



Evaluating Impoliteness in L2: A Study of Pragmatic Competence of Indonesian EFL Teacher Trainees

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The last two decades have witnessed many studies reporting factors that promote second language (L2) learners' pragmatic competence such as pragmatic input, language proficiency, and pragmatic instruction. Length of formal study, although it may relate to language proficiency indirectly, has been a rather neglected aspect in pragmatic acquisition research. This study analyses the effects of length of time spent learning English formally on English language learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness and the foundations by which they evaluate it. Empirical data were collected by means of questionnaires and a semi-structured interview from one hundred EFL teacher trainees at a private university in Central Java Indonesia. The participants were divided into two groups. Group 1 ($n = 50$) studied English for nine and half years and group 2 ($n = 50$) studied English for eight and half years. The overall results revealed that the length of time spent learning English affected the learners' capability of comprehending impoliteness in particular off-record impoliteness. The English learners in the present study mostly used Quality face violation as the foundation of impoliteness evaluation.

Keywords: mock politeness, off-record impoliteness, implied impoliteness, pragmatic comprehension

Introduction

Pragmatic competence represents one of the key components of communicative competence for language learners to appropriately function in the target language communication. It embodies a rule of language use; the rule that enables language users to relate utterances to their meanings, to their intentions, and to situational contexts (Taguchi, 2009). Within L2 acquisition research, under the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), L2 learners' or non-native speakers' ability to comprehend and to use L2 pragmatic knowledge is scrutinized comprehensively. Many ILP studies have found that L2 pragmatic competence could be developed through instruction (e.g., Hosseini & Safari, 2018; Takimoto, 2010, 2013; Soler, 2005). Despite the enlightening finding, other ILP studies have reported that L2 learners' pragmatics knowledge is not on a par with that of native speakers, partly due to the reason that L2 learners often carry L1 pragmatic baggage, consequently they tend to revert to L1 pragmatic norms when performing L2 speech acts. This has made their speech act strategies different from that of native speakers (Bu, 2010; Wijayanto, 2016). In the area of pragmatic comprehension, ILP studies have reported that comprehending non-literal meanings or formulaic utterances is challenging for L2 learners or users (Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; Hagiwara, 2009; Holtgraves, 2007; Lee, 2002; Pratama, Nurkamto, Rustono, & Marmanto, 2017; Taguchi, 2005), in particular understanding irony (Shively, Menke, & Manzón-Omundson, 2008). An aspect of pragmatic competence that has recently received growing research interest is L2 learners' ability to recognise what constitutes impoliteness according to L2 pragmatic norms.

Recent literature has called for introducing impoliteness in L2 classroom contexts for a number of reasons. First, like politeness, impoliteness is a part of daily language use in L1 and L2, and hence introducing L2 impoliteness would help L2 learners to deal with impolite interactions (Ahmadi & Soureshjani, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer & Mugford, 2017). Second, by understanding L2 impoliteness, language learners could shun inappropriate language use in intercultural communication (Tajeddin, Alemi, & Razzaghi, 2014) and they would be able to draw distinction between talking forthrightly and speaking impolitely in L2 (Wijayanto, Prasetyarini, & Hikmat, 2017). Third, despite their high language proficiency, L2 learners or users are not always able to appropriately respond to impoliteness directed to them (Félix-Brasdefer & McKinnon, 2016; Mugford, 2008). Finally, L2 learners or non-native speakers grasp what constitutes impoliteness differently from native speakers do (Dewaele, 2017; Haugh, 2010). Therefore, introducing what constitutes impoliteness in L2 classroom particularly its social aspects and developing language learners' ability to appropriately respond to impoliteness in interpersonal communication are crucial (Félix-Brasdefer & McKinnon, 2016). Nonetheless, Mugford (2008) advises language teachers not to teach language learners to be rude, but rather help them "to identify potentially impolite practices and offering ways of dealing with impoliteness" (p. 375).

Despite the growing number of research of impoliteness in L2 contexts, very few have considered FL/L2 learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness and the foundations by which they evaluate it. What is more, even though studies have reported many factors that could enhance L2 pragmatic acquisition such as pragmatic input (Hassal, 2004; Schauer, 2004), pragmatic instruction (Hosseini & Safari, 2018; Soler, 2005; Takimoto, 2013), and language proficiency (Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Garcia, 2004; Matsumura, 2003; Takahashi, 2005), very little is known about aspects that could foster L2 learners' ability to comprehend impoliteness. This study attempts to examine effects of length of time spent learning English on the ability of Indonesian learners of English to evaluate impoliteness and the foundations by which they evaluate it. The length of formal study was selected as a predictor that might influence comprehension of impoliteness as it has been scarcely explored by interlanguage pragmatic research. One hundred Indonesian native speakers with two different length of time spent learning English were examined for their ability to evaluate impoliteness in four complaint episodes. Empirical data were elicited by means of questionnaires and a semi-structured interview. The learners' evaluation towards impoliteness was analysed through their ability to calculate the level of offensiveness of each complaint utterance by the use of its linguistic cues and social contexts. The foundations of impoliteness were analysed based on violation to Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002) *rappport management*.

