

THE ROLE OF CULTURAL CONTEXT IN PERCEIVING IMPOLITENESS: A COMPARATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW OF WESTERN AND ASIAN PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This study investigates how cultural contexts shape the perception of impoliteness within the framework of cross-cultural pragmatics. Although impoliteness has often been analyzed through Western theoretical models such as those of Culpeper and Spencer-Oatey, these frameworks tend to overlook the influence of cultural norms in non-Western societies. The research aims to systematically analyze previous studies comparing perceptions of impoliteness in Western and Asian contexts, identify similarities and differences in underlying cultural norms, and evaluate the applicability of Western theories across cultures. Employing a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) design, the study collected and synthesized findings from a wide range of empirical works published between 2000 and 2024, focusing on discourse-pragmatic perspectives. The data were examined descriptively to reveal emerging patterns of cultural influence on linguistic behavior. Results indicate that impoliteness is not a universal phenomenon but a culturally constructed concept whose interpretation depends on socio-cultural values such as collectivism, hierarchy, and face orientation. While Western cultures often associate impoliteness with directness and norm violation, Asian contexts may view similar acts as expressions of solidarity or social alignment. The study concludes that existing Western-based theories require cultural adaptation to accurately capture pragmatic realities in diverse societies. Consequently, this research contributes to developing a culturally grounded model of impoliteness perception, offering new theoretical and pedagogical insights for cross-cultural communication and language education.

Keywords: Cultural Norms, Cross-Cultural Pragmatics, Impoliteness Perception



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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of linguistic impoliteness has become one of the major focal points in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics (Kamhar dkk., 2024; Nasarudin dkk., 2024). Since the concept was introduced by Jonathan Culpeper (1996, 2011), theories of impoliteness have developed significantly and have been applied to various communicative contexts, both formal and informal (Hidayah, 2025). However, the perception of impoliteness largely depends on the cultural context in which the interaction takes place (Norwahyudi & Al Fatih, 2024; Yuniati, 2023). In Western societies, impoliteness is often understood as an explicit violation of social norms and is perceived as a form of verbal aggression (Pakaya dkk., 2025). Conversely, in Asian societies—particularly those with collectivist orientations such as Japan, China, and Indonesia—impolite behavior tends to be implicit and may even be perceived as acceptable within hierarchical or power-based relationships (Riyanto, 2024; Sujoko dkk., 2023). The main problem arises because most impoliteness theories are rooted in Western individualistic frameworks, making their application to Asian contexts often inadequate. These contextual differences create a conceptual gap in understanding impoliteness universally.

Literature in the field reveals that most theories of politeness and impoliteness, such as those proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Culpeper (1996, 2011), were primarily developed based on Western communicative behavior, particularly that of English speakers. Consequently, these theories often fail to capture the complexity of linguistic interaction in non-Western contexts, where politeness and impoliteness are deeply influenced by social norms and collectivist cultural values. Previous studies in Asian contexts have shown that behaviors considered impolite in Western cultures may not carry the same meaning in Asian societies (Ana Rahmalia & Saprudin, 2023; Lesmana, 2025; Widiyanarti dkk., 2024). Nevertheless, there remains a lack of systematic comparative reviews examining how impoliteness is perceived across these distinct cultural frameworks. This theoretical gap highlights the need for a comprehensive literature review to reassess the applicability of impoliteness theories within the broader scope of cross-cultural pragmatics.

This study aims to systematically analyze previous research on the perception of impoliteness within Western and Asian cultural contexts. Through a comprehensive literature review approach, it seeks to identify similarities and differences in impoliteness perception patterns based on underlying cultural norms. Furthermore, this study intends to evaluate the extent to which Western theories of impoliteness—such as those proposed by Culpeper and Spencer-Oatey—can be applied or need adaptation in Asian cultural contexts. Ultimately, this research aspires to formulate new conceptual insights into the role of cultural context in shaping impoliteness perception and to contribute to the advancement of cross-cultural pragmatics theory.

