Politeness in Study Abroad

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ABSTRACT: The concept of politeness as an important notion in the study of human interaction had been originally introduced in the field of sociology and later was extended in the areas of discourse analysis and pragmatics. Using Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness, the present longitudinal study examined the development of proficiency in politeness over time pertaining to the use of request and apology speech acts in the Iranian intermediate English language learners in a study abroad program in India. A group of 72 learners were given a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) with 16 scenarios for request and 10 situations for apology at three times interval (at the beginning of the program as pre-test, after three months as post-test 1, and finally after six months as post-test 2). A quantitative analysis of the elicited data indicates a degree of improvement in politeness across the three tests. The findings in this study support that, length of stay in abroad has a positive impact on learners’ achievement in L2 norms of politeness regarding the illocutionary domain of speech acts namely, requests and apologies.

Key Words: study abroad, politeness, interlanguage pragmatics, speech acts, request, apology

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a means of passing information, it is also a way to form relationship and negotiate interpersonal meaning (Locher, 2012). When people use language, they disclose something about themselves and their relationship with others as well. For example, when we request or apologize, we adapt our language use to the nature of our relationship with our addressees (e.g., teacher – student; employer – employee; father – child; friends). Depending on different factors such as affect, power, and distance a person may be addressed differently. Consequently, the degree of these factors determines the degree of politeness applied by the interactants in communication.

It is important to note that while certain linguistic expressions (e.g., ‘thank you,’ ‘please’) may express politeness, it is the situation and the degree of social distance or power that determine whether these expressions are perceived as polite or not by the interlocutor. Felix-Brasdefer (2013) postulates that “polite behavior is conditioned by at least three factors: social distance (+/-D) (the degree of familiarity/distance with the interlocutor), social power (+/-P) (vertical relationships such as a boss – employee relationship), and the weight of imposition (e.g., can I borrow $10 dollars vs. can I borrow $1,000 dollars)” (p. 494).

In order to improve learners’ politeness competence, along with their linguistic competence, developing their socio-cultural competence is also compulsory (Gharaghi, Eslami Rasekh, Dabaghi, & Tohidian, 2011). This will help them to behave politely and produce or perceive polite and impolite behavior in a second language context. Learners’ ability in regard with producing and perceiving polite behavior is often studied in the field of interlanguage pragmatics through analyzing the speech acts such as requests, apologies, complaints, refusals, etc.

To determine which pragmatic abilities the L2 learners acquire during study abroad, ample research studies have been conducted on the acquisition of speech acts such as requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, and so forth (e.g., Collentine, 2004; Khorshidi, 2013; Kinginger, 2011 among others). Other researchers (e.g., DuFon, 1999; Kasper, 2006; Spencer-Otey, 2007) focused on more holistic approaches which scrutinized the process through which second language learners acquire the speech norms of the target language community. Politeness theory is one of the frameworks that can be applied to investigate these speech norms.

On the other hand, some other findings from different research namely, Barron (2003), DuFon (1999), Hoffman-Hicks (1999), and Kondo (1997) indicate that study abroaders do not always show a movement toward being native-like in language norms. Moreover, other studies attested that the degree of pragmatic development is not the same among individual learners (Cohen, Paige, Shivelly, Emert, & Hoff, 2005; Kinginger & Belz, 2005; Siegal, 1995).
Theoretical approaches to politeness

Lakoff’s politeness theory
To decide whether an act is polite or impolite Lakoff (1975, pp. 87-8) suggested three rules while considering that different cultures may judge differently on the same acts. Lakoff’s rules of politeness are as follows:

Formality: keep aloof (creating distance between the interactants)
Deference: give options (providing optionality to show the power of addressee)
Camaraderie: show sympathy (making the addressee feel liked)

Leech’s Politeness Principle
Leech’s politeness principle is actually the expansion of cooperative principle proposed by Grice in 1975. Grice believed that while conversing, people are involved in a set of cooperative efforts, and their interactional interaction is guided by cooperative principle. According to Grice, cooperative principle means "make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (1975, p. 45). Grice’s cooperative principle consists of four maxims:

Quantity: ‘give enough but not too much information’
Quality: ‘be honest and do not exaggerate’
Relation: ‘be relevant i.e. keep to the matter in question’
Manner: ‘make our contribution clear and easy to understand’

