A Sociopragmatic Contrastive Analysis of Online Interactions and its Implications for Fostering EFL Learners' Pragmatic Awareness

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Online social networking has made the distance between people with different languages and cultures smaller through allowing individuals in distant geographical places to form interpersonal relationships. Adopting the Internet as the medium for online interactions, the current study aimed to 1) compare and contrast native American and Persian speakers' complimenting linguistic behavior, as a sample of online interaction to examine if this speech act realized as it is done in face-to-face interaction and 2) examine whether or not the medium of interaction influences complimenting behavior of text-talk users. The data was collected from online social networks by saving archived conversations of 15 chat participants who were selected through snowball sampling in each group of English and Persian chat users. The conversations were produced from January 2009 to May 2012. The compliment exchanges produced by the two groups were examined and contrasted with each other in terms of valued topics, compliment strategies, compliment functions, and compliment responses strategies. The results, having found through the conducting Chi-square test and Z-score, indicated that both groups of participants differed in adopting linguistic complimenting behavior. However, they used the same text-talk features in the online environment which indicates the need for using compensatory strategies due to the mode of the interaction. The results also suggest that communicative acts which are taking place in social networks mirror the cultural values of the language community of text-talk users and the medium of interaction did not restrict participants' preferences in complimenting behavior. As
such, online environment can potentially be used by language learners as a supplementary in-house practice for raising target language pragmatic knowledge