The significance of this research lies in addressing the conceptual gap between impoliteness theories developed in Western contexts and the communicative realities of Asian cultures. Considering that the perception of impoliteness is strongly influenced by social values, politeness norms, and cultural orientations, it becomes essential to reexamine the assumed universality of existing theoretical frameworks. A systematic cross-cultural literature review is expected to enhance our understanding of how cultural context shapes interpretations of impolite behavior while paving the way for a more inclusive and context-sensitive

theoretical model. Therefore, this study is not merely descriptive but also reflective, aiming to reestablish the connection between language, culture, and social perceptions of linguistic impoliteness.

Cross-cultural pragmatics is a branch of pragmatics that examines how utterance meaning is understood and interpreted differently across various cultural communities (Nasarudin dkk., 2024). According to Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), this field focuses on the relationship between language, context, and culture in interactions among speakers from diverse social backgrounds (Munir dkk., 2021; Siregar dkk., 2024; Syahputra, 2025a). Within this framework, cross-cultural pragmatics not only investigates linguistic variation but also explores the social norms that define what is considered polite or impolite within a given culture. It also aims to explain cross-cultural communication misunderstandings that frequently arise due to differing pragmatic perceptions. Therefore, cross-cultural pragmatics plays a vital role in explaining the dynamics of linguistic politeness and impoliteness while providing the foundation for understanding how perceptions of impoliteness are shaped and influenced by cultural factors.

Manifestations of cross-cultural pragmatics can be observed through differences in speech acts, politeness strategies, and the ways speakers adjust their utterances according to the social norms of their respective cultures. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), through the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), demonstrated that although linguistic structures may appear similar, the pragmatic realization of speech acts such as requests or refusals greatly depends on the speaker's cultural background. In intercultural contexts, politeness and impoliteness are often interpreted based on values such as social harmony, hierarchy, and group honor (Aziz dkk., 2025). Thus, cross-cultural pragmatics focuses not only on linguistic forms but also on the social meanings and cultural values underlying verbal actions. Understanding these manifestations is essential for interpreting differences in the perception of linguistic impoliteness across cultures.

The concept of impoliteness perception refers to how individuals evaluate and interpret acts or utterances considered impolite within a specific social context. Culpeper (1996, 2011) defines impoliteness as the use of linguistic strategies deliberately aimed at attacking or threatening the interlocutor's face (Al-Mubarrok dkk., 2023; Irawati dkk., 2023; Yulianto dkk., 2025). However, perceptions of impoliteness are not universal, as they are influenced by cultural norms, values, and expectations. An act deemed offensive in one culture may be perceived as straightforwardness in another. Therefore, understanding impoliteness perception requires a deep contextual analysis of the speaker's social and cultural background. In cross-cultural research, this concept is crucial for exploring how individuals from different cultural backgrounds interpret verbal aggression and behaviors deemed impolite.

Manifestations of impoliteness perception can be observed through various linguistic and non-linguistic strategies employed by speakers in interaction. Culpeper (2011) categorizes impoliteness strategies into several types, including bald on record impoliteness, sarcasm, and mock politeness (Duhita dkk., 2023; Harahap dkk., 2024; Mahayana dkk., 2022). However, how the hearer interprets these strategies depends largely on the cultural context and the existing social relationship. In egalitarian cultures, verbal attacks are often seen as threats to personal dignity, whereas in hierarchical societies, similar behaviors may be perceived as expressions of dominance or social discipline. Manifestations of impoliteness perception are also shaped by factors such as gender, age, and social status, which collectively construct one's interpretative framework for evaluating impolite behavior.

