

**PERCEPTION OF IMPOLITENESS BY
INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS**

Muhammad Zaki Aditama

Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

aditama.zaki@gmail.com (085647501400)

***Abstract** – This study aims to analyze the type of impoliteness of criticism production that used by Indonesian EFL learners. The object of the research is Indonesian EFL learners' perceptions of impoliteness. In analyzing the types of perception of impoliteness the researcher use the theory of Nguyen (2005). The result of the study found that types of criticism that mostly used in movies is indirect criticism. It proved by the mount of indirect criticism that found in movies are 57 indirect criticisms, and 33 direct criticisms.*

***Keywords:** Criticism; EFL learners; Perception; Impoliteness*

A. INTRODUCTION

Politeness and impoliteness are the examples of the pragmatics phenomena, impoliteness as the focus of this study, the concept of impoliteness is a universal phenomenon which occurs among all cultures but its manifestation may vary from culture to culture. Even within the same culture, the manifestation of impoliteness may differ from social context to social context. This is because no linguistic utterance is potentially impolite till judged as such or otherwise by a particular society. However, impoliteness research has become popular only recently (cf. Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper; 2009; Saidi, 2015; Tajeddin et al., 2014; Culpeper et al., 2010) researchers have been working on describing how this phenomenon is manifested in different languages. Culpeper (1996: 355) argues that impoliteness is very much the parasite of politeness. He makes a distinction between 'inherent impoliteness' and 'mock impoliteness'. In some instances the conjunction of act and context does give rise to impoliteness that may be said to be inherent, since it cannot be completely mitigated by any surface realisation of politeness. The notion of inherent impoliteness irrespective of contexts only holds for a minority of acts. Mock impoliteness, or banter, is impoliteness that remains on the surface, since it is understood that it is not intended to cause offence.

According to Culpeper (2009: 18) current definitions of impoliteness deploy the following concepts: face, social norms and rights, intention and emotion. They generally lean either towards the notion of face or the notion of social norms. With regard to face, Quality face turned out to be overwhelmingly the most important type of face relating to impoliteness. Social norms as authoritative standards of behaviour are the basis of sociality rights. He argued that that these rights relate to morality, and that this is an important feature of impoliteness. Intentionality is criterial, however people take offence even if they know that the behaviour that caused it was not fully intentional. Emotions are key to impoliteness. Van Dijk in Culpeper (2009: 19) claims that evaluative beliefs, which constitute attitude schemata, may be associated with emotive aspects, such as like and dislike.

Kecskes (2015: 43) argues that impoliteness may work differently in intercultural interaction than in L1 communication. Most of the studies have taken a cross-cultural approach (cf. Kecskes, 2015; Tajeddin et al, 2014; Chang, 2008; Culpeper et al, 2010) most of them argued that impoliteness may work differently in inter-cultural interaction than in L1 communication. Focussing on propositional meanings interlocutors may sometime be unaware of impoliteness because it is conveyed implicitly or through paralinguistics means that function differently for speakers with different L1 backgrounds. It means that there still a limited number of researcher have looked into the possible differences in the realization and performance of the impoliteness by EFL learners in L1 communication. Bearing in this mind the writer tries to cast further light on Indonesian EFL learners' perception of impoliteness. Against this backdrop, this study focused on Indonesian EFL learners' perception of impoliteness realized in criticism production. Understanding these differences will shed light on variation in the perception of impoliteness in speech act production, particularly criticism performance. The speech act selected to explore impoliteness in this study was criticism. First of all, criticism is among the speech acts which are most likely to be considered as impolite when the speaker does not use sufficient criticism strategies to produce it. The writer takes the relevant previous study to prove the originality of this research. Among those studies are:

Tajeddin et al. (2014) investigated native English speakers' and English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' perception of (im)politeness. The objective of this study was to examine variations in native English speakers' and EFL learners' perceptions of (im)politeness embedded in apology production. The study aimed to investigate what criteria they would take into consideration while evaluating the degree of (im)politeness of apology utterances. Content analysis of respondents' comments indicated that both groups mentioned similar (im)politeness criteria. However, the analysis of frequency counts displayed significant differences between the two groups in their degree of preference for each (im)politeness criterion.

Saidy (2015) conducted a research study about Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of (im)politeness of request speech act in request situation that lacked any politeness marker across two genders. The results indicated that both males and females had similar perceptions regarding the (im)politeness of the requests while their responses showed some variation. The possible underlying reasons behind this variation across genders were discussed and some suggestions for further research were presented. Generally speaking, though, one might conclude that gender would not influence the addressee's perception of the degree of politeness of the request speech act in both formal and informal settings.

