

The student perception of impoliteness: a case study of English and Finnish impoliteness events

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The topic of impoliteness has seen a recent explosion of publishing activity within linguistic pragmatics, including Bousfield (2008), Bousfield and Locher eds (2008), and Culpeper (2011). However, there is still uncertainty about the notion of impoliteness. A few years ago, an international research group was formed by Jonathan Culpeper, Leyla Marti, Meilian Mei, Minna Nevala, and Gila Schauer to investigate cross-cultural perception of impoliteness. The group collected a total of 500 impoliteness events reported by university students in England, China, Finland, Germany, and Turkey. The study (Culpeper et al. 2010) contributed to a central issue in understanding impoliteness, namely, whether the concept of face was adequately accounted for in all interactions taken to be impolite.

It is my purpose in this paper to take a closer look at the impoliteness events reported in England and Finland. The main analytical framework adopted is Spencer-Oatey's (e.g. 2000) "rapport management," covering various types of face as well as sociality rights. The quantitative analysis suggests that three of the five categories of Spencer-Oatey's framework are key ones, namely, quality face, equity rights, and association rights. Furthermore, differences between the geographically separated datasets emerge. For example, the England-based data has a preponderance of impoliteness events in which quality face is violated, whereas the Finnish dataset does not appear to be biased towards any particular category.

References

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