



The Asian EFL Journal
Professional Teaching Articles
October 2011
Volume 55



Senior Editors:
Paul Robertson and Roger Nunn



Published by the Asian EFL Journal Press

Asian EFL Journal Press
A Division of Time Taylor International Ltd

<http://www.asian-efl-journal.com>

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editor@asian-efl-journal.com

Publisher: Dr. Paul Robertson
Chief Editor: Dr. Roger Nunn
Guest and Production Editor: Dr. Susana Gómez

ISSN 1738-1460



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Needs Analysis: Dental English for Japanese Dental Students

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Abstract

Japan continues to rank low in English proficiency tests specially in the academic field. Dental English, also offered as Medical English in some dental schools, is an English course specializing in medical and dental terminologies, dental practice and the development of communication skills and it was introduced into the Japanese dental curriculum in the 1990's. However, at present, it is only offered in half of Japan's 29 dental schools. There is still no consensus among education officials, dental schools, teachers and students as to what it comprises. Almost 20 years have passed and there is still no core curriculum that has been developed for the course to be implemented in all schools. Additionally, Japanese students have constantly been reported to shy away from English courses when they reach college even after six years of English studies in high school. This article explores the needs of dental students taking Dental English at one of the dental schools offering the course. Surveys and entries by students on the Student-Teacher Shuttle Card were used to present these needs. Assessment of their needs showed that they have changed in their

outlook concerning the importance of Dental English for their future professional life as dentists. Students prefer to take more units of the course and also expressed their intentions of becoming international dentists and be ready to face opportunities and challenges concerning the use of English skills. Dental education officials should therefore initiate steps to develop a core curriculum for the course itself, decide on the number of credits it is assigned with, and review the integration of the course into the dental curriculum and national board examinations.

Key words: Needs analysis, Dental Students, Dental English, Japan, English for Specific Purposes.

Introduction

1.1. Literature Review

English within the context of dentistry is an example of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Hutchinson and Waters describe ESP as a type of program that concentrates on language learning in general while keeping to a specific purpose (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Both authors stated that ESP used to be language-centered in its approach, thus giving little attention to the question of how people learn and instead focused on the question of what people learn; therefore, it should meet the specific needs of the learners. They further stated that “although the language-centered approach is not to be dismissed, ESP must be founded in the first instance on sound principles of learning” (Hutchinson, 1987, p.2), thus additionally proposing a learning-centered approach.

Medicine or dentistry in countries where English is not the official language of instruction has started to integrate English into their respective curriculum. These include English courses that emphasize on medical and dental etymologies, terminologies and conversation in countries like Hungary, Greece, Taiwan, Thailand and Malaysia. In China, the Innovation of Curriculum and Teaching Content of Higher Stomatological Education set as one of its goals for dental students to be able to communicate effectively in English and recommends teaching it during the dental school years (Ling & Fu, 2007). In Japan, “Shigaku Eigo” or “Shika Eigo” literally translated as Dental English, was introduced into the dental curriculum in the early 1990s. Since its introduction, dental schools in Japan have been autonomous as to

when the course is offered, how many credits it constitutes, and what the course comprises. In most cases, the teacher is left to decide how to develop and what to include in the syllabus. Moreover, there is still no study that has exclusively looked into developing a common Dental English curriculum for dental schools in Japan that is based on Ministry of Education-approved course context and needs analysis of learners. The importance of having English incorporated into the dental curriculum has been emphasized by a comprehensive survey of all 29 dental schools in Japan (Morse & Nakahara, 2001). However, needs analysis-based core curriculum that specifically describes what the course design would involve has to be developed. This paper presents some insights highlighting the needs of dental students of Okayama University Dental School in Okayama City in Japan for the development of a core curriculum for the Dental English course.

1.2. Future English language challenges of Dental students

English has long been the common language of the international scientific community. International exchanges of ideas in the form of collaborative research, conferences and scientific meetings are conducted in English. Updates in medicine and dentistry essential for paramedical students are also readily available in English journals and books. International student exchanges to broaden their professional outlook are also widely practiced by many countries. In fact, some schools in Japan offer long and short-term student exchange programs to give students the opportunity to experience their respective fields of study in other countries. With this experience come various obstacles such as language and cultural differences and these have been seen as reasons why some programs fail. A study on cross-cultural comparisons of attitudes of dental students in Thailand, Canada and Japan concluded that understanding differences and similarities among dental students may help define strategies to improve the quality of student exchange programs and their attitude on dental education and as future dentists (Karibe et al., 2007). In all of these activities, students are better off if they have basic knowledge of Dental English. However, not

all of Japan's dental schools offer the Dental English course for their students. This is also the case in some Asian, European and most South American dental schools.

In Japan, although two years are spent learning general English upon entering dental school, all other minor and major subjects of the 6-year dental curriculum are taught in Japanese. The two years is in addition to the six years of English courses during their high school years. Even with this, Japanese students still rank low in English language proficiency tests. Germany ranks top in TOEFL results followed by Norway and the Philippines while Japan continues to rank among the lowest (Educational Testing Service 2011; Yomiuri Shimbun, 2000). The Dental English course started to be integrated into the dental curriculum and is usually offered during the early years of the 6-year course in about half of Japan's 29 dental schools. Among three leading national dental schools, Tokyo Medical and Dental University offer the course from 1st year to 5th year while Osaka University Dental School, does not offer it in any year level and Hiroshima University offers it as an elective course in the 3rd year. Most private universities offering the course have it during the 2nd or 3rd year of dental school. If the course is only offered during the early years, students will soon forget it since all subjects in the senior years will be taught in Japanese. In contrast, offering the course only in the senior years will also put more loads on students since they will have to take more clinical and practical courses. However, if the course is offered regularly and further integrated into practical exercises such as the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) or inclusion in the national boards examinations, the basic knowledge will be reinforced leading to the highest level of the learning pyramid where outcome measures would include the ability to analyze, create, evaluate and teach common scenarios within their professional lives (See Appendix 1).

Students generally need to experience both the passive and active tasks in the overall learning process. If future Japanese dentists are to be competent in their English skills, incorporating more units of the course into the current dental curriculum must be pursued by Japan's 29 dental schools. This will better prepare

them for future international professional activities or encounters with international patients during their practice in Japan.

1.3. Dental English among dental schools in Japan

The Japanese dental education system leading to a degree in Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) is a 6-year program directly following high school. The dental curriculum includes two years of general English courses in grammar and conversation typically offered during the first and second year of dental school. In the 1990's, the Dental English course started to be integrated into the dental curriculum. The course is meant to familiarize dental students of common English terminologies used in clinical and practical dentistry. However, a core curriculum as to what the course comprises is yet to be developed. The first and only survey of all of Japan's 29 dental schools conducted by Morse in 2001 and Nakahara in 1999 revealed the need to determine the specific goals of the course if there is to be any attainable purpose. In summary, the survey found out that a considerable difference between public [n=12] and private schools [n=17] existed as to when the course is taught, how it is taught and who teaches it. As to when it is taught, 9% of the public schools offer it for two semesters in the 1st year only compared to 6% of private schools. Forty five percent of the public schools offer it for two semesters during the 1st year and one semester during the 2nd year compared to 12% of the private schools. Forty one percent of private schools offer it for two semesters in both 1st and 2nd years compared to 18% of public schools. Moreover, 12% of private schools also offer the course for two semesters in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years. At Okayama University, it is only offered for one semester during the first year. The study also noted other year-level combinations wherein 29% of private schools offered the course compared to 18% of the public schools. As to how the course is taught, the survey noted number of students per class, number of educators and methods used. Although both public and private class hours offer the course in 90-minute sessions, the number of students varies and where more students are, more organizational efforts and resources are also required. It was also noted that

forms of English other than American or British were not considered acceptable. Additionally, even though all schools reported to have used a textbook, most of these were not designed for dental students. As to who teaches it, public universities were observed to have more educators but the study emphasized that more effort should be placed towards educating the educators because less than a quarter of the educators had a background in the health sciences. The results of the survey, about 10 years old, may have already changed in recent years. However, there is still no updated survey or study that has been undertaken in this field of ESP. Overall, the survey stated the need for an appropriately designed course curriculum, use of appropriate teaching materials and training of educators. The survey concluded that this area of dentistry in Japan has received little attention and traditional teaching methods need to be reviewed.