Laitinen (2011) did a research about the phenomenon of impoliteness by investigating a famous American hospital series *House M.D.*, which has been aired in the United States since 2004, and in Finland since 2006. The show is known especially for its main character breaking the norms of communication, not just in a regular social interaction but in doctor – patient interaction, too. Thus the main focus of the thesis is on the impoliteness strategies that the main character of the series, the main focus of the thesis is on the impoliteness strategies that the main character of the series, Dr. Gregory House, uses. The basis of the analysis is on Jonathan Culpeper's impoliteness strategies (1996) but also Peter A. Andersen's categories of nonverbal communication (1999) are used when the issue of nonverbal impoliteness is considered. The secondary focus is on the reactions of Dr. House's patients after he has been impolite towards them. For this I used Derek Bousfield's (2007) theory on the anatomy of impoliteness, and more particularly his chart of how impoliteness can be responded to. Considering the first research question about which impoliteness strategies House uses in the series, it was

found out that all the impoliteness strategies listed by Culpeper (1996) were used. However, all of Andersen's categories of nonverbal communication were not present: two of them, proxemics and haptics (Andersen, 1999), were not involved in any of House's face attacks. The other research question examined the reactions and responses of the patients. The analysis revealed that many of the patients did not understand House's face attack. Although conversations are written beforehand instead of being spontaneous there may be a few reasons why the patients are made to react as they do.

Chang (2008) explored the variables in perceptions of (im)politeness in an intercultural apology, focusing on discussion of the cultural and gender differences. Through the study's instrument, a conversation between an Australian and a Taiwanese Chinese speaker, the study suggests that there are indeed some differences in perceptions of (im)politeness across different cultural groups, since the participants from these two backgrounds tend to use distinctive strategies to make apologies. The study's findings indicate that the cultural factor is more influential in the perceptions of (im) politeness than the gender factor.

In this study, there is one main problem regarding perception of impoliteness by Indonesian EFL learners as follows:

- a. What types do Indonesian EFL learners to judge impoliteness in criticism production?

B. UNDERLYING THEORY

In this chapter the writer uses some theoretical review that will be use to analyze the data of this study. It deals with some theories such as impoliteness, speech acts, EFL learners, speech acts of criticism.

1. Impoliteness

Impoliteness research has become popular only recently (cf. Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper; 2009; Saidi, 2015; Tajeddin et al., 2014; Culpeper et al., 2010). According to Bousfield (2008: 72), impoliteness is the broad opposite of politeness, in that, rather than seeking to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs), impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs) which are purposefully delivered:

1. Unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or,
2. With deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted',

or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted. Furthermore, for impoliteness to be considered successful impoliteness, the intention of the speaker (or 'author') to 'offend' (threaten/damage face) must be understood by those in a receiver role. With the above definition then, it means that impoliteness does not exist where one, but not both of the participants (in two-party interaction) intends / perceives face-threat.

Culpeper (1996: 355) investigated impoliteness the use of strategies that are are designed to have the opposite effect – that disruption. These strategies are oriented towards attacking face an emotionally sensitive concept of the self (Goffman,1967; Brown and Levinson, 1987). On the other hand, Watss (2003: 18) also suggested that impoliteness is clearly a salient form of social behaviour in the sense that it appears to go against the canons of acceptable, appropriate behaviour operative for the ongoing social interaction. In other words, lack of politeness is associated with intimacy, and so being superficially impolite can promote intimacy. Clearly, this only works in contexts in which

the impoliteness is understood to be untrue. Leech, however, neglects to specify what these contexts might be.

- a. Bald--on--record impoliteness: the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimized.
- b. Positive impoliteness: the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants, e.g. Ignore, snub the other -- fail to acknowledge the other's presence. Exclude the other from an activity. Disassociate from the other -- for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together. Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic. Use inappropriate identity markers -- for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains. Use obscure or secretive language -- for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target. Seek disagreement -- select a sensitive topic. Make the other feel uncomfortable -- for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk. Use taboo words -- swear, or use abusive or profane language. Call the other names -- use derogatory nominations.
- c. Negative impoliteness: the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants, e.g. Frighten -- instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur. Condescend, scorn or ridicule -- emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives). Invade the other's space -- literally (e.g. position yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship). Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect -- personalize, use the pronouns 'I' and 'you'. Put the other's indebtedness on record. Violate the structure of conversation -- interrupt.
- d. Off--record impoliteness: the FTA is performed by means of an implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others.
- e. Withhold politeness: the absence of politeness work where it would be expected. For example, failing to thank somebody for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness.