Despite the effectiveness of Grice’s cooperative principles in discovering the conversational implicatures, it has been criticized by scholars (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983) because it didn’t consider the social factors in language use. Leech (1983) holds that for a successful interaction the cooperative principle alone does not fully serve because to ensure cooperation one needs to be polite first. Leech suggested a set of six maxims as follows:

Tact(minimizing cost and maximizing benefit to other)
Generosity (minimizing benefit and maximizing cost to self)
Approbation (minimizing dispraise and maximizing praise of other)
Modesty (minimizing praise and maximizing dispraise of self)
Agreement (minimizing disagreement and maximizing agreement between self and other)
Sympathy (minimizing antipathy and maximizing sympathy between self and other)

To Leech (1983), the maxims operate on a set of scales in terms of cost-benefit, optionality, indirectness, authority, and social distance. Leech’s politeness principle aims to “maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place” (p. 82). In order to achieve this goal, Leech (1983) states, the speaker in the interaction needs to maximize the benefit for the hearer and at the same time minimize the cost to the hearer. The more costly the goal is to the hearer, the greater the necessity to compensate for that, and thus the need to increase the degree of politeness by applying these maxims. Leech’s politeness principle has also been criticized because to Fraser (1990) it is too theoretical and abstract and according to Mey (1993) it is interpreted as a moral code of behavior. As mentioned by Lee-Wong (2000, p. 19) Leech’s politeness principle “is principally concerned with politeness at the surface level, that outer self indicative of good manners.” Regarding the shortcomings of Leech’s politeness principle, Brown and Levinson state that leech’s politeness principle leads us to an infinite number of maxims which makes the theory of politeness ineffective. Lin (2005) believe that instead of considering the politeness as an absolute and rule-governed theory, Brown and Levinson’s purpose is “to develop a model that concentrates on choices interactants make in actual contexts and allows for cross-cultural variability” (p. 28).

Brown and Levinson’s Theory of Politeness
Politeness refers to the interpersonal relational function of language where meaning is negotiated between interlocutors that are engaged in social interaction (Felix-Brasdefer, 2013, p. 493). Different definitions of politeness have been emerged from the previous studies that investigated this phenomenon in different languages. Some researchers (e.g., Lakoff, 1975) emphasized that politeness serves to reduce the possibility of friction in personal interactions, while Brown and Levinson (1987) see politeness as a means to soften the acts which are possible to threaten the face of interactants. Consequently, politeness strategies help people to reduce the danger and the possibility of antagonism. According to Culpeper (2009) politeness is the use of communicative strategies in order to create and uphold social harmony. To be polite you need either to be contextually appropriate, to follow social and cultural norms, or to be socially positive by addressing face needs.
Several models of politeness have been offered and examined in the realm of pragmatics research, including Leech's (1983) politeness principles and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Ample research studies have focused on the study of cross-cultural pragmatics in general and the study of speech acts in particular to discuss the universality or culture specificity of politeness. Some scholars believe that politeness is universal and the strategies people use are basically similar across cultures and languages (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Fraser, 1985; Leech, 1983, 2007). On the other hand, some other researchers hold that politeness is culture specific and speech acts differ across languages and cultures because the cultural norms and assumptions differ (e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Mao, 1994; Wierzbicka, 2003; Yu, 2003). The analysis of politeness in a second language has mainly utilized Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness and focuses on the linguistic expressions used to convey positive or negative politeness.

The Notion of Face

In the same way that politeness has status as a commonsense notion in our everyday existence, the idea of face appears in our everyday language in phrases such as ‘face-saving,’ ‘face-threatening’ or ‘to lose face’. Brown and Levinson (1987) have investigated politeness and introduced the notion of ‘face theory’ on the basis of principles of one’s desire to be liked or not to be imposed upon. They define ‘face’ -which was originally taken from Goffman (1967)- as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (1987, p. 61).

Theory of politeness indicates that people apply different politeness strategies to protect others’ face when addressing them. Under politeness theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), there are two kinds of faces: Positive face: It is the hearer’s desire to be appreciated and liked. In other words, one likes one’s self-image to be approved by other people. This is comprised of seeking agreement, solidarity, reciprocity or in-group membership markers (e.g., dear, buddy, honey, sweetie, dude).

Negative face: It is the hearer’s desire not to be impeded by others i.e., freedom of action and freedom from imposition. That is, it is part of a person’s personality one desires not to be imposed upon (e.g., being indirect, giving deference, being apologetic).