The Dental English course started to be integrated into Okayama University's Dental School curriculum in 1995. The weekly 90-minute sessions was initially offered for one semester each during the 1st and 2nd year. No official textbooks were used. At the start of 2008 school year, the course began to be offered only in the 2nd semester during the 1st year of the 6-year dental curriculum. Three classes during the latter half of the semester is allotted for a computer-based learning (e-learning) and mainly covers medical and dental terminologies. However, if the time required for students to learn from the course is too short, mastering it will be ineffective even with a well-developed syllabus. In recent years, Japanese students pursuing medical and paramedical education have started to realize the importance of ESP for their future professional careers. The advent of globalization has become an increasingly important influence on dentistry and dental education (De Vries et al, 2008). Most dental schools in Japan require incoming students to take the TOEIC-IP (Test of English for International Communication – Institutional Program) examinations as part of the university entrance examinations. The General Education Group of the Academic Planning Division at Okayama University keeps track of these scores and rankings to monitor the level of English-language proficiency of students. For the

2009, 2010 and 2011 school year, the Faculty of Medicine had an average score of 604, 623 and 632, respectively, of the highest possible TOEIC score of 990; the Faculty of Pharmacy with an average of 522, 534 and 515, respectively; the Faculty of Dentistry with an average of 518, 532 and 523, respectively, compared with scores in other fields of study. These results show a growing interest among students of the need for English-language acquisition in field of medical sciences. However, it should be reinforced by offering courses during the duration of their medical or paramedical studies. In some countries, dental schools even offer elective Dental English courses for interns and post-graduate students. Thus, dental schools in Japan must add credits and provide additional resources for the implementation of a comprehensive English-language course to specifically prepare students of their future professional careers as dentists.

The Needs Analysis

Needs analysis, also known as needs assessment, has a vital role in the process of designing and carrying out any language course (Hamp-Lyons, 2001; Finney, 2002). It generally refers to activities that are involved in collecting information that will serve as the basis for developing a curriculum that will meet the needs of a particular group of students (Iwai et al., 1999). Hutchinson and Waters proposed a framework of questions consisting of 1] Why are the learners taking the course, 2] How do the learners learn, 3] What sources are available, and 4] Who are the learners; for analyzing learning needs (Hutchinson et al., 1987; Songhori, 2008). The present needs analysis study comprised of three assessment instruments (i) the survey, (ii) the student-teacher shuttle card, and (iii) the student's learning preferences and assessment section.

2.1. The survey

English within the dental curriculum in Japan is categorized under the General Education courses with an objective of enabling students to further improve their

English skills. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in inquiries and applications from foreign-trained dentists interested in pursuing dental education in the US (Komabayashi et al., 2005). In a survey comparing Japanese and Swedish dental students, majority (64%) of Japanese students are more likely to go into general practice after graduating while about a quarter (26%) are more likely to prefer working abroad (Karibe et al., 2009).

To assess the expectations of dental students of Okayama University and how they perceive the study of English in the context of dentistry, a three-year survey was given out to 1st year students during the first day of Dental English classes. It will be the first time for them to take a course that will have dentistry as the main focus of study, with English as the medium of instruction. The survey was voluntary, anonymous and no personal information was collected. The questionnaire comprised of five multiple choice questions. The first two questions were regarding their past English learning experience: 1] *What aspect of English did you study most in high school* and 2] *What do you think was the most important English skill?* .The remaining three questions were their expectations of the dental English course. These questions were: 3] *Do you think you will need English after you graduate?* 4] *Which of the following (grammar, reading, writing, conversation, vocabulary) would you like to do more in this class?* 5] *When do you think should you take the Shigaku Eigo class (1st yr only, 5th yr only, 1st & 5th yr, 1st to 6th yr, no need)?*.

For questions 1 and 2 in the 2010 survey, 84% listed “Conversation” as the least studied during high school while 76% listed it as the most important English skill, respectively. For question 3 in the 2009 survey, 59% answered “Yes”, 31% answered “No” and 10% were unsure; while 98% answered “Yes” and 2% answered “No” in the 2010 survey. For question 4, 59% and 63% wanted to do “conversation” in the 2009 and 2010 survey, respectively. For question 5, 47% of students wanted to have the course offered from 1st to 6th year of dental school in the 2008 survey; while it was 37% and 46% in the 2009 and 2010 survey, respectively (See Appendix 2 for more detailed information). For three successive years since 2008, the students’ response on

having more units of the course integrated into the 6-year curriculum show how important Dental English will be for them as future dentists.

2.2. The student-teacher shuttle card

In 1991, Kijun Oda developed the student-teacher shuttle card based on a Japanese merchant's tradition of keeping track of business transactions between sellers and buyers using a small notebook called the "daifukuchou" (Oda, 1991). Dr. Oda noticed that it can also be used in appraising a student, the teacher or the course itself. Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETs) through questionnaires are usually done at the end of the semester and although it can be used for future improvements of the teacher, teaching methods or the course itself, the results would seem to not benefit the students who made the appraisal because they would have had proceeded to the next course already. A regular appraisal using the shuttle card came as an idea so Dr. Oda had it done on a weekly basis. The card, usually in the form of a regular bond paper or cardboard paper, is distributed at the beginning of the class and while the class is going on, students can write questions, comments and suggestions (see Appendix 3). At the end of the class, the teacher collects the cards and replies to each entry until the next class where it is distributed again to the students. The students read the teacher's entries and the cycle continues until the end of the course where the card is returned to the students to keep and review. It became effective in improving the course, self-confidence and student-teacher interaction since there is regular exchange of ideas. Translated to English, Oda presented six possible outcomes of using the shuttle card: (i) it promotes class attendance, (ii) it promotes positive attitudes, (iii) it promotes mutual reliance, (iv) it promotes solid understanding of the course, (v) it verifies the process of self-effort and self-improvement and (vi) it utilizes the best options for the course (Oda, 1991; Rodis et al., 2011). This exercise may not be of interest to English-speaking students but it is specifically applicable to Japanese students as a confidence-building tool since they are usually shy and do not tend to express their thoughts as students in Western countries.

The use of the shuttle card in class can initially be a challenging exercise for Japanese students. However, the views of students taking the Dental English course clearly state its importance. English language learning is often described by English teachers as anxiety-provoking to students and language learners as quiet and passive (Doyon, 2000; Claro, 2007; Williams & Andrade, 2008). The personalized and private exchange of ideas can be used as a means to allow students to assess their own level of English skills, satisfy their need for answers to questions concerning a topic, or relay an opinion without fear of being criticized or laughed at by classmates. An entry stated *“I think the student-teacher shuttle card is a very good system. I’m glad to get many comments”*. Since a majority of students seem to feel unsure of their English ability, the use of the shuttle card can be an effective self-assessment method. Common entries, comments or questions on a particular topic common to most students can be projected onto the screen for other students to see and review. Snapshots of the student’s entries can be taken, cropped to remove personal information, and grouped together with similar entries. When projected onto the screen for review, it will give students an idea of how their classmates write their own entries. Some interesting entries are as follows: *“I was surprised that other students write a lot in ST card, so I’m anxious about my poor comments. I’m not good at writing what I think in English but I’m going to try to write more little by little”*; *“I think my classmate’s comments are very interesting. I knew they have various views and thinking”* and *“It was very useful for me to read the comments of my classmates. I was glad to know of their will to study English hard.”*

Some students unintentionally write entries stating their interests in learning Dental English. In the normal Japanese classroom setting, personal opinions would hardly be verbally spoken in front of the class or even with just the teacher. However, awareness of such opinions can even further motivate the teacher to improve on teaching techniques, plan activities accordingly and encourage students. Some entries stated *“When we become a dentist, dental English is essential. I want to study dental English in order not to have a problem in the future”*; *“I’d like to communicate with a non-*

Japanese so I'm glad to learn dental English"; and "I have little chance to study medicine and dentistry in English so I'm looking forward to having this class."

