are related to behaviour which relates to sex; cursing words are mainly used to express harm; and words having dark meanings or special meanings in the context are always used with certain targets or events with similar features. Therefore, the essence of the matter or the event feature affects the word functions or usages during the cyberbullying process, especially for these newly-emerging and ordinary words.

Taking the legal and moral cases together, the event nature factor is an important element to analyse cyberbullying behaviour. Specifically, with the legal events, the purposes of using strongly or mildly offensive words are expressing anger or other negative emotions, and attacking the targets' personalities. On this point, the word usages are mainly about strongly negative emotional words or cursing words, sometimes combined with emphatic and cathartic words to enhance emotions. Regarding the moral event, the main purpose of internet users is criticism, so that the word usage is more related to the events' or the targets' features.

6.2 Cyberbullying word preferences on social media: sociolinguistic analysis

Cyberbullying is not only an individual problem, but also may affect and be determined by social interactions or relationships (Glover *et al*., 2000; Spears *et al*., 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to analyse it within social structures and interactions, which focus more on the relations between different individuals or groups based on the socio-ecological model. Thus, analysing how the sociolinguistic factors affect word usage in cyberbullying behaviour can provide an approach to discussing the individual differences in cyberbullying word usage.

Sociolinguistics studies how linguistic variations[131] differ between groups separated by certain sociolinguistic variables (e.g. ethnicity, religion, status, gender, age, or level of education) and how the creation and adherence to these rules is used to categorise individuals in social or socioeconomic classes (Dittmar & Schlobinski, 1988: 115; Gumperz & Cook‐Gumperz, 2008; Jay, 2009). In the related studies discussed in the literature review, sociolinguistic research on gender and language is shown to be an established field, in which the gender factor has been a common variable that is used to analyse differences in language usages in cyberbullying, swear or taboo words (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). Although many of the cyberbullying studies have considered gender differences, nearly all the studies have focused on the perpetrators' gender when examining cyberbullying. This has led to the view that boys/males were more likely to take part in cyberbullying, while girls/females were more like to be cyberbullied (e.g. Beran & Tutty, 2002; Baldry, 2004). In this subsection, by considering the features of cyberbullying and the characteristics of the Sina Weibo platform, this research will also choose the gender variable for further analysis. However, the difference with the previous studies is that this research will take both the speakers' and the targets' genders as variables to examine the relation between gender differences and word usage in cyberbullying behaviour.

131 A linguistic variable is a linguistic item which has identifiable variants (Wardhaugh, 1992: 139‐40).

6.2.1 The speaker's gender: The different understanding of word offensiveness between males and females

To distinguish the different understanding of word offensiveness between males and females, this research asked eight people (four males and four females) to label the offensiveness level of the 2,000 single words which were collected from samples (see summarised statistics data in Table 6.2). All the labels were based on the individuals' tolerance of a word's offensiveness. If their personal tolerance was higher, the word offensiveness label is lower, and vice versa. This is a very important step for statistical analysis. The hypothesis is that both individuals and groups have different tolerance levels for cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words, and females have lower tolerance levels of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words than males.

Table 6.2 The Summarized Descriptive Statistics Data of the Offensiveness Level of Single Words Labelled by Volunteers

Offensiveness Level	F1	F2	F3	F4	M1	M2	M3	M4
1	678	498	106	257	692	852	1192	242
2	434	662	1095	1020	508	483	243	733
3	331	503	615	666	398	408	441	674
4	382	185	178	38	301	165	84	311
5	175	152	6	19	101	92	39	40

Table 6.2 shows the overall descriptive statistical results of the offensiveness level of single words labelled by volunteers. In general, the amount of strongly offensive words (level 4 and level 5) labelled by volunteers was less than mildly and lightly offensive words (level 1 to level 3). The difference in the group's tolerance levels for cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words was also estimated. The quantity of strongly offensive words labelled by female volunteers was higher than those labelled by males. Moreover, this research also used a Paired T-test to test whether there is a significant difference in the word offensiveness level tolerance between different individuals (see Table 6.3 and Table 6.4).

Table 6.3 Paired T-test for Labelling of Words according to Level of Offensiveness by Females

	obs	Mean1	Mean2	dif	St_Err	t_value	p_value
F1 - F2	2000	2.471	2.416	.055	.025	2.2	.029
F1 - F3	2000	2.471	2.442	.03	.028	1.05	.283
F1 - F4	2000	2.471	2.271	.2	.028	7.15	0
F2 - F3	2000	2.416	2.442	-.026	.024	-1.1	.281
F2 - F4	2000	2.416	2.271	.145	.024	6.1	0
F3 - F4	2000	2.442	2.271	.171	.018	9.4	0

The analysis of results in Table 6.3 show that the tolerance of females to cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words was different between individuals. The paired comparison results show that the average difference between F1 and F2 was 0.055 ± 0.025 (P=0.029). There were statistically significant differences between F1 and F4, F2 and F4, F3 and F4 (P<0.001). There was no significant difference between F1 and F3 or F2 and F3 (P>0.05). This indicates that F4 had the lowest tolerance score among female individuals, which means her tolerance of offensive words was the highest.

Table 6.4 Paired T-test for Labelling of Words according to Level of Offensiveness by Males

	obs	Mean1	Mean2	dif	St_Err	t_value	p_value
M1 - M2	2000	2.305	2.081	.224	.025	9.2	0
M1 - M3	1999	2.306	1.767	.539	.025	21.05	0
M1 - M4	2000	2.305	2.587	-.282	.024	-12.05	0
M2 - M3	1999	2.08	1.767	.314	.025	12.4	0
M2 - M4	2000	2.081	2.587	-.506	.026	-19.45	0
M3 - M4	1999	1.767	2.587	-.82	.025	-31.95	0

The result was similar in Table 6.4, but gender was the only distinction. The analysis of results in Table 6.4 shows that the males' tolerance of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying differed from individual to individual, and the comparison of the two groups show that the tolerance among the four pairs of males was significantly different (P <0.001). From the results of scores, it can be concluded that the average score of M3 is the lowest, being 1.767, indicating that male individual (M3) has the lowest tolerance score, that is, the highest tolerance of M3. On the whole, the tolerance score of males was lower than that of females, indicating that overall male tolerance is higher than that for females.

Moreover, when tolerance of a word's offensiveness was compared in the mixed-gender group, there was a significant difference between the male group and the female group. The Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to analyse the difference in tolerance of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words between male and female groups (see Table 6.5). The results show that the average score of word offensiveness with females was higher than that of males, and the difference was statistically significant (P<0.001). It can be initially inferred that female tolerance of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words is lower than the male.

Table 6.5 One-way Analysis of Variance by Ranks (Kruskal-Wallis Test) for the Difference between Female and Male Groups' Labelling of Words' Offensiveness Levels

sex	Obs	RankSum	RankMean
F	8000	6.80e+07	8498.38
M	7999	6.00e+07	7501.56
Chi-squared (uncorrected for ties) =		186.308 with	1 d.f. (p = 0.00010)
Chi-squared (corrected for ties) =		201.110 with	1 d.f. (p = 0.00010)
Multiple comparisons between groups			
(Adjusted p-value for significance is 0.025000)			
Ho: Offensiveness (sex==F) = Offensiveness(sex==M)			
RankMeans difference =	996.82	Critical value =	143.14
Prob = 0.000000 (S)			

Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was also used to analyse the difference in tolerance of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words between male individuals and female individuals. The results showed that there was a significant difference in tolerance of such words between male individuals and female individuals (P<0.001). The results of multiple comparisons showed that there were significant differences between F1 and M1-4 (P<0.05), and the results of F2-4 were consistent with F1 (P<0.05). That is, there were statistical differences between female individuals (F1, F2, F3, F4) and male individuals (M1, M2, M3, M4), indicating that there were differences between females and males in tolerance of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying vocabulary. Moreover, it can be seen from the rank results that the score of M4 is higher than all the females, while the score of M1-3 is lower. From this evidence, it appears that females have a lower toleration of the cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words than males.

Table 6.6 One-way Analysis of Variance by Ranks (Kruskal-Wallis Test) for the Difference between Female and Male Understanding of Word Offensiveness

code	Obs	RankSum	RankMean
F1	2000	1.68e+07	8398.87
F2	2000	1.68e+07	8399.14
F3	2000	1.79e+07	8954.76
F4	2000	1.65e+07	8240.74
M1	2000	1.58e+07	7900.17
M2	2000	1.40e+07	6990.40
M3	1999	1.14e+07	5712.64
M4	2000	1.88e+07	9402.14

Chi-squared (uncorrected for ties) = 891.861 with 7 d.f. (p = 0.00010)

Chi-squared (corrected for ties) = 962.721 with 7 d.f. (p = 0.00010)

Multiple comparisons between groups

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F1) = Offensiveness(code==M1)
RankMeans difference = 498.70 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000320 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F1) = Offensiveness(code==M2)
RankMeans difference = 1408.47 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F1) = Offensiveness(code==M3)
RankMeans difference = 2686.23 Critical value = 456.29 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F1) = Offensiveness(code==M4)
RankMeans difference = 1003.27 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F2) = Offensiveness(code==M1)
RankMeans difference = 498.96 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000317 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F2) = Offensiveness(code==M2)
RankMeans difference = 1408.74 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F2) = Offensiveness(code==M3)
RankMeans difference = 2686.50 Critical value = 456.29 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F2) = Offensiveness(code==M4)
RankMeans difference = 1003.00 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F3) = Offensiveness(code==M1)
RankMeans difference = 1054.59 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F3) = Offensiveness(code==M2)
RankMeans difference = 1964.36 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F3) = Offensiveness(code==M3)
RankMeans difference = 3242.12 Critical value = 456.29 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F3) = Offensiveness(code==M4)
RankMeans difference = 447.38 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.001095 (NS)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F4) = Offensiveness(code==M1)
RankMeans difference = 340.57 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.009856 (NS)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F4) = Offensiveness(code==M2)
RankMeans difference = 1250.34 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F4) = Offensiveness(code==M3)
RankMeans difference = 2528.10 Critical value = 456.29 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Ho: Offensiveness(code==F4) = Offensiveness(code==M4)
RankMeans difference = 1161.40 Critical value = 456.24 Prob = 0.000000 (S)

Overall, combining all the statistical results shown previously, strong evidence is provided to show the different levels of tolerance of the offensive words between males and females. Specifically, it can be assumed that females' tolerance of offensive words is lower than males. According to the results of the short questionnaire completed by these eight volunteers, there is a consistent connection between the toleration of offensive words and their usage in the real world. Females do have possibilities to use offensive words, but in comparison with males they may feel embarrassment about using these words because of the lower toleration.[132] Males sometimes do not regard using offensive language as rude behaviour, even in real life, because they have a high toleration of offensive language and think their behaviour is not aggressive but just for joking.[133] It is also considering that many of the offensive words target at females, but it does not mean females will not use them to same-gender targets. At this moment, the elements that influenced the cyberbullying word usages are complex (see section 6.2.2 for the detailed discussion).

However, all these findings can only be used to prove the personal feelings when an individual meets the offensive or sensitive offensive words. It is still challenging to use the speakers' gender as a factor to analyse cyberbullying to a certain extent, and it is also difficult to fully claim that males are more likely to participate in cyberbullying behaviour. That is the reason why this research will also focus on the targets' gender to show a further analysis of the relations between gender differences and offensive word usage during the process of cyberbullying.

6.2.2 Targets' genders: The key factor in determining language use between male and female speakers

Besides the focus on the speakers' gender influences on linguistics, the targets' gender is also an important element to analyse and address the limitations of studying the participants' gender-specific variation shown in their language behaviour. This also helps to reach a relatively consistent conclusion about the targets' gender preferences

132 Three females (F1, F2 and F3) agreed that abusing words are the most offensive words and they rarely used them in the daily communication. One female (F4) stated that cursing words belong to the most offensive category. As for sexual words, all the female volunteers stated that they cannot stand anyone using sexual words on them (See Appendix VII).

133 All males pointed out that they would not pay attention to who used offensive words, and they would not feel surprised by offensive words used in daily life. They do not have offensive purposes when they used the swearing or taboo words in almost of the time. When they used offensive words in daily communication, it is often related to emotion expression (See Appendix VII).

for language usages between different targets during the process of cyberbullying.

As introduced in the methodology chapter, a comparative analysis between two cases of extramarital affairs with similar participation levels and discussion will be studied within the selected subsample to analyse how sociolinguistics factors affect word usages in cyberbullying. In order to reduce the bias, the event natures and the levels of participation were kept at a similar level, and the comments were all regarding the event targets directly (excluding replies to bystanders). Therefore, the dependent variables are language usage and word category preferences; the independent variable is the targets' gender; and the control variables are event natures and the levels of participation (see Table 6.7). The key claim is that the targets' gender is the main element to influence word usage in cyberbullying processes, rather than the speakers' gender. At the same time, females will also use strong offensive words in cyberspace, although they always have a lower tolerance of the offensive words than males.

Table 6.7 The Dependent, Independent and Control Variables on Targets' Gender

Cases	**Dependent Variables**	**Independent Variables**	**Control Variables**		**Focus**
		TG	EN	PL(F:M)	
Chen's speech after extramarital affair	Language usages and word category preferences	Male	Moral cases about extramarital affairs	6.7:3.3	Relations between target gender and language behaviour
Ma's speech after extramarital affair		Female		4.8:5.2	

NB. TG - Target Gender; EN - Event Natures; AC - Participation Level

Figure 6.8 and Figure 6.9 present the frequencies of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word in the subsample used by both males and females in the Ma (the target is female) and Chen (the target is male) extramarital affair cases.

Figure 6.8 shows that the sexual word category (46%) was the highest frequency word category used by male internet users in the Ma case. The cursing word (16%) was the second most popular category, and the abusive word displayed the lowest frequency (4%). In addition, in the Chen case, the ordinary words with special meanings (25%) ranks highest, which was two and a half times higher than in the Ma case, while the sexual word category (21%) used by males ranks second. Significant differences were also shown in the usage of cursing words and abusive words. The cursing words used

by males in the Ma case were more than three times those of the Chen case, while the abusive words in the Chen case were nearly three times that of the Ma case.

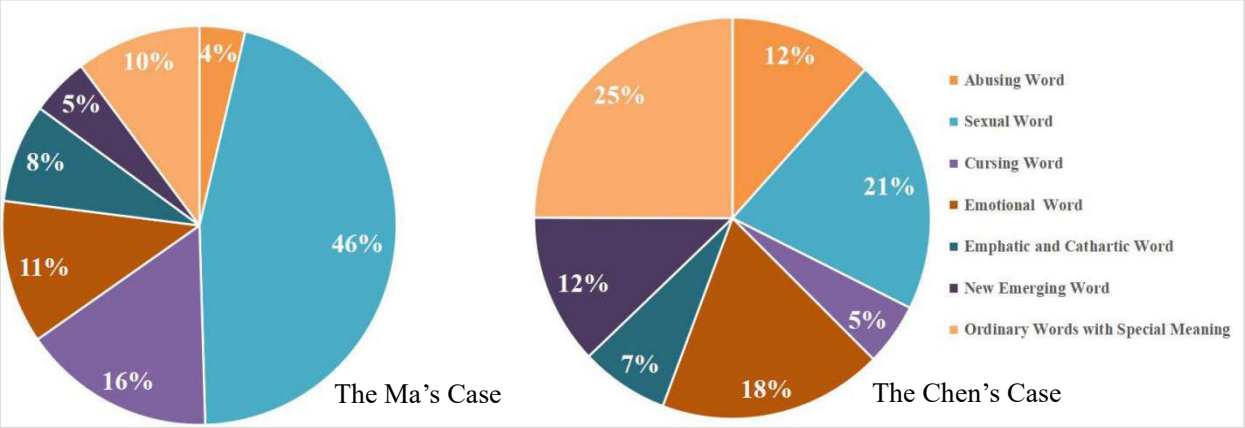


Fig 6.8 Word Category Usage by Males in the Extramarital Affair Cases of Ma and Chen

Figure 6.9 shows that the highest word category usage frequency by females of the subsample word categories in the Ma case was also sexual words (39%). Cursing words were the second most popular category (19%), with little difference from the emotional words (18%). However, there were some differences shown in the Chen case. The ordinary words with special meanings (28%) ranked at the highest frequency, as well as the strong emotional words (25%) and the sexual words (24%) ranked second and third with little difference.

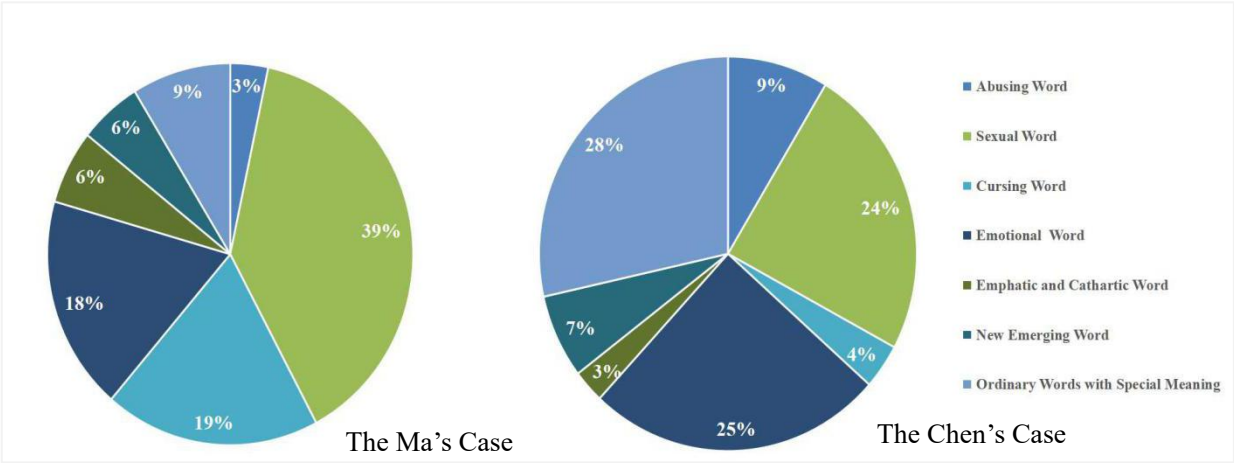


Fig. 6.9 Word Category Usage by Females in the Extramarital Affair Cases of Ma and Chen

Regarding the differences between the word category frequencies used by males and females in these two cases, it can be assumed that the word usage during the process of cyberbullying depends on the targets' genders, not the word usage habits stated in

the existing literature. Both males and females would use strong offensive (cyberbullying) words and mild/light offensive (sensitive cyberbullying) words on their targets. Interestingly, females preferred to use strong offensive words on same-gender targets, which supports evidence from the literature (e.g. Seals & Young, 2003). These primary findings will be reinforced by further data as below.

Frequencies of the top 10 words in the subsample of the chosen samples

Figure 6.10 and Figure 6.11 present the frequencies of selected subsample cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words used by males and females in the Ma and Chen extramarital affair cases. According to the figures above, it can be seen that there is a difference between male and female word usages with similar events but with different targets.

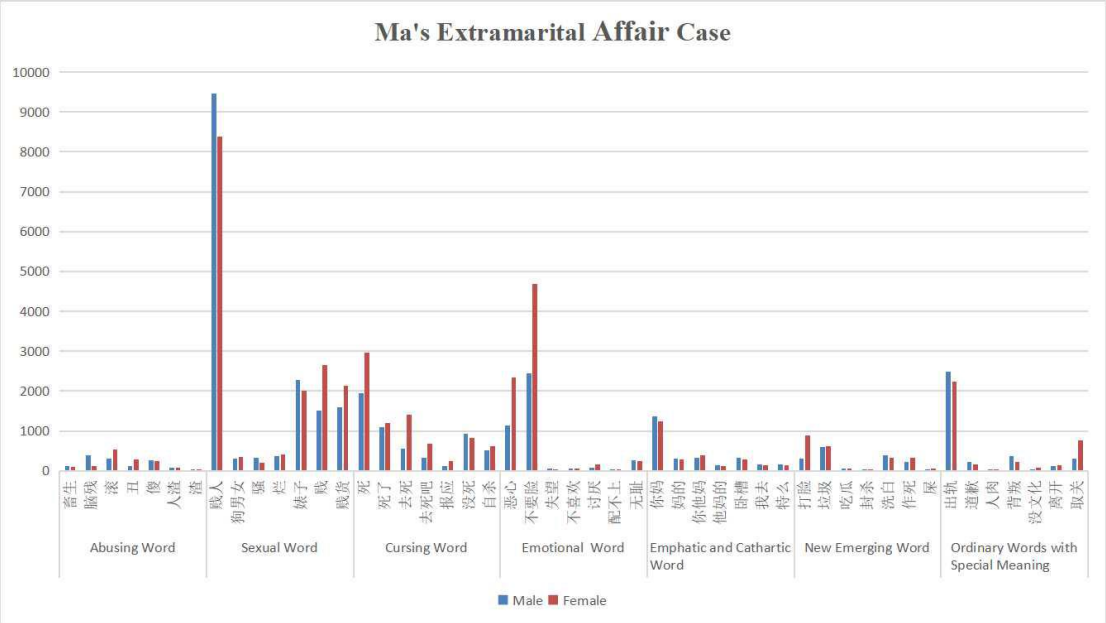


Fig 6.10 Frequencies of Selected Cyberbullying and Sensitive Cyberbullying Words in the Ma Extramarital Affair Case

In the Ma case (see Figure 6.10), the words 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, 9,471), 婊子 (*biǎo zi*, 2,281), 出轨 (*chū guǐ*, 2,484) and 你妈 (*nǐ mā*, 1,365) were commonly used by males. This is similar to the result in the existing literature, in which males prefer using strong offensive words to attack (McEnery, 2004). However, it does not mean that female internet users do not use strong offensive words when they express their emotions and attitudes online. In addition to the previous four words used mostly by males, there were some typical strong offensive words, used by females mostly, in the

Ma case. For example, the characters 贱 (*jiàn*, 2,650) and 死 (*sǐ*, 2,955), as well as the words 不要脸 (*bù yào liǎn*, 4,682), 恶心 (*ě xīn,* 2,338), 死了 (*sǐ le*, 1,098) and 去死 (*qù sǐ,* 1,415), were all at a higher usage level with females than males. At this point, it can be assumed that although females may not stand someone using strong emotional words, sexual words, cursing words and abusive words to attack themselves, they will use such strong offensive words against same-gender targets[134].

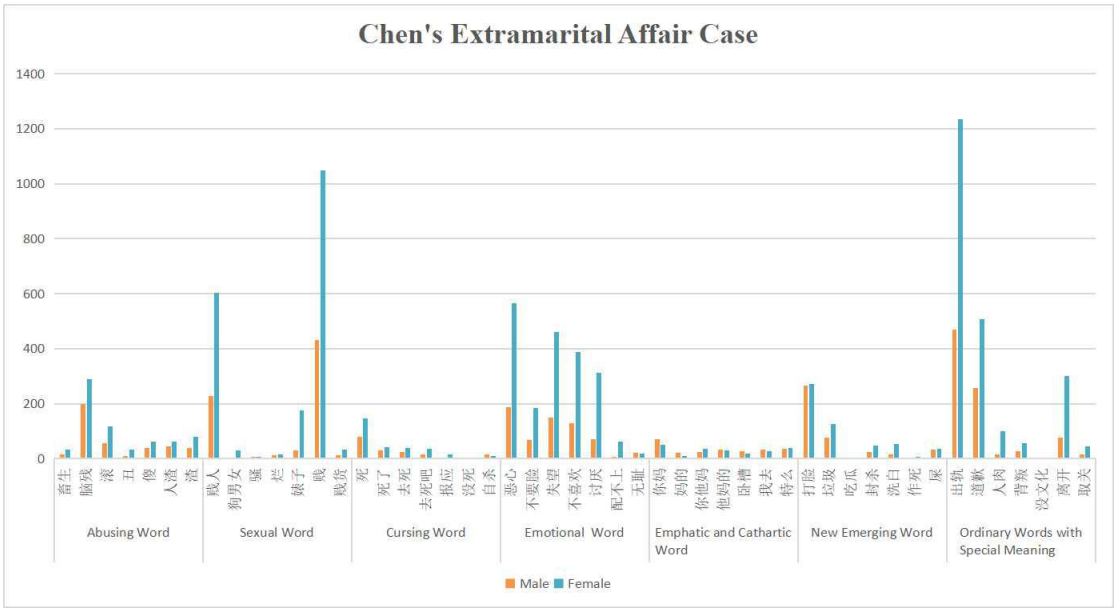


Fig 6.11 Frequencies of Selected Cyberbullying and Sensitive Cyberbullying Words in the Chen Extramarital Affair Case

However, the word usage by both males and females in the Chen case (see Figure 6.11) shows some different features. Briefly, the two main points are: firstly, the most frequently used words were mild offensive words or ordinary words with special meanings; and secondly, although far more females left comments about Chen than males did, the words were more inclined to light/mild offensive words. For example, a notable feature shown in Figure 6.11 is that most of the words were used more frequently by females than by males. Terms like 出轨 (*chū guǐ*, 1,234), 贱 (*jiàn*, 1,048), 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, 602), 恶心 (*ě xīn,* 566), 道歉 (*dào qiàn*, 506), 失望 (*shī wàng*, 461)，不喜欢 (*bù xǐ huān,* 388), 讨厌 (tǎo yàn, 313), 离开 (lí kāi, 300), 不要脸 (*bù yào liǎn*, 185), and 婊子 (*biǎo zi*, 175) were used two to three times more than by males. However, most of these words are emotional words or ordinary words.

134 The language behaviour were further divided into four groups based on gender factors - female to female (F to F), male to female (M to F), female to male (F to M), and male to male (M to M) (Rieber *et al*., 1979).

Besides the general analyses, Table 6.8 and Table 6.9 provide the top 10 words of the subsample word used by males and females in both extramarital affair cases, thereby providing a clearer and more comprehensive view of the differences in word usages by males and females against different targets.

Table 6.8 The Top 10 Words of the Subsample Used by Males in the Ma and Chen Extramarital Affair Cases

No.	Male Internet Users	
	The Ma's case	The Chen's case
1	贱人 9, 471	出轨 470
2	出轨 2, 484	贱 431
3	不要脸 2, 440	打脸 266
4	婊子 2, 281	道歉 258
5	死 1, 947	贱人 229
6	贱货 1, 587	脑残 200
7	贱 1, 504	恶心 188
8	你妈 1, 365	失望 150
9	恶心 1, 129	不喜欢 130
10	死了 1, 098	死 80

N.B. The unit in the table is 'times'.

Table 6.9 The Top 10 Words of the Subsample Used by Females in the Ma and Chen Extramarital Affair Cases

No.	Female Internet Users	
	The Ma's case	The Chen's case
1	贱人 8, 391	出轨 1, 234
2	不要脸 4, 682	贱 1, 048
3	死 2, 955	贱人 602
4	贱 2, 650	恶心 566
5	恶心 2, 338	道歉 506
6	出轨 2, 234	失望 461
7	贱货 2, 137	不喜欢 388
8	婊子 2, 013	讨厌 313
9	去死 1, 415	离开 300
10	你妈 1, 236	脑残 290

N.B. The unit in the table is 'times'.

Among the top 10 words that were used by males in the Ma case (see Table 6.8), the sexual words (贱人 *jiàn rén*, 9,471, 婊子 *biǎo zi*, 2,281, 贱 *jiàn*, 1,504, and 贱货 *jiàn huò*, 1,587) accounted for 40% and the word usage frequency was the highest,

while the others were two cursing words (死 *sǐ*, 1,947 and 死了 *sǐ le*, 1,098), two emotional word (恶心 *ě xīn*, 1,129 and 不要脸 *bù yào liǎn*, 2,440), one emphatic word (你妈 *nǐ mā*, 1,365) and one ordinary word (出轨 *chū guǐ*, 2,484). However, in the Chen case, the top 10 words according to the usage frequencies were the words 出轨 (*chū guǐ*, 470), 贱 (*jiàn*, 431), 打脸 (*dǎ liǎn*, 266), 道歉 (*dào qiàn*, 258), 贱人 (*jiàn rén*, 229), 脑残 (*nǎo cán*, 200)，恶心 (*ě xīn*, 188), 失望 (*shī wàng*, 150), 不喜欢 (*bù xǐ huān*, 130) and 死 (*sǐ*, 80), in which the emotional words (which accounted for 30%) ranked at the top of the subsample. The sexual words came second (accounting for 20%) and the ordinary words with special meanings (20%) came equal second. According to the male word usage differences in these two cases, the first primary suggestion shows that males do not always use strong offensive words to express emotions, depending on the targets' gender.

Table 6.9 shows the word usage by females against different gender targets. There are four sexual words (贱人 *jiàn rén*, 8,391, 贱 *jiàn*, 2,650, 贱货 *jiàn huò*, 2,137 and 婊子 *biǎo zi*, 2,013) which were the most commonly used, and then the cursing words (死 *sǐ*, 2,995 and 去死 *qù sǐ*, 1,415) as well as the strong emotional words (不要脸 *bù yào liǎn*, 4,682 and 恶心 *ě xīn*, 2,338) were also used more frequently in the Ma case. However, the word usage by females against male targets shows some different tendencies. Among the top 10 words, the most common words were the ordinary words with special meanings (2,040 in total), while the emotional words came second (1,728 in total) and the sexual words came third (1,650 in total). According to the results shown in these two tables, target's gender will affect the word usages by individuals. It can also be suggested that female participants would use both strong offensive and mild or light offensive words against targets which are mainly related to the targets' gender, but they would primarily cyberbully the same-gender targets with strong offensive words.

Moreover, the results based on the top 10 word usages in each cases can also be proved by the statistical analysis among the 49-word subsample. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test by SPSS was used to analysis the different frequency of using the subsample words between female and male in Ma and Chen cases. The results (see Table 6.10 and Table 6.11) showed that there was no significance of these words

using frequency between female and male to the Ma case (P=0.141>0.05), however, for the Chen case, there was statistically significant differences of using these words between female and male (P<0.001). This statistical result provided further explanation of the influences of targets' genders on cyberbullying word usages.

Table 6.10 The ranks of using frequency in Ma (A) and Chen (B) cases

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
femaleA - maleA	Negative Ranks	24[a]	19.35	464.50
	Positive Ranks	25[b]	30.42	760.50
	Ties	0[c]		
	Total	49		
femaleB - maleB	Negative Ranks	8[d]	10.06	80.50
	Positive Ranks	39[e]	26.86	1047.50
	Ties	2[f]		
	Total	49		

Table 6.11 Summary of Test Statistics

	femaleA - maleA	femaleB - maleB
Z	-1.472[b]	-5.117[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.141	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Furthermore, the findings shown in the subsample is not typical example. Table 6.12 below presents the top 10 words (excluding names) of all the 2,000 selected words that were used in the Ma and the Chen extramarital affair cases by males and females, which shows similar results consistent with the subsample based study.

Table 6.12 The Top 10 Words Used by Each Gender in the Ma and Chen Extramarital Affair Cases, based on the Target's Gender

No.	Male Internet Users				Female Internet Users			
	The Ma's Case		The Chen's Case		The Ma's Case		The Chen's Case	
	Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency
1	骂	9,985	骂	880	贱人	8,391	骂	1,570
2	贱人	9,471	贱	431	骂	8,312	贱	1,048
3	不要脸	2,440	退出	399	不要脸	4,682	退出	806
4	马婊	2,310	doge	375	色	3,850	走	602
5	婊子	2,281	黑	298	死	2,955	贱人	602
6	doge	2,073	打脸	266	贱	2,650	恶心	566
7	死	1,947	道歉	258	恶心	2,338	doge	518
8	逼	1,724	走	229	贱货	2,137	猪头	507
9	潘金莲	1,645	贱人	229	马婊	2,063	道歉	506
10	宋狗	1,640	脑残	200	婊子	2,013	失望	461

N.B. The unit in the table is 'times'.

According to Table 6.12, sexual words and cursing words were still at the higher level, being used by both males and females in these two cases. It is quite clear that both males and females use the strong offensive words during the cyberbullying process. However, more interestingly, there are also some ordinary words used at high frequency, like the word 退出 (*tuì chū*, refers to quitting). This is because of the context and the full sentence comments that the internet users posted. When the word 退出 is used in daily communication, it is not an abusive or sensitive abusive word, but in the Chen and Ma cases, the phrase '**退出**娱乐圈' (*tuì chū yú lè quān*, refers to quitting the world of showbiz) is an expression for putting pressure or expressing dissatisfaction against the targets when used at higher frequencies.