Literature Review

Impoliteness

Unlike politeness that is operated to maintain social harmony, impoliteness is intentionally planned to offend others or to stir social conflicts. Within the classical study of impoliteness, what is considered impolite linguistic behavior is interpreted on the basis of verbal and non-verbal data produced by research participants. To perform data analysis, researchers are guided by sets of predetermined theoretical frameworks in which *face* and *intentionality* are the two crucial aspects to observe impoliteness. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), people maintain two types of *face* in social interactions, that is, *positive face*, the wants to be ratified, admired and accepted by others, and *negative face*, the desires to be free from imposition. Impoliteness is assumed to take place when speakers intentionally attack other collocutors' negative or positive face with offensive language verbally (Bousfield, 2007; Culpeper, 2010) or non-verbally (Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003). Bousfield and Culpeper (2008) further underscore that impoliteness is not pragmatic failure; it is linguistic behaviour that is systematically and strategically planned. In the same vein, Bousfield (2008) affirms that when speakers employ impoliteness, they intentionally refuse to mitigate their language and they exacerbate face damage by purposefully

employing aggressive language. In a rather different view, Culpeper (2005) states that both speakers' face attacks and hearers' perception towards the attacks are vital in observing impoliteness: "impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates a face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)" (p. 38).

Culpeper (1996) builds five impoliteness strategies that have opposite orientations to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies. *Bald on-record impoliteness*—using language in a direct, clear, and concise way in circumstances in which a speaker has no intention to maintain others' face. *Positive impoliteness*—using language to deliberately damage the addressee's positive face. *Negative impoliteness*—using language to intentionally damage the addressee's negative face. *Sarcasm* or *mock impoliteness*—using politeness to express impoliteness. The strategy is replaced by a general term *off-record impoliteness* that embraces sarcasms and other strategies that allow hearers to comprehend an offensive point by way of implicature (Culpeper, 2005). *Withhold politeness*—an absence of politeness where it would be expected. The taxonomy has been useful to study impoliteness in some different areas such as courtroom discourse (Kryk-Kastovsky, 2006), TV shows and movies (Bousfield, 2007; Culpeper et al., 2003; Kantara, 2010), political speech discourse (Kienpointner, 2008), computer-mediated communication (e.g., Neurauter-Kessels, 2011) and L2 learning (Félix-Brasdefer & McKinnon, 2016; Félix-Brasdefer & Mugford, 2017; Tajeddin et al., 2014; Wijayanto et al., 2017). In general, the studies have reported two fundamental aspects that impoliteness entails. First, non-cooperative communication strategies that are intended to put interlocutors into difficult situations to maintain interpersonal relationships and to achieve mutual understanding. Second, non-cooperative communication that is intentionally expressed to attack others' face through prosody or variations in loudness, pitch, and tempo of utterances. Importantly, impoliteness could be provoked by some factors such as closeness or intimacy, imbalanced social power, and conflicts of interest.

In contrast to Culpeper's (1996, 2005) face attacks, impoliteness can be observed through the ways in which people maintain and threaten interpersonal relations theorized by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002) as *rapport management*. According to Spencer-Oatey (2005), "rapport refers to the relative harmony and smoothness of relations between people, and *rapport management* refers to the management (or mismanagement) of relations between people" (p. 96). Spencer-Oatey (2005) further states that in interpersonal relations, rapport can be dynamically maintained, enhanced, and damaged, and three key bases of rapport management underlie harmonious or disharmonious interpersonal relations: (1) Management of face sensitivity (including management of quality face, relational face, and social identity face), (2) Management of sociality rights (*equity* and *association* rights) and obligations in relation to others, (3) Mutual relationship that comprises three aspects: involvement in mutual relationships, empathy, and respect. Impoliteness could be resulted from violation to the subcomponents of rapport management. In this study, it is called *rapport mismanagement* (Table 1).

