A Comparative Study of Metaphorical Competence of English among Native and Nonnative Learners: The Case of Iranian and American Senior Students of English

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As a theoretical basis metaphor in cognitive and applied linguistics and as a practical basis professional studies assessing metaphorical competence were briefly adumbrated. This study aimed at enhancing seniors’ metaphorical perception in English and discovering the factors affecting comprehension and production of English metaphorical expressions. The subjects included 112 EFL seniors from three universities in Tehran, Iran (72 seniors who took part in the course Using Metaphorical Expressions in EFL Contexts as the Experimental Group [EG] and 40 seniors as the Control Group [CG]) and 30 American seniors of English as the Comparison Group. The lesson plans containing activities that aimed to teach metaphorical expressions, their meanings, and the logic behind them were developed and implemented in two-hour sessions, 12 consecutive weeks. After administering the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), the pretest and posttest of metaphorical competence were developed and administered to assess the receptive and productive metaphorical abilities. The data were analyzed considering the amount of metaphorical language produced and comprehended in the pretest and posttest using the t-test and ANOVA. The results revealed that Iranian EFL seniors mastered the conceptual metaphors and idiomatic expressions, that their receptive ability was better than productive one, that natives and nonnatives differed noticeably both in comprehending and producing metaphorical
expressions, and that linguistic knowledge was important factor affecting the ability to handle metaphorical expressions. The results confirmed the premise that to become metaphorically competent in English, learners need to be exposed to metaphorical language