2. Speech Acts

People always communicate each other. They exactly have certain intention for doing the communication. When they produce utterances, they have many purposes such as making statement, describing event, and stating of affair etc. The utterances are also used to do something such as to make question, order, request, forbid and many more. Those kinds of action are called speech act which is concerned with utterances. According to Searle, speech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication (1996). In keeping with the speech act theory, the purpose of our communication is to deliver our message precisely in relation to the production of speech act.

People do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances. Actions performed via utterances are generally called speech act. (Yule, 1996) According to J.L Austin, speech act treats an utterance as an act performed by a speaker in a context with respect to addressees.

3. Speech Acts of Criticism

According to Michel and Fursland (2008) all of us have been criticised at some point in our lives. Being able to accept criticism assertively is one of the most important tasks we face on our journey to maturity. The word criticism comes from an Ancient Greek word describing a person who offers reasoned judgement or analysis, value judgement, interpretation or observation. So to accept criticism maturely we need to be able to accept feedback in the form of analysis, observation or interpretation from other people about our behaviour.

In the present study, criticizing refers to an illocutionary act whose illocutionary point is to give negative evaluation on the hearer's (H) actions, choice, words, and products for which he or she may be held responsible. This act is performed in hope of influencing H's future actions for the better for his or her own benefit as viewed by the speaker (S), or to communicate S's dissatisfaction/ discontent with or dislike regarding what H has done but without implying that what H has done has undesirable consequences for S (adapted from Wierzbicka, 1987). Based on the above definition of the criticizing speech act, the speech act of responding to criticism in this present study is defined as a verbalized reaction to a given criticism. (Nguyen, 2005: 7)

The following preconditions need to be satisfied in order for the speech act of criticizing to take place:

- a. The act performed or the choice made by H is considered inappropriate according to a set of evaluative criteria that S holds or a number of values and norms that S assumes to be shared between himself or herself and H.
- b. S holds that this inappropriate action or choice might bring unfavorable consequences to H or to the general public rather than to S himself or herself.
- c. S feels dissatisfied with H's inappropriate action or choice and feels an urge to make his or her opinion known verbally.
- d. S thinks that his or her criticism will potentially lead to a change in H's future action or behavior and believes that H would not otherwise change or offer a remedy for the situation without his or her criticism.

(Adapted from Wierzbicka's discussion of criticisms, 1987 and Olshtain and Weinbach's discussion of complaints, 1993)

4. Taxonomy of Criticism

According to Nguyen (2005) the taxonomy of criticisms used in the present study, illustrated with samples from the current data. The taxonomy was developed base on her study of L2 New Zealand English criticisms and modified to fit the fresh data of the current study. It should be noted that a criticism may be made up of a number of formulae (CF). For example, the following criticism consists of three formulae (two statements of problem [that the writer had two conclusions and there were structural problems] and a suggestion [that it might be better if the writer ordered the two conclusions in a certain way]): "umm I've just got through this ah and then it's once again in the end of the structure I thought you had two conclusions as well (.) so (.2) but they're both good (.) so I thought maybe if that one came after that one cause that was more of a conclusion than that one perhaps that would be better so they were more like the structural problem" (NS).

Type	Charateristic	Examples
<p>1. Direct criticism</p> <p>a. Negative evaluation</p> <p>b. Disapproval</p> <p>c. Expression of disagreement</p> <p>d. Statement of problem</p>	<p>Explicitly pointing out the problem with H's choice/ actions/ work/ products, etc.</p> <p>Usually expressed via evaluative adjectives with negative meaning or evaluative adjective with positive meaning plus negation.</p> <p>Describing S's attitude towards H's choice, etc.</p> <p>Usually realized by means of negation word "No" or performatives "I don't agree" or "I disagree" (with or without modal) or via arguments against H.</p> <p>Stating errors or problems found with H's choice, etc.</p> <p>Usually expressed by means of such structures as "I find it difficult to understand . . .", "It's difficult to</p>	<p><i>"I think ah it's not a good way to support to one's idea (L), "Umm that's not really a good sentence" (NS).</i></p> <p><i>"I don't like the way you write that (L).</i></p> <p><i>"I don't quite agree with you with some points (.) about the conclusion" (L), "I don't really agree with you 3as strongly as4 you put it here" (NS).</i></p> <p><i>"And there are some incorrect words, for example "nowadays" (L), "You had a few spelling mistakes" (NS). "I can't understand" (L), "I find it difficult to understand your idea" (L).</i></p> <p><i>"I can't understand" (L), "I find it difficult to understand your idea" (L).</i></p>

