

Relationship between Acculturation Attitude and Pragmatic Comprehension

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Abstract—Comprehension of target language implicatures requires familiarity with the culture-specific conventions encoded in target language expressions which presupposes tendency to learn about the culture of target language community. To this end, a study was conducted over 80 Iranian undergraduates of English in universities in Australia to explore the relationship between acculturation attitude and pragmatic comprehension ability. Data for the study were collected through an acculturation attitude questionnaire and a pragmatic comprehension test. The results of the spearman rank order correlation indicated a strong positive relationship between level of attitude toward target language culture and pragmatic comprehension ability. Pedagogical implications of the findings suggested a high level of interaction with target language speakers and familiarity with culture of target language community for language learners during educational sojourns.

Index Terms—acculturation, contact, implicature, pragmatics, Sojourn

I. INTRODUCTION

Comprehension of target language expressions, according to the relevance theory set forward by Sperber and Wilson (1986), involves the interaction of two elements: the contextual effects that the utterance yields and the processing effort that the audience needs to make to comprehend the utterance. Relevance theory is concerned with two general principles: the cognitive principle of relevance and the communicative principle of relevance. The cognitive principle of relevance states that the greater the contextual effects achieved by the audience, the greater the relevance of the input to the person processing it; however, the smaller the processing effort required by the audience to obtain these effects, the greater the relevance of the input. The communicative principle of relevance states that human communication creates an expectation of optimal relevance on the part of the audience that his/her attempt at interpretation will yield adequate contextual effect at minimal processing effort (Zixia, 2009).

Comprehension of implied meanings (implicatures), referred to as pragmatic comprehension, involves “understanding meaning at two different levels: utterance meaning, or assigning sense to the words uttered; and force, or speaker’s intention behind the words” (Thomas, 1995, p. 22). To arrive at the optimal comprehension of target language expressions, familiarity with the culture-specific conventions encoded in the target language expressions is essential because knowledge of target language culture decodes the contextual cues encoded in target language utterances and consequently reduces the processing effort which is required to arrive at the intended meaning of the utterances. In this respect, educational sojourns, defined as “periods spent in a region where a target language is used as a medium of everyday communication” (Culhane, 2004, p. 50), are supposed to be influential to the development of pragmatic comprehension as they provide abundant exposure to the culture of the target language community and interaction with target language speakers.

However, studies show that educational sojourns are not always advantageous for pragmatic comprehension development (e.g. Taguchi, 2008a; 2008c). The reason is that exposure to target language culture and input is not the sole factor affecting language learners’ pragmatic comprehension rather the type and quality of interactions with target language speakers as well as the level of tendency to learn about the culture of the target language community can be determining factors. In other words, pragmatic comprehension gains may depend on the degree which language learners seek to acculturate to the target community. Therefore, acculturation, defined as “the phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 149), can be a major predictor of pragmatic comprehension development.

In this respect, the various ways in which people acculturate has been outlined in the working model of acculturation attitudes developed by Berry (1980). In this model two major issues are involved: the extent to which people are willing to maintain their heritage culture and the extent to which people wish to adopt the culture of the target society.

Preferences toward any of these two issues lead to the adoption of four different acculturation strategies. These four acculturation strategies are termed by Berry (1980) as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Sam & Berry, 2010).

Assimilation refers to the acculturation strategy in which people are not willing to maintain their heritage culture and wish to adopt the culture of the target society. Integration refers to the acculturation strategy in which people are willing to both maintain their heritage culture and adopt the culture of the target society. Separation refers to the acculturation strategy in which people are willing to maintain their heritage culture and do not wish to adopt the culture of the target society. Finally, marginalization refers to the acculturation strategy in which people neither are willing to maintain their heritage culture nor wish to adopt the culture of the target society (Sam & Berry, 2010).

TABLE I:
ACCULTURATION STRATEGIES

		Maintenance of Heritage Culture	
		+	-
Adoption of Target Culture	↑	Integration	Assimilation
	↓	Separation	Marginalization
		+	-

Considering the importance of possessing a high level of pragmatic comprehension ability for successful cross-cultural communication on one hand and the significant effect which high degree of acculturation attitude to the target culture might have on the comprehension of target language pragmatically implied meanings, the current study seeks to investigate the relationship between the degree of acculturation to target culture and the ability to comprehend target language implied meanings during an educational sojourn in Australia. More specifically the research question to be addressed in the current study is:

What is the relationship between the degree of acculturation to Australian culture and the ability to comprehend Australian implicatures?