Overall, this part compared the single words that were from the subsample of cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying words used by males and females in two cases of similar nature but with different gender targets. One clear conclusion is that targets' gender is the key variable that will affect the word usages during the cyberbullying process. Moreover, this research claims that both males and females will use strong or mild offensive words when they express negative attitudes, emotions or intent to attack others in cyberspace, and when females attack

same-gender targets, their word usage or language behaviour was more offensive than when attacking male targets. This result is quite different from the existing studies' conclusions about the relation between gender factors and swear/taboo word usage, which stated that females prefer mild or light swear or taboo words, and males always use strong offensive words (e.g. Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). Thus, this research speculates that this feature is not specific to the Chinese context. That is, both contextual and sociolinguistic analysis provide new directions for studying the individual differences of cyberbullying.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has offered in-depth analysis of how contextual and sociolinguistic variables affect cyberbullying on social media, based on pragmatics and the mesosystem of the socio-ecological model. Generally, the key claim is that both the contextual and sociolinguistic factors may affect the cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word usages. The detailed findings are summarised below.

Firstly, the pragmatics' focuses are language functions, and contextual variables are the key elements that will affect the language usage for speakers to achieve language behaviour goals. This research has chosen the communication context, the situations of speaking (the cyberbullying forms) and the topic of discussion (the event natures) as elements to discuss how contextual variables affect the word usages during the process of cyberbullying. The finding based on the pragmatics is that the communication context determines the meaning of words in most situations. That is, in addition to the strong offensive words which are related to cyberbullying purposes directly, most of the words, especially the sensitive cyberbullying words, need to be checked within the communication context.

Secondly, beyond the words' denotative functions, the word usage and functions are also affected by the environment or the relationships they were used in. As explained previously, the online contacts between different individuals can be regarded as an element of the mesosystem of the socio-ecological model in cyberspace. In the mesosystem, different situations and discussion topics may have various influences on the relations between individuals, and then affect the language behaviour between

speakers and targets. According to the previous analyses, it can be seen that the strong offensive words are always used in the direct or one-round cyberbullying behaviour. However, the mild or light offensive words were commonly used at the beginning of the indirect or the several-round cyberbullying behaviour, but then became strong offensive words for harassment or insulting purposes. That is, direct or strong cyberbullying might more easily occur within a short-lived relationship or interaction, while the indirect cyberbullying behaviour may mutate into strong cyberbullying behaviour in a long-lived interaction. Moreover, the topic of discussion (event natures) is also an important element to analyse the online interaction between speakers and targets. Most of the individuals usually have a fixed topic of interest, and they will focus on and participate more in the discussions that they are interested in. On this point, the topic of discussion may be a more important and more relevant point to individual participants than the word usages and functions. The research statement is that the speakers will choose the words that are more in line with the event nature or essence itself to express their emotions. These features provide us possibilities to detect, track or prevent cyberbullying through particular expressions or certain relations and contacts between participants and context.

Thirdly, besides the relations between individuals' language behaviour and context, gender differences between the speaker and the target also provide a deeper understanding of language behaviour in cyberbullying. At this point, the socio-ecological mesosystem provides a very clear interrelation between two or more microsystems (individuals) for achieving research goals. In order to solve the limitations in the previous studies on gender differences, this research focuses on both speakers' and targets' gender to get a relative consistent conclusion between gender differences and language usages during cyberbullying. The finding is that both females and males use strong, mild and light offensive words online when they express their emotions and attitudes, and females may use more strong offensive words to same-gender targets. That is, the research claims that the word usage during the cyberbullying process is mainly dependent on the targets' gender, not the speakers' gender, word preferences or language behaviour habits. This statement is totally different from the results of the existing studies, especially the explanation of the

power imbalance feature in cyberbullying behaviour and the social problems caused by cyberbullying. Therefore, the targets' gender becomes the key element of the mesosystem which influences the speakers' behaviour, and this finding can be also to discuss the cyberbullying consequences (see Chapter VII for a detailed discussion).

Overall, this chapter has provided a basis for understanding cyberbullying with new variables according to the pragmatics and the mesosystem of the socio-ecological model. The findings fully support a comprehensive understanding of the sub-research question one, i.e. contextual and sociolinguistics variables are the key elements affecting cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word meanings, usages and functions. According to the results obtained in this chapter, two directions are provided for further discussions: firstly, cyberbullying is an aggressive language behaviour with object-abuse features[135] (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004); and secondly, cyberbullying word usage features show difference between different individuals and groups. Following these two directions, cyberbullying features based on the new socio-ecological theoretical framework will be shown in Chapter VII. Moreover, an in-depth discussions about the social problems caused by cyberbullying, as well as the potential approaches to addressing cyberbullying problems (sub-research questions two and three), will be provided.

135 In this way, the term 'object' means the context or the targets' behaviour that the cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying word used to. For example, abusive words are always used to the 'objects' who are considered unforgivable; and sexual words are generally referred to treating persons (especially females) as an object, or tool, for sex.

Chapter VII Cyberbullying: Context, Effects, and Implications for Practice from China

Following the findings given in Chapter V and Chapter VI, a clear view is that cyberbullying is indeed different from traditional bullying. All the features and functions of cyberbullying words provided new approaches to re-considering the cyberbullying features (see section 7.1). Meanwhile, beyond cyberbullying behaviour, the negative consequences or social problems caused by cyberbullying are also worth discussing. Despite the negative consequences for children and young people mentioned in the existing literature, the effects and the social problems caused by cyberbullying are more common to individuals, irrespective of age and gender differences in both online communities and real life. Therefore, this research will answer sub-research question two and three, in other words, the followings are the previous research results aiming to highlight the social problems caused by cyberbullying (see section 7.2), as well as the preliminary assumptions of legal/non-legal (e.g. legislation and educational approaches) and hard/soft (e.g. technical methods) methods for the detection or prevention of cyberbullying (see section 7.3).

7.1 Research recap: cyberbullying features on social media

As stated in the literature review chapter, traditional bullying elements had limitations of cyberbullying analysis. However, recapping the research findings under the combined socio-ecological theoretical framework in Chapters V and VI, the language usage in the microsystem, and the connections about language usage and social interaction in the mesosystem help to provide clear illustrations about some general features of cyberbullying on social media, constituting the basic results of further discussions of the consequences and prevention of cyberbullying (macrosystem).

7.1.1 Repetition features of cyberbullying

As explained in Chapter V, the reasons for using or not using cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words depend on the conversational goals of speakers. As such, individual's motivation was regarded as an important factor for the

socio-ecological microsystem. Meanwhile, the contextual factors which have different influences on various cyberbullying forms between different microsystems have affected the mesosystem of cyberbullying. Thus, the cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words used for different motivations or in various forms provide a new angle to understand the repetition feature. There are two themes as shown below.

Firstly, for the microsystem angle, repetition is a useful criterion to distinguish whether online (offensive) behaviour is a joke or an intentional attack. Most perpetrators or bystanders argued that using offensive words is a way to express emotions, to release pressure or to joke without harmful intentions (intra-individual motivations). At this point, repetition feature makes it possible to characterise the severity of the action. It assumes that the cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words may have similar positive functions to swearing when they are just used at low frequency, but a mass of such kind of words may make the targets or bystanders feel uncomfortable, and even cause psychological problems. Varying degrees of results may be caused by the number of cyberbullying words received by the targets. At this stage, the repetition feature is the frequency of the offensive word usage, and the function of such repetitive offensive words cannot be seen as simply behaviour for joking or releasing pressure, but should be identified as cyberbullying behaviour, whether or not it causes real harm.

Secondly, the information dissemination and social media features are the key factor which affect the repetition in the mesosystem. Both direct and indirect cyberbullying behaviour involve ‘repetition’, but with different features. On Sina Weibo, constantly sending or replying to negative contents for the Weibo owners is definitely repeated behaviour. Thus, in direct cyberbullying behaviour, the quantity of the cyberbullying contents or messages is the element to identify repetition features. Such messages are ‘a series of acts’ which include the strongly offensive ones as well as the words or comments which contribute to cyberbullying. These contents are the statistical feature to identify repetition features.

However, cyberbullying not only involves one person posting offensive contents repeatedly, but also includes posting and spreading harmful contents from a group,

including forwarding or replying directly, or sending privacy letters numerous times by different internet users. That is, in indirect cyberbullying behaviour, ‘repetition’ is fulfilled by virtue of the same information being accessed or forwarded by multiple recipients. Especially in the social interaction where different individuals have similar cyberbullying purposes, cyberbullying messages may only be posted by an individual once, yet that message may work as a snowball with a large number of people, or posted by other people a number of times. At this point, the repetition starts to appear yet it is challenging to identify such phenomenon, but social media features are obvious elements and can be used to identify repetition feature in cyberspace at this stage. For example, Sina Weibo is mainly shown by using the sign (@) to mention the object or using the hashtag (#) to create a topic. When internet users use these two symbols to mention a specific Weibo account or create a typical topic to targets, and then post offensive language, this is absolutely an approach of repeated cyberbullying behaviour. This behaviour can be employed by a single person, but always did by multiple participants with social interactions. That is, repeated message transmission or multiple uses of mention tags or hashtags by different speakers is the most direct repetitive cyberbullying behaviour.

7.1.2 Power shift and power in discourse during the cyberbullying process

Compared with the power imbalance, the research findings have shifted the attention to the power shift and power in discourse during the cyberbullying process. The new socio-ecological theoretical framework using the sociolinguistics analysis argues that the main elements for analysing ‘power’ during cyberbullying are an understanding of the anonymity of information dissemination that causes power shifts, the scope of power in discourse, and the influence of power in discourse among social interactions. These features can be regarded as an ‘imbalanced relation’ between cyber targets and perpetrators, rather than the power imbalance in a traditional way. The following themes will explore the relation between the gender differences to discuss the power shift feature, as well as the relations between different social ranks/status (e.g. celebrities and ordinary internet users) to discuss the scope and impact of power in certain circumstances.

The power shift between males and females in cyberspace

The first academic research lens is the power shift between genders during the process of cyberbullying. Specifically, the verbal and relational nature of cyberbullying does not fit closely with gender power socialisation practices, and the 'offensive words usage differences' between males and females in cyberspace is narrow.

As reviewed in the literature chapter, a large quantity of research has used gender as a factor to analyse cyberbullying, and found that men used offensive language more than women (e.g. Foote & Woodward, 1973; Lakoff, 1973; Bailey & Timm, 1976; Staley, 1978; Selnow, 1985; De Klerk, 1992; Jay, 1992; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999; Pottie *et al*., 2008; Coates, 2015), as well as that males/boys were more likely to take part in offensive language behaviour than females/girls (e.g. Olweus, 2012). Moreover, Jay (2009, 2012) pointed out that the response to cursing or vulgarities was also different between females and males, by which women were just as likely to have a positive, negative, or neutral reaction to expletives, while men were more likely to use foul language. However, as shown in Chapter VI, both males and females use offensive or sensitive offensive words in cyberspace, and both males and females could be cyberbullied. This is an obvious feature of the power shift between males and females in real life and in virtual space, with three detailed considerations.

Firstly, females will use strong offensive words in cyberspace to express emotions or to show criticisms of both male and female targets, although they cannot always tolerate these words and rarely use them in their daily life. This is the first aspect of the power shift between males and females. In most societies, especially in China, the social norm may provide males with the power to have greater freedom to break taboos and use more vigorous or high-intensity language to express their feelings (Lakoff, 1973; Staley, 1978; De Klerk, 1992), while may restrict females from expressing their aggressive feelings directly, and instead, perhaps, they must manage their anger, hurt, and disappointment using covert methods (Foote & Woodward, 1973; Letendre, 2007; Willer & Cupach, 2011). However, this boundary becomes very blurred in cyberspace. Females may have more possibility to use any words they want to express their emotions in cyberspace than they do in real life. For example, in the

Ma and the Chen cases, the strong offensive sexual word 贱人 (*jiàn rén*) has only minor usage difference between males and females, and other strong offensive words, such as the cursing word 死 (*sǐ*), as well as the strong emotional words 恶心 (*ě xīn*) and 不要脸 (*bù yào liǎn*), were used significantly more often by females.

Secondly, females are more likely to attack same-gender targets (F to F) than the mixed-gender contexts with strong offensive words. In the female-to-female communication in Ma case, the total amount of the direct strong offensive word usage (i.e. abusing, sexual, cursing and offensive emotional words) were 40,287 (accounting for 53.57% of the total), while males' word amounts were 34,772 (accounting for 46.33%). This finding is similar to prior studies (Rieber *et al*., 1979), and displays a very clear feature of the power shift within the female groups. In real life, because of the low tolerance of offensive words and the strict social norms, females may rarely use them. However, online anonymity makes internet users feel less guilty about using such words, and females employ strong offensive words to their targets, especially to female targets, even if they may not use such words in real life. The difference between females' online and offline language behaviour shows the power shift feature.

Thirdly, the female online discussion participation level shows little difference from males, and they may have a higher participation level when the target is male. This finding is also a typical feature of the power shift. On the first point, there were 29,910 (67.29%) females posting comment directly to the target Chen (male target), and 58,517 (47.76%) females in the Ma case (female target). The female participation ratio shows little difference from the male rate in the Ma case, but when the target is a male, the female participation rate is higher. It can be assumed that females have 'equal' powers to express themselves in cyberspace, and even with some typical questions, females have higher participation in expressing their opinions. On the second point, females may use offensive words to attack or criticise male targets, which they rarely do in real life (Smith, 1998). In the Chen case, females used 4,939 strong offensive words directly (amounting to 70.30%) to criticise Chen's behaviour.

According to these three considerations based on the research findings, the power

shift in cyberbullying changes the feature of power imbalance. In real life, males have fewer limitations on using swear or taboo words to express themselves, and females may be more aware of social situations and the social consequences of using offensive words than males because of their lower tolerance of such words and the social norms for females (Baruch & Jenkins, 2007; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Vingerhoets, 2013). However, in cyberspace, the huge difference between females' online and offline behaviour shows that females are not only using strong offensive words, but also have a higher participation level when the target is male. The reason is that physical strength is not the typical requirement when people take part in cyberbullying behaviour, whereas cyberbullying requires technology knowledge and equipment skills. In this way, the gender imbalance on the action of bullying is equalised. This can be regarded as a typical manifestation of power shift between males and females from real life to cyberspace, and the manifestation of power imbalance in cyberbullying is not due to skills of using social media, but having rights to express themselves. However, there is few evidence for saying that female is even more aggressive than male on cyberbullying. More precisely, in cyberspace, because of the social media features, everyone can use any words to express themselves, or even attack others. In an online environment, female may have more possibilities to use offensive words to other due to various reasons than in an offline environment, but females are still easily to be attacked in cyberbullying.

The scope and influence of power in discourse between celebrities and general internet users in cyberspace

In addition to 'imbalanced relation' shown by internet users of a different gender, it is also worth discussing between different social ranks. Within real society, it is expected that the higher the social rank of a person, the less cursing the person performs. At the same time, the higher the social rank, the broader the scope and influence of power in discourse are. However, in cyberspace, such features have new manifestations because of online anonymity[136].

136 Online anonymity is a unique feature of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Shariff, 2009), which is particularly evident between celebrities and general Weibo users in cyberspace (or as a significant difference between online and traditional bullying) (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Shariff, 2009).

In Chinese society, celebrities always have more physical strength (e.g. wealth, high economic status and popularity) than the general public. However, in cyberspace, all of these physical strengths are not factors which prevent cyberbullying, but rather bring greater opportunities for being cyberbullied. As discussed in the literature review chapter, almost all celebrities' accounts are verified, and they can use videos, pictures and text to let others 'know' them. At the same time, all the medias can also post 'information' online about the celebrities. On this point, online anonymity is an umbrella for the participants (general Weibo users) against their targets (celebrities). They can not only post the offensive message to their targets directly, but also post such comments in other medias' comment wall. For example, on Weibo, there are always various accounts posting tweets or re-tweets on one issue, and internet users can take part in discussions, posting the comments they want. Therefore, the general Weibo users have a broader and wider scope and influence of power in discourse on cyberbullying behaviour because their identities will not be discovered and they can do anything they want with less embarrassment, politeness, or fear of retribution. It is worth mentioning that celebrities have fans to back them up, and their fans would join in the 'flaming' to express, to show the attitude and even to attack others. Generally, fans have two directions to follow: supporting their celebrities with rational debate and 'fighting' with others. No matter what kind of the direction the fans chosen, the final result might be the ongoing controversy about the celebrities because of the high-level of participation.

Therefore, the power imbalance feature between celebrities (or their family members) and general Weibo users is more like the 'rights imbalance' which shows three aspects: 1) the general Weibo users believe that they have an absolute right to criticise celebrities because celebrities are public figures with higher salaries and status, and can be criticised by anyone whether they do wrong or not; 2) celebrities also believe that they cannot express their dissatisfaction freely because they are public figures and so assume more social responsibility; and 3) celebrities' fans always choose to say nothing to reduce impacts, if the ongoing controversy is uncontrolled. This 'rights imbalance' or 'conflict' is reflected in the fact that general Weibo users easily attack celebrities, and celebrities very rarely refute this. This new phenomenon could be a

power shift between celebrities and general internet users in cyberspace.

However, this does not mean that the celebrities have lost their power in discourse in normal communication, either in cyberspace, or in the real world. Aside from cyberbullying, celebrities still have a broader and wider scope and influence of power in discourse because they have higher status and a great number of fans.

Therefore, the socio-ecological frameworks provide a new aspect to explain 'power' in cyberspace. In detail, 'power imbalance' manifestations in cyberbullying are the relations between information providers and receivers, which are manifested as 'imbalance relations' or 'rights imbalance' within different social interactions (mesosystems). This is similar to the power imbalance shown in traditional bullying, which is between perpetrators and victims, but we cannot just use physical strength or social rank to measure it. In cyberspace, the 'imbalance relations' or the 'rights imbalance' between 'hidden' speakers and 'identified' targets provides the 'fixed' tendency for offensive or negative words, in which internet users may have more power to use offensive words to attack others without embarrassment because of online anonymity. However, this does not mean the scope and influence of power in discourse in daily communications are increased. Thus, it can be assumed that if online anonymity disappears, the influence of 'imbalanced relation' or 'rights imbalance' in certain circumstances on cyberbullying or other cyber aggression might be weaker (see section 7.3 for a more detailed discussion).

7.1.3 The association between intention to harm, criticism and emotional expression

Intention to harm is one of the main elements to identify bullying and non-bullying behaviour, and this is an obvious feature to distinguish perpetrators and victims in traditional bullying behaviour (Olweus, 1986). However, it is challenging to distinguish motivations in cyberspace because various individuals have their own understanding of the purpose of their online language behaviour. That is, an explanation of the boundary between reasonable expression and intention to harm helps to identify cyberbullying and other cyber aggression problems, as well as helping to make relevant laws, policies and regulations to regulate cyber aggression.

Considering the pragmatics approach, Greenawalt (1990: 288) stated that words or languages founded on how it truly worked, the role it played in human experience, and what matters for a legal system is what words do, not what they say. From this angle, considering the 'results' of the languages in the context may make it possible to identify and distinguish reasonable and unacceptable language in the digital era.

Language can be used to express opinions, ideas, and views, and the functions include yet not limited on the interaction with each other, sharing views, showing agree and disagree thoughts, criticising and parodying, imitating and innovating, supporting and praising (Emerson, 1970; Baker, 1992). That is, the usage of language can be regarded as a link or a relation between speakers and listeners, which occurs between people or groups of people (Greenawalt, 1989; Raaflaub *et al*., 2007). With the development of administrative and legislative regulation of technology and through technological design, the technological innovations in computer-communication technologies, social media, and other digital technologies provide unprecedented opportunities and convenience for people to communicate and interact with others, and internet users have available a wide range of information and opinions for criticism (Mailland, 2000; Balkin, 2004), because digital technologies have changed the social conditions in which people can speak and provided a broader aspect of communication (Leets, 2001; Balkin, 2004).

In details, the obvious perspective of expression in cyberspace is a more flexible use of language (Leets, 2001). The lower costs of information transmission and the easier way for content to cross cultural and geographical borders are the advantages of achieving the purposes of the language use that the traditional mass media could not achieve before, especially sharing views and thoughts (Leets, 2001). However, besides the expansion of positive purposes achieved by the digital age, the open online environment also increases social conflict because of the confusion between acceptable and unacceptable language behaviour in cyberspace.

In general, because of the lower costs of information transmission, the digital technologies drastically increased the number of opportunities for widespread distribution of spreading or receiving offensive or fake information (Leets, 2001). Not

surprisingly, the growing trends of cyber security, cyber aggression and cyberbullying are the results of the blurred understanding of acceptable language behaviour. This conflict emerges because digital technologies have changed the social conditions in which people speak, and also changed the social conditions of speech. In detail, emotional expression, criticism and judgement in cyberspace are part of the general language behaviour, but criticism with offensive words, judgements with offensive words or emotional expressions with offensive words may have negative consequences.[137]

Specifically, on Sina Weibo or other online platforms, most of the internet users believe that they can say anything they want and regard cyber anonymity as an umbrella for their offensive language behaviour. If internet users rejected the relevant cyber regulations, criticism or some regular online activities might shift into online offensiveness, cyber security problems or cyber aggression. At this moment, the function of language use is not about communication or sharing views. The extension of the language use into offensive or aggressive ones is the confusion of different internet users' views on the features and functions of language usage in the digital age. At this point, it is challenging to use the motivation of the language behaviour to identify whether a behaviour is cyberbullying or not. However, if we consider the consequences or the results of one language behaviour, it might be more clear to clarify whether this kind of behaviour is acceptable or not.

Summarising, in cyberspace, the results or problems caused by one language behaviour is more important, more pervasive, and more central to identify the boundary between unacceptable online language behaviour (intention to harm) and reasonable expression through digital technologies. Combining cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word categories, it can be shown that the original purposes of cyberbullying are negative (to the targets), positive (to the speakers), or neutral, but the effects of cyberbullying are usually negative. At this point, this research agrees

137 The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVIC-19) is the emergency met by China at the beginning of 2020. This issue has aroused great attention not only in China, but also worldwide. The public has spoken on social media, expressing their concerns about the emergency, criticism of the province government, anger at the China-Wuhan Red Cross, and dissatisfaction with a few individuals. Some individuals even use some newly-emerging words or phrases relevant to the issue to show anger and criticism. If these expressions were without typical targets and under the freedom of expression values, we shall protect the right of expression. However, if the offensive expressions (e.g. attacking, insulting, cursing, racial discrimination, etc.) or fake information (e.g. rumours and gossips) shown on social media with targets (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Sina Weibo), we shall consider whether these behaviour should be censored or regulated.

that the digital technologies make possible more widespread cultural participation and interaction than previously could have a broader aspect than the mass media provides (Leets, 2001). However, the offensive or harmful language behaviour that may cause serious social problems is also increased. At this point, the results or the consequences of the language behaviour itself helps to distinguish what kind of expression is exact reasonable in cyberspace. In this way, the standards and salient features to identify reasonable or unacceptable behaviour are not about the purpose of expression, but the consequences caused by the language behaviour. This helps to establish reasonable regulatory approaches to better achieving the healthy online environment in the digital age (Sunstein, 1995).

Overall, according to the previous discussion, it is obvious that the new socio-ecological theoretical framework that was used to analyse cyberbullying provides us with a new angle to re-consider the cyberbullying features. As the socio-ecological model stated, individuals' behaviour may be affected by the environment and the relationships they are in. In this way, the features of cyberbullying can be either overt or covert, or it may even vary with different circumstances. To this end, the new socio-ecological theoretical framework used different layers to discuss the cyberbullying phenomenon and features in a relative general way. This is an improvement in comparison with the prior research that uses questionnaires among cyber perpetrators to analyse cyberbullying, proving that cyberbullying is not merely a subcategory of traditional bullying. Using information transmission, social media features and social interactions as elements to discuss cyberbullying within microsystem and mesosystem angles helps to provide references to the marcosystem, which in turn contributes to the discussion of the social problems beyond the aggression behaviour itself (see section 7.2), and provides basic findings to consider how to establish legislation, administrative regulation, and designs of technology that can be used to address these unacceptable behaviour within certain contexts or circumstances (see section 7.3).

7.2 Potential crisis of cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying vocabularies

Foul language has become a 'fashionable' communication style on Sina Weibo and most of the social media platforms today. According to the findings in this research, cyberbullying words and some strong sensitive cyberbullying words (including scatological or disgusting objects, animal names, ancestral allusions, substandard vulgar terms and offensive slang) are extremely widely used against targets, especially in certain situations. Both perpetrators and some bystanders 'enjoy' the offensive language or unethical word usage without embarrassment. Due to the fact that there is potential for wide public access to online content, a single cyberbullying incident could have a serious and lasting harmful effect on the target. Moreover, cyberbullying often involves multiple parties, most prominent being the cyber bullies, cyber victims, cyber bullies-victims and bystanders.[138] The complex relationships between these parties may elicit different levels of negative reaction.

However, the important issue we have met is that even when cyberbullying behaviour does occur on Weibo or on other social media platforms, understanding when the behaviour is simple teasing, and when it amounts to bullying is difficult for almost everyone. Therefore, understanding the negative effects, potential crisis and social problems caused by cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying vocabulary abuses is necessary, as well as beneficial for detecting or preventing cyberbullying or cyber aggression. That is, in general this research states that the consequences of cyberbullying are more serious than traditional bullying, and at the same time, the social problems caused by cyberbullying create more negative impacts on targets.

7.2.1 Reduction in age of internet usage: cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words affect children and young people

The *Report of Internet Use among Minors in China 2018*[139] (hereinafter the Report) showed that the number of minors using the internet in China reached 169 million in

138 Cyber bullies perpetrate a bullying incident; cyber victims are the ones bullied, and bystanders are witnesses to a bullying/victimization incident online. Cyber bully-victim is a vicious cycle in which a victim turns into a bully, and vice-versa (Willard, 2007).

139 The Report of Internet Use among Minors in China 2018 is the official report made by CNNIC. It examines the online behavior of minors and makes specific recommendations. The main foci of the report are on the Internet popularization of minors, the network access environment, the use of applications, and the use of the Internet for self-protection.(ref. http://www.199it.com/archives/862520.html)

that year, with the internet penetration rate among minors reaching 93.7% by July 31, 2018 (China Internet Network Information Center, 2018a). Among these young internet users, mobile phones have become the dominant medium for them to access the internet (China Internet Network Information Center, 2019a). Furthermore, the Report showed that 15.6% of minors surveyed said they had experienced cyberbullying; the most common types were insults or abuse and online harassment, whether to themselves or their relatives and friends. This is also proved by the cases shown in Appendix II, pointing out that some cyberbullying cases were directly related to the minor on Sina Weibo in the last few years. Even worse, 30.3% of minors surveyed had been exposed to illegal and harmful information such as instances of violence, gambling, drug use, and pornography, through internet access.[140] From these statistics reports, it can be seen that minors have become the main users of the internet at a young age[141], and most of them were at the risk in cyberspace (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Barlett, 2015). Therefore, there might be significant serious problems for the minors when they access the internet because they do not have enough knowledge to protect themselves from harmful information (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Smith *et al*., 2008).

As discussed previously, cyberbullying has different forms, and there are even more possibilities for the minor to take part in these negative behaviour. For example, in some celebrities' cases, the minors would attack and insult others to 'protect' their idols (Chen, 2017; Jiang, 2018; Sha, 2020). They would also use very strong offensive words in cyberspace because they believe that anonymity would hide them and then they can do anything they want (Willard, 2007). At the same time, more and more children and young people have been exposed to illegal information. The leading reason is that cyberbullying on social media is the lack of a content filtering mechanism. There is a big difference in the information dissemination and reception between the traditional mass media (i.e. newspaper, television and video) and social media. In China, the traditional mass media would examine or assess formally the materials before posting or publishing (Yang, 2009), but on social media, the

140 Ref. http://www.199it.com/archives/862520.html
141 The Report pointed out that in China, the percentage of students from primary, junior high, high and secondary vocational schools who access the Internet reached 89.5%, 99.4%, 96.3% and 99.0%, respectively. (ref. http://www.199it.com/archives/862520.html)

information or contents are difficult to censor, and sometimes the social media industry turns a blind eye toward the amount of offensive or taboo language (Hassanabadi, 2011). At this point, the minor has little opportunity to avoid objectionable language when they scan the comments even for seemingly innocuous topics.

Besides the direct negative influences on minors, the more serious problem is learning the offensive and foul words during the cyberbullying process and using them in daily life. Following all the findings shown previously, it concluded that cyberbullying has become increasingly prevalent on Sina Weibo. As such, the majority of minors have more opportunities to learn offensive language when they access different cyberbullying behaviour (Barlett, 2015). According to children's language learning and acquisition studies, language to be acquired, the abilities and predispositions that the child brings to language acquisition, and the environmental setting are the three components which comprise language acquisition (Rice, 1989). During the process of language acquisition, phonology, semantics, pragmatics, morphology and syntax are the major dimensions (Rice, 1989; Ratner, 2010). Currently, social media provides a much easier way for a minor to engage in a broad variety of activities for learning language such as entertainment, education, language learning and communication (Livingstone *et al*., 2011). This increases the risks of adolescents being frequently confronted with content that is not suitable for them (Livingstone & Haddon, 2008; Livingstone & Helsper, 2010). For instance, when the minor attacked others or was attacked online, this process might be a two-way behaviour. The minor would output offensive languages, and they would also receive offensive languages (Livingstone *et al*., 2011).

Meanwhile, social cognitive theory asserts that individuals can observe the behaviour of others and then reproduce the same actions (Bandura, 1978). That is, minors' usages of social media make it possible for them to learn and repeat the offensive words and phrases (Bandura, 1978; De Klerk, 1992). That is, cyberspace and online social interaction offer a way for the minor to learn the words or phrases in different cyberbullying contexts, to know the functions and to use them in online social interactions. In detail, cyberbullying words have a significant connection to the

context and event (see Chapter V), so that the minor may 'meet' the typical kinds of words (e.g. attacking words, sexual words, cursing words, and etc) in the topic they discussed. Although sometimes the minor may not actually know what the offensive words mean, if an offensive or taboo word occurs frequently in the comments or communication context, they may believe this is a normal and correct expression and then imitate the use of these words like any other normal social or language skills. Therefore, the minor may not have negative reasons for using these foul words, but the fact is often overlooked that when foul language becomes a habit in casual conversation, it will cause more serious problems to children and young people in daily communication, such as being isolated from peers and developing the offensive language etiquette. Considering the effects of cyberbullying on the minor, it can be found that the reason why cyberbullying affect them more is because most of the social media platforms do not have comprehensive and strict content-based ratings for minors, thus minors do not have enough control over exposure to such offensive or foul words (Willard, 2007). Thus, the findings regarding the minor's acquisition of foul language provide powerful guidelines for educational policy and anti-cyberbullying programmes (see subsection 7.3.3 for a detailed discussion).

7.2.2 Negative consequences for young adults and females

Besides the negative effects and problems for minors, we cannot ignore the negative effects on young adults (aged 20-29) and females. According to *the 43rd Statistical Report on Internet Development in China* (China Internet Network Information Center, 2019a), a substantial majority (67.8%) of Chinese internet users are aged between 10 and 39. More specifically, internet users aged 20 to 29 account for 26.8% of the national total, with the largest proportion among all age groups.

Being the majority group of internet users, young adults have more possibilities to know and learn offensive and sensitive offensive words, and even create some newly-emerging word for particular situations and issues. Being different from minors, young adults have enough social skills and knowledge to distinguish whether a word is acceptable or not, and they may regard offensive words or cyberbullying behaviour as a way for emotional communication that non-offensive words cannot provide. For

example, *Fuck you!* immediately conveys a level of contempt unparalleled by non-taboo words; there is no way to convey *Fuck you!* in polite speech (Margolis, 2002). On this point speakers may rarely appreciate the conversational attacking behaviour and have little or no intention of causing harm based on these offensive words. Moreover, Margolis (2002) stated that an offensive word (e.g. fuck or cunt) would lose its power to shock or offence if it was commonly used in different contexts. It seems unlikely that the users' habits or preferences for the offensive or taboo words (e.g. f-words and c-words) reflect a concern that these words would otherwise offend. In other words, although the motivation for using offensive words online (including cyberbullying) or offline might be the approach to releasing pressure or express criticism or emotion, the functions of such words are still to be rude or impolite to targets, in which vulgar or offensive language often contains negative meanings or functions. In this situation, some young adults prefer to use foul words or slang to express their emotions (even if they do not have offensive motivation), despite the fact that these kinds of words will make the listeners feel uncomfortable, and despite the fact that it is not acceptable to use the word in some daily and formal context (Letendre, 2007). This is not a good phenomenon when the use of offensive or slang words becomes popular or subculture.