However, other literature tends to consider impoliteness linguistically opaque or discursive and it is context dependence. In other words, it is not intrinsically embedded in particular words or utterances (Mills, 2009). It is the result of a negative evaluative judgment towards conducts and linguistic behaviour by co-participants on the basis of whether the conducts and linguistic behaviour comply with sociocultural contexts or social expectations (Culpeper, 2011; Locher, 2006) and whether the linguistic behaviour appropriately conforms to the norms of interactions (Locher & Watts, 2008). Considering that impoliteness is discursive, co-participants can be very subjective when making impoliteness judgments. They might rely on their own perceptions, beliefs, expectations, and knowledge about contextual factors or socio-cultural norms when they evaluate what constitutes impolite language use. Evaluating impoliteness in intercultural communication could be challenging as people from different cultural backgrounds may perceive what constitutes impoliteness differently and they may also interact with different conventions of meaning. Regarding this, Kecskes (2017) asserts that in intercultural communication collocutors have to interpret and construct impoliteness via context of speech situations and they cannot always depend their interpretation on existing common ground and shared knowledge.

However, beyond the theory of discursive impoliteness, verbal aggressions, taboo words, and pejoratives such as insults, swearwords and slurs are commonly perceived as impolite (Dynel, 2015).

TABLE 1
Rapport Mismanagement

Sub-components of <i>rapport management</i>	Sub-components of <i>rapport mismanagement</i>	Examples from the present data
1. Quality face: One's desires to receive positive evaluations of his/her personal qualities.	Undermine, threaten, and negatively evaluate one's competence, appearance, achievement, and all other aspects that relate to one's self-esteem.	I think he is not able to use good language; the irony is impolite. (lack ability to use polite/good language)
2. Relational face: One's desires for people to acknowledge and uphold his/her social identities or roles.	Undermine, threaten, and negatively evaluate one's social identities or roles, for example, as a party leader, a close friend, and so on.	The main reason is that the complaint is directed to a lecturer. A lecturer is a guru, right? so the complaint is impolite.
3. Social Identity face: One's desires for people to acknowledge his/her public worth or value as a member of a larger group he/she belongs to and/or affiliates with.	Undermine, threaten, and negatively evaluate one's positive attributes as a member of a larger group he/she belongs to and/or affiliates with.	In Indonesian culture, such a complaint is very impolite, but in other culture, it may be okay, that's my opinion.
4. Equity right: Claims for good personal consideration and fair treatments.	Impose upon others improperly, treat others unfairly or discriminatively, show prejudice/bias, victimise, take advantage of others, and so forth.	It's unfair, why doesn't he discuss about what has happened to the laptop. He cannot directly blame his friend. Who knows it's not him, or maybe it's already broken.
5. Association right: Entitlements of social involvement with others in keeping up relationships, and of receiving enough empathy and respect.	Show indifferent, unsympathetic and disrespectful behaviours.	Uhm..., I think, he is very rude, he really doesn't respect his friend, he must not use that offensive language.
6. Interactional goals: One's efforts to achieve transactional and/or relational goals.	Block someone's efforts to achieve his/her transactional and/or relational goals, such as rejecting, denying association and so forth.	It was not found in the present study.

Studies of Impoliteness in FL/L2 Learning

To date there are two research categories that have investigated impoliteness in L2 learning contexts. The first type of study investigates impoliteness embedded in speech act production by FL/L2 learners (e.g., Szczepaniak-Kozak, 2016; Wijayanto et al., 2017). An interlanguage pragmatic study by Wijayanto et al., (2017) examined impoliteness embedded in complaint utterances. Fifty Indonesian learners of English were assigned to respond to scenarios of discourse completion tasks orally. The study examined whether speakers' social status and social distance influenced applications of direct and indirect complaint strategies. Impoliteness was found in the ways in which the EFL learners expressed direct complaints. For example, they employed swearwords and other offensive language such as insults, direct criticisms, and verbal threats. The occurrence of the impoliteness was predicted as the result of low pragmatic knowledge, the influence of L1 sociocultural norms, limited models of L2 complaints, and misperception about the stereotype of native English speakers' communication mode.

A longitudinal study Szczepaniak-Kozak (2016) examined Polish EFL learners' ability to develop request strategies. Empirical data were collected at the first and second year of study by means of discourse completion tasks from 57 students of bilingual philology studies in Poland. The result showed that at the first year the learners' requests mostly sounded impolite as they frequently included aggravators such as reprimands and aggressive interrogatives. At the second year, they used less aggravators, but they still sounded impolite as they frequently employed irony, scorn, and condemnation,

and they used limited mitigation devices to soften the requests. The research suggested that the length of time spent studying L2 could enhance the learners' linguistic competence, but not their ability to sound polite.

The second type of study has examined perception of impoliteness by FL/L2 learners (e.g., Aditama, 2017; Félix-Brasdefer & McKinnon, 2016; Masitha, 2016; Mugford, 2008; Perdana, 2017; Tajeddin et al., 2014). Mugford (2008) studied perception of impoliteness by L2 users ($n = 84$) in Mexico. To collect empirical data, Mugford asked research participants to retell impolite situations that they had experienced in L2 interactions. The findings were quite surprising. Despite their high L2 proficiency, they were mostly shocked and lost for words when they were confronted with impoliteness. Even though they knew how to be rude in L2, they were unable to respond to impoliteness directed to them. They just kept silent when native speakers insulted them and one of the participants responded to a shop assistant's rudeness with polite gratitude. The study suggested that the L2 users' inability to respond to impoliteness was partly due to their inexperience with unpleasant communicative realities such as impoliteness. The study concluded that impoliteness or rudeness should be introduced in L2 classroom so that L2 learners would be able to deal with impoliteness/rudeness in interpersonal communication.

