The Relationship between Culture Shock and Sociolinguistic Shock: A Case Study of Non-Persian Speaking Learners

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Abstract - The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between culture shock and Persian, as a foreign language, sociolinguistic shock. It has illuminated the experiences of six non-Persian speakers as foreign Persian learners of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in Iran from different countries. In order to achieve culture shock scale, Mumford questionnaire (1998) was used. Then, interviews were established to gather the experiences of these learners in relation to sociolinguistic shocks. Their responses were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (TA). Three themes were identified in the analysis: Felt experience, Cognitive experience, and Linguistics politeness experience. The findings further indicated that the learners' scores of culture shock scale are positively related to their experiences of sociolinguistic shock. The participants obtained higher scores in culture shock questionnaire faced more problems of controlling sociolinguistic shocks in their interactions with Persian native speakers and vice versa. This paper has also highlighted some factors influencing this matter which lead to individual differences on experience of sociolinguistic shock like nationality and religious beliefs.

Keywords - Culture Shock, Sociolinguistic Shock, Non-Persian Speaker, Thematic Analysis

1. Introduction

The term "culture shock" was firstly introduced by Oberg (1960) as the anxiety experienced by people who encountered in unfamiliar cultural environments. Since its first appearance, researchers have proposed a variety of concepts about culture shock to extend this definition (Adler 1975, Pedersen 1995, Winkelman1994, Bock 1970). In the words of Adler (1975), culture shock describes as emotional reactions to unexpected cultural differences and to the misunderstanding of different experiences. Kim (2004) believes culture shock is a generic process that appears whenever components of a living system are not enough adequate to the demands of a new cultural environment.

A large number of culture shock studies have devoted to different phases of culture shock. There are usually four primary phases of culture shock, the honeymoon or tourist phase, the crises or culture shock phase, the adjustment or gradual recovery phase, and the adaptation or acculturation phase (Winkelman, 1994). These phases consider culture shock at certain times and present diverse features that people may experience in living abroad. According to Xia (2009), phases suggest that adaptation to a new cultural environment is a chronic process, so how to shorten the time of adjust to the new conditions is very helpful for those people who face a new cultural pattern.

When it comes to the realm of linguistics studies, language shock is considered as one of the components of culture shock. Whereas culture and language are closely related, culture shock can be caused by linguistic differences (Fan 2010, 42).There are a few studies carried out to explore the effect of culture shock in educational achievements, especially in its association with learning/teaching a foreign (or a second) language.

Fan (2010) study explores language shocks during the different languages and cultural backgrounds. This research involves the participation of ten Asian background students from the TESOL program at the University of Tasmania. The differences in cultures and languages indeed have an impact on these Asian background students' English language learning/teaching. The results indicated that language shocks are concerned both in a linguistic and a sociolinguistic aspect and also linguistic shocks have a similar pattern as culture shocks and may cause negative influences on the students' attitudes toward second language learning. However, these shocks can be transformed into a positive influence which motivates these ESL students to learn more about the English language. In another study, Fan et al. (2011) consider linguistics as a subcomponent of culture shock. It is argued that language and culture are inter-related. The concept of lin-

guistic shock is established as a product as a culture shock and language differences. Discussions were provided focusing on the differences aspects of linguistics shock, particularly in term of sociolinguistic violation.

The investigation of Dongfeng (2012) study makes a contrastive study of the disease model and the growth model of culture shock. Then, it provides some implications for cross-cultural training and culture teaching in China. For culture teaching, the cultivation of culture competence is emphasized. The combination of culture-specific method and culture-general method is recommended. The results of a study done by Buttaro (2004) shows that adult female ESL learners have some challenges with controlling linguistic rules and applications in different situations while attempting to deal with culture shock of living in a new cultural environment. Lima (2000) study explores culture shock and symptoms among participations of American missionaries in Brazil. Implication of this study results for foreign language learning/teaching and also, concludes that culture has a main role in teaching of a foreign language and a language should not be taught without its cultural aspects.

To the best of present researchers' knowledge, the rela-

tionship between culture shock and sociolinguistic shock from perspective of foreign Persian learners' experiences has not been researched. Hence, the present paper aims at investigating whether there is any association between test taker's culture shock and experiences of sociolinguistic shock regarding their interactions with Persian native speakers. Between the two language aspects of shock (Fan 2010), sociolinguistic shock is chosen because it is more culturally based.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The population for this study consisted of six non-Persian speakers learning Persian as a foreign language at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in Iran. The sample included both men and women, with ages varying from 22 to 32. They had same level of Persian proficiency and were from different countries (Korean, Germany, and Iraqi).

