Abstract

Following a cross-pragmatic study, the researcher tried to determine the strategies utilized by Iranian EFL learners in responding to threats comparing their native speaker counterparts as well as Persian native speakers. Effectively, the study has followed a mixed-method design in which qualitative design seems to be more prominent. Exploiting the data from Limberg’s (2009) study, in which 212 native British sixth-form students were the participants of the study, the researcher tried to replicate the same study by participating 60 Iranian EFL students majoring English as well as 60 Persian native speakers in order to make a comparison among native English speakers, Iranian EFL students as well as Persian native speakers in exposing to the threats and the strategies they utilized in responding to them. In extracting the required data, two chief
instruments were utilized, i.e. a version of the TOEFL test which played the role of proficiency test in order to include the most homogenous ones and Discourse Completion Task (DCT) Questionnaire which was utilized in order to extract the data in terms of the responses to different threats. To this end, six scenarios, based on Limberg’s (2009) study, was adopted to cultural context of Iran in which the Iranian EFL subjects were exposed to “a brief description of the situational circumstances, followed by the speaker’s threat, to which the participants were asked to respond” (Limberg, 2009, p. 1383). In analyzing the data, Limberg’s (2009) model was utilized which has composed of three main stages, i.e. the source of conflict (viz. threat), the response (type and tendency towards a potential outcome), and the compliance or non-compliance action. Hence, the data was analyzed and categorized in terms of the five strategies suggested by Limberg (2009) in confronting with the threats, i.e. compliance, tendency toward compliance, non-compliance, tendency toward non-compliance, and open-ended. In effect, the data were extracted in terms of frequency and percentage and were analyzed and compared through the Spearman chi-square test. It was shown that the two types of strategies of the TC and the NC were the most utilized strategies in responding to the threats among the three groups, i.e. native English speakers and Iranian EFL learners. However. For the native English speakers and Iranian EFL learners, the preferred strategies—C and TC—were the most dominant ones; for Persian group, it was the dispreferred ones—NC and TNC—which were considered the most utilized ones. Hence, the observed differences among the three groups found to be significantly different.

Keywords: responses to threats; compliance, non-compliance, tendency toward compliance, tendency toward non-compliance, open-ended, impoliteness strategies.