A study by Tajeddin et al. (2014) compared between native English speakers and Iranian EFL learners in perceiving impolite apologies and it examined criteria they would consider when they calculated the degree of impoliteness. Both groups were asked to rate eight scenarios containing application of apologies using Likert scale, ranging from 1 (neutral) to 5 (very impolite). The study found that both groups used nineteen criteria to judge the levels of impoliteness. Out of this number, eighteen criteria were common to both groups. The similar use of the criteria was predicted as the result of the prevalent use of apologies in daily communication across different cultures. Despite the similarity, the study found differences in the amount of weight given to each criteria and the native English speakers were more aware of pragmalinguistic failures in the apologies.

Masitha (2016) investigated EFL learners' ability to comprehend the degree of offensiveness of taboo words used in internet memes. Fifty Indonesian native speakers who were English learners at an English department of a university in Surakarta-Indonesia evaluated the degree of offensiveness of 25 internet memes containing 108 taboo words. The result revealed that the learners gave various evaluations to the memes, such as impolite (29.8%), rude (10.2%), disgusting (7.7%), and not good to be seen (6.3%). Surprisingly, the rest of the respondents (46%) did not understand the meaning of the memes. However, the study did not examine factors that could affect the learners' ability to understand the meanings of taboo words used in the memes. It only suggested that taboo words were not usually taught in L2 classrooms therefore many of the learners did not understand the meanings of taboo words.

Aditama (2017) examined Indonesian EFL learners' ability to perceive impoliteness occurring in 10 movies. The study used Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness taxonomy as the framework to evaluate the impoliteness. The results showed that the EFL learners were able to comprehend almost all of the sub strategies of impoliteness classified by Culpeper. Some of the EFL learners also proposed some impolite acts that were not included in Culpeper's (1996) classification such as using of slurs or racist words, harassing, bullying, and showing arrogance. However, the study did not examine factors that could affect the learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness. What is more, as the study used the classical concept of impoliteness, it could not capture impoliteness emerging from violation to social expectations, cultural norms, and other social aspects.

A study closely related to the present research is that of Perdana (2017). The study examined Indonesian EFL learners' ability to comprehend politeness/impoliteness in complaint utterances. Empirical data were collected by means of written discourse completion tasks (DCTs) and structured interviews from 25 EFL learners in Surakarta, Indonesia. The learners filled in nine DCT scenarios containing complaint events. Then they exchanged the completed DCTs one another and they had to evaluate whether the complaint expressions written by the other participants were polite or impolite. Finally, they took part in structured interviews to elicit the bases underlying the evaluation of politeness and impoliteness. The results revealed that the EFL learners employed pragmalinguistic cues, collocutors'

social power and distance, context situations, and the degree of imposition of the complaints as the grounds of politeness/impoliteness evaluation. Nevertheless, the study did not examine factors that could affect the EFL learners' ability to evaluate politeness/impoliteness.

In summary, studies of impoliteness in L2 learning contexts have reported that FL/L2 learners or users associated impoliteness with particular linguistic cues such as offensive language (Aditama, 2017; Masitha, 2016; Mugford, 2008), with violation of social and contextual aspects of communication (Perdana, 2017), and with failure to observe different cultural aspects, social distance and power, pragmatic and linguistic inappropriateness, and other discourse moves (Tajeddin et al., 2014). Some factors that could influence L2 learners' ability to comprehend impoliteness include previous experience with offensive language use in L2 (Mugford, 2008), pragmalinguistic knowledge (Tajeddin et al., 2014), and language proficiency (Perdana, 2017).

The present study intends to explore Indonesian EFL learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness. It particularly investigates whether the length of time spent learning English contributes to their ability to evaluate impoliteness. The following research questions are raised.

- (1) Does length of time spent learning English influence Indonesian EFL learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness?
- (2) What aspects are employed by the learners as foundations of impoliteness evaluation?

Method

Participants

The research was conducted at an English education department of a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. A total of 100 native speakers of Indonesian participated in the study. The participants were selected randomly from 870 EFL teacher trainees. Their ages ranged from 20 to 23 years old, with the average age of 21.5 years. The participants were classified into two groups based on the length of formal study. The first group (henceforth, Group 1) consisted of 50 students who had studied English for six years at the secondary schools and three and half years at the English department. The second group (henceforth, Group 2) consisted of 50 students who had studied English for six years at the secondary schools and two and half years at the English department. The participants had never previously lived in English speaking countries.