As it was already mentioned, speech acts like refusals, complaints, and requests are labeled as face-threatening acts (FTA). Among these, requests are considered intrinsically impolite and consequently face-threatening. Brown and Levinson (1987) hold that FTAs are the acts that deliberately threaten the face needs of others. They add that the politeness strategies that are used in face-threatening acts depend highly on the relationship between the interlocutors. Therefore, speakers and hearers can choose strategies that help them to keep the face of either of the parties. In actual conversations, FTAs are unavoidable and when it happens, it can damage the interlocutor’s face because it is against his or her wants and needs.

Politeness Strategies

Politeness behavior can be manifested in different ways. It can be represented through linguistic expressions (which can also be impolite) used in specific situations (e.g., ‘thanks for inviting me to your party. It’s really kind of you’) or non-verbal gestures that may be judged as either polite or impolite by the interlocutors. Flix-Brasdefer (2013) reports that:

- Politeness is often associated with good manners or rules of etiquette (e.g., ‘please’ and ‘thank you’), deference (formality), consideration for others, mitigation or attenuation (e.g., ‘could [vs. can] you please call me when you get the message?’), indirectness (e.g., ‘I was wondering whether you …’), socially appropriate behavior, rapport management, social behavior in excess (e.g., ‘I’m really grateful for your kind offer, thank you so much.’), or behavior that is perceived as polite (or impolite) by others (p. 494).

Empirical work on linguistic politeness is evident in the production of speech acts such as requests (Marquez Reiter, 2000) and refusals (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008) among native speakers of English (England and U.S.) and Spanish (Uruguay and Mexico) respectively. In these studies politeness is realized through the use of mitigated or indirect requests or refusals with various degrees of tentativity (e.g., ‘Could I borrow …,’ ‘I’m sorry, but unfortunately I will be unable to attend your birthday party’).

Culpeper (1996) introduced five kinds of politeness superstrategies with subcategories while dealing with face-threatening acts. The use of these strategies highly depends on the relationship, the social distance between the speakers and listeners, and also the greatness of the threat of the face threatening act.

Bald on record

In this kind of strategy the speaker is not making an attempt to minimize the face threat. This strategy is often used among family, friends, or intimates. In simple words, this strategy is a direct way of expressing things
without any minimization to the imposition in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way. For example, imperative form without any redress: ‘Wash your hands’.

**Positive politeness**

In positive politeness the speakers is showing that he or she values the interlocutor therefore; the speaker minimizes the threat to the positive face. There are different types of positive strategies (e.g., Noticing or attending to H, Exaggeration, Intensifying interest to H, Using in-group identity makers, Seeking agreement, Avoiding disagreement, Presupposition/raise/assert common ground, Joking, Asserting or presuppose S’s knowledge of and concern for H’s wants, Offering and promising, Being optimistic, Including both S and H in the activity, Giving or asking reasons, Assuming or asserting reciprocity, Giving gifts to H such as goods, sympathy, understanding, or cooperation).

**Negative politeness**

In this kind of strategy, the speaker minimizes the threat to the negative face to show respect and also not to show an imposition on the listener or it expresses respect and consideration. In other words, negative politeness which attends to a person’s negative face also includes indirectness and apologies (e.g., asking somebody in street for directions). Strategies used in this superstrategies consist of Being conventionally indirect, Questioning or hedge, Being pessimistic, Minimizing the imposition, Giving deference, Apologizing, Impersonalizing S and H, Stating the FTA as a general rule, Nominalization, Going on record and incurring a debt, or as not indebting H.

**Off record**

In this strategy, by being indirect the speaker avoids responsibility for a face-threatening act(i.e. you indirectly ask someone to do something by commenting on something, e.g., it’s really hot in here). There are a number of ways that off record strategies can be constructed (e.g., Giving hints, Giving association clues, Presupposition, Understating, Overstating, Using tautologies, Using contradictions, Being ironic, Using metaphors, Using rhetorical questions, Being ambiguous, Being vague, Over-generalization, Displacing H, Being incomplete by using ellipsis)

**Withhold**

In this type of strategy, the speaker is not performing the FTA and a request is made by using a pantomime.