2.3. Student's learning preferences and course assessment

As with the original purpose of the shuttle card, an assessment of the course was conducted by the students at the end of the semester for the past 3 years. The assessment was an essay type question on the importance of learning Dental English in dental school for their future professional life and how they would want it improved. It was also given out as an appendix to their final examination questionnaire. It was only this time that students were given the chance to choose to write their entries in Japanese to give them the opportunity to fully relay their thoughts in writing. Students suggested more opportunities to speak and participate in active learning activities and likewise to have weekly reviews and short quizzes. Others also suggested having a smaller room to facilitate attention and participation. Some entries were based on the students' future plans of becoming international dentists. Some samples of such entries are: *"I think the Shigaku Eigo class would be helpful for me in the future. I think we have to study so much with Japanese dentists and also many foreign dentists. When we study with foreign dentists, we have to know some dental terms in English in advance. So this class gave me many examples that will be necessary in the future"; "I think that English is important for us. This is because we will meet patients who speak English in the future"; "I'm happy to take this class because I didn't know dentistry and tooth and so on before I took this class"* and *"I think having the Shigaku Eigo class would be helpful to me in the future because there are many foreign people in Japan and I'll have chances to communicate with them in the future. Indeed, if I don't know dental words, I won't be able to tell them proper knowledge even if I can speak English."*

During the first year of dental school, most subjects are on the basic sciences and most students still do not have any knowledge about dentistry. Most students tend to choose this field of profession because of personal goals, but there may be extrinsic

factors that might have helped them in their decision on choosing it. Knowing these facts can also aid the teacher into re-designing the syllabus according to how the students are already motivated or otherwise still need to be motivated. Sample entries include: *“I have worked in the dental clinic of my father. When I had a part time job there, my father often said, This English word is often used. You must remember such words because you’ll use the words in the future. So I’m happy to learn such important words in this class and important basic things which aren’t discussed in other Japanese dental classes”* and *“I think having the Shigaku Eigo class would be helpful to me in the future because I’ll join ODAPUS (Okayama Dental Study-Abroad Program for Undergraduate Students). To join it has been my dream since I was a high school student and is the biggest reason why I decided to choose Okayama University. It requires dental knowledge in English. So, this lecture, which teaches me a lot of dental knowledge in English, is very useful. There were some difficult words but when I understood those, I was very glad.”* An example of one student who may need further motivation stated *“I have a headache. I think it’s because studying dentistry is not good for me. It’s my stress I think. Let me tell you my feelings. Since I was a child, I wanted to be a fashion magazine editor but last year I changed my mind for some reasons and decided to be a dentist because my father, a dentist, asked me to do so. But now, I don’t know whether my decision was good for me.”*

Some students stated their interests on the field of dental research and research-related topics may be added into the lectures to further motivate them: *“This class is very good for me because dental research is promoted in foreign country more than in Japan and I need to have English skills to read many reports written in English”* and *“Most papers are written in English. So we need English skills to read it.”* Some also gave out suggestions on how the teacher can maintain teaching methods or how to improve the course. Sample entries of effective teaching methods were *“I think this class is very interesting because the way you teach is unique. In class, your questions make us have interest in Shigaku Eigo”*; *“You gave us word memo so it is easy to understand your class because we don’t learn dental disease yet”* and *“The most*

important thing I learned from this class is what a dentist should be. I want to be a dentist who always think about and do for patients, like you. You always do anything for student. I enjoyed taking this class. Thank you”. Sample entries of how to improve the course were “*Some students sit at the back to avoid participating in class activities so I think it is better to use a smaller room*” and “*Please give us enough time to write on the ST-card.*” Alternatively, two students whose entries were written in Japanese wrote more critical comments; “*I don’t like the class atmosphere because it is too passive*” and “*I am confused because it is difficult for me to think both English and Japanese terms at the same time*”.

Japanese students are described as shy, afraid to make mistakes, prefer to just listen without even asking questions and often refrain from giving out their own opinions mainly because of national language and cultural identity (Claro, 2007; Kubota, 2001; Sullivan, 2009). Being able to practice expressing their opinions freely but privately and having it addressed promptly by the teachers may help students build self-confidence and prepare them for simulated patient practical exercises during their senior years in dentistry. The shuttle card, in addition to oral communication exercises, is one way of achieving this. Additionally, integrating English communication styles in the OSCE exercises and the national dental board examinations will surely enhance learning and retention. During the senior years of the dental curriculum in dental schools in most English and non-English-speaking countries, proper chair-side communication with patients is taught as part of the clinical and practical courses. The combined cultural aspect and inadequate curriculum support in Japanese higher education may be a reason for poor conversation and comprehension skills among dentists when English-speaking patients come, when data retrieval from books or scientific journals is needed, or when faced with problems concerning attendance or presentation at international scientific meetings. With English becoming the international language of scientific exchange, communication in English should now be comprehensively integrated into the dental curriculum.

Discussion

Dental schools in Japan usually start to expose students to the clinical aspect of dentistry during the 5th year and most practical exercises are conducted in preparation for meeting their first patient and for their clinical practical examinations. As the educational needs of dental students change in time, dental schools should be able to assess and provide adequate measures to meet these changing trends. However, in most schools now, this is not the case. This can be proven by recent TOEIC examination results where incoming 1st year dental students got high scores only to find out that they will not be learning English after their 1st year of dental school such as the case in Okayama University. It would seem that students will likely forget what they have learned from the course. In recent years, some dental schools in Asia have started to add more units of the dental English course in their curriculum. Khon Kaen University in Thailand is offering the Dental English course in the 1st, 2nd, 5th and 6th year of dental school while most dental schools in Malaysia have shifted to an English dental curriculum. In Brazil, dentistry is evolving through the influence of North America (Saliba et al., 2009). Dental schools in Japan must develop a common core curriculum for the course while taking into consideration the changing trends and needs of students. A decision to provide more units and the use a common textbook will allow for standardized and comprehensive learning and the provision of modern language-learning facilities will also aid in proper pronunciation, listening comprehension and doctor-patient communication exercises.

For the needs of dental students, a survey in the past three school years (2008-2011) have conveyed their changed approach on the necessity of learning English for their future professional life as dentists. Survey results at the start of the course showed that their expectations were more on having the chance to improve their conversation skills. However, to be able to effectively converse, a language learner must have adequate basic grammar comprehension and vocabulary bank. It must also be noted that terminologies used in dentistry have etymologies from Latin or Greek and are

completely different from common English terms thus requiring more time for teaching and learning. Additionally, the cultural backgrounds of Japanese dental students have to be taken into account while assessing teaching techniques to help them build self-confidence and overcome their shyness in speaking. All of these concerns cannot be addressed in one semester only and more time is needed. There is also “an increasing interest in considering the pedagogical implications of teaching other forms of English known as World Englishes” (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010, pp.370). The Japanese people have their own way of pronouncing English terms based on a form of writing known as “katakana”, developed for non-Japanese words and this may have an effect on English-teaching and learning (Martin, 2004). This has led to an English pronunciation understood by the Japanese themselves but may be often misunderstood or not understood by other English speakers. Because of this, students are discouraged to speak because of their fear of making pronunciation mistakes, being misunderstood or laughed at. Alternatively, English writing exercises have also been reported to improve communication skills (Matsubara, 2001). The shuttle card writing exercise has proved to be one way of building self-confidence in English writing skills and if only given more time, it may prove to be effective in building self-confidence in the transition from writing to speaking. Some students have stated positive comments about how they were encouraged to effectively write by becoming aware of what their classmates are also writing and how their classmates think during each week’s review sessions. It has also helped improve teaching methods of the teacher and this student evaluation of teaching has been mandatory in Japan (Burden, 2009). However, having the course for just fifteen meetings would not be enough to allow for the transition from writing to speaking since most of the earlier meetings are spent on vocabulary or other basic information. Since most of the dental students’ objective in studying Dental English is to be able to speak with English-speaking patients or foreign colleagues, the issue of adding more credits for the course must be taken into consideration so they can have more opportunities to practice their communications skills as they would normally have in Japanese. Additionally,

supplemental e-learning courses with respect to dental student's needs and preferences can further enable students to extensively enhance their learning process (McCann et al., 2010; El Tantawi, 2008). The Okayama University Dental School survey for the past three years among incoming 1st year dental students clearly states that almost half of them would want to have the course offered every year. Additionally, their scores in English proficiency examinations have improved and having to end their chance to improve on it in the early years of dental school would surely deprive them of their objective to be able to speak confidently with English-speaking patients and attend or speak at international scientific meetings.

Our study is limited to just one of Japan's 29 dental schools. The difficulty of even having a common core curriculum for the course and differences in offering it as a dental subject to students has contributed to this study limitation. However, this is the first study that looked into the dental English needs of dental students in Japan. The results of this study can be used as basis for developing and integrating a common Dental English course into the dental curricula in all of Japan's dental schools as well as other dental schools in countries where English is not the language of instruction. It is our intention to further pursue a needs analysis of practicing dentists and assess the current situation of all of Japan's dental schools.

Conclusion

The needs of dental students at Okayama University have clearly shifted towards one becoming an international dentist. The Dental English course should therefore be offered to students in all 29 dental schools and more curriculum units should also be allotted for the course to better prepare students for future opportunities requiring English language competency and proficiency. If these needs are not met during their dental school years, it may be too late for them to master English after they graduate. This study will hopefully lead to the development of a new dental curriculum in Japan that will include a well-defined Dental English course.

