The Relationship between Native-like *Accent* and *Deculturation* among EFL Learners in Iran

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The inherent relationship between language and culture is a widely accepted phenomenon. While the need for research on native speakerness, culture, acculturation and deculturation and their importance in foreign language learning is ever increasing all around the world (McKay & Hornberger, 1996), unfortunately, these fields of study haven't received their due attention in Iran. One area which seems to be under-researched is the effect of trying to achieve a native-like accent (English) and being deculturated and alienated from one's own culture (Persian culture). Therefore, following the guidelines provided by postmodernists and postcolonialists, this study attempted to determine the relationship between accent and deculturation- the more mimicry for accent, the more alienation from the home culture. To this end, this study was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, the researchers consulted some experts of sociology to find a questionnaire that would account for learners' dependence on their native culture. To their knowledge, such a questionnaire did not exist. Accordingly, designing such a questionnaire was the researchers' starting point. First, the researchers considered the manifestations of culture as main indicators and wrote questions (40 items) relating to each one. After the questionnaire was designed (Likert scale), the sociology experts were consulted and their ideas were applied to the questionnaire. Afterwards, a number of language learners were asked to introspect while answering the questionnaire and this helped to make the questionnaire as unambiguous as possible. Finally, to substantiate the reliability and validity (construct validity) of the questionnaire, the researchers ran a pilot study and asked 300 language learners of different language proficiencies, ages, majors and genders to participate in this research. Then, IRT model (Rasch) was run to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The

results of Rasch measurement demonstrated that 4 items should be omitted, reducing the number of items to 36. During the second phase of the study, 100 language learners were asked to take the validated questionnaire and at the same time they were asked to participate in an interview held by two near-native speakers. The aim of conducting the interview was to score learners based on their accents_ how close their accents were to those of native speakers (American English, British English). Interestingly, the results of correlation exhibited a negative relationship between accent and culture and also the results of t-test (successful / unsuccessful groups) corroborated the effect of mimicry on deculturation- the more native-like accent, the more deculturation. Finally, the results were discussed in the context of second language learning and teaching.

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