Besides the serious negative consequences for young adults, the spoken profanity leads to more negative effects for female targets. In many published studies, name calling, rumour mongering, impersonation, and sexual solicitation were more likely towards female targets than male targets (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Letendre, 2007). These were also proved by the cyberbullying samples on Sina Weibo. According to the cyberbullying issues summarised in Appendix II, most of the cyberbullying targets were females. Moreover, according to the statistical data of the cyberbullying word database, there were plenty of cyberbullying words that were related to insulting females. Specifically, most of the sexual words and epithets were used directly to females to attack them. Although the types of offensive words used to attack female targets included frequency (Brooks & Perot, 1991; Langhout *et al*., 2005), duration (Lonsway *et al*., 2002; Langhout *et al*., 2005) and intensity (e.g. hostility, sexuality, ambiguity, degree of threat, and difficulty of escaping from the situation) (Langhout *et*

al., 2005; Wright & Fitzgerald, 2007; Settles *et al*., 2014), the females targets might find it difficult to control the situation when they faced sexual insults, as well as it being hard to escape from cyberbullying like most of the victims (Fitzgerald *et al*., 1995; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Furthermore, it is easier for females to become targets than males when typical issues happened (e.g. Langhout *et al*., 2005; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011), because the bystanders or cyber perpetrators have their own stereotype for females, and cyberbullying may easily occur.

7.2.3 Online anonymity: The reduced cost of cyberbullying, cyber aggression and cyber crime

Online anonymity can be seen as the unique difference between cyberbullying and traditional bullying (Aricak & colleagues, 2008). Different online platforms witness different degrees of anonymity (You & Lee, 2019). As for cyberbullying behaviour, anonymity refers to whether the individuals can hide their presence from other people, including other bystanders, as well as the perpetrators and victim (Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1980; Brody & Vangelisti, 2016). This research focuses on the effects of anonymity on perpetrators, targets and bystanders and discussed why online anonymity causes serious problems during the process of cyberbullying.

For perpetrators, the lack of physical presence in the anonymous online environment allows for the images of the cyberbullying actors 'hiding behind the keyboard', 'using anonymity to hide', or being a 'keyboard man' - as coined by some of the internet users in the Chinese context.[142,143] Thus, the features of anonymity reduce the sense of responsibility (McKenna, 2008). The ability to interact anonymously on the internet reduces concern about one's own behaviour and leads to actions that are unrestrained and disinhibited (Heirman & Walrave, 2012). The perpetrators were less conscious and aware of the impact of their actions on the target because they do not see the victim and do not have direct feedback of the consequences. This leads them to freely hurt other individuals online and makes cyberbullying continue for longer (Slonje *et al*., 2012). This view was also emphasised by interviewees in this research. A number

142 Cyberbullying has been more easier to take part in than the traditional bullying behaviour, and because of the online anonymous, we cannot identify whether the posters are 'real accounts' or 'robots'. Besides, any one can post offensive words online but the laws or legislation approaches cannot punish everyone who take part in cyberbullying. (From No.001 Interview)

143 The perpetrators can hide behind technology and the bystanders or the social media corporation are unlikely to see the behavior first-hand, making it more difficult to respond to than the traditional bullying. (From the focus group interview one)

of interviewees stressed that the anonymity afforded by the internet allows internet users to become 'invisible' and enabled them to feel free to perpetrate aggressive and inappropriate behaviour in cyberspace whereas they might not do so in the real world.[144,145]

For targets, unknown perpetrators appear to evoke higher levels of emotional stress (Kowalski & Limber, 2007), especially as the victims cannot escape from cyberbullying (Sainio *et al*., 2011; Festl & Quandt, 2013). Regarding the forms of cyberbullying previously mentioned, flaming and attacking, sexual insulting, and online harassment are the direct offensive usages to victims, and the online anonymity makes the targets to be ill equipped to handle cyberbullying (Barlett *et al*., 2016). The limited reactions they employed when they met these offensive words or comments were deleting the content, blocking, or arguing with the perpetrator. However, the perpetrators did not think they had intruded into their targets' lives, so that the targets may continue to receive cyberbullying messages wherever they are or whatever they do.

Furthermore, for bystanders, the variety of bystander roles in cyberbullying is more complex, for example, sometimes bystanders can act as the perpetrator by sending offensive contents; sometimes they may receive offensive contents and become the victim; sometimes the bystander may play even the two roles at the same time. In this complex relation, it becomes more challenging to identify who are real bystanders. What's more, bystanders are more likely to transfer into perpetrators in the indirect cyberbullying forms (i.e. memes, photos and video clips, and Egao). When most of the offensive contents were posted publicly and could not be deleted, the main group to spread them is bystanders, and online anonymity makes it more difficult to identify such a large group of people who caused serious problems. Furthermore, besides spreading, in cyberbullying behaviour, the bystanders' uncertainty about whether or not they will be retaliated against by perpetrators may make them less likely to intervene in anonymous situations (You & Lee, 2019). Therefore, more people would

144 Cyberbullying is widespread and very serious. Sometimes it makes the Internet environment suffocating...Cyberbullying is more common than traditional bullying in reality, because cyberbullying has lower cost to against strangers and the real identity can be hidden on the Internet (From No. 007 Interview).

145 When the perpetrators did cyberbullying in the virtual world, the perpetrators...felt that they did not need to be responsible. At the same time, the online anonymity provides a certain identity hiding convenience for the perpetrators (From No.008 Interview).

be involved as perpetrators, to replicate and forward the harassing content and easily give negative reactions (Sticca & Perren, 2013), so that targets may face more embarrassing, intimate, or hurtful situations when multiple participants are involved in 'sharing' such offensive and awkward contents (Dredge *et al*., 2014).

Considering the effects of online anonymity on cyberbullying, it can be regarded that the two main serious consequences of cyberbullying are within two aspects: the perpetrators are less conscious and aware of the impact of cyberbullying and the exposed situation of the targets (Barlett *et al*., 2016). However, it is worth mentioning that the more serious potential risk of online anonymity is transferring cyberbullying into cyber aggression or cyber crime at a decreasing cost (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Nogami & Takai, 2008). The typical serious cyberbullying forms which are related to cyber aggression or cyber crime are rumours and gossip, cyberthreats and cyberstalking, and human flesh search (Chao & Tao, 2012). The internet as a means of transferring information becomes, in the hands of criminals, a tool for carrying out this behaviour. For example, online rumour and gossip spreads quickly and could damage the targets' reputation or cause serious consequences to society (He *et al*., 2019; Baier *et al*., 2019); cyberthreats and cyberstalking can be seen as serious harassment that affect targets, but the target cannot easily use legal and non-legal methods to protect themselves from the aggressors (Willard, 2007). Moreover, the human flesh search engine is a typical form of cyberbullying in China that is related to crime by posting the personal privacy online.

All of this behaviour is related to aggression or crime which is conducted by means of anonymizing the communication over a prolonged period of time. At this point, as for victims or targets, the online anonymous nature hides the perpetrators' identities and internet protocol (IP) addresses, leaving the target vulnerable and unsettled, thus, it is very difficult for them to use legal measures to protect themselves; as for the perpetrators, the online anonymity makes it hard to track their identities and account information, the information transmission routes, and IPs. This seems like an umbrella to allow perpetrators to carry out extremely offensive behaviour, and then escape legal punishment. That is, this unequal rights between perpetrators and victims can easily increase the rate of cyber aggression and cyber crime.

7.2.4 Mutual convergence between cyberbullying and traditional bullying

According to the explanations and discussions outlined in the previous sub-sections, it can be seen that the important means of communication technology for children and young people creates possibilities to be hurt online, while young adults and females may also be affected by cyberbullying. Meanwhile, the online anonymity has decreased the cost of crime. In comparison with the effects studied by traditional bullying research, cyberbullying may reach a large participants and hide the identities, and at the same time, there is a lack of direct feedback from the bully and the target (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014). Thus, this research finds that these differences from traditional bullying may cause more serious effects with lower levels of supervision (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006), and cyberbullying may have possibilities in transforming into traditional bullying. The similar result was provided in some existing research, which showed that cyber (anonymous) scenarios were perceived as worse than not traditional (anonymous) ones (Campbell 2005; Dooley *et al*., 2009; Tokunaga, 2010; Sticca & Perren, 2012; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2014).

For survey data analysis, most of the interviewees pointed out that the consequences of cyberbullying always cause more serious consequences than traditional bullying[146]; since there is greater moral disengagement than is the case with traditional bullying[147].

As explained previously, cyberbullying starts with an unknown relationship, without visual feedback, and anyone might become involved in a cyberbullying war at any time and at any place (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). This specific characteristics may embolden some people to engage in cyberbullying or cyber aggression without feeling guilt because social responsibility is reduced. At the same time, the widespread online messages may intensify the harmfulness of cyberbullying that a cyberbullying victim may be hurt by a group of messages from different internet users in a continuous manner, without much attentions (Tokunaga, 2010). In this way, the consequences of

146 From the interview results, many of the interviewees agreed that cyberbullying has more serious consequences than traditional bullying. For example, No. 003 interviewee stated that cyberbullying is sometimes more dreadful than bullying in real life because targets sometimes did not know why they were attacked. No. 005 and No. 006 interviewees pointed out that cyberbullying targets would have both psychological and physical problems because of the transformation from cyberbullying to traditional bullying. Moreover, No. 009 and No.012 interviewees explained the reason why cyberbullying has more serious consequences than traditional bullying. This is because different forms of cyberbullying have different negative effects on targets, but the targets would be attacked by two or more kinds of cyberbullying behaviour at the same time, and these behaviour would last a long time.

147 There might be many psychological problems due to cyberbullying than they did to physical assault, such as feelings of frustration, depression, anger, stress, fear, and anxiety, and the effects were more persistent. (From No.006 Interview).

cyberbullying are uncontrollable sometimes, and the negative emotional problems and the general psychological problems might develop into the uncontrollable consequences, such as depression and suicidal thoughts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Bonanno & Hymel, 2013).

Besides the significant associations between cyberbullying victims and internalizing problems such as the negative emotional problems (e.g. Perren *et al*., 2010; Olenik-Shemesh *et al*., 2012) and general psychological problems (Nansel *et al*., 2001; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Ybarra *et al*., 2007b; Diamanduros *et al*., 2008), cyberbullying may easily transform into traditional bullying, and then cause negative effects for the target twice or more than twice.[148] There were many cases that cyberbullying translated into traditional bullying and then caused serious consequences. For example, in the Qiao Renliang's case, the attacking first developed online, but later developed into offline boycotts, such as opposing his participation in shows and TV shows. A pediatrician suicide because of the transformation of cyberbullying to traditional bullying.[149] Besides, a female car driver wanted to suicide after being attacked and cursed by internet users because of an accident. Internet users believed that she was the culprit of the bus crashed accident, but the fact was that the female did not retrograde, yet the bus retrograded and crashed into the river after hitting the female's car.

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg of the transformation from cyberbullying to traditional bullying. The results of some cases in Appendix II also proved the transformation to traditional bullying. The reason might be that participants will find a 'reasonable' reason to support their cyberbullying behaviour, in which this cyberbullying behaviour may be transferring rumour, gossip, cyberstalking, and human flesh search into traditional bullying behaviour to attack or insult the targets and their relatives in real life. The findings are very similar to the results shown in the existing research (e.g. Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Hinduja &

148 Cyberbullying is a serious problem, but in comparison with the traditional bullying, the effects of cyberbullying may be multiple. For example, the human flash search is a way to post personal information online. At this point, everyone can see this information and then attack the target. However, the more serious thing is that some people will call the target, go to the target's office or home, and even harass the target's family members. In this situation, the target cannot control the effect or the situation that cyberbullying made, and the problems for the target can be the long term and cumulative stress and trauma (From No.001 Interview).

149 A female pediatrician suicide because the public condemned her husband for beating a boy child in the swimming pool, and the child's family went to the hospital for making trouble. The fact was the boy pushed the doctor firstly

Patchin, 2009), heightening more serious effects than traditional bullying causes.

Overall, based on the discussion in the previous four subsections, the cyberbullying effects on targets can be summarised in two categories: ***fictional*** and ***real*** effects. In the first category, fictional effects are the indirect negative consequences to the cyberbullying victims. For example, when publication of degrading or reputation-spoiling information about the target (e.g. rumour and gossip) through cyberbullying, these behaviour might lead to the negative consequences in any area of the victim's lifestyle. In the second category, the real effects are the direct negative consequence when cyberbullying information through electronic means of communication to the victims. These consequences are always serious problems caused by the negative emotional psychological effects (e.g. feeling angry, frustrated, sad, scared, embarrassed and powerless), and the results might be loss of confidence, violent behaviour, drinking alcohol, smoking, a general sense of uneasiness that they experience in their real life, or even lead to suicide.

There are two reasons for why cyberbullying causes more serious consequences than traditional bullying: firstly, the negative consequences of cyberbullying are ignored by the public and the social media corporations because of a lack of social support on address cyberbullying problems; and secondly, it is likely that the public does not fully understand cyberbullying and do not have effective approaches to solving cyberbullying problems, including the serious nature and potential harm of cyberbullying because

7.3 Research implications for policies and practices

Research on cyberbullying in the Chinese context is at an early stage, but the results of this research still provide insights for empirically established measures for the reduction of cyberbullying. According to the general results (cyberbullying word categories and motivations for cyberbullying) and the typical views to cyberbullying (new angles for understanding cyberbullying and the potential crisis of cyberbullying), a practical approach to prevention and intervention efforts is particularly important.

As for the existing methods for preventing online information, many Western

countries have policies to define the scope of cyberbullying and have established detailed methods to prevent offensive online content. In comparison with the Western countries, China's internet managements are mainly about government legislation and policies (e.g. Tao, 2007), internet company self-regulation (e.g. Wang, 2008; Villeneuve, 2008; Knockel *et al.*, 2011; Vuori & Paltemaa, 2015), and techniques (e.g. Zittrain & Edelman, 2003; Clayton, 2005; Crandall *et al.*, 2007; Park & Crandall, 2010), primarily focusing on sensitive political issues, national information security and national network security (see Appendix I). The main differences of primary concerns of regulating cyberbullying between China's approaches and Western countries' approaches: 1) most of these approaches are not the intervention or preventative strategies dealing specifically with cyberbullying; and 2) there is a lack of educational methods of teaching students, parents and teachers how to deal with cyberbullying. Meanwhile, three main challenges of regulating cyberbullying in China exist: 1) the subject of tort liability is difficult to determine; 2) the consequences of cyberbullying are serious; and 3) internet service providers' obligations to censor content are too general (李之懿等，2019).

Regarding these differences and limitations on preventing cyberbullying in China, Western countries' experiences can provide references to improve our current measurements. However, we shall also consider the features of China's legislation system, as well as the cyberbullying and social media characteristics. To this point, this research states that the potential and effective coping strategies for solving cyberbullying problems might be the combined approaches of government, educators and other parts of society. Consequently, the following subsection will discuss three avenues of implications: 1) the prevention of cyberbullying within a legislation approach; 2) establishing software systems to regulate cyberbullying on social media; and 3) the prevention of cyberbullying within an educational approach.

7.3.1 Prevention of cyberbullying by legislation: Revision perspectives and legislative perspectives

According to the situation faced by China, examining social media as a site of language policy merges trends at the forefront of current research on both language in

the new media and language policy, and language policy on social media can be seen as language management followed by contents features. The main challenge we meet while addressing cyberbullying in the Chinese context through legislation is the lack of typical rules for explaining what is cyberbullying. Within this, based on the effective monitor on regulating other online content in China, language planning and policy and language management theory are used to consider how to approach bottom-up and top-down methods to deal with cyberbullying or cyber aggression. The improvements in government legislation (top-down) and social media regulation (bottom-up) by the Chinese law-making departments and the internet operations are discussed in this subsection within two aspects: 1) expanding the scope of the current legislative code (revision); 2) establishing clear and efficient regulations or policies (legislative).

The revision perspective

The main experience we can learn from the Western countries' regulatory is that they have a clear identification of what kind of information is cyberbullying or offensive content. However, in China, the problem is that there is a lack of judicial interpretation of cyberbullying, even in the lasted published law, i.e. *Provisions on Ecological Governance of Network Information Content,* which can be regarded as the most specific legislation on cyberbullying and relevant behaviour in China. The law clarifies that there are 11 online illegal behaviour that should be regulated[150], but the unclear explanation makes it difficult to identify the nature of the cyberbullying, the forms of cyberbullying, the extent of the injury and the legal subjects.

Meanwhile, the limitations of courts to design and implement policies are another current problem for using legislative approaches to regulating cyberbullying in China. Currently, the legal regulations of cyberbullying are usually based on the *General Principles of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China*[151] and the *Criminal*

150 Provisions on Ecological Governance of Network Information Content (Chinese: 网络信息内容生态治理规定) is used to create a good network ecology, protect the legitimate rights and interests of citizens, legal persons and other organizations, and safeguard national security and public interests. The 11 online illegal behaviour include but are not limited on damaging the reputation or interests of the state, disseminating obscenity, pornography, force, brutality and terror or crime-abetting, humiliating or defaming others and infringing upon reputation and privacy. (ref. http://en.pkulaw.cn/display.aspx?cgid=dc8a694ae08ed787bdfb&lib=law)

151 The General Principles of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China (Chinese name: 中华人民共和国民法通则) is a law in the PRC that was promulgated on April 12, 1986 and came into force on January 1, 1987. It is heavily influenced by the German Civil Code. (ref. http://www.asianlii.org/cn/legis/cen/laws/gpotclotproc555/)

Law of the People's Republic of China[152]. For example, the attacking and insulting forms of cyberbullying are behaviour that attacks the right to reputation, which can be regulated by Article 101[153] and Article 120[154] in the *General Principles of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China*. Meanwhile, the forms of cyberbullying, such as rumour, gossip, cyberstalking and human flesh search, are more serious behaviour that are defined as a criminal offence by the Communist Youth League, which can be regulated by the *Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China*. However, general laws often make it difficult to define cyberbullying, because cyberbullying and cybercrime or cyber aggression are very different, not to mention that it is difficult to track and identify subjects of tort liability.

Recently, the consequences and social problems caused by cyberbullying have become more complex than the criminal cases in real life. Protecting online information will require a new class of cyber lawyers who have a clear understanding of cyberbullying or cyber aggression, and what kind of online expression is permissible. With regard to the prevention of cyberbullying, the main principle is following the relevant rules, policies and laws, and then regulate the online information. In China, the *Constitution of People's Republic of China*[155] states that 'citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration. (Article 35)' and 'The freedom and privacy of correspondence of citizens of the People's Republic of China are protected by law. No organization or individual may, on any ground, infringe upon the freedom and privacy of citizens' correspondence except in cases where, to meet the needs of state security or of investigation into criminal offences, public security or procuratorial organs are permitted to censor correspondence in accordance with procedures prescribed by law (Article 40)'.

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152 The tasks of the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China (Chinese name: 中华人民共和国刑法) are to use criminal punishments to fight against all criminal acts in order to defend the security of the State; to defend the political power of the people's dictatorship and socialist system; to protect property owned by the State and the property, and etc. (ref. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cgvienna/eng/dbtyw/jdwt/crimelaw/t209043.htm)

153 Article 101: Citizens and legal persons shall enjoy the right of reputation. The personality of citizens shall be protected by law, and the use of insults, libel or other means to damage the reputation of citizens or legal persons shall be prohibited.

154 Article 120: If a citizen's right of personal name, portrait, reputation or honour is infringed upon, he shall have the right to demand that the infringement be stopped, his reputation be rehabilitated, the ill effects be eliminated and an apology be made; he may also demand compensation for losses.

155 The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (Chinese name: 中华人民共和国宪法) is nominally the supreme law within the People's Republic of China. It was adopted by the 5th National People's Congress on December 4, 1982, with further revisions in 1988, 1993, 1999, 2004 and 2018. (ref. http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Constitution/node_2825.htm)

To this point, it is important that judicial policymakers follow the scope of constitutional principles that in law, to incorporate an systematic understanding of the nature of cyberbullying and the negative consequences associated with cyberbullying and cyber victimization. Generally, practitioners must recognise the importance of electronic communication and the potential dangers, especially for children, young people and females. In addition, it is essential that practitioners can distinguish the differences, connections and transformations between cyberbullying and traditional bullying. From this angle, different kinds of cyberbullying forms' language features, usages, and functions increasingly provide references to legislatures and administrative agencies to shape regulatory solutions. Specifically, the *Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China*[156] points out that 'any individual or organization using the network shall comply with the Constitution and laws, follow public order and respect social morality, shall not...infringe upon the reputation, privacy, intellectual property rights or other lawful rights and interests of any other person (Article 12)'. In this Article, the scope of the 'offensive language', the 'forbidden language' and other 'harmful' language can be given a clear and detailed explanation and be added to this article, thus expanding the regulations into cyberbullying.

The legislative perspective

The revision perspective of the national legislation provides a reference to the legislative perspective for different media corporations. In China, most of the media corporations follow the national legislation to establish their own regulations and rules (Tai, 2006; Yang, 2009, 2014). However, media corporations face conflicts. In this way, the media corporations should consider the users' rights to make reasonable rules, which are not in conflict with the constitution (Yang, 2014). The ideal direction is also aggressively increasing awareness and understanding of cyberbullying behaviour and displaying greater clarity around the types of behaviour that are considered inappropriate or illegal, as well as set norms or standards within society. This can be seen as a 'down-up' approach to discouraging cyberbullying and cyber

156 The Cyber Security Law of the People's Republic of China (Chinese name: 中华人民共和国网络安全法), commonly referred to as the China Internet Security Law, was enacted to increase data protection, data localization, and cybersecurity in the interest of national security. (ref. https://www.newamerica.org/cybersecurity-initiative/digichina/blog/translation-cybersecurity-law-peoples-republic-china/)

aggression.

In details, the main rules for regulating online information on Sina Weibo are three: firstly, the general rules including the *Sina Weibo Community Convention (微博社区公约)* which points out that rumour, gossip and human flesh search are illegal, but the crackdown and suppression of this behaviour has not been fully implemented. Secondly, the typical rules like *Blogger forbid comments（博主拉黑禁止评论)*[157] on Sina Weibo is actually a one-way and subjective rule to regulate 'harmful' contents. It is a very subjective identification of the term 'harmful', meaning that the account owner can forbid anyone that he/she wants to forbid for three days. Thirdly, the official Weibo Administrator (Chinese: @ 微博管理员) punishes and publishes announcements of the accounts that have serious personal attack behaviour monthly, based on statistical data. However, the general Weibo users still have a lot of questions about this policy, including the basis for punishment and the limitations of punishment.[158] Facing the limitations we met,[159] the first and most important step is to have a clear definition of what kind of expression is acceptable and what kind of information or expression should be regulated, censored, or implemented. These explanations should be explained clearly to both internet service providers and social media users to ensure the scope of acceptable expressions. After notification, establishing clear and detailed rules and obligations for putting this into effect in practice is important.

Besides social media rules, the real-name system rule might also be an efficient way to decrease cyberbullying and cyber aggression.[160] The focus of the real-name system rule is eliminating anonymity because the anonymity of the perpetrator leads to contrasting results. However, this system does not work very well in practice. Although Weibo has a real-name system, it is not mandatory. On Weibo and most social media platforms in China, anyone can use an email to create a new account,

157 This is a manual operation provided by Sina Weibo on 26 September 2018 for Weibo users themselves to delete the 'offensive comments' and block the publishers for three days. (ref. https://www.weibo.com/1934183965/GB7KN8MTH?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment)
158 An example of the punishment of the sensitive accounts in December, 2019. (ref. https://www.weibo.com/1934183965/Iqed7tem1?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0&type=comment#_rnd1580434050314)
159 90% interviewees agreed that the current rules, regulations, and technique approaches on Sina Weibo are inefficient for solving cyberbullying problems.
160 Sina Weibo implemented the Real Name Registration Policy in 2012. This policy was based on the national real-name policy and requires that all users must use their real name to create a Weibo account.

which does not need ID card verification. Besides, users can fill in fake personal information, such as gender and location. The only way to identify the users' identity is the IP address, but the problem is that when a person wants to post harmful information, he/she will use the public IP address rather than the fixed IP. At this point, the real-name system rule for protecting reasonable online behaviour is ineffective. The ideal way is to compulsorily enforce this rule in cyberspace, establishing a users' personality information bank which is similar to the ID card. In this way, the real-name system can be seen as a powerful method to track cyber perpetrators, and people will also reduce their inappropriate behaviour because of the tracking feature. This is not only for regulating cyberbullying related to language usage, but also many other cyber problems, such as rumour, gossip, and the human flesh search. However, at the same time, every internet corporation needs to strengthen its protection of personal information to reduce or put an end to cyber security problems.

Furthermore, the social media content rating policies should also be considered for protecting children and young people. Minors have become the major group in cyberspace, but there is a lack of policies to protect them from offensive messages. Although there is a Teenager System on Weibo and some other social media platforms, the operation principle has many limitations. In practice however the main problem is that the minor's parents set the password for their children's social media account, and then the social media can filter sensitive contents. However, as with the real-name system, the minor may create another account to avoid censorship. That is, the comprehensive social media content rating policies combined with real-name system maybe efficient to filter the negative information for minors and protect them from cyber aggression. On the one hand, the information senders cannot send offensive messages to teenagers, and on the other hand, the social media system should filter the sensitive messages on the public wall for the teenagers' account. This also can be seen as a primary approach to protecting children and teenagers from cyber crime.

7.3.2 Establishment of an automatic system for detecting or preventing cyberbullying

Legislative approaches can be seen as the principal way to control and regulate

cyberbullying and cyber aggression, while an automatic system for detecting or preventing cyberbullying is the real-time internet self-regulation approach to solving the problems. With regard to the quick and wide dissemination of cyberbullying messages on social media, it is crucial to detect the occurrence of cyberbullying almost in real time. More specifically, automatic monitoring is an effective intervention to resolve cyberbullying incidents early, as well as an effective intervention to protect the cyberbullying targets in a timely fashion.

The current automatic system for regulating online information in China is the keyword-based blacklist, which is a system that can filter and censor sensitive comments or messages that contain words on the blacklist. Combined with the cyberbullying detection approaches shown previously, content-based and textual detection and advanced machine techniques are the two main ways to prevent or remove cyberbullying content (Djuric *et al*., 2015). These two methods can both be followed to improve and implement a software system for China or other countries' online communities which are based on their own language features.

As for using digital tools to detect cyberbullying, the vital point is distinguishing cyberbullying from other online language behaviour, such as emotional expression and criticism. In the Chinese context, one single word can have different and complex meanings and functions, as well as being able to sometimes change the original meaning into offensiveness. According to the results of the relations between cyberbullying word usage and contextual variables, the features of the detection system structure are not only single language problems, but also the communication environment and the object of language management systems. The initial idea is to combine the existing Chinese keyword-based blacklist techniques with cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying databases, but with different monitoring mechanisms.

In detail, the keyword-based blacklists can be expanded or divided into different parts for different focuses or issues, and all these words on the list can be labelled with offensiveness and frequency features. For example, this research points out that the word categories can be classified into cyberbullying word categories and sensitive cyberbullying word categories. However, it does not mean that the word in the

sensitive cyberbullying word category is not offensive or strongly offensive. Therefore, there are three steps that can be considered with regard to the detection and regulation of cyberbullying language.

Firstly, checking the word offensiveness level. It cannot be said that one strong offensive word is not harmful enough if it is only used at low frequency. Therefore, when the strongest offensive words are used in cyberspace, they will be removed automatically. Secondly, labelling (flagging) the mild or light offensive words. If the comment or conversation contains a light offensive word in the sensitive cyberbullying words list or some mild offensive word in the cyberbullying words list, they would be subject to labelling by the system first and then turned to manual review to check if the content, within a given context, should be removed. Thirdly, tracking the ordinary words with special meanings and the newly-emerging word related to cyberbullying. This is an important function of the software to detect cyberbullying, because these kinds of words have more complex functions in cyberbullying and may not be easily detected.[161] However, it is really difficult to track, label and check the comments every minute, but cyberbullying always lasts for a long time even in the short-term events and social hotspots. At this point, the ideal monitoring period is every half hour during the period of an outbreak of cyberbullying behaviour, and then every hour thereafter because of the discussion participant features on Weibo.[162]

Besides the content-based detection system, the real-name system rule can be combined with the content filtering system. According to social cognitive theory, individual features can be seen as a prediction to detect or prevent cyberbullying. Therefore, the relation between cyberbullying language usage and the sociolinguistic

161 A more recent example is that there are many newly-emerging words, ordinary words with special meanings, and memes with offensive meanings in the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency. Because at this time, all these words, phrases, and pictures do not have typical targets, we can regard them as emotional expressions rather than cyberbullying. However, in the future, it is not sure whether these words will change into cyberbullying words which are used on specific targets. Putting these words and phrases into the cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying word lists helps to track them in the future. Also, there are many similar words working like this. Detecting them and tracking them are important for further cyberbullying detection and prevention.

162 Based on Tang's (2018) research results on the topic discovery and hot prediction of Weibo public opinion in emergencies, there are six periods of posting weibos or comments in an emergency or a social hotspot: incubation period, outbreak period, spread period, recurrent period, remission period, and dissipate period. During these periods, the number of posted weibos or comments showed a clear upward trend during the outbreak period (after 2-3 hours of the incubation period), and such contents are likely to contain offensive and fake information (Tang, 2018). If the issue is a social hotspot without repeated reports, the number of discussions would decrease after the spread period. However, if the issue involves continued events (e.g. the Jiangge's Case, the Li's case and the Ma's case), the level of discussions would get several outbreak periods. Tang's conclusion is in line with the period of comment volume posting of the typical events which is identified by this research. Therefore, this research stated that comments on cyberbullying issues shall be monitored every half hour during the outbreak period, and every hour thereafter.

variables improve the accuracy of cyberbullying detection. At this point, the real-name system is the way to incorporate the users' information, including account information and posting preferences, and users' personalities, to support deeper analysis to detect anti-social behaviour. At this point, if a Weibo account always posts offensive language or false information, this account can be labelled as a 'risk account' for a higher level of monitoring. That is, the automatic monitoring system will not be limited to cyberbullying behaviour, and can also be used for other cyber aggression and cyber crime. This combination is the fundamental idea for using advanced machine techniques to ensure a healthy cyber environment. In practice, we can also consider the combination with artificial intelligence, or designing supporting digital tools, in the fight against cyber problems.

7.3.3 Social support: The balance between educational protective strategies

Despite the legislative and technological approaches, social support, especially for children and young people, is still important to prevent cyberbullying. In Japan and South Korea, educational approaches and anti-cyberbullying programmes are the key steps to protect the minor from cyberbullying. However, in China, we know little about when children start cyberbullying and we find it difficult to teach them how to distinguish cyberbullying and protect themselves. The current challenges we met to protect the minor are: 1) the children or young people might either be the target of cyberbullying or be the 'perpetrators' to bully others; and 2) most of the them cannot escape from cyberbullying, cyber aggression and cyber crime because they cannot find the perpetrators, so that it is challenging to use legal approaches to protecting themselves from hurt. Therefore, social cognitive theory provides an approach to using the individuals' attitudes, relations or behaviour towards cyberbullying to decrease it (Suler, 2005). Thus, educational protective strategies should be considered as a general approach for children and the young to either identify harmful information and protect themselves from cyberbullying and other cyber aggression, or for adults to understand cyberbullying.

One the one hand, wide-ranging anti-cyberbullying programmes should be used to help minors understand what they can do when they receive offensive and cyber

aggression messages. In details, a series of courses should be taught in classrooms to educate and increase awareness of the risks of sending or using offensive words online, making students understand that using offensive words to attack others is not acceptable behaviour. At the same time, teaching children and the young how to protect themselves in cyberspace and making bystanders aware of their roles are also important to help protect against cyberbullying (Barak, 2005; Mitchell *et al*., 2007; Mitchell *et al*., 2014). The content of these professional courses could be discussions, group work, role-play exercises, or short films which show what cyberbullying is, how serious the consequences are, and what they can do if they have experienced cyberbullying.