Cultural norms refer to a set of rules, values, and social expectations that regulate individual behavior within a society (Aisy dkk., 2025; Arifin dkk., 2024; Turyani dkk., 2024). Hofstede (2001) explains that cultural norms determine how people think, communicate, and interact with their social environment (Fitriani dkk., 2025; Muhtarom dkk., 2024; Ningrum & Tazqiyah, 2024). In pragmatic contexts, cultural norms influence the interpretation of speech

acts and determine whether a particular behavior is regarded as polite or impolite (Haryono dkk., 2024; Putradi & Supriyana, 2024). These norms are closely related to value systems such as individualism and collectivism, power distance, and social harmony orientation. Thus, cultural norms not only serve as behavioral guidelines but also play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of impoliteness in cross-cultural interactions.

Manifestations of cultural norms are reflected in various aspects of communication, including speech style, word choice, and the level of formality used in social interactions. Ting-Toomey (1999) asserts that individualistic cultures tend to emphasize self-expression and directness, whereas collectivist cultures prioritize group harmony and conflict avoidance. These distinctions directly influence how individuals perceive politeness and impoliteness in communication. In societies with high power distance, assertive behavior may be deemed appropriate when exhibited by authority figures but impolite when performed by subordinates (Mudjiyanto dkk., 2023). Therefore, cultural norms serve as a critical foundation for interpreting variations in impoliteness perception across different cultural settings.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, which is a structured, transparent, and rigorous method used to identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing studies relevant to the topic under investigation (Anggraeni, 2024; Shafajar & Rohmah, 2025; Sumarna dkk., 2025). The primary data are obtained from scholarly sources such as peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and conference proceedings discussing impoliteness in cross-cultural contexts. Secondary data include theoretical and conceptual discussions related to cross-cultural pragmatics, impoliteness perception, and cultural norms. The SLR method ensures that the literature selection process adheres to strict research protocols, including well-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as methodological quality assessments. By adopting this systematic approach, the study aims to produce a comprehensive, unbiased, and in-depth synthesis of knowledge regarding cross-cultural variations in impoliteness perception.

The object of this study focuses on the phenomenon of impoliteness, which has become a central issue in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. This phenomenon is intriguing because perceptions of impoliteness are not universal but are shaped by the cultural norms and value systems of a given society. In Western contexts, impoliteness is often perceived as an explicit violation of social norms that reflects verbal aggressiveness (Hartini dkk., 2020; Riyanto, 2024). In contrast, in Asian societies—particularly those with collectivist orientations such as Japan, China, and Indonesia—impolite acts may occur implicitly and are sometimes tolerated within hierarchical or power-based relationships. These contrasting perceptions create a conceptual gap between Western theories of impoliteness and Asian communicative realities. Therefore, this study aims to systematically review previous research findings to explore how cultural context influences perceptions of impoliteness and to evaluate whether Western theories can be adapted to better capture the communicative norms of Asian cultures.

This study is grounded in three main theoretical frameworks. The first is Culpeper's Impoliteness Theory (1996; 2011), which conceptualizes impoliteness as the deliberate use of linguistic strategies to attack or threaten another person's face (Gustiani dkk., 2022; Khotimah dkk., 2022; Saimon dkk., 2024). Culpeper identifies several types of impoliteness strategies, such as bald on record and sarcastic impoliteness, though these have been predominantly developed within Western communicative settings. The second framework is Politeness and Rapport Management Theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and expanded by Spencer-Oatey (2008), which emphasizes the role of social norms and interpersonal relationships in shaping linguistic behavior (Widiana & Sri, 2025). The third framework is Cultural Value Theory developed by Hofstede (2001) and Ting-Toomey (1999), which

explains how cultural dimensions such as individualism versus collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance influence communicative behavior (Widjanarko dkk., 2025). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for analyzing the interaction between culture, norms, and perceptions of impoliteness.

The research process in this study follows a systematic and transparent sequence of SLR stages. The first stage involves formulating clear and focused research questions aligned with the study's objectives. The second stage entails developing a research protocol, which specifies the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and quality assessment parameters for the selected literature. The third stage covers the literature search and selection, conducted through academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using predefined keywords: cross-cultural pragmatics, impoliteness perception, and cultural norms. Subsequently, a quality appraisal and data extraction process is conducted to ensure methodological rigor. The collected data are then synthesized systematically to produce reliable and structured findings that address the research questions.