Research Instrument and Procedure

A questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were applied to elicit the research data. The questionnaire was in the form of discourse completion tasks (DCTs) that contained four situations in which people made complaints. Each DCT had context descriptions that provided the research participants with specific situations, settings, speaker's roles, familiarities between interlocutors, and their relative status levels. Two episodes contained complaint utterances with off-record impoliteness and the other two contained complaints with aggressive language which all had been provided previously by the research participants of the researcher's former research. Each DCT situation was provided with a scale judgment. For example:

Adam has predicted that he would get A for his TEFL subject. Unfortunately, today he finds that he gets E. He is very unhappy with it as he did well on the examination and on all the assignments. He goes to the lecturer with whom he is not quite familiar and makes a complaint.

Adam says: *I thought I did well on my exam and assignments, but you gave me E. Thanks for that. You are a really professional lecturer.*

What do you think of the complaint above? Please circle your choice of the following options.

1. Polite
2. Impolite

The research participants received the questionnaire and they had to read all the DCT scenarios systematically. They were encouraged to ask questions if they did not understand about the context situation. When they were ready, they had to evaluate the complaint utterances in each episode by circling the options provided (polite or impolite). After evaluating the complaints, they took part in a semi-structured interview. The interview elicited the foundations that they had considered when evaluating the complaints.

Data Analysis

The EFL learners' evaluation towards impoliteness was analysed through their ability to calculate the level of offensiveness of each complaint by the use of its linguistic cues and social context. Foundations of impoliteness were analysed based on violation to subcomponents of Spencer-Oatey's (2000, 2002, 2005) rapport management (see Table 1 above). The study applied Pearson's chi-square test with .05 level of significance to analyse whether the differences in the evaluation of impoliteness by the two groups of EFL learners were significant.

Results

Research Question 1: Does length of time spent learning English influence Indonesian EFL learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness?

The evaluation of politeness/impoliteness in Situation 1

DCT situation: Adam predicts that the mark of his TEFL subject will be A. Unfortunately, today he finds that he gets E. He is very unhappy with it as he did well on the examination and on the assignments. He goes to the lecturer with whom he is not quite familiar and makes a complaint.

Adam says: *I thought I did well on my exam and assignments, but you gave me E. Thanks for that. You are a really professional lecturer.*

Table 2 displays the ratings given by the two groups of EFL learners on the degree of offensiveness of the complaint utterances used in situation 1. It shows that most of the learners of Group 1 and Group 2 rated it impolite. Nevertheless, the learners of Group 1 rated it impolite more often than did those of Group 2 and the difference in the rating was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 100) = 23.52, p < .05$.

TABLE 2
Ratings of Politeness/Impoliteness in Situation 1

Participant	Polite	Impolite	Total N	df	χ^2	p
Group 1	2	48	50			
Group 2	23	27	50	1	23.52	.000001
			100			

The evaluation of politeness/impoliteness in Situation 2

DCT situation: John and Jerry are close friends. John borrows Jerry’s laptop to do some assignments. When the laptop is returned, Jerry finds that its screen is broken and it cannot switch on. He complains about it to John.

Jerry says: *Hey, what the f*** were you doing with my laptop? My laptop is broken. My thesis is in it and the submission deadline is tomorrow.*

Table 3 shows the ratings given by the two groups of EFL learners on the degree of offensiveness of the complaint utterances used in situation 2. It shows that most of the learners of Group 1 and Group 2 rated it impolite and the rating was not significantly different, $\chi^2(1, N = 100) = 0.25, p < .05$.

TABLE 3
Ratings of Politeness/Impoliteness in Situation 2

Participant	Polite	Impolite	Total N	df	χ^2	p
Group 1	11	39	50			
Group 2	9	41	50	1	0.25	.617075
			100			

The evaluation of politeness/impoliteness in Situation 3

DCT situation: Andrew is at the academic administration office to ask for information about the marks that are missing from his transcript of records. He is waiting for 30 minutes in the queue. When it is his turn, he finds that the administrative staffs ignore him and they seem to have a chat about the football games they have watched on TV. Andrew is unhappy and he makes a complaint.

Andrew says: *Thanks god, everyone in this office is very helpful.*

Table 4 displays the ratings given by the two groups of EFL learners on the degree of offensiveness of the complaint utterances used in situation 3. It shows that most of the learners of Group 1 rated the complaint impolite. By contrast, most of the learners of Group 2 rated it polite. The rating was significantly different, $\chi^2(1, N = 100) = 17.6471, p < .05$.