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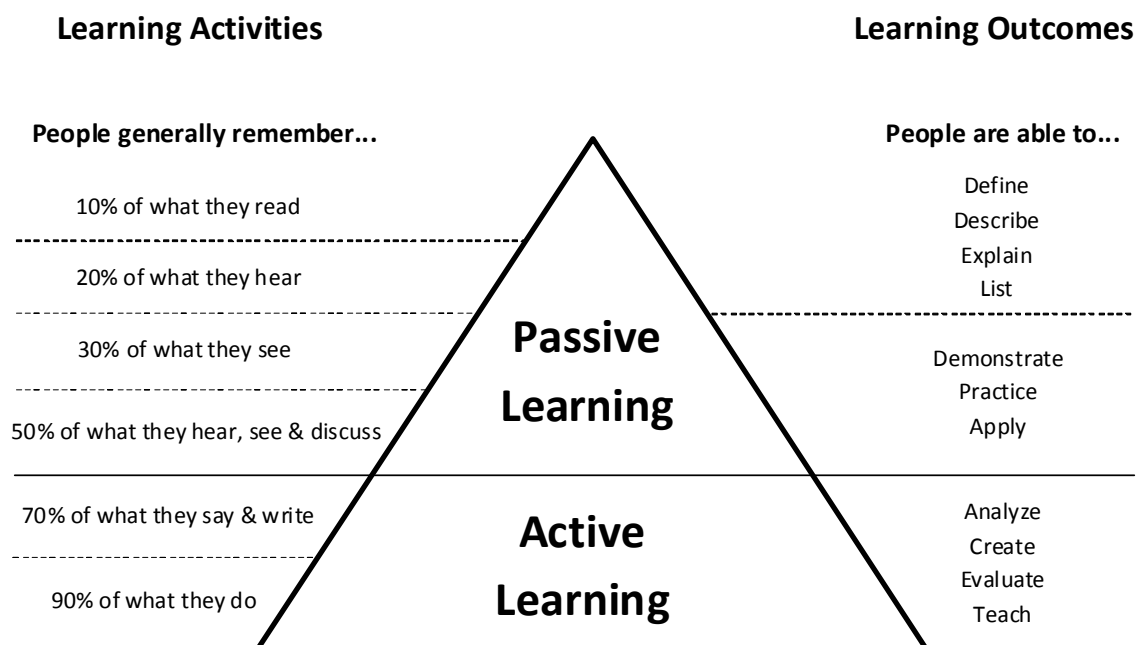
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Appendices

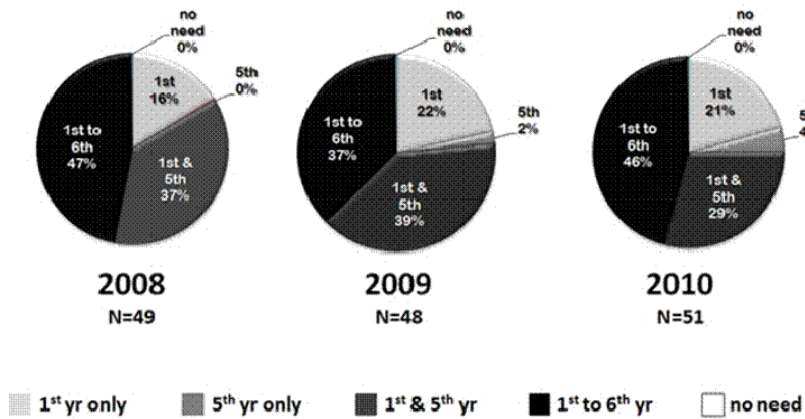
Appendix. 1. The Learning Pyramid. Adapted from National Training Laboratories. Arlington, VA.



Appendix 2. Student's responses as to which year level they think is best to take

Dental English

When do you think should you take the "Shigaku Eigo" class?



Appendix 3. The student-teacher shuttle card

STUDENT-TEACHER SHUTTLE CARD

SUBJECT: Dental English 歯学英语 TEACHER: Dr. Omar RODIS SCHOOL YEAR: 2010-11
 SCHEDULE: Wednesdays 4:20-5:50PM VENUE: 4F Lecture Hall 1 STUDENTS: FIRST YEAR

Name of Student: _____ Student Number: _____

Date	Comments / Questions / Suggestions	Teacher's Action
10/06		
10/13		
10/20		
10/27		
11/10		

If possible, please write your comments, questions, and/or suggestions in English. This will be a good time for you to practice your vocabulary and writing skills. できれば、希望を英語で書いてください。いい練習になります。

STUDENT-TEACHER SHUTTLE CARD

SUBJECT: Dental English 歯学英语 TEACHER: Dr. Omar RODIS SCHOOL YEAR: 2010-11
 SCHEDULE: Wednesdays 4:20-5:50PM VENUE: 4F Lecture Hall 1 STUDENTS: FIRST YEAR

Name of Student: _____ Student Number: _____

Date	Comments / Questions / Suggestions	Teacher's Action
10/06	I enjoyed my first Dental English class. Teacher's English is very kind to understand. I'm looking forward to this class every week.	Thank you for your comments. I am happy that you enjoyed the class. It is important to have a positive mind while studying a new language. Another tip is also about dental terms so it is quite difficult for you to understand everything now. But I will try my best to give you lessons that are easy to understand.
10/13	My English isn't good. But I think that English is very important to be a dentist. And I want to understand dental English well. I try to study English hard.	Don't worry about it too much. It is important that you will (try) to learn and how you think of your future. I understand that learning a new language is difficult because I myself studied English. But I was able to do it now if we also had to study. Please (try) to study hard. So do a little more to do it. I am sure you can do it. Just continue to study hard & believe in yourself.
10/20	I didn't know how "word was made". Long spell word is hard to remember. But I could know how word was made. And it was easy to remember many words. I want to study many words. Thank you for Ki-Kai !!	Yes, your request is the most important thing to remember it to understand the meaning of the medical parts of a medical/dental term. A word looks very complicated... but if you know the purpose of each part, it will be easy for you to make the - because a dentist/doctor seems to be very difficult. But if you study the subject (read) line by line, you will soon become a dental professional.
10/27	I know early dental instruments. For example the tooth brush, dental chair and so on. I'm surprised that dentistry dates back to the hair dressers. I think that dental chairs are very different.	In the early times, barbers were known to practice population's dentistry. They crossed with them as could buy with their instruments aside if a patient comes. They do everything needed to make the patient look healthy. So they cut the hair, shave, take out bad teeth & do surgery. But in the 18th century, they were not allowed to practice dentistry as a medical profession.
11/10	I can learn various branches of dentistry. For example, Oral surgery, orthodontics, periodontics and so on. I was interested in Forensic Dentistry.	When I was a student, I was very much interested in Forensic Dentistry. After taking the board exams (exam) I found out that my highest score was in Oral Surgery. So, I remember little when I became a dentist. And, just before coming to Japan I became interested in Forensic. And I had an chance to study it. I studied General Forensic Dentistry for the year and had some experience to think about it. What's important is to do it. So, I will try my best to give you lessons that are easy to understand.

If possible, please write your comments, questions, and/or suggestions in English. This will be a good time for you to practice your vocabulary and writing skills. できれば、希望を英語で書いてください。いい練習になります。



Performance of Iranian EFL Learners on Compliment Response Speech Acts in English

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Bio Data

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Abstract

Intercultural communication presents many challenges, one of which refers to the need to create awareness about the importance of understanding speech acts cross-culturally. “A speech act is an utterance that performs a locutionary and an illocutionary meaning in communication. For example, ‘I like your dress’ is a speech act concerning a proposition about a person’s dress with the illocutionary force of a compliment” (Ellis, 1994, p.724). However, the response to this compliment varies in different cultures because cultural difference has an impact on compliment response types. Speech acts are considered universal; nevertheless, researches show that they can be manifested differently across languages and cultures. This cross-cultural difference in language use is indicative of broader socio-cultural differences that underlie language in use internationally and certainly it is at this level that much intercultural misunderstanding has its origin. Accordingly, this research was designed to address the three following questions: (i) what are the differences between compliment responses of Iranian learners of English and those of native speakers of American English?; (ii) what is the relationship between EFL proficiency and appropriate use of English compliment responses?; and (iii) what are the similarities and differences between compliment response patterns of the Iranian and American females and males? In order to answer these questions, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was used to place participants in appropriate proficiency groups. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used to collect compliment responses of the participants. The frequency of occurrence of each of the compliment responses were compared

employing a chi-square test. Moreover, the Iranian compliment responses were checked against the findings of the study done between Thai and American responses to compliments in English (Cedar, 2006). As for the first research question, the analysis of the data revealed that there were response pattern differences between the Iranian and American participants regarding compliment response speech act, but the difference between compliment responses given by Iranian learners of English and English native speakers was not statistically significant. As for the second research question, the findings indicated a relationship between EFL proficiency and appropriate use of English compliment responses. Finally, for the third question, the findings revealed that there were statistical differences between Iranian and American females and males in the use of compliment responses. The study suggests that language and culture should be taught simultaneously. Thus, EFL teachers should show the learners how to appropriately respond to an English compliment. This study provided a useful tool for a teacher of English to raise students' awareness of cultural similarities and differences between compliment/response patterns in Iranian and English cultures.