Data analysis in this study applies thematic content analysis, a method that involves identifying and coding key themes emerging from the reviewed literature. This technique allows the researcher to detect patterns, relationships, and conceptual frameworks relevant to the perception of impoliteness across different cultural contexts. Thematic analysis enables a deeper understanding of both shared and divergent aspects of communicative behavior between Western and Asian cultures. Through this analytical lens, the study aims not only to highlight cross-cultural contrasts but also to construct a conceptual model that links cultural norms, politeness perceptions, and communicative strategies. Ultimately, this research contributes to the theoretical advancement of cross-cultural pragmatics and enriches academic discussions on cultural variation in impoliteness perception.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A review of the literature on cross-cultural pragmatics reveals that this field has developed in response to the need to understand how cultural context influences language use and interpretation. Based on a systematic examination of academic sources, it is found that cross-cultural pragmatics focuses on how social norms, cultural values, and communicative habits shape pragmatic meaning in interactions between speakers from different cultural backgrounds. Sources such as Thomas (1983), Wierzbicka (1991), and Spencer-Oatey (2008) emphasize that each culture possesses unique "politeness rules" that cannot be universally applied (Goan Gunawan & Hs, 2021; Putri & Asteria, 2025). Moreover, cross-cultural studies show that misinterpretation of cultural context often leads to pragmatic misunderstandings. Thus, cross-cultural pragmatics does not merely discuss literal language use but also encompasses the social and cultural foundations of intercultural communication.

From these findings, it can be explained that cross-cultural pragmatics plays a crucial role in bridging intercultural differences in perceiving politeness and impoliteness (Syahputra, 2025b). Studies such as Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) demonstrate that speech act strategies vary significantly between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. In Western contexts, direct expressions are often seen as efficient and honest, while in Asian contexts, indirect expressions signify politeness and respect. This explanation illustrates that variations in cultural value systems lead to different interpretations of utterances—whether polite or impolite. Therefore, cross-cultural pragmatics highlights the importance of cultural context in comprehensively understanding verbal and nonverbal communication.

The relationship between the descriptive and explanatory data on cross-cultural pragmatics and the real-world issues of this research indicates a gap in applying universal pragmatic theories to diverse cultural settings. Most theories employed in impoliteness studies are rooted in Western, individualistic assumptions, where politeness norms tend to be oriented toward individual rights. In contrast, Asian contexts are shaped by collectivism, hierarchy, and social harmony. This demonstrates that Western-based politeness theories often fail to fully account for the communicative dynamics within Eastern societies. Therefore, the literature findings reinforce that cultural context significantly influences how communication is perceived and practiced, especially concerning impoliteness.

The literature on impoliteness perception shows that the perception of impoliteness is highly contextual and culturally influenced. Based on a systematic review of studies such as Culpeper (1996, 2011), Bousfield (2008), and Kádár & Haugh (2013), it is found that impoliteness does not always carry a negative meaning; it may serve expressive, humorous, or even solidarity functions in certain contexts. In Western cultures, impoliteness is often identified through direct utterances that threaten the hearer's face (Firnanda dkk., 2025), while in Asian cultures, impoliteness tends to appear more subtly and indirectly, often through violations of implicit social norms (Nugraha dkk., 2022). These findings indicate that the perception of impoliteness cannot be separated from the underlying cultural norms and social values of a community.