Correspondingly, the null hypothesis is:

There is no relationship between the degree of acculturation to Australian culture and the ability to comprehend Australian implicatures.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The studies conducted so far on acculturation and pragmatic comprehension have either explored the relationship between level of acculturation attitude toward target language culture and general language proficiency or investigated the effect of various individual difference variables on pragmatic comprehension ability in language learners. There is, however, a dearth of research on the relationship between language learners' level of acculturation attitude toward target language culture and their target language pragmatic comprehension ability.

A. Acculturation Attitude

The majority of studies conducted on acculturation to date have investigated the psychological outcomes of acculturating toward heritage or dominant culture among immigrants. Very few studies have explored acculturation in relation to language acquisition among language learners during academic sojourns (e.g. Jiang et al., 2009; Waniek-Klimczak, 2011; Rafieyan et al., 2014a). Either investigating the psychological outcomes of acculturating or exploring acculturation in relation to language acquisition, the majority of recent studies have adopted the working model of acculturation proposed by Berry (1980) as the theoretical underpinning of their studies.

Jiang et al. (2009) conducted a study to investigate whether a positive correlation between degree of acculturation to American society and English language attainment can be observed or not. Participants were 49 Chinese international students enrolled in graduate programs at a university in the United States. The Stephenson Multigroup Acculturation Scale was used to measure participants' acculturation progress toward the ethnic society and the dominant society, respectively. A sentence reading task and a language proficiency interview were used to measure participants' target language attainment. The findings indicated that participants were unanimously more immersed in their original culture than in the dominant American culture. Also, the degree of immersion in American society contributed to participants' speaking proficiency but not pronunciation.

Waniek-Klimczak (2011) also explored language experience and acculturation strategy in Polish speech community in Britain who was believed to have achieved the status of language experts by means of their educational and occupational advancement. Participants were three Polish-born and Polish-educated immigrants to the United Kingdom. The three expert English as Second Language users had been living in the United Kingdom for at least 5 years before the recording. The data were collected with the use of an open-format questionnaire. The observations made in the study suggested that both assimilation and integration may be chosen as acculturation strategies in the case of expert English as Second Language users.

Most recently, Rafieyan et al. (2014a) conducted a study to explore the acculturation attitude of learners of English as a Second Language. The participants in the study consisted of 70 Iranian learners of English during an academic sojourn in a university in the United States. Acculturation attitude was assessed through a 5-point likert scale questionnaire. The study found that integration and assimilation strategies received the highest preference by Iranian sojourners whereas separation and marginalization strategies received the lowest preference indicating that Iranian sojourners tend to adopt target language culture while maintaining their heritage culture.

B. Pragmatic Comprehension

A review of studies conducted on pragmatic comprehension reveals that most studies have investigated the role of individual difference variables in the language learners' abilities to comprehend target language implicatures. The types of individual difference variables investigated in these studies consist of language proficiency level (e.g. Taguchi, 2005; Taguchi, 2008b; Taguchi, 2011), target language exposure (e.g. Taguchi, 2008a; Taguchi, 2008c; Taguchi, 2011), cognitive processing ability (e.g. Taguchi, 2008b; Taguchi, 2008c), target language contact (e.g. Taguchi, 2008c; Rafieyan et al., 2014b), and cultural distance (e.g. Rafieyan et al., 2014c). There is a dearth of research on the effect of acculturative aspect of individual differences on the development of pragmatic comprehension, however.

In one study, Taguchi (2005) explored the effect of target language proficiency on accuracy and comprehension speed of different types of implied meanings referred to as pragmatic comprehension. Participants were 160 Japanese learners of English at a university in Japan. General language proficiency was operationalized by the institutional TOEFL and the ability to comprehend implied meaning was assessed by a computerized multiple choice pragmatic listening task. The results of the study identified a strong proficiency effect on the accuracy but not on the speed of comprehension of pragmatic functions.

