The Role of Gender and Language Learning Experience in L2 Pragmatic Performance: The Effects on Iranian EFL Learners’ Speech-Act Knowledge

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Abstract
The number of studies focusing on the role of gender and language learning experience in interlanguage pragmatic development is limited in ESL contexts. Iranian EFL context is not an exception and few investigations have been conducted in this regard. Therefore, the current investigation attempted to study the impact of gender and English language learning experience (LLE) on speech-act interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) performance of Iranian EFL learners. Gender was treated as a biological factor and language learning experience was operationalized as the number of years spent for learning English and the participants were divided into three groups of 1 to 2 years, 3 to five years, and plus 6 years. A multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) including five common English speech acts (request, apology, refusal, complaint, and compliment/compliment responses) was developed and validated by the use of native speakers. A 35-item MDCT was achieved after two pilot studies by native and nonnative speakers. This ILP test was administered to 500 Iranian EFL learners to obtain the required data. The results obtained from an independent t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between female vs. male participants’ speech-act performances. However, a one-way ANOVA showed that there were significant differences...
among the ILP performances of the three groups with different language learning experiences. Then, applying a Tukey test indicated that learners that had spent more years for language learning, had higher speech-act ILP scores. The findings of this study indicated that students with more language learning experience can absorb speech acts better.

**Keywords:** Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence, Language Learning Experience (LLE), Gender, ILP Test, Speech Act