**Politeness Research**

Since the late 1970s many research studies have been devoted to the study of politeness in different cultures and languages. Approaches introduced by Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and Leech (1983) were the early influential contribution in study of politeness determining language choice and discussing relational meaning. Politeness frameworks based on pragmatic theory have been conceptualizing politeness as “strategic conflict avoidance” (Leech, 1980, p. 19), used “to reduce friction in personal interaction” (Lakoff, 1975, p. 64), or minimize face-threat (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These scholars emphasized that in addition to the syntactic rules in the establishment of grammatical sentences, there are pragmatic rules that determine the appropriate use of language as well. The concept of politeness emerged based on the universal rules on pragmatic competence (e.g., Lakoff’s [1973] rule of ‘be polite’) Grice’s cooperative principle (1975), Leech’s politeness principle (1983), Grice’s maxim of ‘quantity’ or Leech’s maxims of approbation and modesty as well as Goffman’s (1967) sociological notion of ‘face’.

In cross-cultural pragmatic studies, most empirical investigations were based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) universal model of linguistic politeness. This model has showed that politeness strategies are used to soften the imposition of acts that are potentially face-threatening. For example, request and apology speech acts have been investigated in various languages such as English (Australian, British, & U.S. English), Argentineen Spanish, and French (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989); England and Spain (Marquez Reiter, 2000), and Russia, Poland, and England (Ogiermann, 2009a) regarding positive and negative politeness strategies.

The notion of politeness in the communicative acts appears to be the most widely used in recent linguistics. Researchers in semantics and pragmatics argue that the performance of the speech acts and the understanding of utterances depend upon situational circumstances of the use (Streek, 1984). Therefore, the use of politeness for the situational speech acts can be more useful in the communicative strategies. Politeness touches the issues that are crucial not only for the sociolinguists and social anthropologists but also in the life of human beings’ communication.
Politeness in Request

The speech act of request is considered as the most common one in cross-cultural pragmatics studies (Ogiermann, 2009b). An interesting fact about this speech act is that requests can be made in different levels of directness and that, based on politeness theories a link exists between indirectness and politeness. This is supported by empirical studies representing that across cultures, in-directness is perceived differently. Ogiermann (2012) articulates that research studies back up a strong preference for conventionally indirect requests in different cultures and languages. For example, the frequent use of the conventionally indirect strategy of ability ‘could’ instead of ‘can’ (cf. Schauer, 2009) may be interpreted as agreement with this connection.

One of the earliest cross-sectional studies on the development of L2 requests is Scarcella’s (1979) analysis of the emergence of polite features when performing English (role play) requests in two learner groups, one group of beginners and one advanced group. The author found that the learners’ use of internal modifiers to express politeness in their requests (e.g., please, maybe, kind of, I think) improved with increasing proficiency.

Imperatives are rarely used for requests in English (Brown & Levinson, 1987). They are mostly used in special contexts such as in military or in an order. Kasper and Schmidt (1996) argued that direct requests such as imperatives precede indirect ones and conventionally indirect requests occur right after the direct request strategies. Indirect requests especially conventionally indirect ones such as willingness, permission, and suggestory formulae … are used in making requests endowed with politeness (Schauer, 2009). Moreover, she added that lexical downgraders namely, downtoners (maybe), politeness marker (please), understater (a bit), past tense modals (could you), consultative device (would you mind), tentative embedding (aspect I was wondering if), marked modality (may) and syntactic downgraders such as conditional clause (if), appreciative embedding (it would be really nice), tentative embedding (I wondered if), tag questions, and negation can be used to soften requests. Green (1975) asserted that conventionally indirect strategies like willingness (e.g., will/would you please), consultative devices (would you mind), and negation (why don’t you) are common modifiers in making a polite request.

Politeness in Apology

Apologies along with requests are the most investigated speech acts in cross-cultural research (cf. Ogiermann 2009a, pp. 61-79). A possible reason for this interest in apologies could be found in their function of repairing and maintaining social harmony. Apologies are usually called for when social norms have been violated, and whenthere is a need to “set things right” (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, p. 20). However, in order for an apology to take place, the speaker has to believe that an act of violation has been performed prior to the moment of speaking and that the result of the act has caused offence to another person who now deserves an apology (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989, p. 55).

Ogierman (2012) states that apologies “function as compensatory actions which enable us to restore social harmony whenever something goes wrong” (p. 31). This suggests that apologies are made to refurbish the hearer’s damaged face by the offence from the speaker. “What is particularly interesting about apologies is that in order to restore the hearer’s face damaged by the offence, the speaker performs a speech act which is costly to his or her own face” (Ogiermann, 2012, p. 31).