<p>e. Statement of difficulty</p>	<p>understand ...” Warning about negative consequences or negative effects of H’s choice, etc. For H himself or herself or for the public.</p>	<p>“Someone who don’t— doesn’t agree with you (.) would straight away read that and turn off” (NS).</p>
<p>f. Consequences</p>	<p>Implying the problems with H’s choice/ actions/ work/ products, etc. by correcting H, indicating rules and standard, giving advice, suggesting or even requesting and demanding changes to H’s work/ choice, and by means of different kinds of hints to raise H’s awareness of the</p>	
<p>1. Indirect Criticism</p>	<p>inappropriateness of H’s choice. Including all utterances which have the purpose of fixing errors by asserting specific alternatives to H’s choice, etc. Usually stated as a collective obligation rather than an obligation for H personally or as a rule which S thinks is commonly agreed upon and applied to all. Usually expressed via such structures as “you have to”, “you must”, “it is obligatory that” or “you are required” or “you need”, “it is necessary”.</p>	<p>“safer” not “safe”, comparison” (L), “And you put “their” I think th- e-r-e” (NS). “Theoretically, a conclusion needs to be some sort of a</p>

<p>a. Correction</p>	<p>Usually expressed via such structures as “will you . . . ?”, “can you . . . ?”, “would you . . . ?” or imperatives (with or without politeness marker s), or want-statement.</p>	<p><i>summary” (L).</i></p>
<p>b. Indicating standard</p>	<p>Usually expressed via the performative “I advise you . . .”, or structures with “should” with or without modality.</p>	<p><i>“You must pay attention to grammar” (L), “You have to talk about your opinion in your summary” (L).</i></p>
<p>c. Demand for change</p>	<p>Usually expressed via the performative “I suggest that...” or such structures as “you can”, “you could”, “it would be better if ” or “why don’t you” etc.</p>	<p><i>“I still want you to consider some points” (L), “What I would have liked to have seen is like a definite theme from the start like you’re just TALKING about it” (NS).</i></p>
<p>d. Request for change</p>	<p>Utterances expressing S’s uncertainty to raise H’s awareness of the inappropriateness of H’s choice, etc.</p>	<p><i>“You should change it a little bit.” (L).</i></p>
<p>e. Advice about change</p>	<p>Rhetorical questions to raise H’s awareness of the inappropriateness of H’s choice, etc.</p> <p>Including other kinds of hints that did not belong to (h) and (i). May include sarcasm.</p>	<p><i>“I think if you make a full stop in here the ah (.) this sentence is clear is clear” (L), “It could have been better to put a comma (.) so ah ((laugh))” (NS).</i></p>
<p>e. Advice about change</p>		<p><i>“Are there several paragraphs ah not sure about the</i></p>

<p>f. Suggestion for change</p> <p>g. Expression of uncertainty</p> <p>h. Asking/presupposing</p> <p>i. Other hints</p>		<p><i>paragraphs’’ (NS).</i></p> <p><i>‘‘Did you read your writing again after you finish it?’’ (L).</i></p> <p><i>‘‘I prefer a writing style which are not too personal’’ (L).</i></p>
--	--	---

C. Research Method

In this study the writer will use descriptive qualitative research because the writer wants to describe the perception of impoliteness by Indonesian EFL learners in criticism production, such as students and teachers. The quality method is used because the writer concerns with the perception of impoliteness in criticism production. Therefore, the type of this study can be classified as qualitative study which gives a description for the impoliteness by Indonesian EFL learners. The data in this research taken from EFL learners’ perception of impoliteness in criticism production in movies. In collecting the

data the writer used questionnaire as an instrument to collect the data. The writer uses DCT (Discourse Completion Tasks), DCT' are short written descriptions of scenarios, followed by a short dialogue one participant in the scenarios. In this step, the writer analyzes the data based on the theory of Nguyen (2005: 7).

D. Finding and Discussion

It presents the answer of problem statement that contains some explanation which is compared the theory, the researcher presents the data that have been collected from participants and analyzes.