On the other hand, teachers, educators and parents also need to be aware of the various kinds of cyberbullying, and what actions can be taken when their students or children experience cyberbullying. In the exiting studies, researchers (e.g. Mishna & Alaggia, 2005; O'Connell *et al*., 2008; Hay & Meldrum, 2010) point out that most of the children and young people would not approach their parents or teachers about experiencing cyberbullying because they may feel that teachers and parents are less aware of cyberbullying. Facing these challenges, it has been assumed that teachers' and parents' support is helpful to protect minors from cyberbullying (Willard, 2007). That is, teachers and parents should have knowledge of cyberbullying and take an active role in prevention and intervention of cyberbullying. Therefore, this research states that parents, educators and teachers should learn a basic knowledge of cyberbullying, as well as guidelines for protecting people from cyberbullying should also be publicised (Wolak *et al*., 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). These are the important ways to facilitate the ability of children and young people to tell their parents and other adults about their experiences of cyberbullying, and for helping parents, educators and teachers to respond effectively.

Moreover, a further consideration in educating internet users for decreasing cyberbullying or cyber aggressive behaviour is to increase their self-efficacy and self-regulation (Hymel *et al*., 2005). According to social cognitive theory, those internet users with lower self-efficacy were more likely to send harmful information online (LaRose *et al*., 2003). Although online communication includes both positive,

negative and neutral effects, internet users should understand what is a healthy relationship and social interaction between individuals or groups.

7.3.4 An effective approach to detecting and preventing cyberbullying: Tripartite collaboration between legislation, techniques and educational strategies

The previous subsections discussed the approaches within three aspects to detect or prevent cyberbullying. However, cyberbullying is an offensive language behaviour with complex motivations and involving complex social interactions. Single approaches may not very effective. Thus, this research points out that tripartite collaboration between legislation, techniques and educational strategies is the ideal way to regulate cyberbullying or cyber aggression.

Firstly, based on the LPP and LMT, language policies are affected by language behaviour (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). That is, the implications for practice and policy are the need for policy makers and practitioners to recognise the importance of social interaction, and the consequences of cyberbullying, especially for children and the young's socialisation. The understanding of cyberbullying helps better to highlight the main focuses and claims of media governance. Based on a comprehensive understanding of cyberbullying, both national legislation and media corporations focus on top-down and bottom-up approaches to providing clear explanations and regulations to internet users to know the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable language behaviour. Besides written laws, policies and regulations, the policies developed by the social media corporations are also considered. These are the official approaches to regulating harmful information in cyberspace.

Secondly, following the official approaches laid down by national legislation and media corporations, the improvements of software systems to detect and prevent cyberbullying are the real-time way to prevent individuals from automatically receiving harmful online content. The different levels of monitoring are based on distinguishing online content. According to the relations between contextual variables and language behaviour, the automatic system can combine the cyberbullying language features and functions with the current word blacklists to censor the

cyberbullying behaviour. Furthermore, the real name system or advanced systems in the future are also helpful to improve the cyberbullying detection system.

Finally, as the social cognitive theory states, individuals' motivations and attitudes to cyberbullying were directly related to detecting or preventing cyberbullying (Hymel *et al*., 2005). The more awareness of cyberbullying that people have, the more social support is able to prevent cyberbullying and to protect cyberbullying targets. Besides, the importance of using education to solve cyberbullying problems is also examined by the current research (e.g Williams & Galliher, 2006; Saylor & Leach, 2009; Park *et al*., 2014) and evidenced by interviews in this research.[163] Therefore, this research states that educational strategies regarding educators, teachers and parents can protect minors from cyberbullying and against the consequences of cyberbullying for general targets. The social support for protecting against cyberbullying should include adults' clear understanding of cyberbullying, the detailed approaches to solving the potential consequences of cyberbullying, and the advice and knowledge for the targets when they experienced cyberbullying.

7.4 Chapter summary

This chapter applies a multi-level discussion, starting with the microsystem (individuals) features of re-considering cyberbullying features, and then extending the view to mesosystem structures (relations between individuals) to explain the negative consequences of cyberbullying, and finally the larger macrosystem (social interactions and structures) to gain the knowledge of establishment or improvement approaches to detecting and regulating cyberbullying and cyber aggression.

Generally, the reconsideration of cyberbullying features based on the research findings make several contributions to the general cyberbullying research. Firstly, this research states that the repetitive features is shown in both direct and indirect cyberbullying behaviour, and is the key factor for distinguishing cyberbullying (or cyber aggression) from joking or emotional expressions. The standards that use to identify repetitive features in cyberspace could be the amount of the same or similar

163 80% of interviewees mentioned the importance of using educational approaches to addressing cyberbullying. They believed that the full understanding of cyberbullying of every individual is the key point to know what is the reasonable behaviour in cyberspaces, and then if everyone can take part in the team to prevent cyberbullying or do not join in cyberbullying, this negative phenomenon can be improved.

offensive contents (whether from the same account or not) and the specific content features on social media (e.g. mentioned and tag features). Secondly, the power imbalance in cyberspace is mainly focusing on the 'imbalanced relation' or 'rights imbalance'. We cannot use physical strength to identify what kind of particular group has less power and is easily attacked online, but we should consider the information dissemination and social interactions. Thirdly, the intention to harm feature is difficult to measure in cyberspace. As for the standards for the examination of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, terms like 'intention' and motivation should be changed to result and consequence when we want to identify whether one behaviour is cyberbullying and cyber aggression. This research agrees that cyberbullying and cyber aggression with harmful functions do not deserve the protection because of the negative consequences. At this point, the main focus is the influence or the potential influence caused by offensive online behaviour. That is, the 'harm' feature in cyberbullying is either about the speakers' motivations or the actual behaviour that results.

This research also has significant implications in practical terms. Following the potential consequences and effects of cyberbullying with individuals and society, the potential predictors of cyberbullying (e.g. anonymity, quick information transmission and language learning) were explained. According to these consequences and predictors, the research states that government agencies (e.g. top-down legislation and policies), social media corporations (e.g. bottom-up approaches and technological systems) and social supports should devise and implement measures to detect and deter acts of cyberbullying. Consistent with social cognitive theory, social norms and self-regulation are also found to have a significant impact on the prevention of cyberbullying (Bandura, 1986). That is, the multi-dimensional governance is considered to provide an overall approach to cyberbullying or cyber aggression. In this way, legislation is the general guidelines, and social media corporations and educational strategies could exert significant impact to regulate cyberbullying; protecting targets or dissuading individuals from the likelihood of experiencing cyberbullying in different aspects.

Overall, this chapter analyses cyberbullying in the multi-level aspects to distinguish

cyberbullying from traditional bullying and other online language behaviour, as well as highlights the features of cyberbullying and the serious social problems caused by cyberbullying. The key claim of this research is that cyberbullying is unacceptable behaviour which should be regulated by relevant rules or approaches. At this point, the legislation, technologies and educational approaches provide us with the chance to gain knowledge and skill to understand and reduce cyberbullying or cyber aggression, thereby promoting reasonable behaviour.

The significant contributions of this research is using an appropriate framework to provide a richer and more inclusive discussion not only for cyberbullying research, but also for other cyber aggression problem studies. Such discussions can be used to determine risk and protective factors for both perpetration and victimisation, or to analyse the differences between individuals in language behaviour in both the Chinese context and in other cultural backgrounds.

Considering the cyberbullying research in light of the new theoretical framework, briefly, the microsystem use individuals' language use features to consider the cyberbullying features and motivations. The mesosystem focuses on the connections between relations in the cyberbullying behaviour, and the macrosystem makes it possible to consider the consequences and measures in a boarder way. This model offers possibilities in terms of integrating multiple levels of analysis in a unified model and do multilevel discussions, rather than comparing the explanatory value of these levels in three separate steps. That is, this structure can not only be used for cyberbullying in China, but also can be used to solve other language problems with different context. In future studies, more detailed comparisons of specific cyberbullying incidents, function-based social media, different types of risks, and finer differentiation between the various bullying roles/groups in off- and online context could be included. This is a big difference from using traditional bullying elements or surveys, and it promotes research on cyberbullying from language uses to social problems, from theoretical research to practical research.

Chapter VIII Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Cyberbullying is an aggressive phenomenon that has emerged with the spread of the digital era and which manifests in different forms on all social media platforms. Researchers, policy makers, educators and society in general all face numerous challenges with regard to the understanding and management of this harmful online conduct. This study used a combined theoretical framework to address three fundamental questions with regard to the phenomenon, based on a case study of Sina Weibo.

The first aspect is a general understanding of the nature of cyberbullying, including assessing the words used in cyberbullying for their meanings, usages, and functions. The second aspect covers the variables that affect cyberbullying, including the ways in which contextual and sociolinguistic variables affect cyberbullying word usages and functions in different situations. The third aspect embraces the gravity of the consequences and social problems associated with cyberbullying, as well as the role of existing and potential approaches to detecting and regulating cyberbullying in China. The research contributions thus cover three aspects: theoretical framework contributions, methodological contributions, and practical contributions.

Nevertheless, this research also has some limitations. The following sections thus summarise the main research findings and state the research contributions, as well as noting the research limitations and making recommendations for future studies.

8.2 The Ubiquity of Cyberbullying

Social media has become a popular way of communicating, gathering and sharing information, and establishing relationships. Alongside these benefits, however, people must take into account the risks inherent in social media. Online language issues that were identified in this study included cyberbullying, hate speech, profanity, rumours, toxic language, swearing and taboo words, extremism, and radicalisation. According to secondary data on the prevalence of cyberbullying, cyberbullying has spread both widely and rapidly in the digital era, and in cyberspace, everyone may be a potential

victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying. According to the analysis and discussions generated by this research, cyberbullying is a serious problem, and finding measures to address this is thus an urgent task.

8.2.1 Cyberbullying and social media

Social media platforms provide a more convenient way to spread both positive and negative information. By combining the socio-ecological model and the key principles of semantics and pragmatics, this research examined cyberbullying word meanings, usages, and functions on social media at three levels.

At the microsystem level, social media messages can be divided into cyberbullying messages and non-cyberbullying messages. In terms of cyberbullying messages, not all negative words are used in cyberbullying behaviour, and in contrast, not all neutral words are irrelevant to it. Based on the cyberbullying and sensitive cyberbullying word database created for this research, words with direct strong offensive meanings or functions do not constitute a large proportion of those used in cyberbullying. This research instead found that word category crossovers and word cross-use are typical features of cyberbullying, with sensitive cyberbullying words frequently used in Chinese; internet users used stronger offensive words while attacking others directly online, however.

In the mesosystem, this research highlights that most of cyberbullying or sensitive cyberbullying words' meanings and functions are related to the situation, context, or environment in which they are used. Thus, online community features and online social interactions provide a direction for the analysis of cyberbullying in a more objective and comprehensive way. Cyberbullying can be regarded as a relationship or interaction between different individuals or groups. The interrelations between different units affect language usage in cyberbullying, and thus contextual and sociolinguistic factors must both be considered as variables when analysing the relationships among cyberbullying word usage, context, and individual characteristics. Based on the findings in Chapter VI, word usage in most cyberbullying experiences showed strong associations with the communication context and the targets' features. For example, internet users preferred to use strongly offensive words in short-term or

single occasion cyberbullying behaviour, while long-term insult exchanges or repetitive cyberbullying behaviour often begins with light or mildly offensive words, those these may change to stronger offensive words later.

Aside from contextual factors, this research also examined gender differences in cyberbullying behaviour. Compared to existing studies, a significant improvement made by this research was moving the focus from the speakers' genders to the targets' genders when analysing language behaviours. As shown in Chapter VI, both females and males use offensive words in the cyberbullying process, with females being more likely to attack same-gender targets with strongly offensive words. These findings highlight the complex relationship between the individuals involved in cyberbullying on social media.

With respect to the macrosystem, cyberbullying, social media features, and societal effects must be considered together. Social media provides an anonymous environment, in which internet users feel free to attack other, though the negative consequences of cyberbullying or cyber aggression affect victims in their real lives. Chapter VII discussed the consequences of and social problems arising from cyberbullying; these consequences and problems clearly affect both individuals to society, and can extend from online to offline scenarios. These findings may be useful for the further development of prevention and intervention strategies.

8.2.2 Cyberbullying and young people

All online language abuse can have serious consequences for children and young people. In the existing literature, many studies highlight the psychological problems faced by young cyber perpetrators and victims (Beran & Li, 2005; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Kowalski *et al*., 2008; Mishna *et al*., 2012; Slonje *et al*., 2013; Berne *et al*., 2019; Wright, 2019; Elbedour *et al*., 2020; Wood *et al*., 2020). The current findings are consistent with prior research, though this project moved on from solely considering psychological problems to considering other general problems caused by cyberbullying in children and young people, such as learning offensive language and the reduced threshold for online crimes.

The findings from this work show that minors can suffer from psychological problems if they are involved in cyberbullying on either side. Owing to the increasing numbers of young internet users, another noteworthy issue is the impact of cyberbullying or offensive language usage on language acquisition. According to the *44th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China* by CNNIC (China Internet Network Information Center, 2019b), minors represent one-fifth of all internet users. As cyberbullying spreads, perpetrators, bystanders, and victims are all inevitably exposed to vulgar and hurtful language. Minors, especially those at the language acquisition stage, do not have the knowledge and skills to distinguish offensive words from ordinary expressions, and they may imitate the use of these words in their daily live. Although such minors may not have negative motivations for using these words, serious problems, such as the growth of impolite behaviours, isolation, and school bullying, may still arise from this usage.

8.2.3 Cyberbullying and ordinary social media users

In addition to the cyberbullying harms suffered by children and young people, adults are also exposed to risks from cyberbullying. It is difficult for people of any age or gender to escape from the negative effects of cyberbullying. Apart from the psychological problems such cyberbullying promotes, attention should thus also be paid to its other negative consequences, such as the multiple social hurts, the uncontrollable knock-on effects, and the possibility of transition from cyberbullying to traditional bullying.

In particular, it is important not to ignore the harms caused by cyberbullying behaviours towards women and girls. Words that are typically used to insult females include many specific attack words, sexual words, epithets, and some newly-emerging words pointedly reserved for females. It is undeniable that in cyberspace, females also use offensive or vulgar language to express themselves or attack others, and the frequency of females using such language can be higher than that of males in some contexts. However, females remain more vulnerable to cyberbullying in many cases. Due to stereotypes, females often bear more blame and suffer more attacks than males for events of similar natures. As with cyberbullies' other key targets, young people,

females cannot easily escape from cyberbullying or find ways to protect themselves.

However, while acknowledging the negative effects endured by females, it is important to note that every individual may experience cyberbullying, becoming a perpetrator, victim, or bystander. Most adults have sufficient knowledge or skills to identify what kinds of words are cyberbullying or deliberately offensive, yet they may still use or coin such words to attack others. The intention of these people may be to have fun or to make what they see as a joke, yet victims often find it difficult to escape from large-scale attacks and may suffer multiple injuries. Additionally, attention should be paid to the potential shift from cyberbullying to traditional bullying. When cyberbullying gets out of control, the risks of traditional bullying are increased, such as exposure of personal information, rumours, and gossip. In previous cases, other people have been found to harass and abuse the subjects of cyberbullying, thus causing greater harm to victims, including an increased risk of suicide.

8.3 Research Contributions

Building on the existing literature on cyberbullying, the most significant contributions made by this research are the establishment of a combined socio-ecological theoretical framework for discussing cyberbullying on multiple levels and, based on this new theoretical framework, a clear explanation of how to collect data and establish a database for further analysis to expand the cyberbullying research field in the case of China. Based on the findings of this research and the current challenges in regulating cyberbullying, this study shifts the focus from empirical research to practical analysis, identifying potential approaches for detecting and preventing cyberbullying and offering theoretical, methodological, and practical improvements to the existing body of work in this field.

8.3.1 Theoretical contributions

One significant contribution of this research is the development of a combined theoretical framework, the *Socio-ecological Framework with Language Features and Management Approaches* as opposed to the application of a single theory, to analyse and discuss the cyberbullying phenomenon. Many previous studies have focused on

using psychological or sociological theoretical frameworks to research cyberbullying, which introduce certain limitations. This research examined both cyberbullying and social media features, combining several principles from theories of sociology, psychology, communication, and linguistics to address the research questions. Two main strengths thus emerged:

First, utilising main principles of several different theories can help reduce the impact of the limitations encountered when these theories are used to address cyberbullying problems separately. Cyberbullying is a behaviour that arises among various different individuals or groups, and in various contexts; thus, while a given theory can analyse cyberbullying in one field, it may find it more challenging to explain it in a more comprehensive way across multiple fields. The new theoretical framework produced in this work to address the research questions more fully, helps solve this problem.

Second, the theoretical framework design can also be used to examine other language problems or similar cases outside of the context of cyberbullying or Chins. All the key principles of the socio-ecological theory, including semantics and pragmatics, social cognitive theory, language policy and planning, and language management theory can be used to contribute to an objective and comprehensive overview of the topic, allowing it to be discussed at the individual level and at a societal level. The main focus is on working from an individual's language behaviours to the resultant social effects; thus, this model can be generalised, allowing researchers to adjust or improve the variables to make it relevant to their own research questions.

8.3.2 Methodological contributions

Using the mixed research method, both qualitative and quantitative research were carried out as part of this research to investigate the features of the cyberbullying phenomenon and the relationships that emerge between individuals, language usage, and social interactions during the process of cyberbullying.

A development and explanation of an appropriate methodological design and the accumulation of a large amount of data are thus also substantial contributions of this research. Considering the original lack of a dataset for the analysis of language use in

cyberbullying in the Chinese context, the significance of establishing cyberbullying database is providing directions to analyse cyberbullying behaviour in a 'new' field. Thus, a central aim and feature of the methodology was to collect a large quantity of data to keep the data reliability and validity, that is, nine cases, with 1,267,190 effective comments, were gathered to create a relatively large sample compared to many of previous studies, as noted in the literature review. Meanwhile, the methodology design was also clearly outlined. At this point, although cyber language is changing with the developments of social interactions and cyber community, and so are cyberbullying words and their functions, this cyberbullying database can still be used as the reference for other social media platforms or relevant language behaviour in the future, because the standards for collecting data and the chosen words for database were both reasonably representative of the population of cyberbullying word usages in the Chinese context.

In conjunction with the phenomenological consideration, content analysis was used to identify some general features and functions of cyberbullying words, effectively addressing the limitations of the questionnaire surveys used in previous studies. Alongside the general findings on cyberbullying, social network analysis was adopted as an in-depth approach to analysing the contents and relationships involved in cyberbullying behaviours, including what kind of words were used in regard to different issues or cyberbullying forms (contextual variables), and what kind of relationships existed among users involved in cyberbullying behaviours (sociolinguistic variables). This mixed research method and the identification of new variables addressed many of the shortcomings in the existing research, and provided several new directions for the investigation and handling of cyberbullying.

Here, interviews were used not only to gather participants' views on cyberbullying but also to identify the consequences of cyberbullying and the challenges and difficulties inherent in detecting and regulating cyberbullying. During the interviews, the voices of different individuals were collected, ensuring that many opinions on cyberbullying were heard, regardless of whether the participants were involved in cyberbullying as bystanders, victims, or bullies. All of the general findings and previous studies' findings were combined with the interview results to provide an important perspective

on detecting and preventing cyberbullying and other cyber aggression problems. This was a key part of the empirical research's transmission to practical analysis.

8.3.3 Practical contributions

The main practical contribution of the research is the development of different kinds of prevention approaches to addressing cyberbullying problems, as different forms of cyberbullying and different cyberbullying words are associated with diverse harms.

Chapter VII detailed the harms caused by different cyberbullying forms and the harms perceived by different targets. Based on these, several measures for detecting or preventing cyberbullying or other online offensive language behaviour emerged, using legislative, technological, and educational approaches. This research utilised a mixed-approach model, which proved to be an efficient way to regulate online problems, including but not limited to, cyberbullying and cyber aggression. Generally, the government, social media companies, and the rest of society should strive to develop a clear and comprehensive understanding of cyberbullying and to understand the importance of anti-cyberbullying action, including taking an active involvement in raising awareness to prevent and respond to cyberbullying.

This research also pointed out in detail how a legislation approach could be used to provide a clear definition of cyberbullying, as well as to develop strict punishments for such actions. Social media companies can and should provide the appropriate setting for changing behaviours and attitudes towards cyberbullying. Detecting cyberbullying automatically or establishing relevant rules are helpful ways to regulate cyberbullying to various levels. Apart from the legislation and technological approaches, educational strategies were also considered, with the main principles of these being that educators, teachers, parents, and students should come to be aware of the importance of anti-cyberbullying policies. For example, students should know where and how to ask for help if they experience cyberbullying, while educators, teachers, and parents should have a clear awareness of how to help protect students from being cyber victims, and how to deal appropriately with those who behave in ways that are unacceptable. Overall, the mixed implementation not only highlighted a potential path for detecting and preventing cyberbullying but also providing a

reference for regulating a wider variety of online language problems.

8.4 Research Limitations

This research has investigated and extensively discussed cyberbullying, developing a new theoretical framework to analyse the nature of cyberbullying, as well as providing a unique exposition of the varying levels of harm and social problems associated with cyberbullying, considering both individual and societal angles. However, there is much yet to be understood about the complexities of cyberbullying, as cyberbullying continues to change and extend as the use of information and communication technologies increases and grows more complex.

The main limitation of this study is the application of uniform standards for identifying cyberbullying language. Studying cyberbullying in the Chinese context is a relatively new field, and this research met with some difficulties and challenges from the lack of references in this field in the Chinese context. While different elements were combined to generate relevant rules to distinguish cyberbullying, the lack of a uniform standard should be addressed for future research.

The sampling types were also excessively narrow, due to a lack of researcher time and funding constraints; although the size of the effective comments database was large, the sample types chosen in this research were mainly cyberbullying cases with high levels of public participation and some more typical samples. This may have reduced data diversity, and the findings about the relationships between cyberbullying and gender differences offer only a preliminary conclusion.

Further, the rules used to for label offensive language and the classification of cyberbullying words both need further refinement. Although this research took its lead from relevant studies in swearing and taboo words in English as well as on social media and Chinese word features, without more references to establish strict standards to label word offensiveness, the individual differences of the eight volunteers who helped in labelling the offensiveness level of words may have caused data biases in the preliminary data labelling.

8.5 Future Recommendations

Future research on cyberbullying should consider the following issues:

Larger sample sets are recommended to make any future empirical studies more representative and the inferences derived from them more generalisable. Cyberbullying occurs every day on different social media platforms and within different event backgrounds. In future work, the sampling types should thus be broader, with a focus expanded from cyberbullying issues to general language issues; data can thus be collected from other social media platforms. A more comprehensive database of this type would allow structural analysis to be performed with a more robust number of cases and larger sample sets.

The research methods used in this study included content analysis, social network analysis, and interviews, which together constitute a basic research framework for cyberbullying in the Chinese context. In future work, more relevant or advanced explanatory models, such as the attribution theory and regression analysis, should be considered and used to facilitate a deeper explanation of how and why such situations occur, as well as the relationships between each elements.

The variables representing both participants chosen and the required analysis can also be expanded. For example, in future work, socio-demographic variables which may affect the labelling should be identified as not only the volunteers' academic backgrounds and gender but also the volunteers' emotional states, understanding of words' denotative or connotative meanings, and language use habits. Any statistical analysis can also be extended to cover more variables, such as educational level, status, location, and age, to enhance the understanding of the effects of individual differences (word usage, attitudes, or attributions) in cyberbullying or other online language behaviours.

This research provided a potential approach to detecting and preventing cyberbullying against a Chinese background. However, legal backgrounds, as well as the situations and developments of social media, vary among different countries (Kwak *et al*., 2010; Clothey *et al*., 2014), and the findings or cyberbullying prevention models derived

from the current research are just a reference for future studies. Future works would benefit from a longitudinal approach to investigating the ongoing nature of cyberbullying, the risks of cyberbullying, and the regulations against cyberbullying in countries with similar backgrounds or legal systems, in order to gain a more comprehensive overview or solution implementation. This is important, as many cyber problems have their own language features due to varying cultural backgrounds and the rapid development of modern technologies.

Future research should thus take into account the need for more comprehensive data collection standards and classifier rules to increase the quality of future datasets, as well as to promote further relevant analysis and discussion. In practical terms, there is a need for future research to consider operationalisation in different contexts or as set against various behaviours.

8.6 Conclusion

Cyberbullying is a complex global behavioural phenomenon that displays typical language features under various social and cultural backgrounds. The perspectives of individuals on cyberbullying differ, but it is important not to ignore the consequences, harms, and social problems caused by cyberbullying; researchers, educators, and individuals should thus strive to raise awareness of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying in the Chinese context is a more specific case or example, which can be used to develop a better understanding of this phenomenon from both linguistic and social science angles. This research provides new directions for the analysis of cyberbullying, though the approach could also be used to address social questions in general ways. The research outputs, based on the combined socio-ecological theoretical framework using a mix-method design, also offer more comprehensive insights into cyberbullying problems on social media. The findings of this research thus facilitate a clearer understanding of cyberbullying, which is not only a valuable contribution towards cyberbullying research but also a valuable tool for any government agency or department or internet company seeking to regulate general cyber problems or considering whether such problems should be punished or criminalised.

Overall, this research contributes to the refinement of multiple theories and benefit academics in the areas of media and cyberbullying, media regulation, and governance, particularly theories on the management of offensive information and behaviour. The research design provides a model for expanding the field of cyberbullying behaviour studies to cover other social media platforms or online languages problems; the model also provides insights into possibilities for theoretical research on the role of social media and information technology in online communities.

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Appendix I Legislation, Policies and Technologies of Online Governance in China

Approach	Year	Name (Title)	Focuses
Legislation	1996	Temporary Decree on the Management of Computer Information Network International Connectivity in the People's Republic of China (Chinese: 中华人民共和国计算机信息网络国际联网管理暂行规定)[164]	· Comprehensive ordinance; · Prohibit the online publication of any content that is 'harmful', 'subversive', or 'damaging to the state or state organs'.
	2000	State Secrecy Protection Regulations for Computer Information Systems on the Internet (Chinese: 国家计算机信息系统保密条例)[165]	· Restrict Internet users' online behaviour; · Prohibit sending or discussing state secrets in cyberspace.
	2000	The Measures for the Administration of Internet Information Services (Chinese: 互联网信息服务管理办法)[166]	· Regulate online information; · Promote healthy online developments.
	2012	Decision on Strengthening Network Information Protection (Chinese: 关于加强网络信息保护的决定)[167]	· Protect network information security, and the lawful interests of citizens, legal persons and other organizations; · Safeguard national security and the public social interest.
	2013	Regulation on the Protection of the Right to Communicate Works to the Public over Information Networks (Chinese: 信息网络传播权保护条例)[168]	· Protecting the right to communicate works to the public over information networks of the copyright owners, performers and producers of audio-visual products.
	2013	Interpretation concerning Some Questions of Applicable Law When Handling Uses of Information Networks to Commit Defamation and Other Such Criminal Cases (Chinese: 关于办理利用信息网络实施诽谤等刑事案件适用法律若干问题的解释)[169]	· Explain criminal cases in cyberspace; · Protect the lawful rights and interests of citizens.

164 Ref. http://www.mps.gov.cn/n2254314/n2254409/n2254419/n2254429/c3721842/content.html
165 Ref. http://www.asianlii.org/cn/legis/cen/laws/ssprfcisoti915/
166 Administrative Measures on Internet Information Services is formulated in order to regulate Internet information services activity and to promote the healthy and orderly development of Internet information services. (ref. http://www.china.org.cn/business/2010-01/20/content_19274704.htm)
167 Ref. https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2012/12/28/national-peoples-congress-standing-committee-decision-concerning-strengthening-network-information-protection/
168 Ref. http://www.lawinfochina.com/display.aspx?lib=law&id=5224&CGid=
169 Ref. https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2013/09/06/interpretation-concerning-some-questions-of-applicable-law-when-handling-uses-of-information-networks-to-commit-defamation-and-other-such-criminal-cases/

	2016	The Cybersecurity Law of the People's Republic of China (Chinese: 中华人民共和国网络安全法)[170]	· Ensure online safety and protect the public interest; · Promote healthy developments of economic and social information.
	2019	Measures for the Management of Credit Information of Internet Information Services Seriously Dishonest Subjects (Draft for Soliciting Opinions) (互联网信息服务严重失信主体信用信息管理办法（征求意见稿）)[171]	对互联网信息服务严重失信主体实施信用黑名单管理和失信联合惩戒
	2020	Provisions on Ecological Governance of Network Information Content (Chinese: 网络信息内容生态治理规定)	Creating a good network ecology, protecting the citizens' legitimate rights/interests, legal persons and other organizations, and safeguarding national security and public interests.
Weibo Policy	2009	Sina Weibo Community Convention（Chinese: 微博社区公约）	The general rules that the weibo users should obey.
	2014	Real Name Registration (Chinese: 实名认证)	Require Web users to register their real names and IDs with online service providers before posting comments.
	2015	The Agreement of the Weibo Service Usage (Chinese: 微博服务使用协议)[172]	The agreement includes obeying the general Weibo rules, protecting intellectual property and privacy, and punishments.
	2018	Blogger forbid comments（Chinese: 博主拉黑禁止评论）	Weibo users can block the internet users who posted any dissatisfied comments on their own Weibo comment walls.
Technology	--	The Great Firewall of China (MacKinnon, 2009)	Website filtering, especially focusing on the foreign Internets.
	--	· Content keyword and URL keyword filtering; · HTML keyword filtering (Zittrain & Edelman, 2003)	Keyword filtering with keyword-based blacklists, especially focusing on the sensitive political issues.[173]

Related research: Liao, 2015; Zeng, 2010; King *et al*., 2013; Zittrain & Edelman, 2003, Bamman *et al*., 2012

170 The The People's Republic of China Network Security Law was enacted by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on November 7, 2016 and was implemented on June 1, 2017. It requires network operators to store select data within China and allows Chinese authorities to conduct spot-checks on a company's network operations. (ref. https://www.newamerica.org/cybersecurity-initiative/digichina/blog/translation-cybersecurity-law-peoples-republic-china/)

171 Ref. http://www.cac.gov.cn/2019-07/22/c_1124782573.htm

172 Ref. https://www.weibo.com/signup/v5/protocol

173 The government's keyword-based blacklist maintains a list of words, URLs and HTML that are not permitted in published content. This list must be continuously updated due to the dynamic growth of the Internet, and its main tasks are to prevent certain foreign websites from accessing Chinese domestic networks and to filter out prohibited messages published by users.

Appendix II Typical Cyberbullying Issues Choosing from Sina Weibo between January 2011 and December 2020[174]

Time	Typical Cyberbullying Issues	Types
2020	A actress was attacked online for about three months without certain reasons.	Attacking; Cursing; Irony; Rumours
	A actor was attacked for about three months because his fans' unacceptable behaviour. There were two opposing online community who took part in this 'war'.	Attacking; Cursing
2019	11/17 Zhejiang Satellite TV was attacked by a large number of neitizens from a long period because an actor was sudden death during the process of the reality show filming.	Attacking; Cursing; Insulting
	10/31 A young actor was attacked because one of his movie script was plagiarism (not the actor's fault).	Attacking; Irony
	10/23 Netizens attacked an actress because of her fake prize in the architecture field.	Attacking; Irony
	09/27 A netizen posted an original weibo to compare two actresses and then was attacked.	Attacking
	07/31 An 'Internet celebrity' (网红) deceived the audiences with faked sounds and images for earning money.	Attacking
	07/12 The University of Shandong was attacked because the International students in this university could have three 'academic volunteers' to help their life, including but not was not limited on translations and ordering meals.	Attacking
	06/30 A male was cyberbullyed because he killed a dog. The cyberbullying behaviour transferred into traditional bullying and extended to the target's girlfriend, friends, company colleagues and family members.	Human flesh search; Attacking; Cursing
	05/31 Two undergraduate students were cyberbullyed because some people posted their traditional bullying behaviour online. The cyberbullying behaviour extended from the targets to the whole group of the students in this university.	Human flesh search; Attacking; Cursing
	05/21 A young singer was cyberbulled because he smoked at the no smoking area.	Attacking

174 Because of the time span, most cyberbullying issues or reports could not be searched. Some of them were supposed 'Sorry, and the post was removed by the author' (抱歉，此微博已被作者删除)'; some were marked as 'The content was complained. According to the Weibo community regulations, the relevant content has been deleted' (该微博因被多人投诉，根据《微博社区公约》，已被删除). At this point, this research could not summary all the cyberbullying issues which occurred on Sina Weibo. Here, the typical cyberbullying issues chosen from Weibo shown in Appendix II were from January 2011 to June 2019. All the issues are selected and summarised from Sina Weibo. The period is from 01 January 2011 to 31 August 2020. The way of selection is through the keyword search (网络暴力) and filtering system on Sina Weibo. All the typical cyberbullying issues are reported by the verified users or official Weibo account.