Key words: speech act, compliment response, Iranian learners of English, proficiency

Introduction

Communicating with speakers of other languages is a complex behavior that requires both linguistic and pragmatic competence. Whether we speak in a first or second language, we are influenced by sociocultural norms and constraints that affect the way we communicate. Rizk (2003) points out that what is considered appropriate in one language might not be so in another. Praising a girl for being fat, for instance, in a Western African community may be considered a compliment; while in an American context it may be perceived as an insult.

If the goals of language teaching are to enable the learner to communicate with both native and non-native speakers in English, then it is important that the norms of language behavior of interlocutors from a range of different cultures be also taught in the English language classroom. The differences in accepted norms of behavior are generally reflected in speech acts. Learners of English must be made consciously aware of the differences in certain speech acts when used by a native speaker of English and by a second language learner of the language because the values and cultural norms underlying the English language which a non-native speaker uses are

not necessarily the same as those of a native speaker.

El Samaty defines pragmatic competence as “the ability to use language effectively in order to understand language in context” (El Samaty 2005, p.341). Employing pragmatic knowledge can be a challenge for non-native speakers whose social values and norms are different from those in the target language culture. When socio-cultural rules in the native language differ from those in the second language, the learners’ transferring of their cultural norms to the target culture of the L2 often causes misunderstanding or offence, resulting in communication breakdown.

Many studies (cf. Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001) have addressed the importance of developing and promoting pragmatic competence in L2 learning. One common rationale of such studies is that grammatical proficiency alone does not guarantee appropriate use of language and that language inappropriateness has a negative effect on social interactions by making learners sound strange, uncooperative, or even impolite in the eyes of communication partners.

Students need sufficient practice in order to obtain the necessary pragmatic competence for successful and effective communication. The development of linguistic competence alone does not guarantee pragmatic competence. Students have to be trained to develop the ability to understand or generate messages with precise accuracy in accordance to the communicative contexts that can be social, cultural or situational.

However, few studies on responses to English compliments between Iranians and Americans (or any native speakers of English) have been undertaken. Accordingly, this study aimed at analyzing and comparing compliment response speech acts by Iranian learners of English and native speakers of American English.

The study presented here aims at answering the following questions:

1. What are the differences between compliment responses of Iranian learners of English and those of native speakers of American English?
2. What is the relationship between EFL proficiency level and appropriate use of English compliment responses?

3. What are the similarities and differences between compliment response patterns of the Iranian and American females and males?

Literature Review

2.1. Compliment Response

In the past decade, sociolinguistic studies have been increasingly conducted on compliment responses between English used by native speakers and English used by L2 English learners with different L1s, for example, Chinese (Yu, 2003; Chen, 1993; Chiang & Pochtrager, 1993), German (Golato, 2002), Indonesian (Ibrahim & Riyanto, 2000), Japanese (Yoko, 2003), and Thai (Cooper & Cooper, 2005; Gajaseni, 1994). The results of the studies show that cultural difference has an impact on compliment response types.

Arabic and South African English speakers were found to prefer accepting compliments rather than rejecting them. Speakers of Asian languages, on the other hand, were likely to reject compliments (Urano, 1998).

More recently, Cedar's (2006) contrastive study of compliment responses used by Thai non-native speakers of English and American native speakers of English revealed significant differences in responses to English compliments between the two groups. While Americans tended to accept compliments and elaborate positively in their responses, Thai non-native speakers of English refrained from elaborating and used formulaic expressions in their responses. Cedar explained this by stating that "the English conversational competence of Thai subjects was not developed enough to express their feelings of positive elaboration" (p.15).

2.2. Pragmatic and discourse transfer in responding to compliments

Pragmatic and discourse transfer is likely to occur when L1 and L2 cultural norms differ noticeably (Tran, 2002). For example, in a contrastive study of compliment responses between the Chinese learners of English and American native speakers of

English, Chen (1993) found that the majority of the Chinese non-native speakers of English rejected compliments, compared to the American native speakers who accepted and appreciated those compliments.

Pragmatic and discourse transfer in English compliment responses made by learners of English was found by Liu (1995) and Yu (1999) in the case of Chinese learners as well as Jeon (1996) in the case of Korean learners, but pragmatic and discourse non-transfer was found by Yuan (1996) also in the case of Chinese learners. Wolfson (1989) believed that there was pragmatic and discourse transfer but it explained only a portion of the miscommunication found in non-native speakers' compliment response behavior. Moreover, Saito and Beecken (1997) found that in the interlanguage of American learners of Japanese, there was pragmatic and discourse transfer of certain compliment response strategies, (e.g. non-use of avoidance), but not of others, (e.g. positive strategies). Baba (1996, 1999) also found that in performing the communicative act of responding to compliments in the L2, both Japanese learners of English, and American learners of Japanese, transferred their L1 pragmatic and discourse norms especially in the family category, using their L1 responding strategies. In the self variable, however, American learners of Japanese did not transfer their positive strategy in responding to compliments. Accordingly, interlanguage pragmatics studies in compliment responses presented contradictory results concerning pragmatic and discourse transfer.

2.3. Proficiency level and pragmatic competence

Kerekes (1992) examined differences in the way learners of ESL in the United States assessed the assertiveness of individuals whose speech contained a range of linguistic devices, with the aim of determining how learner ratings differed across three proficiency levels. It was found that ratings did differ significantly across levels, with those of the higher proficiency group approximating native speakers' ratings (Kerekes, in Rose and Kasper, 2001, p. 276). Changing target languages from ESL to Spanish as a foreign language, Koike (1996) examined how university students in their first,

second, and third year of Spanish understood Spanish suggestions. Third-year students performed significantly better than those in the first year in correctly identifying the speech act in question.

Shedding light on the relationship between pragmatic transfer and development, Rose and Kasper (2001) report that Takahashi and Beebe (1987) advanced the positive correlation hypothesis, predicting that second language proficiency is positively correlated with pragmatic transfer. Lower-proficiency learners, according to the hypothesis, are less likely to display pragmatic transfer in their L2 production than higher-proficiency learners because they do not have the necessary linguistic resources to do so. Higher-proficiency learners, on the other hand, do have such resources, so their L2 production will tend to reveal more pragmatic transfer (cf. Takahashi and Beebe, in Rose and Kasper, 2001)

Other studies, however, do not support Takahashi and Beebe's hypothesis. Maeshiba et al. (1996) carried out an apology study with intermediate and advanced Japanese-speaking ESL learners in Hawaii. Maeshiba et al. (1996) predicted that transfer of apology strategies could be based on similarities and differences in assessment of contextual variables, with positive transfer occurring with similar assessments, and negative transfer where assessments differed. An important finding was that the advanced learners showed more positive transfer and less negative transfer than did the intermediate group. These results do not support the positive correlation hypothesis.

Al Falasi (2007) found that language proficiency did not play a role in producing target-like compliment responses. Both English majors and non majors produced the same compliment responses.

2.4. Gender-based compliments and compliment responses

Since this study examined gender-based differences in compliment responses in Iranian and American context, the studies on this area need special mentioning. Two important studies that focused on gender differences in complimenting were those by

Wolfson (1984) and Herbert (1990). Wolfson (1984) examined the compliment behavior of Americans and found that the way a woman was spoken to was, no matter what her status, a subtle and powerful way of perpetuating her subordinate role in society. Women used compliments more often to other women than they did to men or than men did to each other. Furthermore, compliments on appearance were the dominant topic for women, whereas men complimented on possessions. From his analysis of responses to compliments, Herbert (1990) concluded that females do not usually accept compliments especially from females, whereas compliments from males are usually accepted especially by females.

Ye (1995) also examined gender-based differences in compliments and compliment responses. He classified the compliment strategies employed by respondents into four categories: (i) explicit compliment, (ii) implicit compliment, (iii) non-compliment and (iv) no Response. Results showed that both males and females gave the same order of rank in their preference of compliment strategies. However, statistical analysis showed that there was a significant difference between genders using these four compliment strategies. Female respondents gave more implicit compliments than did male respondents, while males gave more explicit compliments or non-compliments. Male and female respondents were found to use positive semantic carriers differently in adverbs and nouns. Males used nouns more often than females, while females used more adverbs (Ye, 1995).

According to Ye's study, the distribution of compliment responses also showed that male and female respondents adopted different strategies. Specifically, males chose non-acceptance more often than did females, whereas females showed a much stronger tendency to acceptance.

Methodology

3.1. Design

This research study is a descriptive one. The data in this study were analysed both

qualitatively and quantitatively. Iranians and Americans' compliment response patterns belonging to their value system and culture were collected. In this study, compliment response data were coded according to the strategies selected to reply to compliments. Then, a qualitative analysis based on the content of compliment responses was made. Also, the frequency of occurrence of compliment response patterns was calculated to show the numeric differences between the compliment response patterns by Iranians and Americans. The obtained data are presented in tables and figures throughout the article.