Kondo (1997) found that participants’ use of apology strategies such as the use of explanation and their IFID percentage approximated the L2 norms during their stay in abroad and also the learners’ pragmatic transfer decreased significantly. Beckwith and Dewaele (2012) hold that previous studies (e.g., Barron, 2003; Iwasaki, 2010; Kondo, 1997; Marriott, 1995; Warga & Schölmberger, 2007) reported some important impacts toward and away from the L2 norm that can be caused by time abroad, while emphasizing the nonlinear nature of this kind of pragmatic development.

Summary of Recent Studies on Politeness in Speech Acts

Polish culture prefers the use of positive politeness. While positive politeness is clearly given preference, negative politeness was also used in contexts with high social distance and power (Ogiermann, 2012). The results show that lawyers do use both politeness and impoliteness strategies in their speech in the courtroom. However, the number of politeness strategies was significantly greater than impoliteness strategies (Kuntsi, 2012).

Length of stay is not sufficient to acquire sociocultural norms and pragmatic ability to use speech acts in regard with politeness strategies and mitigation devices in Greek language. Therefore, a classroom support is also required to provide learners with metapragmatic information and meaningful opportunities for interaction which results in development in pragmatics (Bella, 2011).
Conventional directness, baldon-record FTA, was not considered to be impolite when the speaker was of a higher social status than the addressee (Culpeper, 2011).

Gender affects the choice of politeness strategies in Iranian EFL learners because females apply more power-politeness strategies than males (Gharaghani et al., 2011).

The speech acts within the Spanish and English advertisements tend to orient toward positive strategies and moreover, there are structural linguistic features specific to each language within speech acts that can support politeness strategies (Wise, 2011).

Similar to English native speakers, Yemeni EFL learners prefer strategies (e.g., hedges including lexical items, syntactic structures and particles showing deference) with negative politeness (ALFattah, 2010). Native speakers of Arabic prefer ‘bold on-record’ strategies (ALFattah, 2010).

The relationship between indirectness and politeness is interpreted differently across cultures. Conventionally indirect requests are the most frequent type in English, German, Polish, and Russian. Interrogatives are used in restricted cases in these languages (Ogiemann, 2009b).

There is a positive correlation between indirectness and politeness in Chinese language (Skewis, 2003). Despite some shared general concepts (universals) regarding politeness between Chinese and American society, culture plays an important role in using different strategies when performing the speech act of compliment (Yu, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and role-play are widely used in cross-cultural pragmatics, especially in interlanguage pragmatics study. In doing research on pragmatic strategies, DCT and role play results are not significantly different (Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Sasaki, 1998), thus, in this case, DCT was used since it provides a large amount of data in short time and saves time and energy (Schauer, 2009). Nurani (2009) summarizes that “DCT also provides stereotypical responses for a socially appropriate response” (p. 670).

Participants

In this study, the investigator tested a group of 72 Iranian English language learners who enrolled to study English in two Indian language institutes as a study abroad program. These 72 language learners were already administered a placement test and an interview and placed in intermediate level.

Instruments

In the present study the researcher used a DCT questionnaire comprised of 16 request scenarios developed by Schauer (2009) and 10 apology situations originally developed by (Blum-Kulka&Olshtain, 1984) in Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) to measure the amount of gains regarding politeness in the three phases of the learners’ stay in L2 context. These two sets of scenarios and situations were proper for the present study to measure learners’ improvement in using strategies to consider politeness aspect of communication because they were skillfully organized by their developers in a way that they included situations with equal and higher status and at the same time for the request scenarios with low and high imposition features.

Procedure

The data for this study were collected by administering the DCT in three phases as follows:

Phase 1: at the beginning of the program as pre-test in order to have a criterion for comparing the gains in post-test 1 and post-test 2.

Phase 2: after three months as post-test 1 to measure the amount of gain for the first three months.

Phase 3: after six months as post-test 2 to measure the total amount of gain during the study abroad program.

Final step

Three native English language teachers scored the papers based on the Speech Act Measure Rating Criteria prepared by Cohen et al. (2005) ranging from number 1 (very inappropriate) to number 5 (very appropriate). The politeness theory used in this study was the one proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The raters scored the answers based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) universal model of linguistic politeness. This model discusses the politeness strategies which are used to mitigate the imposition of acts that are possible to be face-threatening.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A quantitative analysis of the elicited data shows a degree of consensus across the three tests.