TABLE 4
Ratings of Politeness/Impoliteness in Situation 3

Participant	Polite	Impolite	Total N	df	χ^2	p
Group 1	14	36	50			
Group 2	35	15	50	1	17.6471	.000027
			100			

The evaluation of politeness/impoliteness in Situation 4

DCT situation: Jenny is queuing at the gas station around 10 minutes. Suddenly, a car hits her car from the back but its driver does not take the incident seriously and he ignores it. Jenny gets out of her car and makes a complaint.

Jenny says: *Hey you, idiot! Look, you hit my car. Now you want to run away from me hah?*

Table 5 displays the ratings given by the two groups of EFL learners on the degree of offensiveness of the complaint utterances used in situation 4. The table shows that most of the learners of Group 1 and

Group 2 similarly rated it impolite and the rating was not significantly different, $\chi^2(1, N = 100) = 0.2976$, $p < .05$.

TABLE 5
Ratings of Politeness/Impoliteness in Situation 4

Participant	Polite	Impolite	Total N	df	χ^2	p
Group 1	9	41	50			
Group 2	7	43	50	1	0.2976	.585379
			100			

The overall evaluation of politeness/impoliteness

Table 6 displays the overall ratings given by the two groups of EFL learners on the degree of offensiveness of the complaint utterances used in the four situations. The table shows that most of the learners of Group 1 and Group 2 rated the complaints impolite. Nevertheless, the learners of Group 1 rated them impolite more often than did those of Group 2. The rating was significantly different, $\chi^2(1, N = 400) = 18.10$, $p < .05$.

TABLE 6
The Overall Ratings of Politeness/Impoliteness in the Four Situations

Participant	Polite	Impolite	Total N	df	χ^2	p
Group 1	36	164	200			
Group 2	74	126	200	1	18.10	.000021
			400			

Research Question 2: What aspects are employed by the learners as foundations of impoliteness evaluation?

The foundations of impoliteness evaluation in Situation 1

Table 7 displays the foundations of impoliteness evaluation in situation 1. It shows that negative evaluations towards Quality face was mostly used as the foundation of impoliteness evaluation and the second common foundation was negative evaluation towards Relational face. Group 1 used both aspects slightly more often than did Group 2. The other aspects were used only by Group 1.

TABLE 7
The Foundations of Impoliteness Evaluation in Situation 1

Evaluation	Foundations	Frequency (%)	
		Group 1	Group 2
Impolite	Negative evaluation to Quality face <i>-Inability to use polite language</i>	24	20
	Negative evaluation to Relational face <i>-Undermining social role</i>	9	7
	Negative evaluation to Social Identity face <i>- Pointing out characteristics of a particular group/culture</i>	5	-
	Violation to Equity right <i>-Unfairly treated</i>	6	-
	Violation to Association right <i>-Showing no respect</i>	4	-

The data showed that most of the EFL learners of Group 1 and Group 2 stated that the complainers' inability to use good language made the complaint impolite (Negative evaluation to Quality face).

- (1) It is impolite because Adam’s complaint sounds polite, but it expresses a different meaning. He uses an irony to mock the lecturer, as if she was not able to do her job.

Both groups similarly stated that undermining the complaine’e’s social role (lecturer) made the complaint impolite (Negative evaluation to Relational face).

- (2) The main reason is that the complaint is directed to a lecturer. A lecturer is a guru, right? so the complaint is impolite.

Other aspects such as characteristics of a particular culture, unfair treatments, and disrespect were used as the foundations of impoliteness evaluation only by Group 1.

Table 8 displays the foundations of impoliteness evaluation in situation 2. It shows that negative evaluation towards Quality face was mostly used as the foundation of impoliteness evaluation. The EFL learners of Group 2 used it considerably more often than did those of Group 1. However, the EFL learners of Group 1 used other aspects more frequently than did those of Group 2.

TABLE 8
The Foundations of Impoliteness Evaluation in Situation 2

Evaluation	Foundations	Frequency (%)	
		Group 1	Group 2
Impolite	Negative evaluation to Quality face - <i>Inability to use polite language</i>	15	29
	Negative evaluation to Relational face - <i>Failing to uphold a good friendship</i>	11	9
	Negative evaluation to Social Identity face - <i>Culture of a particular group</i>	7	2
	Violation to Equity right - <i>Unfairly treated</i>	6	1

The complainers’ inability to use good language was one of the Quality face aspects mostly used by both groups to evaluate impoliteness.

- (3) Even though they are close friends, it is impolite because he uses swearwords.

Failure to uphold a good friendship was an aspect of Relational face that was often employed to evaluate impoliteness by the EFL learners of both groups. For example

- (4) It’s impolite I think, although the laptop is broken, he shouldn’t be like that to a close friend. He doesn’t seem to keep a good friendship. I do have a close friend, but I won’t say that kind of language to my friend.