Taguchi (2008a) also investigated the differences in the development of accurate and speedy comprehension of implied meaning between language learners in English as Foreign Language and English as Second Language contexts. Participants of the study consisted of 57 Japanese language learners in a college in the United States and 60 Japanese language learners in a college in Japan. Comprehension of implied meaning was assessed by a computerized pragmatic listening task used as pre-test and post-test. The findings of the study suggested improvement in pragmatic comprehension ability in terms of both accuracy and speed among both learners of English as Foreign Language and learners of English as Second Language.

Taguchi (2008c) conducted another study to explore the influence of target language contact and cognitive processing ability on the development of accurate and speedy comprehension of implied meaning over a period of 4-month sojourn in the target language country. Participants were 44 Japanese language learners in a college in the United States. Ability to comprehend implied meaning, cognitive processing ability, and the amount of target language contact were respectively assessed through a computerized pragmatic listening test, a lexical access test, and a survey questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that cognitive processing ability and language contact have significant impact on the speed but not the accurate comprehension of target language implied meaning.

In another study, Rafieyan et al. (2014b) explored the influence of contact with target language speakers on the development of pragmatic comprehension ability. Participants included two groups of Iranian undergraduate learners of English at a university in Iran, one group connected to native American students through social networks whereas the other group was not involved in such intercultural interaction. Pragmatic comprehension ability was measured using a multiple choice pragmatic listening task testing comprehension of implied meaning. The findings of the study suggested that contact with target language speakers has a significantly positive impact on the development of pragmatic comprehension ability in language learners.

Finally, Rafieyan et al. (2014c) investigated the relationship between the degree of cultural distance from the target language community and the level of pragmatic comprehension ability. Participants of the study included 30 German undergraduate learners of English at a university in Germany, perceived as culturally close to the British, and 30 South Korean undergraduate learners of English at a university in South Korea, perceived as culturally distant from the British. Pragmatic comprehension ability was measured through a pragmatic listening task testing comprehension of implied meaning. The findings of the study revealed that language learners whose culture is perceived to be close to the culture of the target language community possess higher ability to comprehend target language implied meaning than language learners whose culture is perceived to be distant from the culture of the target language community.

III. METHODOLOGY

To examine the relationship between language learners' level of acculturation attitude toward target language culture and their target language pragmatic comprehension ability, the current study adopted a correlational research methodology on a group of Iranian learners of English as a Second Language in Australia by first descriptive analysis of language learners' level of acculturation attitude on a 4-level scale ranging from marginalization to assimilation as well as pragmatic comprehension ability on a 4-level scale ranging from poor to optimal and then assessing the type and level of relationship between the two continuous variables.

A. Participants

Participants in the study consisted of 80 Iranian undergraduates studying English as a Second Language in different universities in Australia. According to the data derived from demographic questionnaire, among all the participants, 47 were males and 33 were females. Their age ranged from 18 to 24 with an average age of 22 years old. Their length of residence in Australia ranged from 6 to 10 months at the time of data collection. They were all at the first year of studies and possessed an IELTS overall band of 6.5 as entry requirement to their universities. Therefore, they were considered to be approximately at the same level of language proficiency and have the same level of target culture and language exposure.

A minimum of six months residence in the target culture was adopted as according to the U-curve theory of adjustment and the concept of culture shock (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960), during the first six months, referred to as the 'honeymoon' stage, expatriates are excited with the new and interesting aspects offered by the host country and the feelings of being a tourist cannot be avoided (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). It is from the sixth months up to one year, referred to as the 'crisis' stage, that the expatriates are expected to be more susceptible to the feelings of despair and the tolls of adjusting become apparent (Copeland & Giggs, 1985).

B. Instruments

Three different instruments were used to collect the data for the current study: a demographic questionnaire, an acculturation attitude questionnaire, and a pragmatic comprehension test.

1. Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire elicited information about participants' gender, age, length of residence in Australia, year of study, and level of language proficiency according to their IELTS scores.