	05/03 A female wanted to suicide because of the heavy online pressure of her personal rights protection (Hashtag of #奔驰维权女车主回应诸多争议#)	Attacking; Liberlling
	03/03 A Chinese female VOGUE model was attacked on because netizens thought she is ugly.	Attacking
	01/22 The female protagonist of the D&G racial discrimination ads was attacked after her statements.	Attacking
2018	12/27 A 60-year-old actor was attacked because most of the netizens dissatisfied with his performances and expressions.	Attacking; Egao
	12/05 Rumours to the singer Xue Zhiqian to say he used drugs.	Rumours
	12/02 Cyberbullying to the actress Cao Wenxi because audiences were dissatisfied with her performance in a TV programme.	Attacking; Cursing
	11/22 Cyberbullying to the educator Yu because of his wrong expression of females.	Attacking
	11/20 Cyberbullying to the actor Jiang because of the domestic violence to his girlfriend.	Attacking; Cursing
	11/09 Yan Yalun's issue: An actor was attacked because he was found to be gay.	Attacking, Rumours
	10/28 A female car driver was attacked and cursed because netizens believed that she was the culprit of the bus crashed accident. The fact was that the female did not retrograde, but the bus retrograded and crashed into the river after hitting the female's car.	Attacking; Cursing; Harassment; Llibelling
	10/02 Sun qian's issue: An actress was attacked for her 'poor' performances in a reality show.	Attacking; Cursing; Harassment
	09/07 An 'Internet celebrity' (网红) was reported to beat a pregnant woman, and netizens attacked her online and insulted her grandfather and delivered wreaths. The results were that nobody actually knew what happened but her grandfather passed away.	Attacking; Cursing; Harassment
	09/01 A pediatrician suicide because the public condemned her husband for beating a boy child in the swimming pool, and the child's family went to the hospital for making trouble. The fact was the boy pushed the doctor firstly.	Human flesh search; Attacking; Liberlling
	08/25 Yuan chunwang's issue: An actor was defamed because he acts a villain in a TV series.	Attacking; Liberlling
	08/18 A singer was harassed on the show, and her fans chastised the superintendent.	Attacking
	06/14 Da Zhang Wei's wrong expressions during the World Cup live show.	Attacking
	05/31 A child passed away because of eyes cancer, but her family was attacked because the netizens thought they cheated donations. Finally, the police said the family did not do wrong thing.	Attacking; Cursing; Libelling; Rumours
	05/22 A Chinese male singer Lin Yanjun was attacked and cursed through various ways because someone thought he sings bad.	Attacking; Denigration

	04/09 A woman killed a dog, and the host published the woman's personal information online.	Cursing
	04/06 A Chinese male actor Yang Yang was attacked and cursed (burning his photos) on the Tomb Sweeping Day because fans of a novel were not satisfied with the role he played.	Attacking; Cursing
	03/03 A young host took part in a famous TV programme but did not do well.	Attacking; Denigration
2017	Jiang Ge Tokyo Murder Case: An international student was killed in Japan	Cursing; Denigration
	12/31 Li's statement of 'Yesumen issue' after extramatital affair	Attacking; Denigration
2016	08/20 Ma's speech after extramarital affair	Attacking; Denigration
2015	08/13 Qiao Renliang's wrong expressions of 2015 Tianjin warehouse blasts	Attacking; Cursing
	01/22 Chen's speech after extramarital affair.	Attacking; Cursing
2013	12/28 False article about a 4-year-old girl in a TV show; Hashtag #王诗龄滚出爸爸去哪儿# (#Get out of the TV show!)	Denigration; Llibelling
	12/17 A girl's personal information was exposed online because a shop owner suspected that she had stolen the clothes.	Human flesh search; Attacking
	07/13 Hashtag of #袁姗姗滚出娱乐圈# (#Yuan Shanshan, get out of the entertainment!) ranked at the top of the Weibo Heat Microblogs Lists for a long time because of audiences' displeasure of Yuan Shanshan's poor acting.	Attacking; Denigration
	04/02 Netizens questioned a woman's behaviour about selling cosmetics and donating all proceeds to the earthquake-stricken area of Ya'an. They believed her action was illegal and hype to make money.	Attacking; Denigration; Libelling
2012	01/17 Netizens posted many offensive languages on Zhang's Weibo account wall because they thought Zhang was too harsh to the participant in a job-hunting TV show.	Attacking
	01/15 One-Month online fighting between Han Han's and three famous authors on Weibo, because these three authors questioned Han Han's article was written by others and attacked him online first.	Attacking; Denigration
2011	12/27 Netizens posted a significant number of offensive comments to attack Zhong because they watched a false video about Zhang's abusing behaviour of his mother.	Libelling; Rumours
	12/03 Ms Xiao 'suicide' because she couldn't bear the fact that her husband Mr Jiang was derailed, and left a ten-thousand-word 'suicide note'. Mr Jiang and Miss Yu were abused and defamed. But a few months later, Xiao 'resurrected'. The fact was the 'suicide' was organised by a team.	Human flesh search; Attacking; Libelling

Appendix III The Summary Table of Cyberbullying and Sensitive Cyberbullying Words from the Chosen Samples

Word	Category	Pin Yin	English Meaing	Word	Category	Pin Yin	English Meaing
[蜡烛]	CW	[là zhú]	A emoji of candle	肏你	AW	cào nǐ	fuck you
13	OW	—	Hieroglyph of 'B'	厕所	NEW	cè suǒ	toilet
b	OW	—	Vagina	插	SW	chā	cum inside
bb	EEW	—	Acronym of bibi, motormouth	插进	SW	chā jìn	cum inside
BB	EEW	—	Acronym of bibi, motormouth	插进去	SW	chā jìn qù	cum inside
bi	OW	—	Pinyin of '逼/屄'	插入	SW	chā rù	cum inside
biao	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊', whore	查字典	OW	chá zì diǎn	look up dictionary
Biao	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊', whore	豺狼	AW	chái láng	jackal
BIAO	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊', whore	猖獗	OW	chāng jué	rampant
biAO	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊', whore	猖狂	OW	chāng kuáng	furious
biaoz	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子', whore	娼	SW	chāng	prostitution
biaoza	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子', whore	娼妇	SW	chāng fù	prostitution
biaozhi	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子', whore	娼妓	SW	chāng jì	prostitution
biaozi	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子', whore	娼家	SW	chāng jiā	prostitution family
Biaozi	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子', whore	娼响	SW	chāng xiǎng	prostitution
BiaoZi	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子', whore	偿命	CW	cháng mìng	life for a life
BIAOZI	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子', whore	唱嘻哈	OW	chàng xī hā	sing hip-hop
biaozichoubu	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子臭不要脸', Bitch! Lose you assface!	抄	OW	chāo	copy
biaozipeigou	SW	—	Pinyin of '婊子配狗', bitch couple	抄歌	OW	chāo gē	copy other's song
bichi	SW	—	Transliteration of 'bitch'	嘲	OW	cháo	ridicule
bihuo	SW	—	Pinyin of '逼货', motherfucker	嘲讽	OW	cháo fèng	ridicule
bitch	SW	—	—	炒作	OW	chǎo zuò	hype
Bitch	SW	—	—	车祸	CW	chē huò	car accident
BITCH	SW	—	—	车震	SW	chē zhèn	sex behaviour in a car
BItch	SW	—	—	扯淡	OW	chě dàn	bullshit
BiTch	SW	—	—	扯蛋	OW	chě dàn	bullshit
BitchLI	SW	—	Bitch Li	扯犊子	OW	chě dú zi	bullshit
BitchLu	SW	—	Bitch Lu	扯后腿	NEW	chě hòu tuǐ	hold sb. back
buyaobilian	EEW	—	Pinyin of '不要逼脸'	沉塘	CW	chén táng	be sunk into river
buyaolian	EEW	—	Pinyin of '不要脸'	陈狗	AW	chén gǒu	(epithet) asshole (name)
Buyaolian	EEW	—	Pinyin of '不要脸'	陈狗赫	AW	chén gǒu hè	(epithet) fuckboy (name)
buyaoliand	EEW	—	Pinyin of '不要脸的'	陈狗家	AW	chén gǒu jiā	(epithet) Chen's fucking family
b脸	AW	b liǎn	same as '逼脸', assface	陈赫	OW	chén hè	name
b数	AW	b shù	shitty ideas	陈赫狗	AW	chén hè gǒu	(epithet) asshole Chen

ca	AW	—	Pinyin of '擦', fuck	陈赫渣	AW	chén hè zhā	(epithet) fuckboy Chen
cao	AW	—	Pinyin of '操', fuck	陈贱男	AW	chén jiàn nán	(epithet) fuckboy Chen
Cao	AW	—	Pinyin of '操', fuck	陈刘狗	AW	chén liú gǒu	(epithet) fucking couple (name)
CAO	AW	—	Pinyin of '操', fuck	陈尿裤	AW	chén niào kù	(epithet) name
Caodenishuang	AW/SW	—	Pinyin of '操的你爽吗', Was she a good fuck?	陈世峰	OW	chén shì fēng	name
caonima	AW/SW/EEW	—	Pinyin of '操你妈', fuck your mother	陈世美	AW	chén shì měi	(epithet) name
CAONIMA	AW/SW/EEW	—	Pinyin of '操你妈', fuck your mother	陈渣	AW	chén zhā	(epithet) fuckboy Chen
Caonima	AW/SW/EEW	—	Pinyin of '操你妈', fuck your mother	陈渣男	AW	chén zhā nán	(epithet) fuckboy Chen
caonimade	AW/SW/EEW	—	Pinyin of '操你妈的', fuck your mother	陳世峰	OW	chén shì fēng	name
caonimua	AW/SW/EEW	—	Typo of '操你妈', fuck your mother	吃错药	NEW	chī cuò yào	what's wrong with you
chou	AW	—	Pinyin of '丑', ugly	吃大便	NEW	chī dà biàn	eat that shit
choub	AW	—	Same as '丑逼', assface	吃干饭	NEW	chī gān fàn	nonsense
chouB	AW	—	Same as '丑逼', assface	吃瓜	NEW	chī guā	rubbernecker
choubi	AW	—	Same as '丑逼', assface	吃饺子	OW	chī jiǎo zi	eat dumplings
choubiaozi	SW	—	Pinyin of '臭婊子', fucking bitch	吃里扒外	OW(CI)	chī lǐ pá wài	live on sb. while helping others secretly
choubiaozilx	SW	—	Pinyin of '臭婊子, lxl', fucking whore, lxl	吃奶	SW	chī nǎi	tit fuck
choubilanbi	SW	—	Pinyin of '臭逼烂逼', fucking vagina	吃腻	AW	chī nì	(extended meaning) cloy
chouren	AW	—	Pinyin of '丑人', ugly guy	吃软饭	NEW	chī ruǎn fàn	dead beat
choushabi	AW	—	Pinyin of '臭傻逼', fucking guy	吃屎	NEW	chī shǐ	eat that shit
cn	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你', fuck you	吃翔	NEW	chī xiáng	eat that shit
cnm	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈', fuck your mother	耻辱	OW	chǐ rǔ	shame
CNM	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈', fuck your mother	抽插	SW	chōu chā	cum inside
Cnm	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈', fuck your mother	抽出来	SW	chōu chū lái	(penis) pull out
CNm	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈', fuck your mother	丑	AW	chǒu	ugly
CNMB	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈逼', fuck your mother's cunt	丑八怪	AW	chǒu bā guài	very ugly person
cnmb	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈逼', fuck your mother's cunt	丑爆	AW	chǒu bào	fucking ugly
Cnmb	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈逼', fuck your mother's cunt	丑比	AW	chǒu bǐ	homophone of '丑屄', assface
cnmd	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈的', fuck!	丑笔	AW	chǒu bǐ	homophone of '丑屄', assface
cnmgb	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈个逼', fuck your mother's cunt	丑币	AW	chǒu bì	homophone of '丑屄', assface
cnmlb	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈个逼', fuck your mother's cunt	丑表子	SW	chǒu biǎo zi	homophone of '丑婊子', ugly whore
cnmlgb	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈个逼', fuck your mother's cunt	丑裱	SW	chǒu biǎo	homophone of '丑婊子', ugly whore
Cnmlgb	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈个逼', fuck your mother's cunt	丑蠢	AW	chǒu chǔn	ugly and foolish
cnmm	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈妈', fuck your mother	丑的	AW	chǒu de	ugly
cnmp	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操你妈批', fuck your mother's cunt	丑恶	AW	chǒu è	hideous
csf	EEW	—	Name's acronym	丑恶嘴脸	AW	chǒu è zuǐ liǎn	ugly and vicious face
CSF	EEW	—	Name's acronym	丑货	AW	chǒu huò	ugly person
ctm	AW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操他妈', fucking	丑陋	AW	chǒu lòu	eyesore

ctmd	AW/EEW	—	Acronym of '操他妈的', fucking	丑陋的	AW	chǒu lòu de	eyesore
C位出殡	CW	C wèi chū bìn	coffin in the centre	丑男	AW	chǒu nán	ugly man
c位出殡	CW	C wèi chū bìn	coffin in the centre	丑娘	AW	chǒu niáng	ugly woman
diao	CW	—	Pinyin of ‘屌', penis	丑女	AW	chǒu nǚ	ugly woman
die	CW	—	—	丑人	AW	chǒu rén	ugly person
Die	CW	—	—	丑事	AW	chǒu shì	scandal
DIE	CW	—	—	丑死	AW	chǒu sǐ	very ugly
diss	EEW	—	(extended meaning) underestimate	丑死了	AW	chǒu sǐ le	very ugly
Diss	EEW	—	(extended meaning) underestimate	丑态	AW	chǒu tài	buffoonery
DISS	EEW	—	(extended meaning) underestimate	丑态百出	AW	chǒu tài bǎi chū	act like a fool
dissPG	EEW	—	underestimate sb	丑闻	OW	chǒu wén	scandal
dissPGone	EEW	—	underestimate sb	醜	AW	chǒu	ugly
disspgone	EEW	—	underestimate sb	臭	OW	chòu	smelly
dog	OW	—	—	臭表子	SW	chòu biǎo zi	homophone of '臭婊子', fucking whore
doge	OW	—	—	臭不要脸	EEW	chòu bù yào liǎn	shameless
fuck	AW	—	—	臭虫	OW	chòu chóng	bedbug
Fuck	AW	—	—	臭吊丝	AW	chòu diào sī	poor guy
FUCK	AW	—	—	臭货	OW	chòu huò	poor guy
fuCK	AW	—	—	臭脚	NEW	chòu jiǎo	stinky feet
fuckyou	AW	—	—	臭骂	OW	chòu mà	scold angrily and abusively
Fuckyou	AW	—	—	臭名	OW	chòu míng	notoriety
FuckYou	AW	—	—	臭名远扬	OW(CI)	chòu míng yuǎn yáng	infamous
FUCKYOU	AW	—	—	臭名昭著	OW(CI)	chòu míng zhāo zhù	notorious
FuckyouBitch Youareabasta	AW	—	—	臭娘	SW	chòu niáng	same as '臭娘们', fucking woman
gun	OW	—	Pinyin of ‘滚', fuck off	臭娘们	SW	chòu niáng men	fucking woman
jb	SW	—	Acronym of '鸡巴', penis	臭皮囊	NEW	chòu pí náng	the mortal flesh
JB	SW	—	Acronym of '鸡巴', penis	臭气熏天	OW	chòu qì xūn tiān	overwhelming stench
Jb	SW	—	Acronym of '鸡巴', penis	臭沙壁	AW	chòu shā bì	homophone of '臭傻屄', fucking dopey cunt
jB	SW	—	Acronym of '鸡巴', penis	臭莎比	AW	chòu shā bǐ	homophone of '臭傻屄', fucking dopey cunt
jian	SW	—	Pinyin of ‘贱', bitch	臭味相投	OW(CI)	chòu wèi xiāng tóu	share the same rotten tastes
Jian	SW	—	Pinyin of ‘贱', bitch	臭鱼	OW	chòu yú	stink fish
JIAN	SW	—	Pinyin of ‘贱', bitch	出殡	CW	chū bìn	funeral
JIan	SW	—	Pinyin of ‘贱', bitch	出车祸	CW	chū chē huò	a car accident

JianB	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱屄', fugly cunt	出轨	OW	chū guǐ	cheating on sb
jianb	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱屄', fugly cunt	出轨行为	OW	chū guǐ xíng wéi	cheating on sb
jianB	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱屄', fugly cunt	出軌	OW	chū guǐ	cheating on sb
jianbi	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱屄', fugly cunt	出洋相	OW	chū yáng xiàng	lose face
jianbiao	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱婊', fucking bitch	处女膜	SW	chǔ nǚ mó	Hymen
jianbiaozi	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱婊子', fucking bitch	处死刑	CW	chǔ sǐ xíng	execution
jianren	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱人', bitch	畜	AW	chù	livestock
JIANREN	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱人', bitch	畜生	AW	chù shēng	brute
JianRen	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱人', bitch	畜牲	OW	chù sheng	livestock
Jianren	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱人', bitch	串通	OW	chuàn tōng	collude
jianrenbuyao	SW	—	Pinyin of '贱人不要脸'	床上	OW	chuáng shàng	get laid
jiba	SW	—	Pinyin of '鸡巴', penis	床上运动	SW	chuáng shàng yùn dòr	get laid
jiji	SW	—	Pinyin of '鸡鸡', penis	床戏	SW	chuáng xì	have a sex
JJ	SW	—	Acronym of '鸡鸡', penis	床照	SW	chuáng zhào	sex photos
jj	SW	—	Acronym of '鸡鸡', penis	锤子	OW	chuí zi	(dialect) fuck
laji	NEW	—	Pinyin of '垃圾', rubbish	春药	SW	chūn yào	aphrodisiac
Laji	NEW	—	Pinyin of '垃圾', rubbish	蠢	AW	chǔn	stupid
LAJI	NEW	—	Pinyin of '垃圾', rubbish	蠢爆	AW	chǔn bào	That's fucking stupid.
lanbi	SW	—	Pinyin of '烂逼', fucking vagina	蠢笨	AW	chǔn bèn	stupid and foolish
langbi	SW	—	Pinyin of '浪逼', dissolute	蠢逼	AW	chǔn bī	peckerhead/dildo
langdang	SW	—	Pinyin of '浪荡', dissolute	蠢比	AW	chǔn bǐ	homophone of '蠢逼', peckerhead/dildo
langgou	SW	—	Pinyin of '浪狗', dissolute guy	蠢比狗	AW	chǔn bǐ gǒu	cockshit
langhuo	SW	—	Pinyin of '浪货', dissolute guy	蠢才	AW	chǔn cái	idiot
langjian	SW	—	Pinyin of '浪贱', dissolute bitch	蠢材	AW	chǔn cái	idiot
langren	SW	—	Pinyin of '浪人', dissolute guy	蠢蛋	AW	chǔn dàn	stupid
lanhuo	SW	—	Pinyin of '烂货', licentious woman	蠢狗	AW	chǔn gǒu	saphead
Lanhuo	SW	—	Pinyin of '烂货', licentious woman	蠢话	AW	chǔn huà	stupid expressions
low	AW	—	—	蠢货	AW	chǔn huò	moron
Low	AW	—	—	蠢哭	AW	chǔn kū	That's fucking stupid.
LOW	AW	—	—	蠢驴	AW	chǔn lǘ	moron
low13	AW	—	Hieroglyph of 'low b'	蠢人	AW	chǔn rén	stupid person
lowB	AW	—	Poor guy	蠢事	OW	chǔn shì	stupid thing
lowb	AW	—	Poor guy	蠢死	AW	chǔn sǐ	thickhead
Lowb	AW	—	Poor guy	蠢样	AW	chǔn yàng	stupe
LowB	AW	—	Poor guy	蠢猪	AW	chǔn zhū	idiot
LOWB	AW	—	Poor guy	辞退	OW	cí tuì	dismiss
lowbee	AW	—	Homophone of 'low b'	辞职	OW	cí zhí	resignation

lx	OW	—	Name's acronym	凑表脸	EEW	còu biǎo liǎn	homophone of '臭不要脸', shameless
LX	OW	—	Name's acronym	粗鄙	AW	cū bǐ	vulgar
mabi	EEW	—	Pinyin of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	粗话	OW	cū huà	swear
mb	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	粗口	OW	cū kǒu	swearing
MB	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	粗劣	AW	cū liè	coarse
Mb	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	粗陋	AW	cū lòu	rough
md	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈的', oh, shit!	粗鲁	AW	cū lǔ	rough
MD	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈的', oh, shit!	粗蛮	AW	cū mán	rough
Md	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈的', oh, shit!	粗俗	AW	cū sú	vulgar
mdzz	AW	—	Acronym of '妈的智障', shithead	猝死	CW	cù sǐ	sudden death
MDZZ	AW	—	Acronym of '妈的智障', shithead	崔莺莺	AW	cuī yīng yīng	(epithet) name
mlb	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈了逼', fucking, shit!	挫骨扬灰	OW(CI)	cuò gǔ yáng huī	grind one's bones to dust
mlgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈了逼', fucking, shit!	打残	CW	dǎ cán	mutilate
MLGB	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈了逼', fucking, shit!	打脸	NEW	dǎ liǎn	slap your face
Mlgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈了逼', fucking, shit!	打炮	SW	dǎ pào	(extended meaning) have casual sex
mlgbd	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈了逼', fucking, shit!	打死	CW	dǎ sǐ	killed
mlgj	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈了逼', fucking, shit!	打胎	OW	dǎ tāi	have an abortion
mlgjb	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈了逼', fucking, shit!	打肿脸充胖子	OW(CI)	dǎ zhǒng liǎn chōng p	keep up appearances
mmp	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈卖批', your mother is a whore	打嘴	OW	dǎ zuǐ	slap
MMP	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈卖批', your mother is a whore	大便	NEW	dà biàn	shit
Mmp	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈卖批', your mother is a whore	大放厥词	OW(CI)	dà fàng jué cí	talk a lot of nonsense
mmP	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈卖批', your mother is a whore	大粪	NEW	dà fèn	shit
mMP	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈卖批', your mother is a whore	大快人心	OW(CI)	dà kuài rén xīn	affording general satisfaction
MMp	EEW	—	Acronym of '妈卖批', your mother is a whore	大撒比	AW	dà sā bǐ	homophone of '大傻屄', dopey cunt
mngb	EEW	—	Acronym of '玛尼戈壁', motherfucking	大卸八块	OW(CI)	dà xiè bā kuài	slice and dice
nc	AW	—	Acronym of '脑残', shithead	大言不惭	OW(CI)	dà yán bù cán	brag unblushingly
nimabi	EEW	—	Pinyin of '你妈逼', motherfucking	歹毒	AW	dǎi dú	vicious
nm	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈', fucking	戴绿帽	NEW	dài lǜ mào	be cuckolded
nmb	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈逼', motherfucking	戴绿帽子	NEW	dài lǜ mào zi	be cuckolded
NMB	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈逼', motherfucking	戴帽子	NEW	dài mào zi	be cuckolded
Nmb	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈逼', motherfucking	胆小怕事	OW	dǎn xiǎo pà shì	timid
nmd	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈的', fucking	荡	SW	dàng	dissolute
nmgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈个逼', motherfucking	荡妇	SW	dàng fù	tart
nmlgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈个逼', motherfucking	叨逼	OW	dāo bī	motormouth
NMLGB	EEW	—	Acronym of '你妈个逼', motherfucking	叨比叨	OW	dāo bǐ dāo	motormouth

nmsl	CW	—	Acronym of '你妈死了', your mother died	悼念	CW	dào niàn	mourning
nozuonodie	NEW	—	Don't be so pathetic!	道德败坏	OW	dào dé bài huài	demoralization
Nozuonodie	NEW	—	Don't be so pathetic!	道德绑架	OW	dào dé bǎng jià	moral abduction
NozuoNoDiE	NEW	—	Don't be so pathetic!	道德沦丧	OW	dào dé lún sàng	anomic
NoZuoNoDie	NEW	—	Don't be so pathetic!	道歉	OW	dào qiàn	apologize
NozuoNodie	NEW	—	Don't be so pathetic!	得瑟尼马	EEW	dé sè ní mǎ	boast your mother
NoZuonodie	NEW	—	Don't be so pathetic!	低等	OW	dī děng	inferior
ojbk	NEW	—	okay' - not fine	低等动物	AW	dī děng dòng wù	lower animals
qj	SW	—	Pinyin of '强奸', rape	低级	AW	dī jí	low-level
qnmb	EEW	—	Acronym of '去你妈逼', motherfucking	低贱	AW	dī jiàn	cheesy
qnmd	EEW	—	Acronym of '去你妈的', holy fuck!	低劣	AW	dī liè	inferior
qnmlgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '去你妈逼', motherfucking	低能儿	AW	dī néng ér	cockshit
QNMLGB	EEW	—	Acronym of '去你妈逼', motherfucking	低俗	AW	dī sú	vulgar
Qnmlgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '去你妈逼', motherfucking	低下	AW	dī xià	low
qnmLgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '去你妈逼', motherfucking	诋毁	OW	dǐ huǐ	slander
sao	SW	—	Pinyin of '骚', coquettish	抵命	CW	dǐ mìng	life for a life
sb	AW	—	Acronym of '傻逼', dopey cunt	地狱	CW	dì yù	hell/damn
sha	AW	—	Pinyin of '傻', stupid	地獄	CW	dì yù	hell/damn
sha13	AW	—	Hieroglyph of '傻b', dopey cunt	颠倒黑白	OW(CI)	diān dǎo hēi bái	turn things upside down
shab	AW	—	Hieroglyph of '傻b', dopey cunt	颠倒是非	OW(CI)	diān dǎo shì fēi	turn things upside down
shaB	AW	—	Hieroglyph of '傻b', dopey cunt	玷污	OW	diàn wū	tarnish
shabi	AW	—	Hieroglyph of '傻b', dopey cunt	叼	SW	diāo	homophone of '屌', penis
Shabi	AW	—	Hieroglyph of '傻b', dopey cunt	屌	SW	diǎo	penis
shadiao	AW	—	Pinyin of '傻屌', fuckstick	屌丝	AW	diǎo sī	cock player
shi	NEW	—	Pinyin of '屎', shit	吊	AW	diào	homophone of '屌', penis
shit	NEW	—	—	吊不拉几	AW	diào bù lā jǐ	(dialect) ace
sibiaozi	SW	—	Pinyin of '死婊子', fucking whore	吊死	AW	diào sǐ	hang oneself
songzhe	OW	—	Name	吊炸天	AW	diào zhà tiān	(dialect) freaking awesome
stupid	AW	—	—	丁丁	AW	dīng dīng	the male reproductive system
s逼	AW	s bī	Hieroglyph of '傻b', dopey cunt	丢脸	OW	diū liǎn	lose face
tm	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈', shit!	丢人	OW	diū rén	lose face
TM	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈', shit!	丢人现眼	OW(CI)	diū rén xiànyǎn	humiliation
Tm	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈', shit!	洞	OW	dòng	(extended meaning) cunt/asshole
tM	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈', shit!	抖机灵	OW	dǒu jī ling	mouthy fools
tmb	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈逼', fuck off	斗鸡眼	OW	dòu jī yǎn	cross-eye
TMD	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈的', shit!	逗逼	AW	dòu bī	goofball
tmd	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈的', shit!	逗比	AW	dòu bǐ	homophone of '逗逼', goofball

TMd	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈的', shit!	毒	AW	dú	vicious
Tmd	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈的', shit!	毒妇	SW	dú fù	vicious woman
TmD	EEW	—	Acronym of '他妈的', shit!	毒辣	AW	dú là	diabolical
wc	OW	—	Acronym of '我操', fuck	毒瘤	AW	dú liú	malignant tumor
WC	OW	—	Acronym of '我操', fuck	毒蛇	AW	dú shé	viper
wcnm	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '我操你妈', fuck your mother	毒蛇猛兽	OW	dú shé měng shòu	like a viper or a beast
Wcnm	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '我操你妈', fuck your mother	毒蝎	AW	dú xiē	poison scorpion
wcnmb	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '我操你妈逼', fuck your mother's cunt	读点书	OW	dú diǎn shū	read more books
woc	AW/SW/EEW	—	Acronym of '我操', fuck	短浅	OW	duǎn qiǎn	narrow and shallow
wqnmlgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '我去你妈了个逼', motherfucking	断气	CW	duàn qì	breathe one's last
Wqnmlgb	EEW	—	Acronym of '我去你妈了个逼', motherfucking	断章取义	OW(CI)	duàn zhāng qǔ yì	garble
WQNMLGB	EEW	—	Acronym of '我去你妈了个逼', motherfucking	断子绝孙	OW(CI)	duàn zǐ jué sūn	die without descendants
哀哉	OW	āi zāi	sorrowful	多读点书	OW	duō dú diǎn shū	read more books
挨操	SW	āi cāo	be fucked	多读书	OW	duō dú shū	read more books
挨骂	OW	āi mà	scolded	多行不义必自毙	OW(CI)	duō xíng bù yì bì zì bì	The wages of sin is death
挨炮	SW	āi pào	be fucked	多看书	OW	duō kàn shū	read more book
挨喷	OW	āi pēn	scolded	多骚	SW	duō sāo	really coquettish
挨批	OW	āi pī	scolded	堕胎	OW	duò tāi	abortion
癌症	CW	ái zhèng	cancer	恶报	OW	è bào	bad news
艾滋	OW	ài zī	AIDS	恶臭	OW	è chòu	stench
艾滋病	OW	ài zī bìng	AIDS	恶毒	AW	è dú	vicious
爱出风头	OW	ài chū fēng tóu	push oneself forward	恶妇	SW	è fù	vicious woman
爱管闲事	OW	ài guǎn xiánshì	kibitz	恶狗	OW	è gǒu	villain
爱是一道光	NEW	ài shì yīdào guāng	(extended meaning) sb. cheated on sb.	恶贯满盈	OW(CI)	è guàn mǎn yíng	flagrance
碍眼	OW	ài yǎn	annoying	恶鬼	AW	è guǐ	villain
安息	CW	ān xí	rest in peace	恶果	OW	è guǒ	bad result
安葬	CW	ān zàng	burial	恶行	OW	è xíng	sin
肮脏	OW	āng zāng	sordidness	恶疾	CW	è jí	malady
嗷嗷叫	OW	áo áo jiào	howl	恶劣	EEW	è liè	vile
八婆	SW	bā pó	nosy parker	恶魔	AW	è mó	demon
扒皮	OW	bā pí	exposure	恶气	OW	è qì	vicious
霸凌	OW	bà líng	bullying	恶人	AW	è rén	villain
白痴	AW	bái chī	idiot	恶人先告状	OW(CI)	è rén xiān gào zhuàng	The villain brought suit against his victims
白点	OW	bái diǎn	same as 'idiot'	恶事	OW	è shì	vicious thing
白饭	OW	bái fàn	same as 'nonsense'	恶俗	EEW	è sú	vulgar