TABLE 1. Sample data sheet of Types of Criticism Productionin Movies

SAMPLE	DIRECT CRITICISM						INDIRECT CRITICISM								
	N E	D	E D	S P	S D	C	A	I S	D C	R C	A C	S C	E U	A/ P	O H
<i>“I don’t quite agree with you with some points (.) about the conclusion” (L), “I don’t really agree with you 3as strongly as4 you put it here” (NS).</i>			√												
<i>“Are there several paragraphs ah not sure about the paragraphs’ (NS).</i>													√		

NO	TYPES OF CRTSM	MOVIES		
		MV 1	MV 2	MV 3
	DIRECT			
	NE	2	2	3
	D	3	3	2
	ED	4	2	4
	SP	1	1	2
	SD	-	2	-
	C	1	-	1
	TOTAL	11	10	12
	INDIRECT			

	A	2	1	1
	IS	2	3	2
	DC	1	2	3
	RC	2	1	2
	AC	1	2	2
	SC	2	2	2
	EU	3	2	2
	A/P	4	3	4
	OH	2	4	2
	TOTAL	19	20	18
TOTAL		30	30	30

From 30 participants the writer finds that types of criticism that mostly used in movies is indirect criticism. It proved by the amount of indirect criticism that found in movies are 57 indirect criticism, and 33 direct criticism.

E. Conclusion

There are 15 types of criticism production from all the types of criticism. Indirect criticism is mostly used in movies. Meanwhile direct criticism is not found too much in the movie. Negative evaluation 7, disapproval 8, expression of disagreement 10, statement of problem 4, statement of difficulty 2, consequences 2. For indirect criticism the writer found that correction 4, indicating standard 7, demand for change 6, request for change 5, advice about change 5, suggestion for change 6, expression of uncertainty 7, asking or presupposing 11, other hint 8.

Bibliography

- Beebe, L.M., Takahashi, T., and Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). *Pragmatic transfer in ESL criticisms*. In R.C. Scarcella, E.S. Anderson, and S.D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55-94). New York: Newbury House Publishers.
- Bousfield, Derek, 2008. *Impoliteness in Interaction*. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia.
- Brown, Penelope and Stephen Levinson, 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chang, Wei-Lin. 2008. *Australian and Chinese perceptions of (im)politeness in an intercultural apology*. Paper of Pragmatic and Intercultural Communication.
- Chen, H.J. 1996. *Cross-cultural comparison of English and Chinese metapragmatics in criticism*. Indiana University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 408 860).
- Culpeper, Jonathan, 2009. *Impoliteness: using and understanding the language of offence*. In: ESRC Project.

- Culpeper, Jonathan, Marti, Leyla, Mei, Meilian, Nevala, Minna, Gila, Schauer. 2010. *Cross-cultural variation in the perception of impoliteness: a study of impoliteness events reported by students in England, China, Finland, Germany and Turkey*. *Intercult. Pragmat.* 7 (4), 597--624.
- Culpeper, Jonathan. 1996. *Towards an anatomy of impoliteness*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 25: 349–367.
- Fauziati, E. 2014. *Methods of Teaching: English as a Foreign Language*. Era Pustaka Utama. Surakarta
- Indrawati. 2011. *Politeness in Community Practice*. *Journal of language and Literature*.
- Kecskes, Istvan. 2015. *Intercultural Impoliteness*. *Journal of Pragmatic*
- Koh, Adelaine. 2014. *The customer is (not) always king: Impoliteness in the service encounter*. Desertation. Singapore: National University of Singapore.
- Kuntsi, Piia. 2012. *Politeness and impoliteness strategies used by lawyers in the 'DOVER TRIAL'*. Thesis. Joensuu. University of Eastern Finland.
- Laitinen, Melina. 2011. *Breaking The Rules of Communication: verbal and nonverbal impoliteness in the American Hospital drama House M.D.* Thesis. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.
- Leech, Geoffrey, 1983. *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Levinson, Stephen C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Locher, Miriam and Derek Bousfield. 2007. *'Impoliteness and Power in Language.'* In *Impoliteness in Language*, Derek Bousfield and Miriam Locher (eds.). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Michel, F. 2008. *Assert Yourself*. Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions.
- Nishimura, Yukiko. 2010. *Impoliteness in Japanese BBS interactions: Observations from message exchanges in two online communities*. *Journal of Politeness Research*.
- Saidi, Mavadat. 2015. *EFL Learners' Perception of (im)politeness: The Possible Gender Difference*. *International Journal of Language and Applied Linguistics*.
- Setiyadi, Bambang. 2006. *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*. Graha Ilmu. Yogyakarta
- Tajeddin et al. 2014. *Cross-cultural Perceptions of Impoliteness by Native Speakers and EFL Learners: The Case of Apology Speech Act*. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*.
- Thomson, Rachel and Agyekum, Kofi. 2015. *Impoliteness: The Ghanaian Standpoint*. *International Journal of Society, Culture, & Language*
- Watts, Richard J., 2003. *Politeness*. CUP, Cambridge.
- Yule, George. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press