Table 1. Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphericity Assumed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88.757</td>
<td>691.944</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouse-Geisser</td>
<td>1.976</td>
<td>89.819</td>
<td>691.944</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huynh-Feldt</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>88.757</td>
<td>691.944</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-bound</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>177.514</td>
<td>691.944</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error(Test)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphericity Assumed</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouse-Geisser</td>
<td>140.321</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huynh-Feldt</td>
<td>142.000</td>
<td>.128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-bound</td>
<td>71.000</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 represents that the difference among the scores is highly significant \(F(2, 142) = 691.94, \ p = .000\) at the level \(\alpha < .05\). This means that length of stay certainly affects learner’s development in politeness. This finding supports the results obtained in previous research studies (e.g., AL Fattah, 2010; Schauer, 2007, 2009; Shively, 2008; DeKeyser, 2007; Churchill & Dufon, 2006; Freed, 1995; Siegal, 1995, Barron, 2006).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Politeness Scores in the Tests and Gains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre (at the beginning)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>.48078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 1 (after 3 months)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>.58214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 2 (after 6 months)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.42030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Speakers</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.32764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain 1 (after 3 months)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>.49608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain 2 (after 6 months)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.53321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics obtained in this research. As the table shows, the means are increased in subsequent post tests (pre = 1.73, post 1= 2.92, post 2= 3.94). This increase in the mean obtained by the learners in the study abroad group in three different levels demonstrates that length of stay has a positive impact on the performance of the learners abroad and the more stay, the more development in politeness is statistically supported as well. The table above also depicts the gains [gain 1= 1.19 (after 3 months), gain 2= 2.21(after 6 months)] which almost doubled at the end of the program. Figure 1 below illustrates the learners’ increase in the scores regarding their politeness development with reference to the native speakers’ performance. It shows that learners’ performance on politeness is approximating the native speakers’.

Figure 1. SA learners and Native Speakers’ scores
The paired sample test below represents the relationship between pairs of tests. As it can be seen in the table 3, for all the three pairs the difference is statistically significant.

### Table 3. Paired Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Pre – Post 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.19</td>
<td>.49608</td>
<td>.05846</td>
<td>-1.30671</td>
<td>-1.07357</td>
<td>-20.357</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Post1 – Post 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.02</td>
<td>.48909</td>
<td>.05764</td>
<td>-1.14340</td>
<td>-.91354</td>
<td>-17.843</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Pre – Post 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.21</td>
<td>.53322</td>
<td>.06284</td>
<td>-2.34391</td>
<td>-2.09331</td>
<td>-35.305</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCLUSION**

The social aspect of the language learning is probably the reason for why a great number of SLA researchers investigated different aspects of the impact of study abroad in language learning (Shively, 2008). What distinguishes second language from foreign language context is that in second language learning context the learners enjoy the multitude amount of opportunities for social interaction with native speakers and experience the authentic culture outside the classroom. Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2005) argue that from the viewpoint of socialization perspective, everyday interactions with native speakers in study abroad context help L2 learners to socialize into the culture modes.

Previous research on interlanguage pragmatics support that study abroad context plays a role in making the learners more native-like in L2 regarding perception and production of routine expressions (Barron, 2003; DuFon, 1999; Kondo, 1997; Marriott, 1995; Rodriguez, 2001), development of request modifiers (Khorshidi, 2013; Schauer, 2009), upgraders (Barron & Warga, 2007; Schauer, 2009), semantic strategies (Barron, 2003). In fact, the more, the better perspective is supported in previous studies.

Furthermore, other studies on other issues like communicative competence revealed that students in study abroad make gains in the ability to manage a conversation in the L2 (Lafford, 1995; Dings, 2006). In fact, Leech (1983, p. 108) associates indirectiveness with politeness by saying that “indirect illocutions tend to be more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be.”

All said, this paper investigated the effect of study abroad in general and the impact of length of stay on L2 learners’ linguistic politeness development in particular. The elicited data from the learners revealed that length of residency in study abroad context improved learners’ pragmatic knowledge regarding the perception and production of linguistic politeness in request and apology speech acts. The findings in this study indicate that, a semester sojourn in abroad increased participants’ achievement in L2 norms of politeness regarding the illocutionary domain of speech acts namely, requests and apologies. This finding is in line with previous studies (e.g., Cherchill & DuFon, 2006, among others) in which it was disclosed that in second language acquisition of politeness the students become somewhat native-like during study abroad.

**REFERENCES**