The culture of a specific group was an aspect of Social Identity face that was frequently used to evaluate impoliteness.

- (5) In Indonesian culture, such a complaint is very impolite, but in other culture, it may be okay, that’s my opinion.

Unfair treatment to others was an aspect of Equity right that was regularly used to evaluate impoliteness by some of the EFL learners of Group 1.

(6) The complaint is impolite. Something wrong happens to the laptop, he should have asked questions about it properly. Yeah, like asking him to explain the problem. He must not directly complain John with offensive language like that, it's very... very... impolite.

Table 9 displays the foundations of impoliteness evaluation in situation 3. It shows that negative evaluation towards Quality face was mostly used as the foundation of impoliteness evaluation. The EFL learners of Group 1 used it considerably more frequently than did those of Group 2. Besides, the EFL learners of Group 1 used some other aspects that were not used by those of Group 2.

TABLE 9
The Foundations of Impoliteness Evaluation in Situation 3

Evaluation	Foundations	Frequency (%)	
		Group 1	Group 2
Impolite	Negative evaluation to Quality face <i>-Inability to use polite language</i>	23	15
	Negative evaluation to Social Identity face <i>-Seniority/older citizens</i>	6	-
	Negative evaluation to Relational face <i>-Undermining social role</i>	1	-
	Violation to Equity right <i>-Unfair treatment</i>	4	-
	Violation to Association right <i>-Showing no respect</i>	2	-

Repeatedly, the complainers' inability to use good language was one of the Quality face aspects mostly used as the basis to evaluate impoliteness. For example,

(7) It's not polite, as I told you previously, using irony to complain is not polite.

Unlike the EFL learners of Group 2, some of the EFL learners of Group 1 associated impoliteness with a challenge to other's seniority (Challenge to someone's Social Identity face). For example,

(8) The problem in this case, Andrew is a student and he is talking to administrative staffs who are older than him.

The following excerpt shows that one of the EFL learners of Group 1 used disrespectfulness (an aspect of Association rights) as a foundation of evaluating impoliteness.

(9) However, he should have used polite language, or in Javanese language it's called *ngajeni* (showing respect), even though he is irritated in this situation.

Table 10 displays the foundations of impoliteness evaluation in situation 4. It shows that negative evaluation towards Quality face was mostly used as the foundation of impoliteness evaluation. The EFL learners of Group 2 used it considerably more often than did those of Group 1. The second common aspect was negative evaluation towards Social Identity face, which was employed by the EFL learners of Group 1 slightly more often than it was by those of Group 2. The least was violation to Association rights and it was used only by those of Group 1.

TABLE 10
The Foundations of Impoliteness Evaluation in Situation 4

Evaluation	Foundations	Frequency (%)	
		Group 1	Group 2
Impolite	Negative evaluation to Quality face <i>-Inability to use polite language</i>	23	33
	Negative evaluation to Social Identity face <i>-Strangers (unfamiliar interlocutors)</i> <i>- Particular culture</i>	14	10
	Violation to Association right <i>-Undermining interpersonal relationships</i>	4	-

One of Quality face aspects commonly used by the EFL learners of both groups was the complainers' inability to use good language. For example,

(10) As I said previously, she used the offensive word 'idiot' to complain other people, so it's impolite.

The EFL learners of both groups associated impoliteness with two aspects of speaker's Social Identity face, namely unfamiliar persons (strangers) and cultural values of a particular group. They used the former similarly (Group 1 = 8%, Group 2 = 7%), nevertheless those of Group 1 used the latter twice more often than did those of Group 2 (6% and 3% respectively).

(11) In my opinion, when the harsh complaint is targeted to a stranger, it is very impolite.

(12) Because she used an offensive word 'idiot' in the complaint. Maybe it is common in Western culture to do such a complaint, but in Indonesian culture it is very impolite.

Some of the EFL learners of Group 1 used violation to Association right (the complaint would bring about bad impacts to other people) as a basis of impoliteness evaluation, but those of Group 2 did not, for example

(13) Jenny said "Hey you, idiot!". This will incite anger and the problem will not be settled. If the driver is unhappy about it, they will be involved in fierce quarrels.

Discussion

The objectives of the present study were to examine whether the length of time spent learning English influences Indonesian EFL learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness and to explore foundations of impoliteness evaluation used by the learners. Two groups of Indonesian EFL learners evaluated four complaint utterances used in four different discourse situations. Pearson's chi-square test was applied to analyse the differences in the evaluation of impoliteness.