2. Acculturation Attitude Questionnaire

To assess language learners' level of acculturation attitude toward Australian culture, the East Asian Acculturation Measure (EAAM), developed by Berry (2001), was adapted. The questionnaire consisted of 29 items with four subscales: assimilation attitude (items 1-8), integration attitude (items 9-13), separation attitude (items 14-20), and marginalization attitude (items 21-29). The items were based on a likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree with values 1 to 5 assigned to them respectively (Rafieyan et al., 2013). The original questionnaire had been designed for a group of Asians including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigrants to America. In the adapted version of the questionnaire Asian was replaced by Iranian and American was replaced by Australian.

To assess the validity of the questionnaire, the items went through content validity. Researchers gave the definition of what they intended to measure, a description of the participants of the study, and the questionnaire to two lecturers in the University of Tehran who were expert in the field of educational psychology. The lecturers confirmed that the questionnaire is suitable to be used for the study (Rafieyan et al., 2014c). To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was piloted on 30 Iranian language learners in an intensive English program in Australia. The reliability coefficient computed through Cronbach Alpha for each sub-scale including assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization attitudes were respectively 0.82, 0.75, 0.80, and 0.85 (Rafieyan et al., 2014a).

3. Pragmatic Comprehension Test

To assess language learners' ability to comprehend implied meaning, a pragmatic listening comprehension test, developed by Taguchi (2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2011), was adopted. The pragmatic comprehension test was a 24-item test assessing comprehension of conversational implicatures. The items on the pragmatic comprehension test were based on a multiple choice design with 4 options consisting of one appropriate option and three distractors. For each item there was a dialogue between a male and a female native Australian speaker. The reply given at the end did not provide a direct answer to the speaker's question. Participants had to listen to each dialogue and choose the option which referred to the most appropriate intention of speaker (Rafieyan et al., 2014c; Rafieyan et al., 2014d).

To assess the validity of the pragmatic comprehension test, content validity was used. The researchers gave the definition of what they intended to measure, a description of the participants of the study, and the test to two lecturers in the University of Tehran who were experts in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. The lecturers confirmed that the test is suitable to be used for the study (Rafieyan et al., 2014c). To assess the reliability of the pragmatic comprehension test, a pilot study was conducted over 30 undergraduate students of English in Islamic Azad University of Abadan, Iran. The reliability coefficient assessed through Kuder-Richardson 21 was 0.82 (Rafieyan et al., 2014e).

C. Procedure

During the second semester in academic year 2013/2014, 80 copies of the pragmatic comprehension test were administered to the participants in the study. The participants were alerted that the recordings would be played once only. They were then instructed to listen to each dialogue and choose one of the four options provided which best refers to the idea implied in the dialogue. They were also informed that there is no negative mark for the wrong answers and were assured that the results would not affect their marks in the courses they were taking. The test took around 20 minutes to be completed. Following the completion of the test, test slips were collected and 80 copies of the demographic questionnaire and the acculturation attitude questionnaire were distributed among the participants right away. Participants were instructed to answer each item on the acculturation attitude questionnaire by circling one of the numbers ranging from 1 at the most extreme disagreement to 5 at the most extreme agreement with the expressed idea. They were also assured that their answers would remain private and confidential. Participants were then given ample

time to reflect on their attitude toward the ideas mentioned in the questionnaire and return the questionnaire. All the test and questionnaires slips were then collected by the researchers and prepared for the analysis.

D. Data Analysis

To assess the relationship between the degree of attitude toward and acceptance of target language culture and the ability to comprehend target language implied meanings, a total of two variables were considered: language learners' type of acculturation attitude and their level of pragmatic comprehension ability. Acculturation attitude was assessed through language learners' attitude toward ideas expressed in the acculturation attitude questionnaire. Level of pragmatic comprehension was also determined based on the pragmatic comprehension indicators developed through piloting the pragmatic comprehension test on a large group of language learners with the same characteristics as the participants in the current study.

1. Language Learners' Acculturation Attitude

To assess language learners' acculturation attitude, descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarize the properties of the data collected from the participants. Descriptive statistics consisted mainly of mean and frequency percentages. The acculturation attitude was represented by a mean score on a 5-point scale, where 1 (strongly disagree) represented the minimum score on the scale and 5 (strongly agree) represented the maximum score on the scale. The overall mean score for each acculturation strategy determined language learners' level of attitude regarding that specific strategy. The acculturation strategy which received the highest mean score represented language learners' acculturation attitude (Rafieyan et al., 2014a). The percentage of participants in each classification was then presented in graphic form. The analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 21.