白莲	NEW	bái lián	same as 'bitch'	恶心	EEW	ě xīn	nausea
白莲花	NEW	bái lián huā	same as ’白莲', idiot	恶心的	EEW	ě xīn de	disgusting
白莲教	NEW	bái lián jiào	same as ’白莲', idiot	恶言恶语	OW(CI)	è yán è yǔ	curses
白蓮花	NEW	bái lián huā	same as ’白莲', idiot	恶言相向	OW(CI)	è yán xiāng xiàng	curse
白血病	OW	bái xiě bìng	leukemia	恶意	OW	è yì	malice
白眼	OW	bái yǎn	supercilious look	恶意揣测	OW	è yì chuǎi cè	malicious conjecture
白眼狼	AW	bái yǎn láng	white-eyed wolf	恶有恶报	OW(CI)	è yǒu è bào	evil results of evildoing
败坏	AW	bài huài	corrupt	恶语伤人	OW(CI)	è yǔ shāng rén	insult
败家	OW	bài jiā	spendthrift	恶语中伤	OW(CI)	è yǔ zhòng shāng	calumniate
败类	AW	bài lèi	scum of a community	饿死	CW	è sǐ	starve
败類	AW	bài lèi	scum of a community	惡心	EEW	è xīn	nausea
败露	OW	bài lù	expose	鳄鱼	NEW	è yú	crocodile
败事有余	OW(CI)	bài shì yǒu yú	do more harm than good	鳄鱼的眼泪	NEW	è yú de yǎn lèi	crocodile tears
败絮其中	OW(CI)	bài xù qí zhōng	foul inside	鳄鱼泪	NEW	è yú lèi	crocodile tears
拜金	NEW	bài jīn	money worship	鳄鱼眼泪	NEW	è yú yǎn lèi	crocodile tears
拜金女	NEW	bài jīn nǚ	worship girl	二手货	SW	èr shǒu huò	secondhand person
班门弄斧	OW(CI)	bān mén nòng fǔ	teach fish to swim	发疯	OW	fā fēng	madness
般配	OW	bān pèi	perfect match	发贱	SW	fā jiàn	estrus
搬弄是非	OW(CI)	bān nòng shì fēi	tell tales	发情	SW	fā qíng	oestrus
半老徐娘	OW(CI)	bàn lǎo xú niáng	middle-aged beauty	发骚	SW	fā sāo	oestrus
半身不遂	OW(CI)	bàn shēn bù suí	hemiplegia	法克	AW	fǎ kè	transliteration of 'fuck'
半死不活	OW(CI)	bàn sǐ bù huó	half-dead	翻字典	OW	fān zì diǎn	look up dictionary
半文盲	OW	bàn wén máng	semi-literate	烦	EEW	fán	annoying
扮傻	OW	bàn shǎ	pretend to be stupid	烦人	EEW	fán rén	annoying
帮凶	AW	bāng xiōng	accomplice	烦死	EEW	fán sǐ	the most annoying
薄情	OW	bó qíng	ruthless	反社会人格	OW	fǎn shè huì rén gé	antisocial personality
鸨	SW	bǎo	procuress	犯贱	SW	fàn jiàn	be bitchy/be a bitch
鸨子	SW	bǎo zi	procuress	饭桶	AW	fàn tǒng	nonsense
报复	OW	bào fù	revenge	放荡	SW	fàng dàng	debauchery
报应	CW	bào yìng	retribution	放荡的	SW	fàng dàng de	rakehelly
报应不爽	OW(CI)	bào yìng bù shuǎng	inevitable retribution	飞蛾扑火	OW(CI)	fēi é pū huǒ	a flying moth darts into the fire
報應	CW	bào yìng	retribution	非主流	AW	fēi zhǔ liú	non-mainstream
暴毙	CW	bào bì	sudden death	废材	AW	fèi cái	dipshit
暴丑	AW	bào chǒu	very ugly	废柴	AW	fèi chái	dipshit
暴力	OW	bào lì	bullying	废狗	AW	fèi gǒu	nonsense
暴力事件	OW	bào lì shì jiàn	violent incident	废品	OW	fèi pǐn	rubbish

暴民	OW	bào mín	mob	废人	AW	fèi rén	shitneck
暴徒	OW	bào tú	thug	废物	AW	fèi wù	shitneck
爆粗	AW	bào cū	swearing	坟	CW	fén	grave
爆菊	SW	bào jú	fuckbutt	坟墓	CW	fén mù	tomb
爆死	CW	bào sǐ	sudden death	坟头	CW	fén tóu	grave
爆炸	CW	bào zhà	explosion	焚	CW	fén	burn
卑鄙	AW	bēi bǐ	contemptible	粉转路	NEW	fěn zhuǎn lù	change from a fan to a by-stander
卑鄙龌龊	OW(CI)	bēi bǐ wò chuò	sordid	粪	NEW	fèn	shit
卑鄙无耻	OW(CI)	bēi bǐ wú chǐ	mean and shameless	粪坑	NEW	fèn kēng	cesspit
卑贱	AW	bēi jiàn	lowly	风骚	SW	fēng sāo	pussy
卑劣	AW	bēi liè	despicable	封杀	NEW	fēng shā	block
卑劣的	AW	bēi liè de	despicable	疯狗	AW	fēng gǒu	crazy dog
背叛	OW	bèi pàn	betray	疯女人	SW	fēng nǚ rén	crazy woman
背叛的	OW	bèi pàn de	Betrayal	疯婆子	SW	fēng pó zi	crazy woman
背叛者	AW	bèi pàn zhě	traitor	疯子	AW	fēng zi	madman
被车撞	CW	bèi chē zhuàng	hit by a car	父母双亡	CW	fù mǔ shuāng wáng	parents died
被狗吃	AW	bèi gǒu chī	eaten by a dog	负能量	NEW	fù néng liàng	negative emotions
奔丧	CW	bēn sàng	bereavement	妇道	SW	fù dào	womanhood
笨不拉几	AW	bèn bù lā jǐ	silly	妇科病	OW	fù kē bìng	Gynecological diseases
笨蠢	AW	bèn chǔn	foolish and stupid	妇科炎症	OW	fù kē yán zhèng	Gynecological inflammation
笨蛋	AW	bèn dàn	idiot	该死	CW	gāi sǐ	Damn!
笨死了	AW	bèn sǐ le	very stupid	甘霖娘	SW	gān lín niáng	(dialect) fuck your mother
笨猪	AW	bèn zhū	stupid pig	干	SW	gàn	(dialect) fuck
崩	OW	bēng	collapse	干得漂亮	EEW	gàn dé piào liang	well done
屄	SW	bī	cunt	干爹	NEW	gān diē	suger daddy
逼	SW	bī	homophone of 屄, cunt	干你娘	SW	gàn nǐ niáng	(dialect) fuck your mother
逼逼	EEW	bī bī	motormouth	干女儿	SW	gàn nǚ ér	(dialect) fuck your daughter
逼池	SW	bī chí	transliteration of 'bitch'	干炮	SW	gàn pào	(dialect) fuck
逼叨	EEW	bī dāo	motormouth	干爽	SW	gān shuǎng	(dialect/slang) fuck comfortably
逼货	SW	bī huò	poor guy	干死	SW	gàn sǐ	(dialect) fuck to death
逼鸡	SW	bī jī	cumdumpster	干死你	SW	gàn sǐ nǐ	(dialect) fuck you to death
逼烂	SW	bī làn	fucking cunt	干完	SW	gàn wán	(dialect) fucked
逼浪	SW	bī làng	dissolute woman	肛交	SW	gāng jiāo	assfuck
逼脸	AW	bī liǎn	assface	肛门	SW	gāng mén	anal sex
逼人	SW	bī rén	fucking guy	高潮	SW	gāo cháo	orgasm
逼数	AW	bī shù	shitty ideas/self-awareness	睾丸	SW	gāo wán	testicle/male genitalia
逼死	CW	bī sǐ	constantly aggravate	公厕	NEW	gōng cè	toilet

逼太贱	SW	bī tài jiàn	fucking cunt	公共厕所	NEW	gōng gòng cè suǒ	toilet
逼太松	SW	bī tài sōng	sensuality woman	公共汽车	NEW	gōng gòng qì chē	public bus
逼下去	OW	bī xià qù	force	公交	NEW	gōng jiāo	public bus
逼小璐	AW	bī xiǎo lù	fucking (name)	公交车	NEW	gōng jiāo chē	public bus
逼痒	SW	bī yǎng	sensuality woman	苟合	SW	gǒu hé	illicit sexual relations
逼样	AW	bī yàng	assface	苟且偷生	OW(CI)	gǒu qiě tōu shēng	drag out an ignoble existence
逼嘴	AW	bī zuǐ	flibbertigibbet	苟延残喘	OW(CI)	gǒu yán cán chuǎn	lingering death
比比	EEW	bǐ bǐ	same as '逼逼', motormouth	狗	OW	gǒu	dog
比不上	EEW	bǐ bù shàng	can't compare with	狗逼烦	AW	gǒu bī fán	very annoying
鄙视	OW	bǐ shì	despise	狗逼骚	AW	gǒu bī sāo	very coquettish
币	SW	bì	homophone of 屄, cunt	狗逼秀	OW	gǒu bī xiù	fucking big show-off
币池	SW	bì chí	transliteration of 'bitch'	狗逼样	AW	gǒu bī yàng	pariah dog
必死	CW	bì sǐ	be certain to die	狗比	AW	gǒu bǐ	homophone of '狗屄', fucking cunt
必死无疑	OW(CI)	bì sǐ wú yí	certain death	狗币	AW	gǒu bì	homophone of '狗屄', fucking cunt
闭嘴	OW	bì zuǐ	shut up!	狗操	SW	gǒu cāo	fucked by a dog
哔	EEW	bì	homophone of 屄, cunt	狗带	AW	gǒu dài	transliteration of 'go to die'
哔哔	EEW	bì bì	same as '逼逼', motormouth	狗蛋	AW	gǒu dàn	bad man
毙命	CW	bì mìng	meet violent death	狗东西	AW	gǒu dōng xī	(extended meaning) a contemptible and loathsome person
碧池	SW	bì chí	transliteration of 'bitch'	狗粉	AW	gǒu fěn	bad fans
碧莲	AW	bì lián	homophone of '逼脸', assface	狗货	AW	gǒu huò	(extended meaning) a contemptible and loathsome person
碧脸	AW	bì liǎn	homophone of '逼脸', assface	狗急跳墙	OW(CI)	gǒu jí tiào qiáng	a cornered beast will do something desperate
避孕套	OW	bì yùn tào	condom	狗家	AW	gǒu jiā	dog's family
鞭尸	CW	biān shī	whip corpse	狗叫	OW	gǒu jiào	dog barking
变本加厉	OW(CI)	biàn běn jiā lì	intensified	狗命	AW	gǒu mìng	cheap life
变态	AW	biàn tài	metamorphose	狗模狗样	AW	gǒu mó gǒu yàng	look and behave like a dog
变性	SW	biàn xìng	transsexual	狗男女	SW	gǒu nán nǚ	a fucking couple
表	SW	biǎo	homophone of '婊', whore	狗娘样	SW	gǒu niáng yàng	(extended meaning) a contemptible and loathsome person
表货	SW	biǎo huò	whore	狗奴	AW	gǒu nú	douche-fag
表里不一	OW(CI)	biǎo lǐ bù yī	duplicity	狗屁	OW	gǒu pì	nonsense
表子	SW	biǎo zi	homophone of '婊子', whore	狗日	EEW	gǒu rì	peckerhead
婊	SW	biǎo	whore	狗日的	EEW	gǒu rì de	peckerhead
婊啊	SW	biǎo a	whore	狗屎	OW	gǒu shǐ	bullshit

婊贝	SW	biǎo bèi	whore	狗头	OW	gǒu tóu	dog head
婊逼	SW	biǎo bī	fucking cunt	狗腿	OW	gǒu tuǐ	brown-noser/subservient
婊婊	SW	biǎo biǎo	whore	狗腿子	AW	gǒu tuǐ zi	brown-noser/subservient
婊不婊	SW	biǎo bù biǎo	are you a whore?	狗血淋头	OW(CI)	gǒu xiě lín tóu	revile
婊的	SW	biǎo de	lewd	狗眼	AW	gǒu yǎn	snob
婊鸡	SW	biǎo jī	bitchass	狗养	AW	gǒu yǎng	son of a bitch
婊姐	SW	biǎo jiě	fucking girl	狗样	AW	gǒu yàng	(extended meaning) a contemptible and loathsome person
婊里	SW	biǎo lǐ	looks like a whore	狗咬狗	AW	gǒu yǎo gǒu	dogfight
婊脸	SW	biǎo liǎn	same as '不要脸', shameless	狗崽子	AW	gǒu zǎi zi	bastard
婊妈	SW	biǎo mā	fucking woman	狗贼	AW	gǒu zéi	scoundrel
婊们	SW	biǎo men	whores	狗子	OW	gǒu zi	poor guy
婊配狗	SW	biǎo pèi gǒu	bitchy couple	狗嘴里	AW	gǒu zuǐ lǐ	(slang) dog's mouth
婊气	SW	biǎo qì	lewd	够蠢	OW	gòu chǔn	very foolish
婊死	SW	biǎo sǐ	very lewd	孤儿	CW	gū ér	orphan
婊杂	SW	biǎo zá	homophone of '婊子', whore	孤魂野鬼	OW(CI)	gū hún yě guǐ	homeless ghost
婊砸	SW	biǎo zá	homophone of '婊子', whore	孤男寡女	OW(CI)	gū nán guǎ nǚ	a male and a female
婊咋	SW	biǎo za	homophone of '婊子', whore	骨灰	CW	gǔ huī	bone ash
婊渣	SW	biǎo zhā	homophone of '婊子', whore	骨灰盒	CW	gǔ huī hé	cinerary casket
婊子	SW	biǎo zi	whore	瓜批婆娘	SW	guā pī pó niáng	(dialect) motherfucking woman
裱	SW	biǎo	homophone of '婊', whore	寡妇	SW	guǎ fù	widow
裱配	SW	biǎo pèi	same as '婊贝', whore	寡廉鲜耻	OW(CI)	guǎ lián xiǎn chǐ	shameless
别更博	OW	bié gèng bó	do not post weibo	关系户	NEW	guān xì hù	closely-related units
别拉黑	OW	bié lā hēi	do not block the accounts	棺材	CW	guān cai	coffin
别来祸祸	OW	bié lái huò huò	don't do harm to sb/sth	棺木	CW	guān mù	coffin
别太怂	OW	bié tài sǒng	don't be timid	龟儿子	AW	guī ér zi	(dialect) bastard
别瞎发	OW	bié xiā fā	don't post anything blindly	龟孙	AW	guī sūn	(dialect) bastard
别瞎用	OW	bié xiā yòng	don't use anything blindly	诡辩	OW	guǐ biàn	sophistry
别秀	OW	bié xiù	don't show off	诡计	OW	guǐ jì	deception
别作	NEW	bié zuō	don't be a trouble-maker	鬼	NEW	guǐ	ghost
瘪三	AW	biē sān	tramp living by begging	鬼扯	OW	guǐ chě	bullshit
殡仪馆	CW	bìn yí guǎn	funeral parlor	鬼话	NEW	guǐ huà	bullshit
病魔	CW	bìng mó	serious illness	刽子手	AW	guì zi shǒu	executioner
病魔缠身	OW(CI)	bìng mó chán shēn	suffer from long-term illness	滚	AW	gǔn	fuck off
病入膏肓	OW(CI)	bìng rù gāo huāng	incurably sick	滚出	AW	gǔn chū	fuck off
病死	CW	bìng sǐ	fatality	滚出来	AW	gǔn chū lái	fuck off

勃起	SW	bó qǐ	erection/boner	滚出去	AW	gǔn chū qù	fuck off
补脑	OW	bǔ nǎo	ass-hat	滚出娱乐圈	AW	gǔn chū yú lè quān	Get out of the world of showbiz
不道德	EEW	bù dào dé	erection	滚粗	AW	gǔn cū	homophone of '滚出', fuck off
不得好死	OW(CI)	bù dé hǎo sǐ	die in one's boots	滚蛋	AW	gǔn dàn	fuck off
不得善终	OW(CI)	bù dé shàn zhōng	not end well	滚滚	AW	gǔn gǔn	fuck off
不得体	EEW	bù dé tǐ	indecent	滚回	AW	gǔn huí	go back
不懂事	EEW	bù dǒng shì	immature	滚回去	AW	gǔn huí qù	go back home
不懂装懂	OW	bù dǒng zhuāng dǒng	pretend to know	滚开	AW	gǔn kāi	fuck off
不放过	EEW	bù fàng guò	don't forgive	滚去	AW	gǔn qù	go fucking do sth
不敢恭维	OW(CI)	bù gǎn gōng wéi	not good	滚死远	AW	gǔn sǐ yuǎn	fuck! piss off
不共戴天	OW(CI)	bù gòng dài tiān	absolutely irreconcilable	滚远	AW	gǔn yuǎn	piss off
不够格	EEW	bù gòu gé	not qualified	滚远点	AW	gǔn yuǎn diǎn	piss off
不欢迎	EEW	bù huān yíng	not welcome	滾出	AW	gǔn chū	fuck off
不会删	OW	bù huì shān	will not delete	过街老鼠	OW(CI)	guò jiē lǎo shǔ	be despised by people
不积口德	OW	bù jī kǒu dé	not discreet	过世	CW	guò shì	pass away
不见棺材不落泪	OW(CI)	bù jiàn guān cai bù luò	refuse to be convinced until one is faced with grim reality	哈巴狗	OW	hǎ bā gǒu	pug
不堪回首	OW(CI)	bù kān huí shǒu	unbearable memories	还他妈	EEW	hái tā mā	fucking!
不堪入耳	OW(CI)	bù kān rù ěr	disgusting speech	害群之马	OW(CI)	hài qún zhī mǎ	black sheep
不堪入目	OW(CI)	bù kān rù mù	disgusting scene	害人精	AW	hài rén jīng	pest
不看	OW	bù kàn	do not look/watch	汉奸	AW	hàn jiān	traitor
不可救药	OW(CI)	bù kě jiù yào	incorrigible	毫无诚意	OW(CI)	háo wú chéng yì	without sincerity
不可理喻	OW(CI)	bù kě lǐ yù	unreasonable	毫无悔意	OW(CI)	háo wú huǐ yì	without regret
不可思议	OW(CI)	bù kě sī yì	incredible	好吃不如饺子	OW	hào chī bù rú jiǎo zi	(extended meaning) it is interesting to fornicate with one's sister-in-law
不劳而获	OW(CI)	bù láo ér huò	reap without sowing	好丑	AW	hǎo chǒu	very ugly
不乐意	EEW	bù lè yì	unwilling	好贱	SW	hǎo jiàn	bitchy
不买账	EEW	bú mǎi zhàng	not buy	好骚	SW	hǎo sāo	very coquettish
不配	EEW	bù pèi	unworthy	好玩不过嫂子	OW	hǎowán bùguò sǎozi	(extended meaning) it is interesting to fornicate with one's sister-in-law
不仁不义	OW(CI)	bù rén bù yì	heartless and unjust	好自为之	OW(CI)	hǎozìwéizhī	behave oneself
不入流	EEW	bù rù liú	not mainstream	何兴丽	OW	hé xìng lì	name
不删	OW	bù shān	do not delete	何渣渣	AW	hé zhā zhā	(epithet) crap He
不是人	AW	bù shì rén	brute	盒饭	OW	hé fàn	(extended meaning) nonsense
不适合	EEW	bù shì hé	not suitable	黑	OW	hēi	(extended meaning) dislike
不爽	EEW	bù shuǎng	out of sorts	黑粉	NEW	hēi fěn	hater
不思悔改	OW(CI)	bù sī huǐ gǎi	impenitent	黑狗	OW	hēi gǒu	hater

不思进取	OW(CI)	bù sī jìn qǔ	unambitious	黑木耳	NEW	hēi mù ěr	(extended meaning) cunt
不喜欢	EEW	bù xǐ huān	dislike	黑猪	OW	hēi zhū	(extended meaning) slutbag
不要b脸	AW	bù yào bī liǎn	lose your assface	黑子	NEW	hēi zǐ	hater
不要B脸	AW	bù yào bī liǎn	lose your assface	很丑	AW	hěn chǒu	very ugly
不要放过	EEW	bù yào fàng guò	don't forgive	很蠢	AW	hěn chǔn	pinhead
不要紧	OW	bù yào jǐn	not serious	很屌	AW	hěn diǎo	sb got balls
不要脸	EEW	bù yào liǎn	shameless	很烦	EEW	hěn fán	very annoying
不要谅解	EEW	bù yào liàng jiě	don't forgive	很贱	SW	hěn jiàn	bitchy
不要原谅	EEW	bù yào yuán liàng	don't forgive	很烂	SW	hěn làn	very dissipated
不择手段	OW(CI)	bù zé shǒu duàn	unscrupulous	很骚	SW	hěn sāo	very coquettish
不正经	OW	bù zhèng jīng	dishonest	很傻	AW	hěn shǎ	very stupid
不知好歹	OW(CI)	bù zhī hǎo dǎi	being ignorant of goodwill	很脏	OW	hěn zàng	very dirty
不知悔改	OW(CI)	bù zhī huǐ gǎi	impenitent	很渣	AW	hěn zhā	crap
不知廉耻	OW(CI)	bù zhī lián chǐ	shameless	狠	EEW	hěn	ruthless
不知死活	OW(CI)	bù zhī sǐ huó	reckless	狠毒	EEW	hěn dú	vicious
不知天高地厚	OW(CI)	bù zhī tiān gāo dì hòu	arrogant and ignorant	横尸	CW	héng shī	corpse
不知羞耻	OW(CI)	bù zhī xiū chǐ	shameless	红杏出墙	OW(CI)	hóng xìng chū qiáng	cheating on one's husband
不治之症	CW	bù zhì zhī zhèng	incurable disease	后台	OW	hòu tái	(extended meaning) backstage supporter
不自重	EEW	bù zì zhòng	mot self-respect	厚脸皮	EEW	hòu liǎn pí	cheeky
擦	OW	cā	similar with '肏', fuck	厚颜无耻	OW(CI)	hòu yán wú chǐ	as bold as brass
擦屁股	OW	cā pì gu	fuckbutt	厚着脸皮	EEW	hòu zhe liǎn pí	cheeky
才疏学浅	OW(CI)	cái shū xué qiǎn	limited knowledge and talent	狐狸	SW	hú lí	fox
踩	OW	cǎi	(extended meaning) underestimate	狐狸精	SW	hú lí jīng	vixen
残暴	AW	cán bào	brutal	护主狗	AW	hù zhǔ gǒu	watchdog
残废	OW	cán fèi	disabled	花瓶	OW	huā píng	vase
残花败柳	OW(CI)	cán huā bài liǔ	fallen woman	花圈	CW	huā quān	wreath
残疾	OW	cán jí	disabled	哗众取宠	OW(CI)	huá zhòng qǔ chǒng	grandstanding
残忍	OW	cán rěn	brutal	画眼线	OW	huà yǎn xiàn	draw eyeliner
残渣	OW	cán zhā	dregs	坏蛋	AW	huài dàn	badass
惨死	CW	cǎn sǐ	die tragically	坏女人	SW	huài nǚ rén	bad woman
惨无人道	OW(CI)	cǎn wú rén dào	brutality	坏人	AW	huàirén	badass
操	AW	cāo	homophone of 肏, fuck	坏水	NEW	huài shuǐ	full of craft and guile
操逼	SW	cāo bī	fuck the cunt	荒淫无度	OW(CI)	huāng yín wú dù	debauched
操操	SW	cāo cāo	fuck! fuck!	黄脸婆	SW	huáng liǎn pó	worn housewife
操蛋	SW	cāo dàn	fuckhole	黄泉路	CW	huáng quán lù	road to the netherworld
操到	SW	cāo dào	fucked	晦气	EEW	huì qì	unlucky

操得	SW	cāo dé	fucked	混蛋	AW	hún dàn	asshole
操翻	SW	cāo fān	(slang) fuck back and forth	混账	AW	hùnzhàng	asshole
操够	SW	cāo gòu	(slang) sick of fucking	混子	AW	hùn zi	bastard
操过	SW	cāo guò	fucked	活该	EEW	huó gāi	deserve it
操烂	SW	cāo làn	(slang) tear by fuking	活死人	AW	huó sǐ rén	living dead
操马蓉	SW	cāo mǎ róng	fuck (name)	活罪难逃	OW(CI)	huó zuì nán táo	inescapable guilt
操你	AW	cāo nǐ	fuck you	火化	CW	huǒ huà	cremation
操你大爷	AW	cāo nǐ dà yé	fuck you, shit!	火化场	CW	huǒ huà chǎng	crematorium
操你妈	AW	cāo nǐ mā	fuck your mother	火葬场	CW	huǒ zàng chǎng	crematorium
操你妈逼	AW	cāo nǐ mā bī	fuck your mother's cunt	祸国殃民	OW(CI)	huò guó yāng mín	bring disaster to the country and the people
操你麻痹	AW	cāo nǐ má bì	same as ‘操你妈逼', fuck your mother's cunt	祸害	AW	huò hài	scourge
操您妈	AW	cāo nín mā	same as ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	祸祸	OW	huò huò	cause great suffering to.
操嫂	SW	cāo sǎo	fuck your sister in law	祸水	SW	huò shuǐ	(extended meaning) women is trouble
操爽	SW	cāo shuǎng	(slang) fuck comfortably	鸡	SW	jī	homophone of '妓', whore/prostitute
操死	SW	cāo sǐ	fuck and die	鸡巴	SW	jī bā	(dialect) penis
操他妈	AW	cāo tā mā	fucking	鸡儿	SW	jī er	(dialect) penis
操她妈	AW	cāo tā mā	fucking	鸡鸡	SW	jī jī	(dialect) penis
操她麻痹	AW	cāo tā mábì	fucking shit!	鸡婆	SW	jī pó	nosy parker
操完	SW	cāo wán	fucked	鸡子	SW	jīzi	homophone of '妓子', whore/prostitute
操晕	SW	cāo yūn	(slang) fuck to faint	姬	SW	jī	lesbian
曹	AW	cáo	homophone of 肏, fuck	基佬	SW	jī lǎo	gay
曹尼玛	AW	cáo ní mǎ	same as ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	基男	SW	jī nán	gay
槽	AW	cáo	homophone of 肏, fuck	基圈	SW	jī quān	gay community
艹	AW	—	homophone of 肏, fuck	极品	OW	jí pǐn	(extended meaning) weirdo
艹你妈	AW	(cao) nǐ mā	homophone of ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	几把	SW	jǐ bǎ	homophone of '鸡巴', penis
艹你母亲	AW	(cao) nǐ mǔqīn	same as ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	妓	SW	jì	prostitute
草	AW	cǎo	homophone of 肏, fuck	妓女	SW	jì nǚ	whore/prostitute
草包	AW	cǎo bāo	nonsense	妓院	SW	jì yuàn	brothel
草比	SW	cǎo bǐ	homophone of 操逼, fuck cunt	寄生虫	AW	jì shēng chóng	parasite
草草	AW	cǎo cǎo	homophone of 操操, fuck! fuck!	家破人亡	OW(CI)	jiā pò rén wáng	family ruined
草鸡	SW	cǎo jī	homophone of '操妓, fuck the prostitute	家事	OW	jiā shì	family issues
草烂	SW	cǎo làn	homophone of ’操烂'	贾乃亮	OW	jiǎ nǎi liàng	name
草尼	AW	cǎo ní	homophone of ‘操你', fuck you	贾乃绿	AW	jiǎ nǎi lǜ	(epithet) name
草尼马	AW	cǎo ní mǎ	homophone of ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	贾笑	AW	jiǎ xiào	(epithet) fake laugh
草泥	AW	cǎo ní	homophone of ‘操你', fuck you	贾装没事	AW	jiǎ zhuāng méi shì	(epithet) (name) pretend to be okay
草泥马	AW	cǎo ní mǎ	homophone of ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	贾装原谅	AW	jiǎ zhuāng yuán liàng	(epithet) (name) pretend to forgive

草泥馬	AW	cǎo ní mǎ	homophone of ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	假慈悲	EEW	jiǎ cí bēi	fake compassion
草你	AW	cǎo nǐ	homophone of ‘操你', fuck you	假哭	EEW	jiǎ kū	fake cry
草你妈	AW	cǎo nǐ mā	homophone of ‘操你妈', fuck your mother	假奶亮	AW	jiǎ nǎi liàng	(epithet) name
草他妈	AW	cǎo tā mā	homophone of ‘操他妈', fucking	假惺惺	EEW	jiǎ xīng xīng	hypocritically
草原	AW	cǎo yuán	grassland	奸	SW	jiān	illicit sexual relations
肏	AW	cào	fuck	奸夫	SW	jiān fū	adulterer

奸夫淫妇	OW(CI)	jiān fū yín fù	an immoral woman and her adulterer	傻叼	AW	shǎ diāo	homophone of '傻屌', fuckstick
奸妇	SW	jiān fù	adulteress	傻屌	AW	shǎ diǎo	fuckstick
奸情	OW	jiān qíng	fooling around	傻狗	AW	shǎ gǒu	saphead
奸人	OW	jiān rén	treacherous people	傻瓜	AW	shǎ guā	blockhead
奸杀	CW	jiān shā	rape and kill	傻货	AW	shǎ huò	idoit
奸淫	SW	jiān yín	illicit sexual relations	傻冒	AW	shǎ mào	stupid-head
贱	SW	jiàn	bitch/cheap	傻帽	AW	shǎ mào	stupid-head
贱b	SW	jiàn b	homophone of '贱屄', fugly cunt	傻批	AW	shǎ pī	dumb fucker
贱屄	SW	jiàn bī	fugly cunt	傻缺	AW	shǎ quē	shitbrain
贱逼	SW	jiàn bī	homophone of '贱屄', fugly cunt	傻笑	AW	shǎ xiào	giggle
贱婢	SW	jiàn bì	cheap maid/pariah	傻样	AW	shǎ yàng	stupe
贱婊	SW	jiàn biǎo	fucking whore	傻站	AW	shǎ zhàn	silly standing
贱婊子	SW	jiàn biǎo zi	fucking whore	傻种	AW	shǎ zhǒng	idoit
贱儿	SW	jiàn ér	fucking son	傻子	AW	shǎzi	idoit
贱妇	SW	jiàn fù	hussy	傻子玩意	AW	shǎ zǐ wán yì	idoit
贱骨头	SW	jiàn gú tóu	miserable wretch	煞逼	AW	shā bī	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt
贱货	SW	jiàn huò	schlock	煞逼操	AW	shā bī cāo	dumb fucker
贱浪骚	SW	jiàn làng sāo	cheap, dissolute and coquettish	煞笔	AW	shà bǐ	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt
贱妈	SW	jiàn mā	hussy	删	OW	shān	delete
贱麻	SW	jiàn má	homophone of '贱妈', hussy	删博	OW	shān bó	delete the post
贱命	SW	jiàn mìng	cheap life/pariah	删了	OW	shān le	deleted
贱娘	SW	jiàn niáng	hussy	删微博	OW	shān wēi bó	delete the weibo
贱娘们	SW	jiàn niáng men	hussy	伤风败俗	OW(CI)	shāng fēng bài sú	breach of morality
贱女	SW	jiàn nǚ	limmer	伤天害理	OW(CI)	shāng tiān hài lǐ	do things that are against reason and nature
贱女人	SW	jiàn nǚ rén	limmer	上床	OW	shàng chuáng	get laid
贱批	SW	jiàn pī	fucking cunt	上吊	CW	shàng diào	hanging
贱人	SW	jiàn rén	slut	上坟	CW	shàng fén	go to the grave
贱蓉	SW	jiàn róng	(epithet) Bitch (name)	上过学么	OW	shàng guò xué me	Have you been to school?
贱骚	SW	jiàn sāo	cheap and coquettish	烧钱	CW	shāo qián	burn paper money - a type of sacrifice
贱事	SW	jiàn shì	fucking things	烧死	CW	shāo sǐ	burned to death
贱样	SW	jiàn yàng	(extended meaning) a contemptible and loathsome person	烧香	CW	shāo xiāng	burn incense - a type of sacrifice
贱渣	SW	jiàn zhā	fucking crap	烧纸	CW	shāo zhǐ	burn paper money - a type of sacrifice
贱种	SW	jiàn zhǒng	son of a bitch	少妇	OW	shào fù	young wife