3.2. Participants

Sixty senior students in the English department at Sheikhabaee University that is a state university were selected using accessible sampling. Age range of participants was 20-23.

3.3. Materials

In this study, a standard English language test, Oxford Placement Test (OPT), was administered to place participants in the appropriate English language proficiency level. The data were elicited via a modified version of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) which includes compliment and compliment responses. The questionnaire made by the researcher was modified for the purpose of validity and reliability. The participants were invited to choose one of the different strategies of responses based on the module used by Payung Cedar (2006) (e.g. acceptance, elaboration, neutral, negative, etc.) which they felt more appropriate. The answers were checked against the findings of the study done between Thai and American responses to compliments in English (Cedar, 2006).

3.4. Procedures

Thirty senior students studying English language and literature as well as thirty senior translation students were selected using accessible sampling. The learners were

regrouped into advanced and intermediate groups on the basis of their OPT scores, the purpose of which was to examine the relationship between EFL proficiency level and appropriate use of English compliment responses. Then, the questionnaire which included compliment and compliment responses was administered to the participants. The participants were asked to choose one of the different strategies of responses which they felt were more appropriate. Also, they could add other responses if they believed them to be appropriate in the context. Moreover, among these sixty participants only forty one participated in the OPT. The range of scores of the advanced group was 42-54 and the intermediate group was 28-39. There was also a disparity in numbers between male and female students. There were only twelve male respondents; accordingly, twelve female respondents were selected randomly on the basis of table of random numbers to explore the similarities and differences between compliment response patterns of the Iranian and American females and males.

Data Analysis and Results

The data was coded and entered onto Microsoft Excel sheets (see appendices), and then analyzed statistically. As the findings were frequency based, chi-square indexes were applied in the study. Moreover, P-value was measured via the computerized program called Statistica. First, X^2 was measured through $X^2 = \sum (O-E)^2/E$ then we gave X^2 to the Statistica to calculate the P-value.

Based on the research questions mentioned earlier, the findings are divided into three sections: (i) the differences between compliment responses of Iranian learners of English and those of native speakers of American English, (ii) the relationship between EFL proficiency level and appropriate use of English compliment responses, and (iii) the similarities and differences between compliment response patterns of the Iranian and American females and males, as respectively demonstrated below.

4.1. The differences between compliment responses used by Iranian speakers of English and by native speakers of American English

In response to this research question, compliment responses produced by Iranian-speaking learners of English and those given by native speakers of English are presented in Figure1 below.

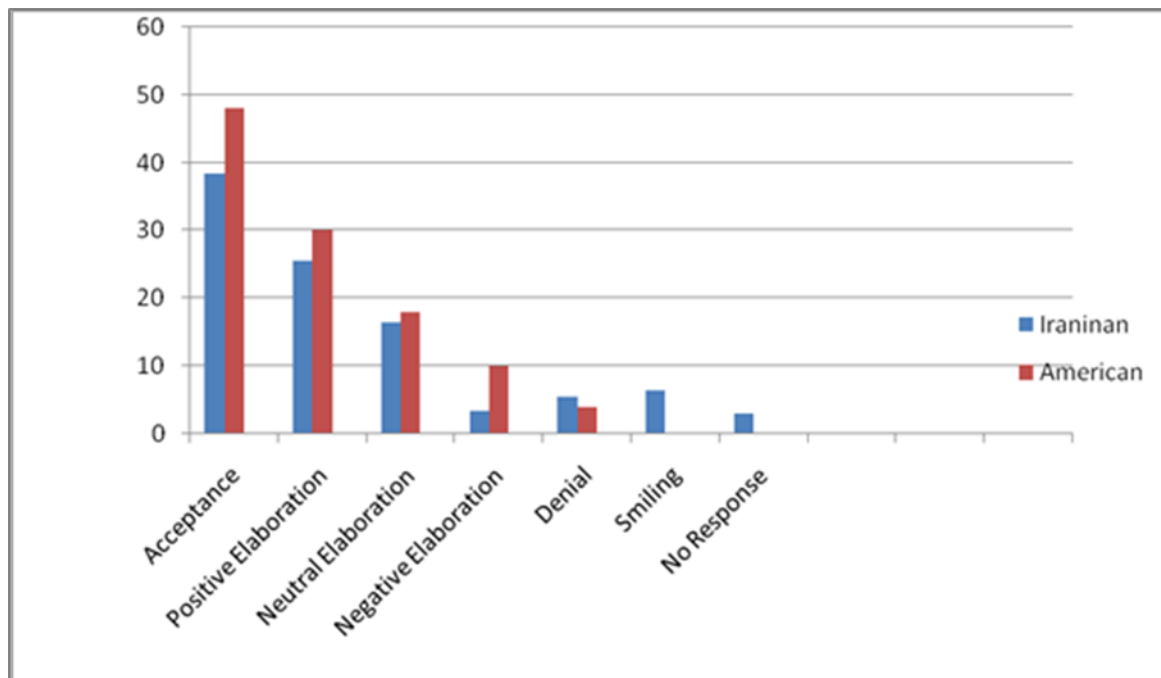


Figure 1 Different response strategies used by Iranian speakers of English and native speakers of English

Note: The numerals are the percentages of the responses in each strategy.

As shown in Figure1 above, the statistical results show that the difference between compliment responses given by Iranian learners of English and English native speakers is not statistically significant ($X^2 = 7.57, p=.372, p>.05$).

4.2. *The relationship between EFL proficiency and appropriate use of English compliment responses*

In response to the second research question, the results are shown in Figure 2 below. The compliment responses of the Iranian learners of English were checked against the findings of the study done between Thai and American responses to compliments in English.

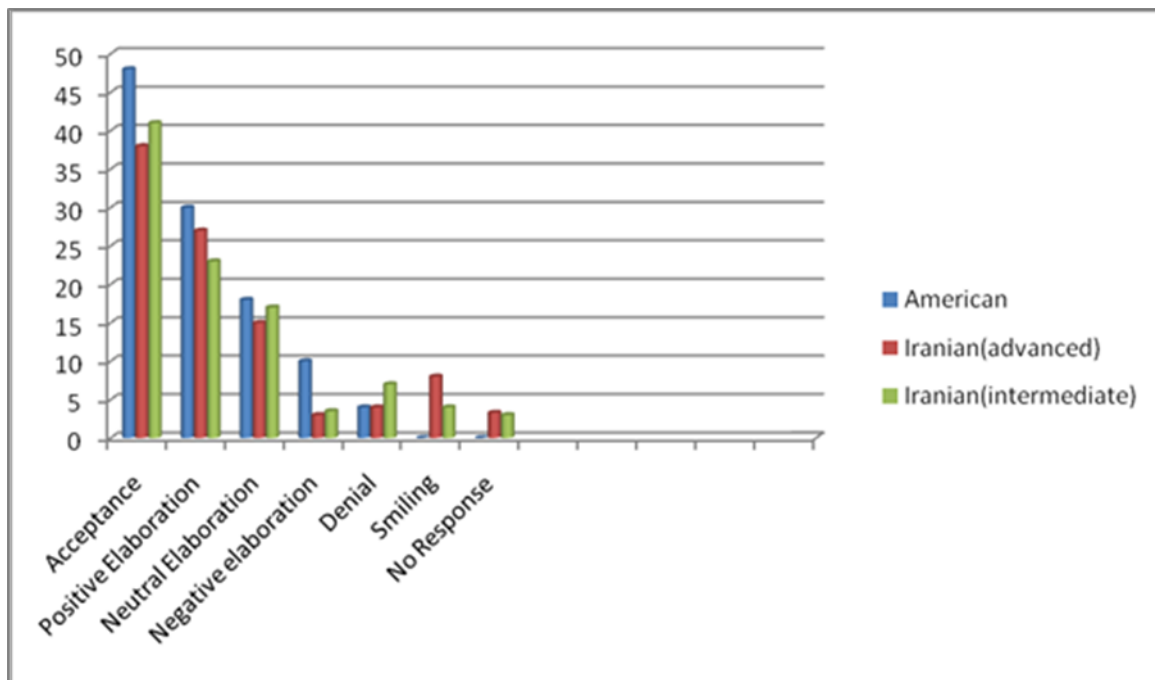


Figure2 Different response strategies used by Iranian advanced and intermediate learners of English and native speakers of English.

Note: The numerals are the percentages of the responses in each strategy.

Statistically speaking, the results show that the difference between compliment responses given by Iranian intermediate learners of English and advanced learners is not statistically significant ($X^2 = 5.409$, $p = .610$, $p > .05$). Although advanced and intermediate learners' language proficiency are not equal, the way they use language is not considerably different.