2. Pragmatic Comprehension Indicators

To develop indicators of language learners' pragmatic comprehension levels, the pragmatic comprehension test was administered to 240 international undergraduates of English in various universities in Australia. The mean score and the standard deviation of the obtained marks were then assessed and transformed into z-score to determine the cut scores for the classification of language learners into four pragmatic comprehension levels including optimal pragmatic comprehension, strong pragmatic comprehension, weak pragmatic comprehension, and poor pragmatic comprehension. The classification was based on the principle of relevance which states that pragmatic comprehension level is determined through the degree of contextual effects the text/utterance yields and the degree of processing effort the reader/hearer needs to make to comprehend the text/utterance. In this respect, scores above the z-score of +1.00 standard deviation would fall into the category of optimal comprehension, scores between the z-scores of +1.00 and 0.00 standard deviation would fall into the category of strong comprehension, scores between the z-scores of 0.00 and -1.00 standard deviation would fall into the category of weak comprehension, and scores below the z-score of -1.00 standard deviation would fall into the category of poor comprehension. The mean and the standard deviation obtained from language learners' performance on the pragmatic comprehension test were respectively 12.95 and 5.86. Therefore, the z-score of +1.00 which corresponds to a position exactly 1 standard deviation above the mean would be 18.81 and the z-score of -1.00 which corresponds to a position exactly 1 standard deviation below the mean would be 7.09. Consequently, participants who get a score of 19-24 would be classified as optimal comprehension performers, participants who get a score of 13-18 would be classified as strong comprehension performers, participants who get a score of 8-12 would be classified as weak comprehension performers, and ultimately participants who get a score of 0-7 would be classified as poor comprehension performers.

TABLE II:
PRAGMATIC COMPREHENSION INDICATORS

Scores	Categories of Performers	Pragmatic Comprehension Ability
19-24	Optimal Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contextual implications are fully comprehensible ▶ Language learners do not need to make any unnecessary processing effort to comprehend implied meanings
13-18	Strong Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contextual implications are relatively clear ▶ Language learners need to make some unnecessary processing effort to comprehend the implied meaning
08-12	Weak Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contextual implications are implied ▶ Language learners need to make considerable processing effort to comprehend implied meanings
00-07	Poor Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Contextual implications are vague and unclear ▶ All processing effort to comprehend implied meanings is in vain

3. Language Learners' Pragmatic Comprehension Level

To determine language learners' level of pragmatic comprehension, descriptive statistics were used. Descriptive statistics consisted of the sum of the marks obtained through the pragmatic comprehension test. In this respect, 1 mark was assigned to each correct answer whereas no mark was assigned to the wrong answers (Rafieyan et al., 2014d). As there were 24 items on the pragmatic comprehension test, each language learner could get a mark between 0 and 24. Then based on the obtained marks and the cut scores determined by pragmatic comprehension indicators, language learners were classified into one of the four classifications of optimal pragmatic comprehension, strong pragmatic

comprehension, weak pragmatic comprehension, and poor pragmatic comprehension performers. The analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 21.

4. Relationship between Acculturation Attitude and Pragmatic Comprehension

To determine the relationship between acculturation attitude and pragmatic comprehension, spearman rank order correlation (ρ), which measures the relationship between two variables when both variables are measured on ordinal scales (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013), was used. The size of the value of spearman correlation can range from -1.00 to +1.00. This value indicates the strength of the relationship between the two variables. A value of 0 indicates no relationship at all, a value of +1.00 indicates a perfect positive correlation (as one variable increases, so does the other variable), and a value of -1.00 indicates a perfect negative correlation (as one variable increases, the other variable decreases) (Pallant, 2013). Cohen (1988) suggests a set of guidelines to interpret the values between 0 and 1. The guidelines, which have been presented in table III, apply whether or not there is a negative sign out the front of the r value.