Table 1. Background Information of the Participants

Participant	Country	Gender	Length of time in Iran	Semester	Age	Religious
1	Korea	Female	1 year and 4 months	2	30	Christian
2		Male	1 year and 8 months	2	32	
3	German	Female	1 year	2	25	Christian
4		Male	11 months	2	24	
5	Iraq	Female	7 months	2	22	Islam
6		Male	7 months	2	25	

2.2. Instruments

The case study approach was selected as the best method to get the necessary data from interviews. As Yin (1998) described that a case study might include a deduction when an event cannot be seen directly. Then, a researcher will conclude that a particular event resulted from some earlier occurrence based on an interview and documentary evidence gathered as part of the case study. Here, data was collected via completing Mumford's culture shock questionnaire and the participants' experiences, during direct interviews. Thematic analysis was chosen over a quantitative research method, to provide a rich investigation into the results which have been obtained from the interviews, opening up further considerations around sociolinguistic shocks.

2.2.1. Culture Shock Questionnaire (CSQ)

Form measuring culture Shock, a questionnaire adopted from Mumford (1998) was used. This scale included 12 Likert-type items with three possible answers each. The questionnaire consists of seven core culture shock items (like "do you feel

strain from the effort to adapt to a new culture?") and five interpersonal stress items (like "do you feel anxious or awkward when meeting local people?"). These items were marked for three possible answers as follow: first response gets two points, second answer has one point and the third one gets zero point. The final grade equals to the sum of the scores for each answer. High scores indicate a higher level of culture shock. More information about selection of items, reliability and validity of the CSQ can be found in Mumford (1998). In the present study; the items were translated into the Persian language by the researchers with some changes in related to Iranian society.

2.2.2. Thematic Analysis (TA)

In this paper, thematic analysis was chosen as a quantitative research method because of its flexibility in descriptions of the learners' experiences which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data (Braun and Clarke 2006, 78). According to the criteria of thematic analysis, the data was analyzed to the creation of themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) explained thematic analysis in 6 phase process as:

Table 2. Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

3. Data Analysis

In this research, the data were analyzed by considering both the learners' scores of culture shock scale and their interviews about Persian sociolinguistics shock.

3.1. Learners' Scores of CSQ

The following table presents the scores of seven core culture shock items and five interpersonal stress items. In the scale, higher shock is between 11- 14, moderate shock is 6- 10 and lower shock is 0- 5:

Table 3. Participants' Scores

Participant	Core culture shock items score	Interpersonal stress items score	Sum total
1	4	3	7
2	3	3	6
3	5	3	8
4	4	5	9
5	2	0	2
6	1	3	4

Based on data in Table (3), among these learners, no one has a higher level of culture shock. Korean and German learners' scores were moderate shock and Iraqi learners were lower shock. Although the effect of core culture shock and interpersonal stress items are different in learners' total scores, some items are outstanding. For instance, in responses to the interpersonal stress items, German learners answering *occasionally* and Korean and Iraqi learners answering *not at all* to the item of "Are you finding it an effort to be polite to your Iranian hosts?" or German and Korean answered *occasionally or most of the time* to the item of "when you go shopping do you feel that Iranian people may be trying to cheat you?", but Iraqi learners answered *not at all*. Nevertheless, all of them had answered *occasionally* to core culture shock item "How often do you miss your family and friends back home?". It seems cross-cultural similarities have had a significant effect on the learners' scores. When learners have more closeness with Iranian culture, the scores are lesser. This might depend to some factors such as nationality (e.g., country and continent) and religious beliefs. As Iran and Iraq countries are in

neighborhood, they share many cultural similarities. One of the main similarities is religious views that have close correlation with cultural aspects (Srikanthanet et al., 2008). Whereas both Iran and Iraq are Islamic countries, it shares lot unities between their cultures. These similarities cause Iraqi learners face with at least culture shock. Korean learners had less challenge with culture shocks, too. As a result of common cultural components among Asian societies, adoption with Iranian culture is easier for Korean learners. Cultural diversity might lead to more culture shocks, especially when people exposed to a different culture environment with unfamiliar social norms. Because the speakers behave in the ways natural to their own cultures, which may be different in the culture of their speakers, there is the potential for conflict (Carroll, 1988). Iran and German are set in two different continents with great differences in communicative rules as western and eastern cultures. German learners got higher scores and their responses to the items showed that they felt more challenges in their sociocultural interactions with Persian native speakers such as politeness system in Persian language.

3.2. Learner's interviews

In interviews, the researcher's questions guided this study concerns learners' experiences and feelings in related to sociolinguistic shocks that have faced during living in Iran. All participants described their experiences in answering to the following two questions:

1. What are your feelings of the sociocultural interactions with Persian natives?

2. What sociolinguistic shocks have you experienced during your interactions with Iranian people?

Data were analyzed using TA. In phase 5, the themes written in the pattern depicted by Boyatzis (1998):1. Label. - 2. Description or Definition. - 3. Indicators. - 4. Example.