剑	SW	jiàn	homophone of '贱', bitch/cheap	蛇	AW	shé	snake
剑人	SW	jiàn rén	homophone of '贱人', bitch	蛇蝎	AW	shé xiē	viper
溅	SW	jiàn	homophone of '贱', bitch/cheap	蛇蝎心肠	OW(CI)	shé xiē xīn cháng	malicious
键盘婊	NEW	jiàn pán biǎo	keyboard bitch	社会败类	AW	shè huì bài lèi	pest of society
键盘侠	OW	jiàn pán xiá	keyboard man	射	SW	shè	to ejaculate
贱	SW	jiàn	bitch	射精	SW	shè jīng	to ejaculate
江歌	OW	jiāng gē	name	身败名裂	OW(CI)	shēn bài míng liè	lose all standing and reputation
江歌妈	OW	jiāng gē mā	name	神烦	EEW	shén fán	very annoying
交际花	SW	jiāo jì huā	tart	神经病	AW	shén jīng bìng	Are you crazy?
交配	SW	jiāo pèi	copulate	生不如死	OW(CI)	shēng bù rú sǐ	living death
饺子	OW	jiǎo zi	dumpling	生殖器	OW	shēng zhí qì	genitals
借刀杀人	OW(CI)	jiè dāo shā rén	do harm to sb. through the hands of another	牲畜	AW	shēng chù	livestock
金莲	AW	jīn lián	(epithet) name	牲口	AW	shēng kǒu	livestock
精神病	OW	jīng shén bìng	mental illness	圣诞节	OW	shèng dàn jié	Christmas
精神病人	OW	jīng shén bìng rén	psychiatric patient	圣诞夜	OW	shèng dàn yè	Christmas Eve
精神病院	OW	jīng shén bìng yuàn	mental hospital	圣母	NEW	shèng mǔ	Virgin Mary bitch
精液	SW	jīng yè	dickjuice/semen	尸骨	CW	shī gǔ	remains
精子	SW	jīng zǐ	dickmilk/sperm	尸体	CW	shī tǐ	corpse
鸠占鹊巢	OW(CI)	jiū zhàn què cháo	arrogate	尸位素餐	OW(CI)	shī wèi sù cān	hold an office and enjoy all the privileges without doing any work
咎由自取	OW(CI)	jiù yóu zì qǔ	bring trouble to oneself	失望	EEW	shī wàng	disappointed
居心不良	OW(CI)	jū xīn bù liáng	ill-disposed	十八层地	CW	shí bā céng dì	the bottom of the hell
居心叵测	OW(CI)	jū xīn pǒ cè	ulterior motive	十恶不赦	OW(CI)	shí è bù shè	heinous
绝后	CW	jué hòu	without offspring	食屎	NEW	shí shǐ	eat that shit
绝配	OW	jué pèi	perfect match	屎	NEW	shǐ	shit
绝症	CW	jué zhèng	incurable disease	屎盆子	NEW	shǐ pén zi	(extended meaning) to make a scapegoat of sb
绝种	CW	jué zhǒng	without offspring	逝者	OW	shì zhě	deceased
絕配	OW	jué pèi	perfect match	嗜血	AW	shì xiě	bloodthirsty
开房	SW	kāi fáng	(extended meaning) have casual sex	收尸	CW	shōu shī	bury the dead
开炮	SW	kāi pào	(extended meaning) have casual sex	寿衣	CW	shòu yī	shroud
开玩笑	OW	kāiwánxiào	crack a joke	兽	OW	shòu	beast
看不惯	EEW	kàn bù guàn	can't stand it	兽性	OW	shòu xìng	beastliness
看不起	EEW	kàn bù qǐ	look down	耍无赖	AW	shuǎ wú lài	act shamelessly
看不上	EEW	kàn bù shàng	underestimate	摔	CW	shuāi	throw
看不下去	EEW	kàn bù xià qù	can't watch anymore	摔死	CW	shuāi sǐ	fall to death

磕药	AW	kē yào	using drugs	双商感人	NEW	shuāng shāng gǎn rén	impressive low IQ and EQ
可耻	EEW	kě chǐ	shameful	谁他妈	EEW	shéi tā mā	fucking
可恶	EEW	kě wù	hateful/damn	水军	NEW	shuǐ jūn	water army/Internet marketer
可恨	EEW	kě hèn	detestable	水性杨花	OW(CI)	shuǐ xìng yáng huā	of easy virtue
空降兵	NEW	kōng jiàng bīng	(extended meaning) closely-related units	司马	CW	sī mǎ	homophone of '死妈', your mother died
口活	SW	kǒu huó	blow job	私生子	AW	sī shēng zǐ	bastard
口交	SW	kǒu jiāo	blow job	撕	OW	sī	tear
口诛笔伐	OW(CI)	kǒu zhū bǐ fá	condemn both in speech and writing	撕逼	NEW	sī bī	(extended meaning) flaming
裤衩	OW	kù chǎ	trousers	撕逼么	NEW	sī bī me	(extended meaning) flaming
裤裆	OW	kù dāng	crotch	撕烂	AW	sī làn	torn
裤头	OW	kù tóu	trousers	撕票	CW	sī piào	kill the hostage
胯下	SW	kuà xià	under the crotch	死	CW	sǐ	die
快滚	AW	kuài gǔn	fuck off	死八婆	SW	sǐ bā pó	a fucking nosy parker
快活	OW	kuài huó	(extended meaning) sexual satisfaction	死八婆欠草	SW	sǐ bā pó qiàn cǎo	fuck you, the nosy parker
狂妄自大	OW(CI)	kuáng wàng zì dà	hubris	死逼样	SW	sǐ bī yàng	a fucking assface
亏心事	OW	kuī xīn shì	sth. which gives one a guilty conscience	死变态	AW	sǐ biàn tài	a fucking metamorphose
垃圾	NEW	lā jī	rubbish	死不承认	OW	sǐ bù chéng rèn	refuse to admit sth even unto death
腊鸡	NEW	là jī	homophone of '垃圾', rubbish	死不悔改	OW(CI)	Sǐ bù huǐ gǎi	incorrigible
蜡烛	CW	là zhú	candle	死不瞑目	OW(CI)	sǐ bù míng mù	die with an everlasting regret
辣鸡	NEW	là jī	homophone of '垃圾', rubbish	死不认错	OW	sǐ bù rèn cuò	refuse to admit a fault even unto death
烂	SW	làn	dissipated	死不认账	OW	sǐ bù rèn zhàng	refuse to admit sth even unto death
烂比	SW	làn bǐ	(extended meaning) loose woman	死不要脸	OW	sǐ bù yào liǎn	extremely shameless
烂货	SW	làn huò	(extended meaning) loose woman	死不足惜	OW(CI)	sǐ bù zú xī	dserve to die
烂人	AW	làn rén	crap	死蠢	AW	sǐ chǔn	very stupid
烂透	OW	làn tòu	really poor	死狗	AW	sǐ gǒu	(extended meaning) a contemptible and loathsome person
烂渣	AW	làn zhā	crap	死货	AW	sǐ huò	(extended meaning) a contemptible and loathsome person
烂嘴	OW	làn zuǐ	mouth rot	死鸡婆	SW	sǐ jī pó	a fucking nosy parker
滥交	SW	làn jiāo	promiscuous	死绝	CW	sǐ jué	be completely annihilated
滥情	SW	làn qíng	promiscuous	死了	CW	sǐ le	died
滥竽充数	OW(CI)	làn yú chōng shù	hold a post without qualifications	死路一条	CW	sǐ lù yī tiáo	a road that leads to death
狼狈为奸	OW(CI)	láng bèi wéi jiān	collusion	死妈	CW	sǐ mā	your mother died
狼心狗肺	OW(CI)	láng xīn gǒu fèi	brutal and cold-blooded	死娘	CW	sǐ niáng	your mother died

浪	SW	làng	dissolute	死皮赖脸	OW(CI)	sǐ pí lài liǎn	brazen-faced/obsequious
浪逼	SW	làng bī	slutbag	死翘翘	CW	sǐ qiào qiào	dead as a doornail
浪比	SW	làng bǐ	homophone of '浪逼', slutbag	死去	CW	sǐ qù	pass away
浪荡	SW	làng dàng	dissolute	死人	CW	sǐ rén	dead person
浪妇	SW	làng fù	skank	死亡	CW	sǐ wáng	death
浪货	SW	làng huò	tart	死无葬身之地	CW	sǐ wú zàng shēn zhī dì	die without a burial place
浪女	SW	làng nǚ	tart	死刑	CW	sǐ xíng	death penalty
劳资	EEW	láo zī	(dialect) (slang) your father	死性不改	OW	sǐ xing bù gǎi	never change
老鸨	SW	lǎo bǎo	procuress	死有余辜	OW(CI)	sǐ yǒu yú gū	dserve to die
老逼	SW	lǎo bī	(extended meaning) old slut	死于非命	OW(CI)	sǐ yú fēi mìng	die an unnatural death
老东西	AW	lǎo dōng xī	(extended meaning) white elephant	死渣	AW	sǐ zhā	fucking slutbag
老狗	SW	lǎo gǒu	(extended meaning) old slut	死猪不怕开水烫	OW	sǐ zhū bù pà kāi shuǐ tàng	a dead pig feels no scalding water
老赖	AW	lǎo lài	deadbeat	怂	AW	sǒng	homophone of '屌', sóng, weak and incompetent
老母鸡	SW	lǎo mǔ jī	(extended meaning) old slut	怂包	AW	sǒng bāo	coward/weakling
老母猪	SW	lǎo mǔ zhū	(extended meaning) old slut	怂逼	AW	sǒng bī	chicken-hearted
老骚	SW	lǎo sāo	old slut	怂样	AW	sǒng yàng	coward/weakling
老骚妇	SW	lǎo sāo fù	old slut	宋狗	AW	sòng gǒu	(epithet) fuckboy (name)
老鼠	AW	lǎo shǔ	mouse	宋鸡	AW	sòng jī	(epithet) fuckboy (name)
老鼠过街	OW(CI)	lǎo shǔ guò jiē	a rat crossing the street	宋吉吉	AW	sòng jí jí	(epithet) name
老鼠屎	AW	lǎo shǔ shǐ	rat feces	宋门庆	AW	sòng mén qìng	(epithet) name
雷劈	CW	léi pī	lightning	宋渣	AW	sòng zhā	(epithet) fuckboy (name)
冷漠	EEW	lěng mò	indifferent	宋渣男	AW	sòng zhā nán	(epithet) fuckboy (name)
冷血	EEW	lěng xuè	cold-blooded	碎尸万段	OW	suì shī wàn duàn	tear sb. to pieces
离开	OW	lí kāi	leave	碎嘴	OW	suì zuǐ	windbag
离世	CW	lí shì	pass away	碎嘴子	OW	suì zuǐzi	windbag
李表子	AW	lǐ biǎo zi	homophone of '李婊', Bitch Li	他妈	EEW	tā mā	shit!
李婊	AW	lǐ biǎo	(epithet) Bitch Li	他妈的	EEW	tā mā de	shit!
李浩菲	OW	lǐ hàofēi	name	踏马	EEW	tà mǎ	homophone of '他妈', shit!
李贱璐	AW	lǐ jiàn lù	(epithet) Bitch (name)	太笨	AW	tài bèn	very foolish
李金莲	AW	lǐ jīn lián	(epithet) name	太浪	SW	tài làng	very dissolute
李骚璐	AW	lǐ sāo lù	(epithet) coquettish (name)	太骚	SW	tài sāo	very coquettish
李小璐	OW	lǐ xiǎo lù	name	太他妈	EEW	tài tā mā	holy shit!
理头发	OW	lǐ tóu fǎ	hair cut	太特妈	EEW	tài tè mā	homophone of '太他妈', holy shit !

脸皮厚	EEW	liǎn pí hòu	cheeky	太脏	OW	tài zàng	very dirty
良心被狗吃	OW	liáng xīn bèi gǒu chī	conscience eaten by a dog	太渣	AW	tài zhā	very bad/poor
良心不安	OW	liáng xīn bù ān	condemned by one's conscience	太作	AW	tài zuō	make too much trouble
良心何在	OW	liáng xīn hé zài	conscienceless	掏粪	NEW	tāo fèn	similar as '吃屎', eat that shit
良心谴责	OW	liáng xīn qiǎn zé	condemned by one's conscience	讨人嫌	EEW	tǎo rén xián	annoying
聊鸡掰	EEW	liáo jī bāi	(dialect) nonsense	讨人厌	EEW	tǎo rén yàn	annoying
灵车	CW	líng chē	hearse	讨厌	EEW	tǎo yàn	hate
灵堂	CW	líng táng	ancestral shrine	特妈	EEW	tè mā	homophone of '他妈', shit!
令人恶心	OW	lìng rén ě xīn	revolting	特么	EEW	tè me	homophone of '他妈', shit!
令人发指	OW(CI)	lìng rén fà zhǐ	heinous	体无完肤	OW(CI)	tǐ wú wán fū	be beaten black and blue
令人寒心	OW	lìng rén hán xīn	bitterly disappointing	替天行道	OW(CI)	tì tiān xíng dào	enforce justice on behalf of Heaven
令人气愤	OW	lìng rén qì fèn	infuriating	天打雷劈	OW(CI)	tiān dǎ léi pī	be struck by lightning
令人讨厌	OW	lìng rén tǎo yàn	disgusting	天地不容	OW(CI)	tiān dì bù róng	absolutely intolerable
令人心寒	OW	lìng rén xīn hán	bitterly disappointing	天理何在	OW(CI)	tiān lǐ hé zài	no justice
令人作呕	OW	lìng rén zuò ǒu	revolting	天理难容	OW(CI)	tiān lǐ nán róng	absolutely intolerable
刘表	AW	liú biǎo	homophone of '刘婊', Bitch Liu	天诛地灭	OW(CI)	tiān zhū dì miè	stand condemned by God
刘婊	AW	liú biǎo	(epithet) Bitch Liu	恬不知耻	OW(CI)	tián bù zhī chǐ	shameless
刘狗	AW	liú gǒu	(epithet) female dog (name)	舔	SW	tiǎn	(extended meaning) fawn
刘狗鑫	AW	liú gǒu xīn	(epithet) female dog (name)	舔着	SW	tiǎn zhe	(extended meaning) fawn
刘鬼	AW	liú guǐ	(epithet) Ghost Liu	调侃	OW	tiáo kǎn	mockery
刘鸡	AW	liú jī	(epithet) Bitch Liu	跳梁小丑	OW(CI)	tiào liáng xiǎo chǒu	contemptible scoundrel
刘贱	AW	liú jiàn	(epithet) Bitch Liu	跳楼	CW	tiào lóu	jumping from an building
刘贱贱	AW	liú jiàn jiàn	(epithet) Bitch Liu	跳楼自杀	CW	tiào lóu zì shā	suicide by jumping from an building
刘烂人	AW	liú làn rén	(epithet) Crap Liu	跳下去	CW	tiào xià qù	jump
刘三金	AW	liú sān jīn	(epithet) name	挺蠢	AW	tǐng chǔn	very foolish
刘洗白	AW	liú xǐ bái	(epithet) name	通奸	SW	tōng jiān	adultery
刘鑫	OW	liú xīn	name	通奸罪	SW	tōng jiān zuì	adultery
刘月经	AW	liú yuè jīng	(epithet) name	同归于尽		tóng guī yú jìn	perish together
刘渣	AW	liú zhā	(epithet) Crap Liu	偷情	SW	tōu qíng	adultery
刘渣渣	AW	liú zhā zhā	(epithet) Crap Liu	秃驴	AW	tū lǘ	(extended meaning) Buddhist monk
流产	OW	liú chǎn	have an abortion	土包子	NEW	tǔ bāo zi	country bumpkins
流言蜚语	OW(CI)	liú yán fēi yǔ	gossip	土狗	AW	tǔ gǒu	country bumpkins
劉鑫	OW	liú xīn	name	吐槽	NEW	tǔ cáo	taunt/rant/to roast sb
龙丹妮	OW	lóng dān nī	name	退出	OW	tuì chū	quitting
龙根	SW	lóng gēn	donkey dick	退出娱乐圈	AW	tuì chū yú lè quān	quitting the world of showbiz

璐出马脚	AW	lù chū mǎ jiǎo	(epithet) (name) gave the show away	吞翔	NEW	tūn xiáng	eat that shit
露出马脚	AW	lù chū mǎ jiǎo	give the show away	拖后腿	NEW	tuō hòu tuǐ	hinder sb
乱搞	SW	luàn gǎo	fucks	拖油瓶	NEW	tuō yóu píng	stepchildren
乱交	SW	luàn jiāo	fooling around	脱饭	NEW	tuō fàn	don't follow
乱伦	SW	luàn lún	fornication	脱粉	NEW	tuō fěn	don't follow
乱说话	OW	luàn shuō huà	mouthy person	脱光	OW	tuō guāng	stripping
轮奸	SW	lún jiān	gangbang	脱裤子	OW	tuō kù zi	take off pants
裸体	SW	luǒ tǐ	nude	玩火自焚	OW(CI)	wán huǒ zì fén	stir up a fire and burn oneself
裸照	SW	luǒ zhào	topless	玩嘻哈	OW	wán xī hā	sing hip-pop
驴	AW	lǘ	donkey/jackass	万宝路	AW	wàn bǎo lù	(epithet) name
绿	NEW	lǜ	(extended meaning) having an affair	万抱璐	AW	wàn bào lù	(epithet) name
绿茶	NEW	lǜ chá	(extended meaning) angelic bitch	万磁王	AW	wàn cíwáng	(epithet) name
绿茶婊	NEW	lǜ chá biǎo	angelic bitch/pretentious coquette	万狗	AW	wàn gǒu	(epithet) fuckboy (name)
绿光	NEW	lǜ guāng	(extended meaning) having an affair	万人操	AW	wàn rén cāo	fucks
绿巨人	NEW	lǜ jù rén	(extended meaning) having an affair	万人草	AW	wàn rén cǎo	homophone of '万人操', fucks
绿亮	AW	lǜ liàng	(epithet) name	万人璐	AW	wàn rén lù	(epithet) name
绿帽	NEW	lǜ mào	(slang) green hat	万嫂	AW	wàn sǎo	(epithet) name
绿帽子	NEW	lǜ mào zi	(slang) green hat	王八	AW	wáng bā	son of a bitch
绿色	NEW	lǜ sè	(extended meaning) having an affair	王八蛋	AW	wáng bā dàn	son of a bitch
绿油油	NEW	lǜ yóu yóu	(extended meaning) having an affair	王八羔子	AW	wáng bā gāo zi	son of a bitch
妈蛋	EEW	mā dàn	homophone of '妈的', oh, shit!	网暴	OW	wǎng bào	cyberbullying
妈的	EEW	mā de	Oh, shit!	网络暴力	OW	wǎng luò bào lì	cyberbullying
妈卖批	EEW	mā mài pī	(dialect) your mother is a whore	网络攻击	OW	wǎng luò gōng jí	cyberbullying
麻痹	EEW	má bì	homophone of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	忘恩负义	OW(CI)	wàng ēn fù yì	ungrateful
麻袋	EEW	má dài	homophone of '妈的', oh, shit!	伪君子	OW	wèi jūn zǐ	hypocrite
麻蛋	EEW	má dàn	homophone of '妈的', oh, shit!	伪娘	SW	wěi niáng	sissy
麻溜点滚	AW	má liū diǎn gǔn	fuck off now	猥琐	AW	wěi suǒ	filthy/sleazy
麻溜滚	AW	má liū gǔn	fuck off now	文盲	OW	wén máng	illiteracy
麻批	EEW	má pī	homophone of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	窝囊废	AW	wō náng fèi	pussy/coward
马	OW	mǎ	horse	我擦	AW/EW/EEW	wǒ cā	homophone of '我操', fuck
马逼	SW	mǎ bī	homophone of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	我擦你妈	AW/EW/EEW	wǒ cā nǐ mā	homophone of '我操你妈', fuck your mother
马比	SW	mǎ bǐ	homophone of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	我操	AW/EW/EEW	wǒ cāo	fuck
马币	SW	mǎ bì	homophone of '妈逼', fucking, shit!	我操你妈	AW/EW/EEW	wǒ cāo nǐ mā	fuck your mother
马表	AW	mǎ biǎo	homophone of '马婊', bitch Ma	我操你妈逼	AW/EW/EEW	wǒ cāo nǐ mā bī	fuck your mother's cunt
马婊	AW	mǎ biǎo	(epithet) Bitch Ma	我靠你妈	AW/EW/EEW	wǒ kào nǐ mā	homophone of '我操你妈', fuck your mother

马叉虫	AW	mǎ chā chóng	(epithet) name	我去	EEW	wǒ qù	fucking
马粪	NEW	mǎ fèn	horse dung	我去年买了个表	EEW	wǒ qù nián mǎi le gè biǎo	homophone of '我去你妈了个逼', motherfucking
马狗	AW	mǎ gǒu	(epithet) fuckboy (name)	我日	AW/EW/EEW	wǒ rì	(dialect) fuck
马昊	OW	mǎ hào	name	我他妈	EEW	wǒ tā mā	fuck!
马鸡	AW	mǎ jī	(epithet) Bitch Ma	我踏马	EEW	wǒ tà mǎ	homophone of '我他妈', fuck!
马贱	AW	mǎ jiàn	(epithet) Bitch Ma	沃日	AW/EW/EEW	wò rì	homophone of '我日', fuck
马贱蓉	AW	mǎ jiàn róng	(epithet) Bitch (name)	卧槽	AW/EW/EEW	wò cáo	homophone of '我操', fuck
马金连	AW	mǎ jīn lián	(epithet) name	卧草	AW/EW/EEW	wò cǎo	homophone of '我操', fuck
马勒戈壁	EEW	mǎ lēi gē bì	homophone of '妈了个逼', fucking, shit!	卧轨	CW	wò guǐ	lying rail
马勒个逼	EEW	mǎ lēi gè bī	homophone of '妈了个逼', fucking, shit!	卧轨自杀	CW	wò guǐ zì shā	suicide by throughing oneself under a train
马蓉	OW	mǎ róng	name	握草	EEW	wò cǎo	homophone of '我操', fuck
马蓉狗	AW	mǎ róng gǒu	(epithet) female dog (name)	龌龊	EEW	wò chuò	filthy/sleazy/dirty
马骚	AW	mǎ sāo	(epithet) coquettish (name)	乌龟	OW	wū guī	(extended meaning) bastard
马骚蓉	AW	mǎ sāo róng	(epithet) coquettish (name)	乌龟王八	AW	wū guī wáng bā	(extended meaning) bastard
马薇薇	OW	mǎ wēi wēi	name	污	OW	wū	dirty
骂	OW	mà	scold	无耻	EEW	wú chǐ	shameless
骂娘	OW	mà niáng	curse	无耻下流	OW(CI)	wú chǐ xià liú	shameless and indecent
骂人	OW	mà rén	scold	无耻之徒	OW(CI)	wú chǐ zhī tú	shameless bastard
卖弄学问	OW(CI)	mài nòng xué wèn	pedantic	无耻之尤	OW(CI)	wú chǐ zhī yóu	shameless bastard
卖批	SW	mài pī	(dialect) work as a whore	无恶不作	OW(CI)	wú è bù zuò	commit all sorts of crimes
卖肉	SW	mài ròu	(dialect) work as a whore	无法无天	OW(CI)	wú fǎ wú tiān	lawlessness
卖骚	SW	mài sāo	(dialect) work as a whore	无风不起浪	OW(CI)	wú fēng bù qǐ làng	nothing comes of nothing
卖身	SW	mài shēn	prostitution	无可救药	OW(CI)	wú kě jiù yào	incorrigible
卖淫	SW	mài yín	prostitution	无良	EEW	wú liáng	unscrupulous
卖淫女	SW	mài yín nǚ	prostitute	无眉柳	AW	wú méi liǔ	(epithet) name
盲目跟风	OW(CI)	máng mù gēn fēng	blindly follow	无脑	AW	wú nǎo	simp
猫哭耗子	OW(CI)	māo kū hào zi	shed crocodile tears	无情无义	OW(CI)	wú qíng wú yì	heartless and faithless
貌合神离	OW(CI)	mào hé shén lí	seemingly in agreeement, but actually at odds	五马分尸	OW(CI)	wǔ mǎ fēn shī	tear a body limb from limb by five horses
没点b数	AW	méi diǎn b shù	have no self-awareness	侮辱	OW	wǔ rǔ	insult
没点逼数	AW	méi diǎn bī shù	have no self-awareness	物以类聚	OW(CI)	wù yǐ lèi jù	birds of a feather flock together
没点逼数么	AW	méi diǎn bī shù me	don't you have any self-awareness of yourself?	雾草	AW	wù cǎo	homophone of '我操', fuck
没爹没妈	CW	méi diē méi mā	orphan	吸毒	AW	xī dú	drug
没教养	EEW	méi jiào yǎng	poorly educated	吸血虫	AW	xī xiě chóng	leech
没脸见人	EEW	méi liǎn jiàn rén	shameless	吸血鬼	AW	xīxuè guǐ	vampire
没脸没皮	EEW	méi liǎn méi pí	shameless	洗	NEW	xǐ	(extended meaning) try to defend oneself

没良心	EEW	méi liáng xīn	ungrateful	洗白	NEW	xǐ bái	(extended meaning) try to defend oneself
没脑	AW	méi nǎo	birdbrain	洗不白	NEW	xǐ bù bái	can't defend
没脑子	AW	méi nǎo zi	birdbrain	戏精	NEW	xì jīng	drama queen
没皮没脸	EEW	méi pí méi liǎn	shameless	戏子	AW	xì zi	ppera jokery
没人操	SW	méi rén cāo	Nobody wants to fuck you	瞎bb	EEW	xiā bb	abbreviation of '瞎逼逼', flibbertigibbet
没上过学	OW	méi shàng guò xué	lacking an education	瞎逼逼	EEW	xiā bī bī	flibbertigibbet
没死	CW	méi sǐ	Did you die?	瞎了狗眼	EEW	xiā le gǒu yǎn	the blind
没头没脑	OW	méi tóu méi nǎo	silly	下地狱	CW	xià dì yù	go to the hell
没头脑	OW	méi tóu nǎo	silly	下跪	OW	xià guì	kneel
没文化	OW	méi wén huà	uneducated	下贱	SW	xià jiàn	dirtiness
没心没肺	EEW	méi xīn méi fèi	heartless	下九流	SW	xià jiǔ liú	humble professionals
没颜值	OW	méi yán zhí	very ugly	下流	SW	xià liú	obscene
梅毒	OW	méi dú	syphilis	下流无耻	SW	xià liú wú chǐ	indecent and shameless
昧良心	OW	mèi liáng xīn	act against one's conscience	下三烂	SW	xià sān làn	low-grade
昧着良心	OW	mèi zhe liáng xīn	act against one's conscience	下三滥	SW	xià sān làn	low-grade
麋鹿	AW	mí lù	(epithet) name	下限	OW	xià xiàn	lower limit
冥婚	CW	míng hūn	the nether world marriage	下葬	CW	xià zàng	be buried
魔鬼	AW	mó guǐ	evil-doer	下作	AW	xià zuo	obscene
母狗	SW	mǔ gǒu	female dog	先奸后杀	OW	xiān jiān hòu shā	rape and kill
母鸡	SW	mǔ jī	(extended meaning) loose woman	现世报	CW	xiàn shì bào	retribution in this life
母猪	SW	mǔ zhū	(extended meaning) loose woman	翔	NEW	xiáng	(extended meaning) shit
木耳	NEW	mù ěr	(extended meaning) cunt	小鸡鸡	SW	xiǎo jī jī	(dialect) penis
墓地	CW	mù dì	cemetery	小璐	OW	xiǎo lù	name
奶子	SW	nǎi zi	breast	小麋鹿	AW	xiǎo míl ù	(epithet) name
男扮女装	SW	nán bàn nǚ zhuāng	ross-dressing man	小学	OW	xiǎo xué	primary school
男不男的	SW	nán bù nán de	androgynous man	小学生	OW	xiǎo xué shēng	primary school students
男盗女娼	OW(CI)	nán dào nǚ chāng	behave like desperadoes and whores	小学文化	OW	xiǎo xué wén huà	elementary culture
孬	AW	nāo	coward	心肠歹毒	OW(CI)	xīn cháng dǎi dú	vicious
孬狗	AW	nāo gǒu	pussy/coward	心狠手辣	OW(CI)	xīn hěn shǒu là	heartless and cruel
孬货	AW	nāo huò	pussy/coward	心机婊	NEW	xīn jī biǎo	scheming bitch
孬种	AW	nāo zhǒng	pussy/coward	鑫峰作浪	AW	xīn fēng zuò làng	(epither) Liu and Feng made trouble
脑残	AW	nǎo cán	shithead	惺惺作态	OW(CI)	xīng xīng zuò tài	affected manners
脑积水	CW	nǎo jī shuǐ	hydrocephalus	性病	SW	xìng bìng	sexually transmitted disease
脑死亡	CW	nǎo sǐ wáng	brain death	性荡者	SW	xìng dàng zhě	sex addict
脑瘫	CW	nǎo tān	cerebral palsy	性福	SW	xìng fú	sexual satisfaction

闹心	EEW	nào xīn	trouble	性饥渴	SW	xìng jī kě	sex-starved
尼玛	EEW	ní mǎ	homophone of '你妈', fucking	性奴	SW	xìng nú	sex slave
尼玛币	EEW	ní mǎ bì	homophone of '你妈逼', motherfucking	性生活	SW	xìng shēng huó	sexual behaviour
尼玛个逼	EEW	ní mǎ gè bī	homophone of '你妈逼', motherfucking	性欲	SW	xìng yù	sexual desire
尼玛	EEW	ní mǎ	homophone of '你妈', fucking	性欲强	SW	xìng yù qiáng	strong sexual desire
尼妹	EEW	ní mèi	same as '尼玛', fucking	凶恶	OW	xiōng è	ferocious
你妈	EEW	nǐ mā	fucking	凶神恶煞	OW(CI)	xiōng shén è shà	malicious-looking
你妈b	EEW	nǐ mā b	homophone of '你妈逼', motherfucking	胸大没脑	OW	xiōng dà méi nǎo	woman with big breasts is silly
你妈的	EEW	nǐ mā de	fucking	胸无点墨	OW(CI)	xiōng wú diǎn mò	unlearned
你他妈	EEW	nǐ tā mā	shit!/fucking	胸罩	OW	xiōng zhào	bra
你他妈的	EEW	nǐ tā mā de	shit!/fucking	绣花枕头	OW(CI)	xiù huā zhěn tou	an outwardly attractive but worthless person
你她妈	EEW	nǐ tā mā	shit!/fucking	虚伪	OW	xū wèi	hypocritical
你特么	EEW	nǐ tè me	homophone of '你他妈', shit!/fucking	穴	OW	xué	(extended meaning) cunt
娘们	SW	niáng men	pussy	学前班	OW	xué qián bān	preschool
娘娘腔	SW	niáng niáng qiāng	sissy	学嘻哈	OW	xué xī hā	learn hip hop
娘炮	SW	niáng pào	sissy	血馒头	NEW	xuè mán tou	steamed bread with blood
鸟样	AW	niǎo yàng	pussy/coward	烟熏妆	OW	yān xūn zhuāng	smoky makeup
尿裤子	OW	niào kù zi	pee in his/her pants	腌臜	EEW	ā zā	filthy
孽障	AW	niè zhàng	evil creature	言多必失	OW(CI)	yán duō bì shī	loose lips sink ships
孽种	AW	niè zhǒng	son of a bitch	眼线	OW	yǎn xiàn	eyeliner
牛逼	EEW	niú bī	badass	眼线笔	OW	yǎn xiàn bǐ	eyeliner pencil
扭曲	EEW	niǔ qū	distortion	眼线液	OW	yǎn xiàn yè	eyeliner
浓妆淡抹	OW(CI)	nóng zhuāng dàn mǒ	heavy or light makeup	眼影	OW	yǎn yǐng	eyeshadow
浓妆艳抹	OW(CI)	nóng zhuāng yàn mǒ	heavy makeup	眼妆	OW	yǎn zhuāng	eye makeup
弄死	CW	nòng sǐ	kill	演	OW	yǎn	act
弄头发	OW	nòng tóu fǎ	hair cut	演戏	OW	yǎn xì	act
懦夫	OW	nuò fū	pussy/coward	杨柳	OW	yáng liǔ	name
女表	SW	nǚ biǎo	same as '婊', whore	养条狗	AW	yǎng tiáo gǒu	keep a dog
女表子	SW	nǚ biǎo zi	same as '婊', whore	养小三	AW	yǎng xiǎo sān	have a mistress
潘金连	AW	pān jīn lián	(epithet) name	妖妇	SW	yāo fù	scold
潘金莲	AW	pān jīn lián	(epithet) name	妖怪	AW	yāo guài	monster
潘金蓉	AW	pān jīn róng	(epithet) name	妖姬	SW	yāo jī	alluring woman
陪葬	CW	péi zàng	be buried with the dead	妖精	SW	yāo jing	alluring woman
配不起	EEW	pèi bù qǐ	not worth	妖孽	SW	yāo niè	evildoer