TABLE III:
STRENGTH OF RELATIONSHIP

r Value	Strength of Relationship
$r = 0.10$ to 0.29	Small Correlation
$r = 0.30$ to 0.49	Medium Correlation
$r = 0.50$ to 1.00	Large Correlation

In this respect, values 1 to 4 were assigned to acculturation attitudes ranging respectively from marginalization, separation, integration, to assimilation, where marginalization (1) represented the lowest level of acculturation attitude whereas assimilation (4) represented the highest level of acculturation attitude. Accordingly, values 1 to 4 were assigned to pragmatic comprehension levels ranging respectively from poor comprehension, weak comprehension, strong comprehension, to optimal comprehension, where poor comprehension (1) represented the lowest level of pragmatic comprehension whereas optimal comprehension (4) represented the highest level of pragmatic comprehension. The correlation coefficient was assessed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 21. The squared correlation (r^2), called the coefficient of determination, was then used to measure the proportion of variability in pragmatic comprehension ability that can be determined from its relationship with acculturation attitude. Criteria for interpreting the value of r^2 as proposed by Cohen (1988) have been presented in table IV.

TABLE IV:
PERCENTAGE OF VARIANCE EXPLAINED, R^2

r^2 Value	Strength of Relationship
$r^2 = 0.01$	Small Correlation
$r^2 = 0.09$	Medium Correlation
$r^2 = 0.25$	Large Correlation

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The current study examined the relationship between the acculturation attitude of Iranian learners of English toward Australian culture and their ability to comprehend Australian implicatures. The results were presented through descriptive analysis of language learners' acculturation attitude on four levels of marginalization, separation, integration, and assimilation as well as their pragmatic comprehension ability on four levels of poor, weak, strong, and optimal. The relationship between both variables was then assessed using spearman rank order correlation (ρ) and discussed based on relevance theory.

A. Findings

1. Language Learners' Acculturation Attitude

Table V presents the distribution of language learners into various levels of acculturation attitude. Among all 80 language learners participating in the study; 18 (22.5 percent) adopted assimilation attitude, 28 (35 percent) adopted integration attitude, 22 (27.5 percent) adopted separation attitude, and 12 (15 percent) adopted marginalization attitude. The distribution of language learners into levels of acculturation attitude from the highest percentage to the lowest percentage would be respectively integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization. In this respect, the highest percentage of language learners adopted integration attitude (35 percent), that is, tended to both maintain their heritage culture and adopt the culture of target society whereas the lowest percentage adopted marginalization attitude (15 percent), that is, tended to neither maintain their heritage culture nor adopt the culture of the target society.

TABLE V:
LANGUAGE LEARNERS' ACCULTURATION ATTITUDE

Acculturation Attitude	Number of Language Learners
Assimilation	18
Integration	28
Separation	22
Marginalization	12
Overall	80

2. Language Learners' Pragmatic Comprehension Level

Table VI presents the distribution of language learners into various levels of pragmatic comprehension. Among all 80 language learners participating in the study; 10 (12.5 percent) were categorized as optimal comprehension performers, 21 (26.25 percent) were categorized as strong comprehension performers, 33 (41.25 percent) were categorized as weak comprehension performers, and 16 (20 percent) were categorized as poor comprehension performers. The distribution of language learners into levels of pragmatic comprehension from the highest percentage to the lowest percentage would be respectively weak, strong, poor, and optimal. In this respect, the highest percentage of language learners were categorized as weak comprehension performers (41.25 percent), that is, needed to make considerable processing effort to comprehend implied meanings whereas the lowest percentage were categorized as optimal comprehension performers (12.5 percent), that is, did not need to make any unnecessary processing effort to comprehend implied meanings.

TABLE VI:
LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC COMPREHENSION LEVEL

Category of Performers	Number of Language Learners
Optimal Comprehension	10
Strong Comprehension	21
Weak Comprehension	33
Poor Comprehension	16
Overall	80

3. Relationship between Acculturation Attitude and Pragmatic Comprehension

Table VII presents the results of the correlation between language learners' acculturation attitude and their pragmatic comprehension ability. The correlation coefficient measured through spearman rank order correlation was 0.82 which according to the guidelines set by Cohen (1988) indicates a large correlation between the two variables (above 0.05), suggesting a strong positive relationship between level of acculturation attitude and pragmatic comprehension ability, that is, a higher attitude toward the adoption of target culture was positively correlated with a higher ability to comprehend target language conversational implicatures.