4.3. *The similarities and differences between compliment response patterns of the Iranian and American females and males*

In response to the third research question, the results are shown in Figure 3 below. The compliment responses of the Iranian learners of English were checked against the findings of the study done between Thai and American responses to compliments in English.

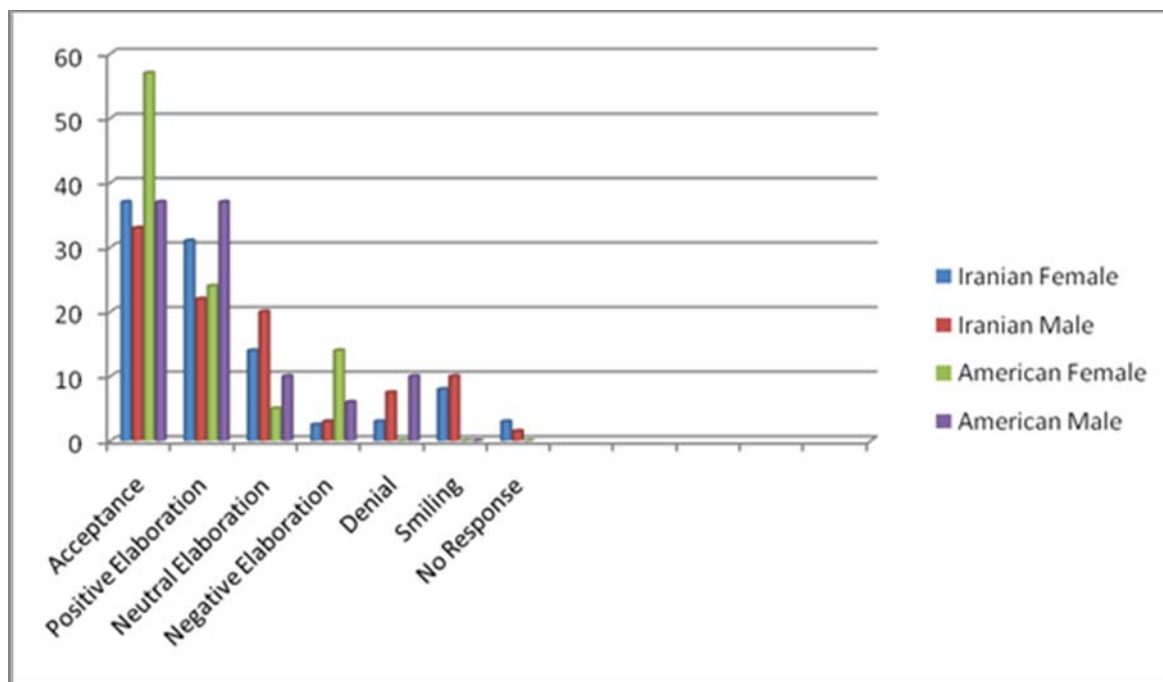


Figure3 Different response strategies used by different genders of two ethnic groups: Iranian females vs. males, and American females vs. males

Note: The numerals are the percentages of the responses in each strategy.

The chart above shows that the responses given by American females are well related to those given by American males ($X^2 = 21.8925$, $p < .0005$, $p < .05$), suggesting that gender does play a significant role in Americans' responding to English compliments. The results from the Iranian group show that there is not a significant difference between Iranian females' and males' responses ($X^2 = 10.557$, $p = .159$, $p > .05$). In addition, a significant difference was found between responses by Iranian females and those by American females ($X^2 = 34.69$, $p = .000013$, $p < .05$), and between responses by Iranian males and those by American males ($X^2 = 18.63$, $p = .0094$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

The findings of the first phase of the study revealed that two types of compliment responses, namely, "smiling" and "no response" are used by the Iranian participants in this study but do not exist in the American participants' responses. Interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics studies have provided ample evidence that L2 learners' L1 pragmatic knowledge significantly influences their comprehension and production of

pragmatic performance in the L2 (Kasper, 1992). Responding to a compliment includes verbal and nonverbal behavior (body language) such as smiles (Holmes, 1987). Like verbal expressions, smiles in different cultures carry different meanings. The “smiling strategy” as a response to compliments seems to come from Iranian culture, which is less open to expressing compliments. Moreover, in Iranian culture, the function of smiling is to lessen embarrassment and tension between the interlocutors. Thus, an American, who does not understand standard Iranian norms of responding to compliments, may be confused when he sees an Iranian person’s smile in response to his English compliment.

A supportive example that we used in the questionnaire is as follows:

American: *Your sweater is nice*

Iranian: *You like it?*

A: *Yes, I like your sweater*

I: *Um...* (smiling)

Besides smiling (laughing), the other response type used only by Iranian subjects is “no response.” The reason why they did not give any indication or response to compliments might be related to their limited linguistic resources in English, or no indication of having heard of the compliment.

The following example is typical:

A: *What is your name?*

I: *Sara*

A: *I think it’s a really beautiful name*

I: (no response)

Based on the results mentioned above, two interesting observations were observed. The first, as mentioned before, is that smiles have different functions in each culture. The major functions of smiling, without any verbal elaboration as a compliment response strategy, in Iranian culture, is to lessen embarrassment and tension, so as not to threaten the face of the complimenter. According to Cedar (2006), even though smiling can be understood to play the same role in American culture, it is less likely to

be used as a response to compliments. In other words, Americans smile and laugh when responding to compliments, but they also elaborate their response verbally without exception. This shows that Iranian learners of English tend to transfer the pragmatics of Iranian complimenting to their use of English language interactions. The second observation is that Americans tend to use negative elaboration more often than do Iranians (the percentage of using negative elaboration by Americans and Iranians is 10:3.5).

The findings of the second section of the study, namely, the relationship between EFL proficiency level and appropriate use of English compliment responses revealed that although Iranian advanced learners of English are somehow different from native speakers of English in responding to compliments, Iranian advanced learners of English are more similar to native speakers of English. The findings provide support for a link between increasing pragmatic awareness and advanced language proficiency. Findings indicate that EFL proficiency has an effect on appropriate use of English compliment responses. So, the second hypothesis of this research that learners of high proficiency will not necessarily possess comparable pragmatic competence is rejected. Although advanced learners are more similar to native speakers of English, regarding “smiling” and “no response” which are not used by native speakers of English, advanced learners use these items more often than do intermediate learners. Therefore, even advanced learners may use language inappropriately and show differences from target-language pragmatic norms. This variation seems to come from the Iranian speakers’ lack of sociocultural familiarity with the English expressions involved. In other words, the English conversational competence of Iranian participants is not developed enough to respond to a compliment properly.

Finally, the findings of the third section, the similarities and differences between compliment response patterns of the Iranian and American females and males, revealed that gender does play a significant role in Americans’ responding to English compliments. However, the results show that there is not a significant difference between Iranian females’ and males’ responses. Yet, a significant difference was found

between responses by Iranian females and those by American females, and between responses by Iranian males and those by American males.

For a more detailed information, some other differences have been arrived at in this study. First, it was found that American females use “acceptance” as a response type far more often than do American males (57:37), but the frequency of use of “acceptance” by Iranian females and males is, to some extent, similar (37: 33). Another interesting result is that American females use “negative elaboration” more often than do Iranian females (14:2.5). Third, American males and Iranian males and females use “denial responses”, while American females give no denial responses. The last interesting finding is that Iranian females and males use the “non-verbal response” (smile), while none of the American females and males smiles to the complimenter as a response to compliments. This seems to come from the Iranian culture which requires people to be modest and humble. Additionally, only the Iranian females and males refrain from giving a response.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the compliment response patterns of Iranian learners of English and those of native Americans. The obtained findings confirm previous studies (Golato, 2002; Yu, 2003) that cultural differences have an impact on compliment response types. The overall findings of this study reveal that there are some similarities and differences between compliment responses of Iranian learners of English and those of native speakers of American English. Moreover, the findings of this study support Herbert (1990) and Ye’s (1995) claims that there are gender-based differences in compliment responses. Finally, the findings show that advanced learners are more similar to native speakers of English in responding to compliments.

Communicating effectively and efficiently in any given language requires more than just linguistic knowledge. The ability to use this linguistic knowledge appropriately in the given sociocultural context is also essential. Hence, pragmatics is an indispensable aspect of language ability in order for L2 learners to understand and be understood in

their interactions with native speakers. A language learner needs to be equipped with the rules of language use as well as the rules of language usage (Widdowson, 1991) in order to be communicatively competent, and determine the pragmatic appropriateness of a particular speech act in a given context. Before teaching the rules of language use, however, it is necessary to define such rules. To do so, we need to study language in as many cultures and societies and under the influence of as many sociopragmatic factors as possible.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

Language researchers need to develop a comprehensive theory of the phenomenon they are studying (in the case of language) before they can make any claim about their findings. It is necessary that language researchers study language in various societies to develop an integrated concept of the nature of language and all of the sociopragmatic factors involved in the process of language learning. By studying language in different societies and in the context of various sociopragmatic variables, language researchers can extract the shared aspects of the phenomenon of language and develop a theoretical framework on the basis of their findings. However, since most of the sociopragmatic studies of language are culturally restricted to western societies and culture, this study tried to expand the scope of such studies to include a non-western language and culture regarding one of the speech acts.