The results showed that the four complaints were generally evaluated as impolite. The results of the chi-square test indicated that the EFL learners of Group 1 (studied English longer) and those of Group 2 (studied English shorter) had no differences in evaluating explicit complaints that contained offensive language (the complaints in situation 2 and 4). The offensive language might have given them an easy clue to observe the impoliteness or they might have been informed by common knowledge: the easiest way to express impoliteness is using offensive words such as swearwords. The finding confirms the earlier studies (e.g., Aditama, 2017; Perdana, 2017) that have revealed that to perceive impoliteness, EFL learners depend mainly on offensive words. The finding also supports the classical notion of impoliteness, that is, an intentional attack to others' face through offensive words (Bousfield, 2007; Culpeper, 1996).

The EFL learners of both groups were able to comprehend offensive points conveyed through implicatures (complaints in situation 1 and 3) labelled as mock politeness (Culpeper, 1996) or off-record impoliteness (Culpeper, 2005). The EFL learners of both groups rated the complaints in both situations impolite, nevertheless the EFL learners who studied English longer evaluated mock politeness as impolite significantly more often than did those who studied English shorter. This seems to suggest that understanding offensive points by way of implicatures such as verbal irony or mock politeness requires high language proficiency (by the assumption of the length of study). Indeed, to comprehend verbal irony is challenging for L2 learners as they have to be able to interpret utterances in their contexts and to understand the reasons that the literal meanings of the utterances are not compatible with the contexts (Shively et al., 2008). The present finding supports previous studies (e.g., Conklin & Schmitt, 2008; Hagiwara, 2009; Holtgraves, 2007; Pratama et al., 2017) that have revealed that comprehending non-literal meanings and formulaic utterances is demanding for L2 learners.

Regarding the foundations of impoliteness, the most important finding to emerge from the data is that the EFL learners of Group 1 and Group 2 mostly used the complainers' inability to use refined language as the basis of their impoliteness evaluation. The present study also found that the EFL learners employed culture in general as the foundation of impoliteness evaluation. However, what they meant by 'culture' in this case was no more than communication style. Indonesians commonly think that people from English speaking countries are outspoken and rude and it is tolerable for them to express their mind directly (Hassal, 2004). Supporting Hassal (2004), one of the EFL learners evaluated an impolite complaint as follows: *"Because she used an offensive word 'idiot' in the complaint. Maybe it is common in Western culture to do such a complaint, but in Indonesian culture it is very impolite"*. Another important result relating to the second research question is that they used social expectation or norms particularly respect as the foundation of impoliteness evaluation. This is in line with Culpeper (2011), Kádár and Haugh (2013), and Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2016) who similarly claim that respect is one of the essential aspects of social expectation and it is the most prominent foundation of (im)politeness evaluation. However, only the EFL learners who studied English longer (Group 1) used the aspect as the basis of impoliteness evaluation. All in all, the data indicated that the EFL learners who studied English longer were more capable of providing a wide range of factors that underlain impoliteness evaluation. This suggests that the longer they learned L2 (English), the more capable they identified various factors that could be associated with impoliteness.

Conclusion

The effects of length of time spent learning English on Indonesian EFL learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness and the foundations of impoliteness evaluation were examined. Length of formal study has a significant influence on the EFL learners' ability to evaluate impoliteness, particularly mock politeness or off-record impoliteness. The EFL learners who studied English longer were much more capable of comprehending offensive points expressed through mock politeness. This indicates that comprehending implicit impoliteness requires high pragmatic competence. Various aspects were used by the EFL learners in the present study as the foundations of impoliteness evaluation. Nevertheless, those who studied English longer were more capable of providing a wide range of factors underlying impoliteness evaluation. This indicates that the length of time spent learning English contributes to the increase of Indonesian EFL learners' ability to learn more aspects that can be associated with impoliteness.

Nonetheless, the data of the present study were limited to the results of evaluation of impoliteness in four discourse situations of complaint, therefore the results might not cover all discursive aspects of face management and mismanagement. Future research should explore them in various social situations. The present study investigated EFL learners' ability to evaluate off-record impoliteness expressed via verbal irony (overstatements); future research could examine their ability to recognize impoliteness expressed through ironic understatements and sarcasms.

This study suggests that it is crucial to introduce impoliteness and its social aspects to Indonesian EFL learners in all levels of proficiency (or to L2 learners in general) through pragmatic teaching so that they would have better understanding of potential impolite communication early and they would be able to deal with it in real life situations. Importantly, teaching politeness/impoliteness should become an essential part of teaching communication skills in particular speaking and writing skills. By understanding L2 impoliteness and its damaging effects to other interlocutors, L2 learners would have better understanding of how to choose and to use language in interpersonal communication. The findings of the present study probably could also be applied by English teachers as information to design tasks to improve the interpersonal communication competence of their students.

Acknowledgement

The research was supported by Doctoral Research Grant of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia (Grant No:355.10/A.3-111/LPPM/IX/2018).

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