CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Over the past decades, social interactions have undergone a significant transformation, shifting from face-to-face conversations to a complex digital landscape. Face-to-face interactions, which once served as the foundation of human connection, enabled people to build relationships, establish trust, and express emotions through nonverbal cues such as body language and tone of voice. However, with the emergence of social media, people can now interact with others across geographical boundaries to create international communities and maintain connections virtually. Social media platforms have revolutionized communication by enabling us to share ideas, feelings, and experiences with a vast audience. Despite these benefits, they also have challenges, such as managing digital identities, navigating online etiquette, and preserving-meaningful interpersonal relationships in virtual environments.

In digital communication, politeness is not always maintained. When someone's behavior deviates from social expectations or norms, it is often seen negatively and labeled as "impolite." Particularly in online conversation, people commonly express themselves freely, including the possibility of impoliteness, which is less common in written form. Many users cannot control what they want to express, sometimes saying hurtful or offensive expressions, either intentionally or unintentionally, to other people. Such offensive words, whether expressed orally or in written form, have become increasingly common in public communication.

Social media has now become the dominant medium of interaction, with the three most popular platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as they provide a convenient and

instant connection with others, regardless of physical distance. Instagram, in particular, is one of the most widely used platforms for sharing daily activities and personal experiences. There are currently over 2 billion active users on Instagram every month. According to data recorded in 2023 and January 2024, Instagram's monthly active users were 2.4 billion (DemandSage, 2023). As of September 2024, 5.17 billion people use social media worldwide, out of 5.45 billion internet users, 94.9% of whom are active users (Backlinko, 2024). On Instagram, users can post a variety of content, including photos and videos, while others can respond by leaving comments, thereby fostering both positive and negative interactions.

Everyone can post everything on social media. They can upload photos or videos to their feed or just to Instagram stories. Similarly, artists can also upload something that they want. Some people might make mistakes when posting something. However, why public figures become targets of online hostility while they have done nothing wrong online? One notable example is Benny Blanco, an American record producer, songwriter, and author. Despite his professional success and debut as an emerging actor, Blanco has been targeted by negative comments regarding his appearance and his relationship with Selena Gomez. Many netizens think that Selena does not deserve him because of Blanco's looks. Meanwhile, he is one of the good actors in his debut. For instance, one comment on Blanco's Instagram post (@itsbennyblanco) with his Girlfriend, Selena Gomez from @isthis_vogue: "Why is Selena dating that thing?" Such language is deeply impolite, as referring to a person as a "thing" constitutes a demeaning and dehumanizing expression.

Impoliteness, as a linguistic phenomenon, is context-dependent and studied in the field of Pragmatics. Culpeper (2011, p.19) defines impoliteness as "a communicative action that aims to harm and disappoint the conversation partner by attacking their face." This definition implies that impoliteness varies depending on the context, understanding, the speaker's intentions, and the listeners' interpretation. In other words, if the listener perceives that the

speaker is attacking him/her directly, causing them to feel wounded and let down, the speaker may be viewed as unfriendly. However, if the listener perceives the impoliteness of the joke, he/she may view it as maintaining social harmony.

This study focuses on impoliteness strategies. Impoliteness strategies are defined by Culpeper (2011) as a phenomenon that occurs in specific contexts, characterized by certain behaviors that evoke negative attitudes and emotions. Impoliteness comes in various ways, such as imbalance in power, misinterpretations of intention, and sometimes cause a high level of stress can make somebody be impolite. Culpeper also defined strategies as ways of achieving particular goals in interaction that are conventional for a particular community. Impoliteness strategies is a way of interpreting disrespectful speech within a particular context.

Previous studies on impoliteness strategies have been widely done in different contexts (Siahaan, 2023; Ambabarita, 2023; Sinaga, 2024; Nubli, 2024; Rahma, 2022; Kharisma, 2022). However, these researchers do not discuss the functions of impoliteness used by netizens to target and dislike someone on social media. All of them only studied the types of impoliteness, none of them discussed the functions of impoliteness strategies. To address this gap, this study analyzes both types and functions of impoliteness proposed by Culpeper (2011). Therefore, the strength of this study is to expand the analysis of the types of impoliteness strategies into the functions of those strategies.

Benny Blanco's Instagram provides an appropriate case of investigation as the source of data, as his posts attract large number of hateful comments. Interestingly, a feed in Benny Blanco's Instagram on July 22nd, 2024, has 1.3M likes. It means that the significant numbers of these likes indicates that this feed is influential for netizens.

By examining impoliteness strategies within Benny Blanco's Instagram comment sections, this research aims to contribute to ethical communication in social media by analyzing

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netizens' impolite comments on Benny Blanco's Instagram. Beyond theoretical significance, this research can foster mindful communication, mitigating harmful online interactions. Despite extensive searches, no prior studies on this specific topic have been found, as most existing research on Benny Blanco consists primarily of news coverage. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impoliteness strategies present in his Instagram comment section based on the aforementioned theoretical frameworks.