配不上	EEW	pèi bù shàng	not worth	妖气	SW	yāo qì	enchanting
喷	OW	pēn	(extended meaning) curse	野狗	SW	yě gǒu	(extended meaning) wanton
喷粪	NEW	pēn fèn	dookie	野鸡	SW	yě jī	(extended meaning) wanton
喷屎	NEW	pēn shǐ	dookie	野马	SW	yě mǎ	(extended meaning) wanton
喷死	CW	pēn sǐ	(extended meaning) curse	野种	AW	yě zhǒng	son of a bitch
喷翔	NEW	pēn xiáng	dookie	野猪	SW	yě zhū	(extended meaning) wanton
喷子	NEW	pēn zi	hater	一个巴掌拍不响	OW(CI)	yī gè bā zhang pāi bù xiǎng	one palm cannot clap
披麻戴孝	OW(CI)	pī má dài xiào	put on mourning apparel	一路货色	OW	yī lù huò sè	birds of a feather
屁	NEW	pì	ass	衣冠禽兽	OW(CI)	yī guān qín shòu	beast in human attire
屁鸡	AW	pì jī	(epithet) name	遗臭万年	OW(CI)	yí chòu wàn nián	perpetual infamy
屁鸡王	AW	pì jī wáng	(epithet) name	遗像	CW	yí xiàng	a portrait of the deceased
屁眼	SW	pì yǎn	asshole	遗照	CW	yí zhào	a portrait of the deceased
嫖	SW	piáo	visit a prostitute	以暴制暴	OW	yǐ bào zhì bào	answer violence with violence
嫖娼	SW	piáo chāng	use prostitutes	以血还血	OW	yǐ xuè hái xuè	blood for blood
嫖妓	SW	piáo jì	use prostitutes	以牙还牙	OW	yǐ yá hái yá	tooth for tooth
嫖客	SW	piáo kè	brothel frequenter	抑郁症	OW	yì yù zhèng	Depression
姘夫	SW	pīn fū	paramour (male)	因果报应	OW(CI)	yīn guǒ bào yìng	retribution for sin
姘头	SW	pīn tou	paramour	阴唇	SW	yīn chún	labia
品行不端	OW	pǐn xíng bù duān	misbehave	阴道	SW	yīn dào	vaginal
平西王	AW	píng xī wáng	(epithet) name	阴道炎	OW	yīn dào yán	Vaginitis
平嘻哈	AW	píng xīhā	(epithet) name	阴毒	AW	yīn dú	sinister
平嘻王	AW	píng xī wáng	(epithet) name	阴魂不散	OW(CI)	yīn hún bú sàn	haunting ghost
泼粪	NEW	pō fèn	splash shit	阴毛	SW	yīn máo	pubes
泼妇	SW	pō fù	shrew/vixen	阴险	OW	yīn xiǎn	sinister
泼妇骂街	SW	pō fù mà jiē	shrew scold	阴阳怪气	OW(CI)	yīn yáng guài qì	mystifying
泼皮	SW	pō pí	rogue	淫	SW	yín	kinky
潑婦	SW	pō fù	shrew/vixen	淫才	NEW/SW	yín cái	lewd
婆娘	SW	pó niáng	(dialect) old woman	淫荡	SW	yín dàng	salacious
破烂	SW	pò làn	(extended meaning) loose woman	淫妇	SW	yín fù	slutbag
破烂货	SW	pò làn huò	(extended meaning) loose woman	淫秽	SW	yín huì	obscene
破鞋	SW	pò xié	loose woman	淫贱	SW	yín jiàn	salacious
奇葩	NEW	qí pā	weirdo	淫界	NEW/SW	yín jiè	community of slutbag
骑乘	SW	qí chéng	(extended meaning) have a sex	淫鹿	NEW/AW	yín lù	(epithet) Slut-shaming name
骑马	SW	qí mǎ	(extended meaning) have a sex	淫璐	NEW/AW	yín lù	(epithet) Slut-shaming name
掐死	CW	qiā sǐ	throttle	淫乱	SW	yín luàn	promiscuous

千刀万剐	OW(CI)	qiān dāo wàn guǎ	hacked in pieces	淫女	SW	yín nǚ	slutbag
千夫所指	OW(CI)	qiān fū suǒ zhǐ	universally condemned	淫牌	NEW/SW	yín pái	(epithet) name
千古骂名	OW(CI)	qiān gǔ mà míng	perpetual infamy	淫态	NEW/SW	yín tài	promiscuous
千古罪人	OW(CI)	qiān gǔ zuì rén	eternal sinner	淫娃	SW	yín wá	slutbag
欠操	SW	qiàn cāo	deserve to be screwed	淫邪	SW	yín xié	obscene
枪毙	CW	qiāng bì	execute by shooting	淫欲	SW	yín yù	lust
强暴	SW	qiáng bào	rape	淫贼	SW	yín zéi	rapist
强词夺理	OW(CI)	qiǎng cí duó lǐ	argue irrationally	引火自焚	CW	yǐn huǒ zì fén	set fire on oneself
强奸	SW	qiáng jiān	rape	幽默	OW	yōu mò	humor
强奸犯	SW	qiáng jiān fàn	rapist	有上过学么	OW	yǒu shàng guò xué me	Have you been to school?
墙头草	AW	qiáng tóu cǎo	fence-sitter	有头无脑	OW	yǒu tóu wú nǎo	stupid
抢镜头	OW	qiǎng jìng tóu	steal the show	愚蠢	AW	yú chǔn	foolish
抢台词	OW	qiǎng tái cí	steal the show	愚昧	AW	yú mèi	ignorance
敲你妈	AW	qiāo nǐ mā	homophone of '操你妈', fuck your mother	舆论	OW	yú lùn	public opinion
乔不删	AW	qiáo bù shān	(epithet) name	原地爆炸	CW	yuán dì bào zhà	in situ explosion
乔任操	AW	qiáo rèn cāo	(epithet) name	允悲	OW	yǔn bēi	sorrowful
乔任狗	AW	qiáo rèn gǒu	(epithet) fuckboy name	杂交	AW	zá jiāo	hybridization
乔任凉	AW	qiáo rèn liáng	(epithet) name	杂碎	AW	zá suì	son of a bitch
乔任梁	OW	qiáo rèn liáng	name	杂种	AW	zá zhǒng	son of a bitch
乔莎碧	AW	qiáo shā bì	(epithet) doney cunt (name)	脏	OW	zàng	dirty
乔删	AW	qiáo shān	(epithet) name	葬身火海	CW	zàng shēn huǒ hǎi	be buried in flames
瞧不起	EEW	qiáo bù qǐ	look down	遭报应	CW	zāo bào yìng	get the retribution
禽兽	AW	qín shòu	an evil person	遭骂	OW	zāo mà	be cursed
禽兽不如	OW(CI)	qín shòu bù rú	be worse than a beast	糟心	EEW	zāo xīn	annoying
清者自清	OW(CI)	qīng zhě zì qīng	a clean hand wants no washing	早死早好	CW	zǎo sǐ zǎo hǎo	the earlier one die, the better
情商堪忧	NEW	qíng shāng kān yōu	worrying EQ	渣	NEW	zhā	crap
蛆	OW	qū	maggot	渣逼	AW	zhā bī	fuckboy
蛆虫	OW	qū chóng	maggot	渣货	AW	zhā huò	fuckboy
蛆们	OW	qū men	maggot	渣男	AW	zhā nán	fuckboy/love rat
取关	NEW	qǔ guān	did't follow	渣女	AW	zhā nǚ	love rat
去你妈	EEW	qù nǐ mā	motherfucking	渣人	AW	zhā rén	love rat
去你妈的	EEW	qù nǐ mā de	motherfucking	渣渣	NEW	zhā zhā	crap
去世	CW	qù shì	pass away	渣渣人	AW	zhā zhā rén	love rat
去死	CW	qù sǐ	go to the hell	渣子	NEW	zhā zi	crap

去死吧	CW	qù sǐ ba	go to the hell	渣滓	NEW	zhā zǐ	crap
去他妈	EEW	qù tā mā	Holy fuck!	诈骗	OW	zhà piàn	sharp
去他妈的	EEW	qù tā mā de	Holy fuck!	诈骗犯	AW	zhà piàn fàn	scammer
全家Sl	CW	quán jiā Sl	abbreviation of '全家死了', All your family is dead.	诈尸	CW	zhà shī	a moving corpse
全家死了	CW	quán jiā sǐ le	All your family is dead.	张狗	AW	zhāng gǒu	(epithet) fuckboy (name)
犬奴	AW	quǎn nú	douche-fag	招黑	NEW	zhāo hēi	annoying
缺德	EEW	quē dé	villainous	招骂	EEW	zhāo mà	be insulted
缺德事	EEW	quē dé shì	a wicked thing	招人烦	EEW	zhāo rén fán	make trouble
缺货	OW	quē huò	a mean person	这伪娘样	SW	zhè wěi niáng yàng	sissy
缺心眼	EEW	quē xīn yǎn	stupid	真TM	AW	zhēn TM	abbreviation of '真他妈', to hell with it!
缺心眼儿	EEW	quē xīn yǎn er	stupid	真tm	AW	zhēn tm	abbreviation of '真他妈', to hell with it!
群殴	OW	qún ōu	group fight	真丑	AW	zhēn chǒu	very ugly
惹人烦	EEW	rě rén fán	annoying	真该死	AW	zhēn gāi sǐ	Damn it!
惹人讨厌	EEW	rě rén tǎo yàn	stinking	真鸡巴	EEW	zhēn jī bā	similar as '真他妈', to hell with it
惹人嫌	EEW	rě rén xián	annoying	真鸡儿	EEW	zhēn jī er	homophone of '真鸡巴', to hell with it
惹人厌	EEW	rě rén yàn	stinking	真几把	EEW	zhēn jǐ bǎ	homophone of '真鸡巴', to hell with it
人丑	AW	rén chǒu	ugly person	真贱	SW	zhēn jiàn	bitchy
人贱	AW	rén jiàn	you skunk	真可笑	AW	zhēn kě xiào	so ridiculous
人流	OW	rén liú	abortion surgery	真能作	AW	zhēn néng zuò	what a trouble-maker
人面兽心	OW(CI)	rén miàn shòu xīn	a beast in human face	真尼玛	EEW	zhēn ní mǎ	homophone of '真你妈', fucking
人模狗样	OW(CI)	rén mó gǒu yàng	look like a person but behave like a dog	真尼瑪	EEW	zhēn ní mǎ	homophone of '真你妈', fucking
人品	OW	rén pǐn	character	真你妈浪	SW	zhēn nǐ mā làng	fucking dissolute woman
人人喊打	OW	rén rén hǎn dǎ	be lambasted by people	真骚	SW	zhēn sāo	very coquettish
人肉	OW	rén ròu	Human flesh search	真他妈	EEW	zhēn tā mā	To hell with it!
人设崩塌	NEW	rén shè bēng tā	go against one's public image	真他妈的	EEW	zhēn tā mā de	To hell with it!
人神共愤		rén shén gòng fèn	incur the greatest popular indignation	真他妈贱	SW	zhēn tā mā jiàn	To hell with it! Bitch
人妖	SW	rén yāo	shemale	真踏马	EEW	zhēn tà mǎ	homophone of '真他妈', to hell with it!
人渣	AW	rén zhā	scumbag	真特妈	EEW	zhēn tè mā	homophone of '真他妈', to hell with it!
日	EEW	rì	(dialect) fuck	真特么	EEW	zhēn tè me	homophone of '真他妈', to hell with it!
日妈	AW	rì mā	(dialect) fuck your mother	真秀逗	AW	zhēn xiù dòu	brain fart
日马蓉	SW	rì mǎ róng	(dialect) fuck Ma Rong	真脏	AW	zhēn zàng	very dirty
日嘛	AW	rì ma	homophone of '日妈', fuck your mother	真渣	AW	zhēn zhā	bitchy
日批	AW	rì pī	(dialect) have a sex	指鹿为马	AW	zhǐ lù wéi mǎ	call white black
日他妈	AW	rì tā mā	dialect of '操她妈': fucking	制杖	AW	zhì zhàng	homophone of '智障', mentally handicapped
乳腺癌		rǔxiàn ái	breast cancer	智商低下	OW	zh ìshāng dī xià	low IQ

入土	CW	rùtǔ	be buried	智商感人	NEW	zhì shāng gǎn rén	impressive low IQ
入土为安	CW	rùtǔ wéi ān	be laid to rest	智商堪忧	NEW	zhì shāng kān yōu	worrying IQ
入狱	CW	rù yù	jail	智商硬伤	NEW	zhì shāng yìng shāng	low IQ
软蛋	NEW	ruǎn dàn	dead beat/wimp	智障	AW	zhì zhàng	mentally handicapped
软饭	NEW	ruǎn fàn	dead beat/craven	种马	SW	zhǒng mǎ	service boar
软柿子	AW	ruǎn shì zi	wimp	种猪	SW	zhǒng zhū	service boar
弱智	AW	ruò zhì	handicapped	咒	CW	zhòu	curse
撒比	AW	sā bǐ	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	咒骂	CW	zhòu mà	curse
撒币	AW	sā bì	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	咒诅	CW	zhòu zǔ	curse
赛马	OW	sài mǎ	homophone of '死妈', your mother died	诛	CW	zhū	lancinate
三八	SW	sān bā	nosy parker	诛杀	CW	zhū shā	lancinate
三级片	SW	sān jí piàn	porm	诛心	OW	zhū xīn	reveal one's evil intentions
三金	AW	sān jīn	(epithet) name	株连九族	OW(CI)	zhū lián jiǔ zú	kill all the relatives of one person
三流	SW	sān liú	small-time	猪	AW	zhū	pig
丧比	AW	sàng bǐ	dispirited poor guy	猪狗	AW	zhū gǒu	pig and dog
丧尽天良	OW(CI)	sàng jìn tiān liáng	conscienceless	猪狗不如	OW(CI)	zhū gǒu bù rú	be worse than pigs or dogs
丧门星	AW	sàng mén xīng	trouble maker	猪笼	OW	zhū lóng	pig cage
丧心病狂	OW(CI)	sàng xīn bìng kuáng	frenzied	猪脑	AW	zhū nǎo	shitbrain
搔首弄姿	OW(CI)	sāo shǒu nòng zī	coquet	猪脑子	AW	zhū nǎo zi	shitbrain
骚	SW	sāo	coquettish	猪头	AW	zhū tóu	chowderhead
骚b	SW	sāo b	homophone of '骚逼', slutbag	猪样	AW	zhū yàng	pig-like
骚包	SW	sāo bāo	coquettish one	蛀虫	OW	zhù chóng	roundworm
骚逼	SW	sāo bī	slutbag	装b	AW	zhuāng b	homophone of '装逼', to be a douche
骚比	SW	sāo bǐ	homophone of '骚逼', slutbag	装逼	AW	zhuāng bī	to be a douche
骚币	SW	sāo bì	homophone of '骚逼', slutbag	装比	AW	zhuāng bǐ	homophone of '装逼', to be a douche
骚表	SW	sāo biǎo	homophone of '骚婊', prostitute	装叉	AW	zhuāng chā	homophone of '装逼', to be a douche
骚不骚	SW	sāo bù sāo	very coquettish	装蠢	AW	zhuāng chǔn	pretend to be stupid
骚得	SW	sāo dé	coquettish	装疯卖傻	OW(CI)	zhuāng fēng mài shǎ	play the fool
骚妇	SW	sāo fù	skank	装龟	AW	zhuāng guī	pretend to be a snob
骚狗	SW	sāo gǒu	skank	装聋作哑	OW(CI)	zhuāng lóng zuò yǎ	pretend to be ignorant of sth.
骚货	SW	sāo huò	skank	装嫩	AW	zhuāng nèn	act young
骚鸡	SW	sāo jī	cumdumpster	装傻	AW	zhuāng shǎ	pretend to be stupid
骚贱	SW	sāo jiàn	coquettish and cheap	装死	OW	zhuāng sǐ	play possum
骚贱浪	SW	sāo jiàn làng	coquettish, cheap and dissolute	装孙子	AW	zhuāng sūn zi	pretend to be a snob

骚劲	SW	sāo jìn	very coquettish	撞死	CW	zhuàng sǐ	knocked to death
骚浪	SW	sāo làng	coquettish and dissolute	追悼会	CW	zhuī dào huì	memorial service
骚浪货	SW	sāo làng huò	coquettish and dissolute woman	捉奸	SW	zhuō jiān	catch the adultery affair
骚浪贱	SW	sāo làng jiàn	coquettish, dissolute and cheap	捉奸在床	OW(CI)	zhuō jiān zài chuáng	caught one's mate cheating
骚里骚气	SW	sāo lǐ sāo qì	coquettish	子宫	OW	zǐ gōng	uterus
骚鹿	SW	sāo lù	(epithet) coquettish (name)	子宫癌	CW	zǐ gōng ái	Uterine cancer
骚璐	SW	sāo lù	(epithet) coquettish (name)	自毙	CW	zì bì	suicide
骚璐璐	SW	sāo lù lù	(epithet) coquettish (name)	自掘坟墓	CW	zì jué fén mù	dig one's own grave
骚露	SW	sāo lù	(epithet) coquettish (name)	自取灭亡	OW(CI)	zì qǔ miè wáng	court destruction
骚娘	SW	sāo niáng	skank	自取其辱	OW(CI)	zì qǔ qí rǔ	ask for an insult
骚娘们	SW	sāo niáng men	skank	自杀	CW	zì shā	suicide
骚女	SW	sāo nǚ	skank	自杀身亡	CW	zì shā shēn wáng	suicided
骚婆	SW	sāo pó	skank	自杀式	CW	zì shā shì	suicidal
骚气	SW	sāo qì	coquettish	自杀未遂	OW(CI)	zì shā wèi suì	attempted suicide
骚人	SW	sāo rén	coquettish person	自生自灭	OW(CI)	zì shēng zì miè	grow and die without outside interference
骚骚骚	SW	sāo sāo sāo	very coquettish	自食其果	OW(CI)	zì shí qí guǒ	reap as one has sown
骚嫂	SW	sāo sǎo	(epithet) coquettish (name)	自慰	SW	zì wèi	masturbating
骚事	SW	sāo shì	coquettish behaviour	自寻死路	OW(CI)	zì xún sǐ lù	bring about one's own destruction
骚味	SW	sāo wèi	look like a whore	自以为是	OW(CI)	zì yǐ wéi shì	self-centereous
骚样	SW	sāo yàng	look like a whore	自作孽	OW	zì zuò niè	have only oneself to blame
骚猪	SW	sāo zhū	look like a whore	自作自受	OW(CI)	zì zuò zì shòu	carry what one makes
骚子	SW	sāo zi	(epithet) coquettish (name)	走	OW	zǒu	leave
騷	SW	sāo	coquettish	走狗	AW	zǒu gǒu	lackey
騷貨	SW	sāo huò	skank	走后门	NEW	zǒu hòu mén	(extended meaning) closely-related units
扫墓	CW	sǎo mù	grave sweep	诅咒	CW	zǔ zhòu	curse
嫂嫂	OW	sǎo sǎo	sister in law	祖坟	CW	zǔ fén	ancestral tomb
嫂子	OW	sǎo zi	sister in law	嘴臭	AW	zuǐ chòu	flibbertigibbet
瘙	SW	sào	homophone of '骚', coquettish	嘴贱	AW	zuǐ jiàn	mouthy fools
瘙浪	SW	sào làng	homophone of '骚浪', coquettish and dissolute	嘴炮	OW	zuǐ pào	windbag
瘙痒	SW	sào yǎng	itching	嘴碎	OW	zuǐ suì	windbag
臊	SW	sāo	homophone of '骚', coquettish	嘴瘾	OW	zuǐ yǐn	garrulous
臊子	SW	sào zi	homophone of '嫂子', sister in law	最丑	AW	zuì chǒu	ugliest
色	OW	sè	prurience	最烦	AW	zuì fán	most annoying
杀比	AW	shā bǐ	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	最贱	SW	zuì jiàn	most bitchy
杀币	AW	shā bì	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	最烂	SW	zuì làn	very dissipated
杀叉	AW	shā chā	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	最浪	SW	zuì làng	very dissolute

杀人	AW	shā rén	kill sb	最骚	SW	zuì sāo	very coquettish
杀人不见血	OW(CI)	shā rén bù jiàn xiě	kill sb by insidious means	最渣	AW	zuì zhā	crap
杀人偿命	OW(CI)	shā rén cháng mìng	a life for a life	罪该万死	OW(CI)	zuì gāi wàn sǐ	death is not sufficient for such a crime
杀人犯	AW	shā rén fàn	murderer	罪魁祸首	OW(CI)	zuì kuí huò shǒu	chief culprit
杀人狂	AW	shā rén kuáng	Murderer	罪有应得	OW(CI)	zuì yǒu yīng dé	deserve punishment
杀人者	AW	shā rén zhě	murderer	作	NEW	zuō/zuò	affected/present/make
杀人罪	AW	shā rén zuì	homicide	作逼	SW	zuō bī	drama queen
沙比	AW	shā bǐ	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	作恶	OW	zuò è	commit a sin
沙壁	AW	shā bì	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	作恶多端	OW(CI)	zuò è duō duān	sinfulness
沙雕	AW	shā diāo	homophone of '傻屌', fuckstick	作恶者	AW	zuò è zhě	perpetrator
莎比	AW	shā bǐ	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	作贱	NEW	zuò jiàn	humiliate/sb demean hisself or herself
傻	AW	shǎ	stupid	作践	NEW	zuò jiàn	humiliate/sb demean hisself or herself
傻B	AW	shǎ B	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	作孽	AW	zuò niè	commit a sin
傻b	AW	shǎ b	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	作呕	EEW	zuò ǒu	disgusting
傻屄	AW	shǎ bī	dopey cunt	作死	NEW	zuò sǐ	look for trouble
傻逼	AW	shǎ bī	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	作妖	NEW	zuò yāo	make trouble
傻逼样	AW	shǎ bī yàng	stupid assface	做孽	AW	zuò niè	commit a sin
傻比不	AW	shǎ bǐ bù	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	做头	OW	zuò tóu	hair cut
傻叉	AW	shǎ chā	homophone of '傻屄', dopey cunt	做头发	OW	zuò tóu fǎ	hair cut
傻蛋	AW	shǎ dàn	idiot	做作	NEW	zuò zuo	behave affectedly

Note 1. AW - Abusive Word
SW- Sexual Word
CW - Cursing Word
EEW - Emotional and Emphatic Word
NEW - Newly-emerging Word
OW - Ordinary Words with Special Meanings
OW (CI) - Ordinary Words (Chinese Idiom)

2. The terms highlighted in red are the ones in subsample dataset.

Appendix IV Interview Guide (English-Chinese)

Place: Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Duration of Interview:

In this research, cyberbullying is defined as an objective "language behaviour" or "behaviour towards language" via electronic communication tools, referring to the use of offensive language behaviour when we communicate with others. When you take part in the interview, you can follow the definition in the research, or you can also have your own view about what cyberbullying is. During the process of the interview, if you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you can stop at any time.

在这项研究中，网络暴力被定义为"在交流过程中，通过电子通讯工具传播攻击性语言的客观'语言行为'"。当你在回答本研究的访问问题时，你可以使用本研究对于网络暴力的定义，也可以依照你个人对于网络暴力的看法。在整个访问过程中，如果你对于访问问题有任何不适，你可以随时结束访问。

1. What is your role? How many years have you been working in your current role? (你的职业是什么？你从事该职业多久了？)

2. Do you have a Sina Weibo account? If so, how many years have you used your Weibo account for? (你是否拥有新浪微博账号？如果有，你使用新浪微博多少年了？)

3. What is your definition of cyberbullying? (你如何理解网络暴力？)

4. When should an incident of online teasing or conflict be considered cyberbullying? What criteria must it meet? (你认为在什么情况下，网络嘲弄或冲突事件应该被认定为是网络欺凌?它必须满足哪些标准?)

5. Can you describe the different types of cyberbullying that are most common on Sina Weibo today? And for example. (你能描述一下现阶段在新浪微博上，有哪些常见的网络暴力形式吗？可否举一些例子。)

6. How do these forms of cyberbullying differ from each other in terms of their effects on the victim? (这些形式的网络暴力在对受害者的影响方面有何不同?)

7. How common do you believe cyberbullying on Sina Weibo is? For example, do you think it is currently more common or prevalent than traditional bullying in real life contexts? Please explain your answer.

你认为网络暴力在新浪微博上是普遍行为吗？例如，相比于在显示生活中，网络暴力是否比传统暴力行为更为普遍？请解释你的答案。

8. Have you been involved with a cyberbullying incident on Sina Weibo? If so, how did the incident occur, and what is the result?

9. In your view, how was the current cyberbullying policy created on Sina Weibo? If so, how does the policy respond to the issue of cyberbullying? Do you think these policies are efficient in preventing cyberbullying on Sina Weibo?

在你看来，新浪微博目前是否有应对网络暴力的政策？如果有，该政策如何应对网络暴力问题的？你认为这些政策对防止新浪微博上的网络暴力有效吗?

10. If you are an educational worker, counsellor, administrator, or social media worker, and you discovers that someone has either experienced cyberbullying or has cyberbullied others, how can you plan and implement an effective intervention?

如果你是教育工作者、辅导员、管理人员或社交媒体工作者，当你发现某人曾参与过网络暴力或曾遭受过网络暴力时，你会如何计划和实施有效的干预?

11. According to my research, the numerous types of cyberbullying contents and the constant changes of the cyberbullying language features on Sina Weibo have made it difficult for social media platforms and policy makers to detect, define, and appropriately address cyberbullying incidents. Do you have any suggestions as to the effective ways of addressing cyberbullying that Sina Weibo, policy makers or we as users should look out for?

根据我的研究，由于网络暴力的用语和内容种类繁多，以及新浪微博上网络暴力的语言特征不断变化，使得社交媒体平台和政策制定者很难发现、定义和恰当处理网络暴力事件。对于这样的问题，你认为新浪微博、政策制定者以及新浪微博用户应该如何有效地防止网络暴力？你有什么建议吗?

Appendix V Themes for the 11 Interview Questions

Questions	Themes	Subthemes
Personal information (Q1-Q2)	Role and social media usage	--
Definition of cyberbullying (Q3-Q4)	Basie cyberbullying knowledge	Views of cyberbullying; Standards of cyberbullying.
Types of cyberbullying (Q5)	Attacking, insulting, cursing, invasion of privacy, rumours	Anger, rude, susetting, unreal, repetitive, hurt, intentional bullying.
Effects of cyberbullying (Q6)	Consequences caused by cyberbullying	The influences on individuals; the influences on society.
Prevalence of cyberbullying (Q7)	Frequency of cyberbullying on Sina Weibo	The comparison with traditional bullying.
Experiences of cyberbullying (Q8)	Cyber perpetrators, cyber victims, bystanders	--
Solutions to problems (Q9-Q11)	Simple language management, organised language management	The views of the current policies on cyberbullying, the challenges of solving cyberbullying problems; the approaches that can be used to address cyberbullying.

Appendix VI Short Questionnaire for Eight Volunteers (Chinese and English)

Q1: How do you think about these words, for example, are they offensiveness and related to cyberbullying? What kinds of words are the most offensive ones to you?

F1: 我认为这些词语有一些确实让人无法接受，尤其是和性相关的词语，对女性非常不友好，其他词语就还好，有些词语没有语境就是很普通的词语。

(I think that some of these words are really unacceptable, especially the sexual words, which are very unfriendly to females. Other words are some ordinary words if without context.)

F2: 我最不能接受的是诅咒和有关“操”的词语，很难听。

(I cannot stand the cursing words and f-words. Very rude!)

F3: 我觉得成语和一些日常用语在没有语境的情况下，不能判断是暴力还是不暴力。但是有些词语听到就让人不舒服，比如“你妈死了”和“操你妈”这种，肯定是暴力的。

(I feel that idioms and some everyday expressions cannot be identified as cyberbullying or non-cyberbullying words without the context. However, some words will make the hearer feel uncomfortable, such as ‘your mother is dead’ and ‘fuck your mother’, which must be offensive.)

F4: 我在标号的时候有自己设定一个中间值 3，比如普通的骂人的话，低于中间值的是一些日常生活中也可能会用的词。我最不能接受的是涉及家人的词，诅咒和谩骂都不行，所以基本都标了 4 和 5。

(I set a middle value of 3 for labelling. Thus, swearing words which are below the middle value can be used in the daily life. In my eyes, swearing words that are relevant to one’s families are the most unacceptable ones, regardless of whether they are used to curse or for verbal abuse, and I marked all such words 4 or 5.)

M1: 有些关于家人的词语无法接受，而一些创造出来的词语，可能需要语境才能判断。

(I cannot stand some words that are related to family members. For some coined words, I think that they can be identified with context.)

M2: 我觉得这个表里很多词语在生活中都会见到，我觉得大多数都还好，但是有一些关于侮辱女性的词语真的很不好，这类词语我标号都比较高。

(I think many of the words in this list are used in the daily expression, so, I think most of them are okay. However, some words that are used to insult females are particularly nasty, so I labelled these words with high marks.)

M3: 我对于侮辱女性和诅咒的词语标号比较高，其他的都还好。

(I cannot stand the words used to insult females and curses. Others are fine.)

M4: 在做这个标号之前，我几乎不知道有那么多骂人的话，尤其是一些缩写，很有意思。我最不能接受的是关于性的词语和诅咒，我觉得男生用关于性的词语，很不礼貌。

(Before doing labelling, I did not know there were so many words for attacking or insulting. Specially, for some abbreviations, they are very interesting. I cannot stand the sexual words and cursing words. If a male use sexual words, they are very rude.)

Q2: Do you think swear/taboo words or cyberbullying words are the more suitable way to express strong emotions (e.g. anger, hate, displeasure, and etc.) online?

F1: 用很难听的词语去表达情感是一种方式，但网络暴力不对。

(Using offensive words is one way to express emotions, but cyberbullying is unacceptable.)

F2: 我不会用那些难听的词语表达情感，不管是不是在网上，都让人很不舒服。

(I do not use offensive words to express emotion, whether in cyberspace or not. They are rude.)

F3: 我经常会在网上看到有些人列表中那些特别难听的词语去评论别人，我也不知道他们是什么目的，但作为旁观者，我觉得很不合适，我也不会用。

(I always see some Internet users using these words to comment on others. I do not know their motivations, but as a bystander, I think it is inappropriate and I will not use these words.)

F4: 有些词语其实很常用，比如“操你妈”和“他妈的”，很多时候就是表达一种情感，并不是故意伤害谁。但有些涉及家人的谩骂和诅咒，确实很过分，完全无法接受。

(Some of these words are widely used, such as ‘fuck your mother’ and ‘shit’. In some context, they are a kind of emotional expression without attacking purposes. However, for the words related to cursing family members, they are very offensive and I cannot stand.)

M1: 其实有些词语我也会用，并没有什么恶意，但是我不会诅咒别人。

(I use some of these words without offensiveness, but I will not curse others.)

M2: 表达情感可以有很多方法，用网络暴力表达情感肯定是不合适的，但是列表里有些“暴力”词语其实在生活中会用到，并没有什么恶意。

(There are many ways to express emotions, thus, cyberbullying is not a suitable way. However, some ‘offensive’ words in the list are also used in daily communication without offensiveness.)

M3: 很多词语其实生活中都会用的，包括一些我标 4 以上的词语，尤其是打游戏的时候，但我觉得那不是网络暴力。

(Most of the words will be used in the daily expression, including the words I labelled as level 4 or above, especially when we are playing the game. I think they are not about cyberbullying.)

M4: 我觉得任何情况下，网络暴力都是不可取的。

(I do not think cyberbullying can become a choice under any circumstances.)

Appendix VII Dominant Classifications of Swear/Taboo Words

Author/Year	Classifications
Hughes, 1991: 3	Swearing draws upon such powerful and incongruous resonators as religion, sex, madness, excretion and nationality, encompassing an extraordinary variety of attitudes.
Jay, 1996	Name calling; Insulting; Profanity; Slang; Vulgarity; Obscenity; Epithets; Slurs; Scatology.
McEnery, 2004: 32-51	Negative adjective; Adverbial booster; Cursing expletive; Destination usage; Emphatic adverb/adjective; Figurative extension of literal meaning; General expletive; Idiomatic set phrase; Literal usage denoting taboo referent; Imagery based on literal sense; Premodifying intensifying negative adjective; Pronominal form with undefined referent; Personal insult referring to defined entity; Religious oath.
Pinker, 2008	Harmful matter; Abusive swearing; Idiomatic swearing; Emphatic swearing; Cathartic swearing.
Jay *et al*., 2008 Battistella, 2005: 72	Obscenity; Blasphemy; Name-calling; Verbal aggression; Ethnic-racial slurs; Vulgar language, Slangs; Scatology and Insults.
Jay, 2009: 154	Sexual references; Irreverent/irreligious; Ethnic/racial/gender slurs; Ancestral allusions; Substandard vulgar terms; Offensive slang; Animal names; Scatological or disgusting objects.
Other related works	Stapleton (2010): Taboos in English are placed on sexual references (blow job, cunt) and on those that are considered profane or blasphemous (goddamn, Jesus Christ).
	Stone and McMillan (2012): 1) Refer to something that was taboo, offensive, impolite, or forbidden in the culture; and 2) Can be used to express or evoke strong emotions, most usually of anger or anxiety.
	Andersson and Trudgill (2007: 1) refers to something taboo or stigmatized in the swearer's culture; 2) is not intended to be interpreted literally; and 3) can be used to express strong emotions or attitudes.