Each theme classified with a label, definition and indicator to illuminate how the data was arranged into themes, with examples taken from the data itself (Barber, 2009). Then three themes identified within the data: Felt experience, Cognitive experience, and Linguistics politeness experience. This investigation helps the researchers to get a better understanding regarding the non-Persian speakers' experiences in relation to Persian sociolinguistic shocks. In following, these themes are qualified and discussed.

Table 4. Themes of Learners' Experiences

Theme 1:	-
Label:	**Felt experience**
Definition:	The learner defines the felt experience thorough feeling and emotional words.
Indicators:	Coded when the learner uses an emotional description in terms of sociolinguistic shocks.
Example:	"Comfortable" could consider as emotional description.
Theme 2:	-
Label:	**Cognitive experience**
definition:	The learner defines the experience through a thought pattern and interpretation.
Indicators:	Coded when the learner describes their thoughts during sociolinguistic shocks contexts.
Example:	"Expressing idea is different" could consider as a thought.
Theme 3:	-
Label:	**Linguistic politeness experience**
definition:	The learner defines sociolinguistic shock in the context of linguistic politeness.
Indicators:	Coded when the learner describes the sociolinguistic shocks in related to politeness norms in Iranian society.
Example:	"Linguistic etiquette" could consider as a context for linguistic politeness.

Theme 1: Felt Experience

The felt experience was composed of the emotive feeling words described by learners about Persian sociolinguistic system. Participants 1and 2 (Korean learners) depicted their feelings with usage of words as "understandable" and "sometimes different"; for participants 3 and 4 from German, the felt experience of sociolinguistic shock was described as "rather challenging" and "difficult"; participants 5 and 6 (Iraqi learners) used the word "familiarity" and "comfortable" with Persian sociolinguistic norms. It is clear learners' descriptions lead to recognize their attitude in regard to socio cultural interactions with Persian native speakers.

Theme2: Cognitive Experience

According to James (1980), the interlocutress' values, feelings, beliefs, thoughts, and preferences are part of the concept of context and shape the discourse. Also, the discourse of the experiences of sociolinguistic shocks is included of specific belief structure. All learners explained about feeling and judging within the experiences. By considering foreign language learning, when L2 learners are unaware of the sociolinguistic patterns of the target language, they usually tend to transfer their L1 sociolinguistic norms when communicating with native speakers of the target language, and this might lead to misunderstandings and social interaction breakdowns (Agar, 1994). In terms of Persian sociolin- guistic shocks, non-Persian speakers' experiences demonstrate the different communication norms might lead to diverse sociolinguistic patterns, too. For instance, participant 4 from German met challenging with criticizing and disagreement with others' idea. He mentioned that *in Iranian society, discussion is difficult because people try to use their religious beliefs and express their ideas with considering of religious evidences in proving their honesty in discourse.* Participant 2 from Korea stated *in interacting with Persian natives, expressing idea is different. For instance, customer' idea is more important than seller's idea in Korea but it is vice versa in Iran.* On the other hands, Iraqi learners felt no shocking in interaction with Persian natives. Participant 5 told that *communication is easy with Persian native speakers and I can understand well Iranian communicative behaviors. I think it happens due to common cultural and social norms between Iran and Iraq country. It can be easily seen from friendly manners of Iranian people like Iraqi people.* As mentioned earlier, cultural similarities between two countries (Iran and Iraq) lead to decrease shocks on Iraqi learners.

Theme3: Linguistics politeness experience

The most outstanding learners' experiences that lead to sociolinguistic shocks are emerged from contexts which belong to linguistic politeness and use of routines and stereotyped patterns in Persian language for openings, greetings,

inviting, apologizing, introducing topics, etc. German learners found these matters were shocking. They stated in Iran, *these are different from German because those are mix of taa'rof[1]. Taa'rof is not presented in interacting with German people. In Iranian society, when we meet someone who offer us something, we are confuse it is only a taa'rof or genuine one. For example, German formula of greeting is brief but sal âm o ahv âl porsi* (Iranian greeting) *is very difference. It takes up plentytime and consists of the health of family and close friends and etc.* It should be noted ritual politeness (taa'rof) has been addressed as a backbone of Persian politeness system (Koutlaki 2009, Beeman, 1976) that provides a means for manifesting in the communicative norms of Iranian people partly through repeated refusals of offers and invitations, hesitation in asking for services and favours, hesitation in rejecting requests and so on. (Sharifian, 2013:100).