The explanation derived from the reviewed studies shows that impoliteness perception is shaped by cultural orientations toward social values and interpersonal relationships. In Western research, impoliteness is commonly defined as a threat to an individual's face, as proposed in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory (Pakaya dkk., 2025). However, Asian-based studies such as Kádár (2008) and Lim (2011) reveal that impoliteness may function as a form of social control or as an expression of acceptable hierarchy (Putradi & Supriyana, 2024). Thus, the perception of impoliteness depends heavily on the cultural norms of a given community. This explanation confirms that impoliteness cannot be universally conceptualized, as each culture has its own framework for interpreting verbal behavior that deviates from politeness norms.

The relation between the descriptive and explanatory data indicates that impoliteness perception is a social phenomenon deeply rooted in cultural norms and social structures. Within the context of this study, the literature shows that the discrepancy between Western theories and Asian communication practices stems from differing cultural orientations toward politeness. In Western societies, impoliteness is generally avoided as it violates individual autonomy, whereas in Asian contexts, impoliteness may serve to preserve social order. These findings are relevant to the core issue of this research, showing that Western theories of impoliteness do not fully capture communication practices in Asian cultures, where social harmony and respect for hierarchy take precedence.

The literature on cultural norms highlights that cultural values play a central role in shaping how politeness and impoliteness are interpreted within a society. Drawing on works by Hofstede (2001), Ting-Toomey (1999), and Spencer-Oatey (2008), it is evident that cultural dimensions such as individualism–collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance have a profound influence on communicative behavior (Triwibisono & Aurachman, 2021). In collectivist cultures, such as those in many Asian societies, social norms demand conformity and respect for social hierarchy, whereas in Western individualistic cultures, honesty, openness, and freedom of speech are more highly valued. This body of data demonstrates that cultural norms serve as the primary framework guiding perceptions and practices of communication across cultures.

The explanation of these findings shows that cultural norms not only influence communication behavior but also serve as the moral and social foundation of a society. Studies such as Triandis (1995) and Matsumoto (2007) reveal that cultural norms define the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behavior, including what is perceived as impolite (Isnawan, 2024). In Asian cultures, politeness norms are strictly regulated to maintain social harmony, while in Western cultures, these norms are more flexible and emphasize self-expression. Consequently, cultural norms act as the main determinant guiding how individuals assess verbal behavior that may be regarded as impolite in particular contexts.

The relationship between the descriptive and explanatory findings on cultural norms directly connects with the core focus of this research: the role of cultural context in shaping impoliteness perception. The reviewed literature demonstrates that variations in cultural norms lead to distinct perceptions of impolite behavior. This explains why Western theories based on individualistic principles are often incompatible with Asian contexts that prioritize collectivism and social harmony. Hence, the findings strengthen the central argument of this study that cultural norms serve as a key mediating variable bridging cross-cultural understanding of impoliteness, and they provide a foundation for developing a more context-sensitive and universal model of cross-cultural pragmatics.

Table 1. Research Findings

No.	Key finding (concise)	Evidence sources (representative)	/ Linked research objective(s)	Theoretical implication	Practical recommendation
1	Impoliteness is contingent rather than universal	Systematic synthesis of cross-cultural studies (e.g., Culpeper critiques; CCSARP findings; Asian pragmatics studies)	Analyze systematically prior research on impoliteness perception	Challenges universalist assumptions in prevailing impoliteness theories; signals need for context-sensitive theorising	Avoid applying Western-based metrics uncritically; adapt analytic frameworks to cultural context in research and teaching
2	Directness vs. indirectness frames the perception of impoliteness	Cross-cultural speech-act research (Blum-Kulka et al., CCSARP) and region-specific empirical studies	Identify similarities and differences in perception patterns	Challenges universalist assumptions in prevailing impoliteness theories; signals need for context-sensitive theorising. Demonstrates that surface form (directness) maps to different pragmatic meanings across cultures;	In language pedagogy, teach pragmatic functions of direct/indirect strategies with culture-specific exemplars