TABLE VII:
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACCULTURATION ATTITUDE AND PRAGMATIC COMPREHENSION

		Pragmatic Comprehension Level		Acculturation Attitude Level	
Spearman's rho	Pragmatic Comprehension Level	Correlation Coefficient	1.00	0.82**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.00	
	Acculturation Attitude	N	80	80	
		Correlation Coefficient	0.82**	1.00	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00	.	
		N	80	80	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

To measure the proportion of variability in pragmatic comprehension ability that can be determined from its relationship with acculturation attitude, the squared correlation (r^2), called the coefficient of determination, was used. The squared correlation derived from the computation of spearman correlation for acculturation attitude and pragmatic comprehension ability in the current study was $r^2 = (0.82)^2 = 0.67$, that is, 67 percent of variability in pragmatic comprehension ability can be determined from its relationship with acculturation attitude which according to the guidelines set by Cohen (1988) indicates a large correlation (above 0.25).

B. Discussion

The present study investigated the relationship between language learners' level of acceptance of heritage and target culture referred to as acculturation attitude and their ability to comprehend target language conversational implicatures referred to as pragmatic comprehension. The findings suggested a strong positive relationship between the two variables, that is, language learners who were more immersed in Australian culture had a higher capability to comprehend Australian conversational implicatures appropriately. These findings reject the null hypothesis which states there is no relationship between the degree of acculturation to Australian culture and the ability to comprehend Australian implicatures.

There are two factors which can explain the findings obtained in the current study: target culture familiarity and target language contact. Language learners who were more immersed in the target language culture, adopting

integration and assimilation attitudes as their acculturation strategies, had more opportunities to learn about the cultural features of the target language community than language learners who were more immersed in their heritage culture, adopting separation and marginalization attitudes as their acculturation strategies, as they explored the target culture more. Consequently; they were more familiar with the sociopragmatic features of the target language which refer to the appropriate use of language according to the social context (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983), that is, they knew what is appropriate to say in a particular situation according to the sociocultural norms of Australia.

Accordingly, language learners who were more immersed in the target language culture had more opportunities to interact with target language speakers than language learners who were more immersed in their heritage culture as most of their friends were from the target society. The frequent interaction with target language speakers certainly led them to be more familiarized with the pragmalinguistic features of the target language which refer to the appropriate use of language (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983), that is, they knew what is appropriate to say according to the linguistic rules of the English language.

The familiarity with the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of the target language provided language learners with enough contextual effects to help them comprehend the meanings implied in target language expressions without any unnecessary processing effort. On the contrary, language learners who did not develop knowledge of target language pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features were not equipped with sufficient contextual effects to comprehend the meanings implied in target language expressions. Consequently, they had to put considerable effort to process target language conversational implicatures as they were vague and unclear to them.

The findings obtained in the current study are consistent with the findings obtained in the studies conducted by Jiang et al. (2009) and Waniek-Klimczak (2011) who found that successful language learners were more immersed in the target culture than their heritage culture. The findings are also in line with those obtained in the study conducted by Rafieyan et al. (2014b) who found that contact with target language speakers develops pragmatic comprehension ability. The findings obtained in the current study, however, do not support the findings obtained in the study conducted by Taguchi (2008c) who found that contact with target language speakers does not have a significant effect on appropriate comprehension of target language conversational implicatures.

V. CONCLUSION

The study found that there is a strong positive relationship between degree of acculturation attitude toward target language culture and pragmatic comprehension ability. Language learners who were more immersed in the target culture, adopting integration and assimilation as acculturation strategies, were more successful in appropriate comprehension of target language implicatures than language learners who were more immersed in their heritage culture, adopting separation and marginalization as acculturation strategies. Therefore, language learners who are on an educational sojourn are advised to interestingly explore target language culture and interact with target language speakers in order to develop target language pragmatic competence.

The study was limited in some ways, however. First of all, the study only explored the ability to comprehend conversational implicatures to measure pragmatic comprehension ability and did not include conventional implicatures. Furthermore, the study only explored the relationship between acculturation attitude and pragmatic comprehension ability and did not explore the effect of pragmatic instruction on developing pragmatic comprehension ability. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to include both conversational and conventional implicatures and investigate the effect of various methods of pragmatic instruction including Focus on Form and Focus on Forms methods on the development of pragmatic comprehension ability.

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