Many matters of etiquette in Asia countries are common. Persian and Korean, though from different linguistic families, have both applied signs and elements of Politeness and this is their common aspect. There are some aspects of historical, religious, and cultural similarities between Iranian and Korean societies which may account for this (Safaar Moghadam, 2009). Also, Iranian and Iraqi linguistic etiquette are connected to Islam as it is written in the Qur'an. Wikipedia explains Islamic etiquette is known that contains some features like good manners, morals, humaneness, and ethics. (Wikipedia) As a result of more common social norms and etiquette, sociolinguistic shocks minimize among Iraqi and Korean learners and Persian native speakers than German learners.

4. Discussion

From the results of this study, it can be seen that shocks, whether culture or sociolinguistic, hold an important role within the communication of Persian and non-native Persian speakers. In this section, researchers explore the findings of this paper with a view to opening up the observations in light of thematic analysis.

First, the findings of this study showed that those learners having lower scores on culture shock scale are more successful in interacting with Iranian society and vice versa. For instance, Iraqi learners who show lower culture shock have a better understanding around Iranian cultural knowledge. They are more likely to succeed in their cross-cultural communication and interactions with Persian native speakers. From perspective of thematic analysis, they stated emotive words like familiarity with Iranian politeness norms. Hence, we may conclude that an individual having lower score in CSQ in related to target language can face lower socio linguistic shocks in his/her interactions with a person from that language.

Second, culture shock and sociolinguistic shock were found to be positively related. Although Korean and German learners were moderated shock, German got higher score than Korean learners. It shows that learners who got higher scores on CSQ tend to experience more sociolinguistic shocks or their feelings indicated a greater anxiety toward it like negative emotional words that described with German learners. They may be sensitive to the fact that people with whom they are communicating may have different emotional and thoughts in comparison to themselves. As mentioned earlier, cognitive experience is regarded as knowledge of thoughts, beliefs, and interpretation of other people, therefore they stated more different sociolinguistic patterns that being unaware of these differences can lead to miscommunication. Differences in the norms for social communication between cultures might often lead to miscommunication and even hostility in cross cultural interaction insofar as where cultural differences are greater the miscommunications can be greater too (Trudgill, 1983).

The third finding of this study confirmed the previous findings of Russo (2005) and Fan (2010) studies that have stated sociolinguistic shock often occurs in intercultural communication which related to linguistic politeness because of different understandings toward linguistic etiquette. In these situations, individuals start realizing the linguistic differences, and pondering their own social norms which used to be taken for granted; they may then observe that these norms seem to be insufficient for smooth interaction in the new society (Agar, 1994).

Another result revealed by this research can also be discussed in view of sociolinguistic competence. Omaggio Hadley (1993) considered sociolinguistic competence as the learner's ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. Hence, Iraqi learners having lower scores are able to adjust easier themselves to the demands of a particular context. It seems that intercultural similarities cause Iraqi learners have higher sociolinguistic competence in interaction with Iranian people. Therefore, their ability is high to behave contextually appropriate to Iranian social situation in which they are spoken.

Finally, association between sociolinguistic shock and culture shock can also be interpreted in related to the term sociolinguistic relativity. Wolfson (1989) argues for effects of different cross-cultural context on language learning with the term sociolinguistic relativity and states every society has its own knowledge of the sociolinguistic rules of native speakers and its own certain set of conventions, and patterns for conducting of communicative routines and these must be understand in the context of a general system which shows the values and the structure of society. Hence, culture can be considered as a basic framework for making sense of all the regularities in a community's use of language (Mizne, 1997). Learners' shocks from perspective of thematic analysis may decrease if they better understand the conventions of language use in a society like politeness and etiquette and also have

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[1]Ta'arof is described as the nature and practice of a famous Persian verbal ritual for politeness in interpersonal communications that composed of stylized linguistic patterns (Koutlaki 2002).

similarity with cultural and sociolinguistic aspects of language.

5. Conclusions

The present study discussed the relationship between culture shock and sociolinguistic shock by participating of six non-Persian speakers and the way in which this association influences the learners' experiences. For measuring culture shock, Mumford (1998) questionnaire was used. Language shock examined from sociolinguistic aspect. Direct interviews were constructed to gather learners' experiences about sociolinguistic shocks. The data was analyzed by Thematic Analysis (TA). Felt, cognitive and linguistics politeness experiences were described as three themes in related to sociolinguistic shocks. The description of relationship between learners' culture shock and their experiences in this study appears to indicate a lack of knowledge of sociolinguistics etiquette might lead to more challenges in different cultural environments. It has also suggested more cultural similarities based on ethnic background influence sociolinguistic shocks. By considering the findings of this research, learners' scores of culture shock scale would appear the positively associated between culture and sociolinguistic shocks. In other words, learners who experience high levels of culture shock are likely to face more sociolinguistic shocks. However, the small size of the population surveyed (6 foreign learners) is an important factor that must be kept in mind when looking at any result. Further research and exploration into non-Persian speakers' shocks required to support the findings of this research.

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