6.2. Pedagogical Implications

The study suggests that language and culture should be taught simultaneously. This ignores the entire fields of ELF and World Englishes, which suggest the opposite. Compliments and compliment responses have many functions in English. Thus, EFL teachers should show the learners how to appropriately respond to an English compliment. This study provided a useful tool for a teacher of English to raise students' awareness of cultural similarities and differences between compliment/response patterns in Iranian and English cultures. Teachers can provide

the language learners with abundant and fruitful information concerning the most appropriate use of compliment responses. Moreover, the findings of this study can hopefully provide the translators with the information they need in order to come by the closest linguistic and pragmatic equivalent forms in translation.

As for the implications of the findings of this study, one should bear in mind the statement by Hymes (1972) that proficiency in a language means not only the knowing of its phonology, syntax, vocabulary and semantics but also being able to make use of this knowledge appropriately in actual communication. Thus, to assess the non-native speakers' language proficiency, in addition to assessing their knowledge of the phonology, vocabulary, syntax and semantics, it is necessary to assess their sociopragmatic knowledge of language. Finally, the findings of studies like this can help the test makers to make their assessment of language proficiency more comprehensive.

6.3. Suggestion for Further Research

Although the findings of this study have shed some light on the response pattern differences between the Iranian and American participants regarding compliment response speech act, it leaves a great number of questions open to further investigation. The findings of this study are limited to a specific group (university students) with a specific level of education (senior) and with the age range 20 to 23. Accordingly, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to people of other ages or groups of the society. Further studies need to be carried out to account for these limitations. Another line of research can be opened up to study the effect of age on compliment responses. A young man may use a compliment response different from that of an old man. Also, this study was limited to the study of the verbal aspects of language, where as, the non-verbal aspect of language is sometimes of prime importance in the studies of language; for, a gesture which is appropriate in one culture may be absent or insulting in another. Yet, another point which is worth studying in relation to compliment responses includes the study of the compliment

response in written discourse. Finally, it should be noted that people may respond differently to a compliment, depending on a number of factors other than culture and gender. Some of these factors include social status (high vs. low) of the interlocutors, social distance (friends, acquaintances, or strangers), age, and situations. Clearly, these are areas that call for further study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Different response strategies used by Iranian learners of English

Participants	Acceptance	Positive elaboration	Neutral elaboration	Negative elaboration	Denial	No response	Smiling
1	5	6	1	0	1	0	2
2	3	1	4	2	3	2	0
3	4	5	1	2	0	2	1
4	8	3	1	0	0	0	3
5	5	2	5	1	0	0	2
6	6	3	2	2	1	0	1
7	6	4	3	0	1	0	1
8	5	3	4	1	2	0	0
9	4	6	4	0	0	1	0
10	7	5	1	0	1	0	1
11	6	5	1	0	0	2	1
12	6	6	0	0	0	1	2
13	5	8	1	0	0	0	1
14	7	5	1	0	0	1	1
15	7	6	1	0	0	0	1
16	3	3	4	2	2	0	1
17	4	5	1	1	1	0	3
18	6	5	2	0	0	2	0
19	5	5	2	1	1	0	1
20	5	5	2	1	1	0	1
21	6	5	3	1	0	0	0

22	5	5	3	1	0	0	1
23	5	5	3	0	1	0	1
24	7	5	3	0	0	0	0
25	6	1	1	0	0	4	3
26	6	4	1	1	1	1	1
27	8	3	1	0	2	0	1
28	7	1	5	0	0	1	1
29	7	3	3	2	0	0	0
30	7	1	4	1	0	1	1
31	6	2	2	2	3	0	0
32	9	3	1	0	2	0	0
33	9	3	2	0	0	0	1
34	8	4	1	0	1	0	1
35	8	1	3	0	3	0	0
36	4	5	4	0	0	1	1
37	8	5	2	0	0	0	0
38	8	2	3	0	0	1	1
39	7	3	4	0	1	0	0
40	3	7	1	0	0	2	2
41	7	7	1	0	0	0	0
42	3	4	4	1	2	1	0
43	6	6	1	1	0	1	0
44	4	4	5	1	1	0	0
45	7	2	3	1	1	0	1
46	4	4	4	0	1	0	2
47	5	5	2	0	2	1	0
48	9	0	2	2	1	1	0
49	5	2	3	1	2	1	1
50	6	6	0	0	1	0	2
51	5	2	5	0	1	0	2
52	5	4	3	0	0	0	3
53	4	8	2	1	0	0	0
54	5	3	2	1	2	0	2
55	6	2	5	0	0	0	2
56	6	4	3	0	0	1	1
57	6	1	5	0	0	1	2
58	3	2	4	1	5	0	0
59	7	4	2	0	0	0	2
60	3	3	2	2	3	0	2
total	347	232	149	33	50	29	60

Appendix 2. Different response strategies used by Iranian advanced learners of English

Participants	Acceptance	Positive elaboration	Neutral elaboration	Negative elaboration	Denial	No response	Smiling
1	6	2	5	0	0	0	1
2	6	4	3	0	0	1	1
3	6	1	5	0	0	1	2
4	6	6	0	0	0	1	2
5	5	8	1	0	0	0	1
6	7	5	1	0	0	1	1
7	3	2	4	1	5	0	0
8	7	6	1	0	0	0	1
9	4	5	1	1	1	0	3
10	5	5	3	0	1	0	1
11	7	5	3	0	0	0	0
12	6	1	1	0	0	4	3
13	7	3	3	2	0	0	0
14	3	3	4	2	2	0	1
15	6	5	2	0	0	2	0
16	5	5	2	1	1	0	1
17	5	5	2	1	1	0	1
18	7	4	2	0	0	0	2
19	5	5	3	1	0	0	1
20	8	3	10	0	2	0	1
Total	114	83	47	9	13	10	24

Appendix 3. Different repose strategies used by Iranian intermediate learners of English

Participants	Acceptance	Positive elaboration	Neutral elaboration	Negative elaboration	Denial	No response	Smiling
1	7	1	4	1	0	1	1
2	6	2	2	2	3	0	0
3	9	3	1	0	2	0	0
4	9	3	2	0	0	0	1
5	3	3	2	2	3	0	2
6	8	4	1	0	1	0	1
7	8	1	3	0	3	0	0
8	4	5	4	0	0	1	1
9	8	5	2	0	0	0	0
10	8	2	3	0	0	1	1
11	7	3	4	0	1	0	0
12	3	7	1	0	0	2	2
13	7	7	1	0	0	0	0

14	3	4	4	1	2	1	0
15	6	6	1	1	0	1	0
16	4	4	5	1	1	0	0
17	7	2	3	1	1	0	1
18	4	4	4	0	1	0	2
19	5	5	2	0	2	1	0
20	9	0	2	2	1	1	0
Total	125	71	51	11	21	9	12

Appendix 4. Different response strategies used by Iranian females

participants	Acceptance	Positive elaboration	Neutral elaboration	Negative elaboration	Denial	No response	Smiling
1	7	3	3	2	0	0	0
2	9	3	2	0	0	0	1
3	4	5	4	0	0	1	1
4	3	7	1	0	0	2	2
5	5	5	2	0	2	1	0
6	5	2	5	1	0	0	2
7	7	5	1	0	1	0	1
8	6	6	0	0	0	1	2
9	7	5	1	0	0	1	1
10	4	5	1	1	1	0	3
11	5	5	2	1	1	0	1
12	5	5	3	0	1	0	1
Total	67	56	25	5	6	6	15

Appendix 5. Different response strategies used by Iranian males

Participants	Acceptance	Positive elaboration	Neutral elaboration	Negative elaboration	Denial	No response	Smiling
1	5	2	3	1	2	1	1
2	6	6	0	0	1	0	2
3	5	2	5	0	1	0	2
4	5	4	3	0	0	0	3
5	4	8	2	1	0	0	0
6	5	3	2	1	2	0	2
7	6	2	5	0	0	0	2
8	6	4	3	0	0	1	1
9	6	1	5	0	0	1	2
10	3	2	4	1	5	0	0

11	7	4	2	0	0	0	2
12	3	3	2	2	3	0	2
Total	61	41	36	6	14	3	19