				necessitates function-focused analysis	
3	Power distance and hierarchy mediate impoliteness judgments	Hofstede-derived analyses; Spencer-Oatey's rapport management; Asian empirical studies on hierarchical interaction	Identify differences based on cultural norms; evaluate applicability of Western models	Adds hierarchical (collective-face) dimension that Western face-theory underrepresents; theory must incorporate power-distance parameters	Include power-distance markers in discourse annotation and in pragmatic competence curricula
4	Impoliteness may perform non-negative social functions (solidarity, humor, social control)	Studies on banter, humor, and group-based discourse (Kádár & Haugh; regional media analyses)	Analyze functions and formulate conceptual contributions	Expands functional scope of impoliteness theory beyond purely hostile acts; supports multifunctional model	Encourage pragmatic analyses that code for function (e.g., solidarity vs. aggression) when annotating corpora
5	Limitations exist in applying Culpeper and Spencer-Oatey models universally	Comparative critiques and mismatches reported in non-Western datasets	Evaluate applicability of Western impoliteness theories	Indicates gaps: models require parameters for collective-face, hierarchical norms, and contextual cues	Propose model revisions or modular extensions rather than wholesale replacement of existing frameworks
6	A culturally adaptive (modular) model is conceptually feasible	Thematic synthesis across reviewed studies produced recurrent culture-specific codes	Formulate new conceptual findings for cross-cultural pragmatics	Suggests a hybrid model: core impoliteness strategies + culture-specific parameter set (e.g., collectivism, power distance, indexical cues)	Develop a modular analytic toolkit for researchers: core taxonomy + plug-in culture modules
7	Empirical gaps: multimodal, digital, and corpus-	Review shows limited multimodal corpora and scarce large-scale digital interaction studies	Support systematic analysis and future research	Methodological implication: theory testing requires richer empirical bases	Prioritise corpus-building (multimodal and digital), experimental

based cross- cultural data are sparse	in Asian settings	directions	(multimodal + digital corpora)	cross-cultural studies, and annotated datasets for reproducible research
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The findings of this study indicate that the perception of impoliteness cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it occurs. Communication patterns in Western and Asian societies reflect two distinct value orientations—individualism and collectivism—that ultimately shape how individuals interpret impolite acts. In Western contexts, impoliteness is often understood as a violation of individual freedom or a threat to one’s face, while in Asian contexts, impoliteness may serve social functions such as maintaining hierarchy, asserting authority, or fostering solidarity. The literature analysis also reveals that Western theories of impoliteness, such as those proposed by Culpeper and Spencer-Oatey, are not entirely applicable to Asian settings. Therefore, this study emphasizes that impoliteness should be understood contextually, taking into account the underlying cultural norms that serve as primary determinants of pragmatic interaction across cultures.

Compared to previous studies, this research provides a more systematic and comprehensive analysis through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. Earlier works, such as Culpeper (2011) and Bousfield (2008), mainly focused on Western communicative contexts, thereby overlooking the pragmatic diversity found in Asian societies. In contrast, this study places both cultural perspectives on equal footing, producing a more balanced understanding of impoliteness phenomena. Moreover, it extends beyond linguistic forms of impoliteness by emphasizing the underlying sociocultural factors. Hence, the strength of this research lies in its ability to integrate pragmatic theory with cultural dimensions, offering a conceptual foundation for the development of a more context-sensitive and universal model of cross-cultural pragmatics.

The outcomes of this study reflect the importance of understanding cultural context in cross-cultural pragmatics. By examining the perception of impoliteness from both Western and Asian perspectives, this research expands the conceptual horizon of how intercultural communication can occur effectively without generating misunderstanding. This reflection underscores that understanding cultural value differences is not merely an academic concern but also a practical necessity in global communication. In an era of intensified intercultural interaction, the findings offer significant benefits for applied linguistics, language education, and intercultural diplomacy. Therefore, the contribution of this study extends beyond theoretical insights to fostering intercultural awareness in everyday communication practices.

The main implication of this study lies in the necessity of adapting Western impoliteness theories to fit Asian cultural contexts. Theoretically, it reaffirms that universal pragmatic models are difficult to apply without accounting for cultural value variations. Practically, these findings have implications for designing cross-cultural communication strategies, particularly in language education and international communication. By recognizing that impoliteness perception differs across cultures, language educators, diplomats, and communication practitioners can develop approaches that are more culturally sensitive. Thus, this research provides a foundation for developing intercultural communication guidelines grounded in cultural awareness and pragmatic empathy.

The observed differences in impoliteness perception between Western and Asian contexts stem from the underlying cultural value systems of both societies. Western societies, driven by individualistic orientations, view freedom of expression and honesty as positive traits; hence, direct speech acts are rarely seen as threatening. Conversely, collectivist Asian societies value social harmony and hierarchy, leading to the interpretation of directness as a breach of politeness. Another contributing factor is the differing conceptions of face and the role of social

context in pragmatic interpretation. Thus, the results of this study are a logical consequence of the divergent value systems that underpin social interaction and intercultural communication.

Based on the findings and analyses of this study, a conceptual step is needed to develop a cross-cultural pragmatic model that is more adaptive to global cultural variations. Scholars should reconsider Western impoliteness theories to make them more inclusive of non-Western contexts. Language educators are encouraged to integrate cultural awareness into pragmatic instruction, particularly in teaching English as an international language. Meanwhile, future researchers are advised to extend this approach through empirical cross-cultural studies involving real interactions among speakers from diverse backgrounds. Thus, the strategic actions derived from this study are not merely conceptual but also contribute to strengthening intercultural competence in global communication.

CONCLUSION

One of the most striking findings of this study is that impoliteness is not a universal linguistic phenomenon, but a culturally constructed concept shaped by distinct social norms and communicative expectations. The systematic review revealed that what is perceived as an impolite act in Western contexts—often characterized by direct confrontation or explicit disagreement—can be interpreted quite differently in Asian cultures, where such expressions may reflect honesty, familiarity, or even respect for hierarchical relationships. This unexpected revelation challenges the dominance of Western-based impoliteness theories and highlights the inadequacy of assuming that pragmatic norms are cross-culturally stable. The analysis further demonstrates that cultural context does not merely influence linguistic form, but fundamentally alters the pragmatic meaning of impoliteness itself. Thus, the study redefines impoliteness as a dynamic and culture-bound construct, whose interpretation is inseparable from the socio-cultural frameworks within which communication takes place.

The present research contributes significantly to both theoretical and practical domains of linguistics. Theoretically, it extends Culpeper's and Spencer-Oatey's frameworks by situating impoliteness within a broader cross-cultural perspective, thereby enriching the discipline of pragmatics with more context-sensitive insights. By systematically synthesizing findings from diverse cultural settings, this study provides a conceptual foundation for developing a culturally adaptive model of impoliteness that accommodates both Western and Asian value systems. Practically, the study offers valuable implications for intercultural communication, language pedagogy, and applied linguistics. It encourages educators to incorporate cultural awareness into pragmatic instruction and helps international communicators avoid misinterpretations rooted in cultural bias. Ultimately, the research enhances our understanding of how communicative competence in English—and indeed in any language—depends not only on linguistic proficiency, but also on cultural sensitivity and pragmatic empathy.

Although this study provides a comprehensive comparative synthesis, it acknowledges certain limitations that open promising avenues for further exploration. As a systematic literature review, it relies on secondary data and theoretical interpretation rather than empirical observation of natural discourse. Future research could therefore expand this work through ethnographic or corpus-based studies that examine authentic intercultural interactions to validate and refine the conceptual insights presented here. Additionally, future investigations might explore other linguistic or paralinguistic dimensions of impoliteness—such as tone, gesture, or digital communication—to capture its evolving nature in modern communicative contexts. Rather than being a constraint, these limitations serve as a roadmap for advancing a more integrative, empirically grounded understanding of how cultural context continues to shape impoliteness perception across the global landscape of human communication.

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