

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم





شبكة المعلومات الجامعية التوثيق الالكتروني والميكرو فيلم



جامعة عين شمس

التوثيق الإلكتروني والميكروفيلم

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**Cultural and Linguistic Factors in Conversational
Implicature: A Cross-Cultural Study of Native and Nonnative
Speakers' of English Interpretation of Implicature**

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Doctor of Philosophy**

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Under the Supervision of

Professor Amira Agameya

By

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Summary:

The aim of this cross-cultural study was to provide an account of the way native and nonnative speakers of English interpret and comprehend implicature in English. In particular, this research attempted to identify the factors which may influence the way nonnative speakers of English interpret conversational indirectness. Interpretation of conversational implicature, namely the ability of nonnative speakers to deduce inferences from utterances in the same way as native speakers, was the dependent variable. Language proficiency, culture, structural complexity and explicit teaching were the independent variables.

Two instruments were employed: a TOEFL Test intended to measure the nonnative speakers' language proficiency and an Implicature Elicitation Task to measure the native and nonnative subjects' ability to interpret implicature. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings of this study supported previous research which has generally concluded that nonnative speakers of English do not interpret implicatures the way native speakers do. Results also indicated that culture has an overriding effect on interpretation of implicature to which that of structural complexity is subordinate. Furthermore, language proficiency and the ability to interpret implicature were found to be distinct skills which cannot be considered determinants of each other. In addition, the findings of this study revealed that explicit instruction has a positive enhancing effect on the nonnative speakers' overall skill in interpreting implicature in English. Such conclusions have cultural as well as pedagogical implications for teaching English as a foreign language.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide an account of the way native and nonnative speakers of English interpret and comprehend implicature. In particular, this research attempted to identify the factors which may influence the way nonnative speakers of English interpret conversational indirectness. The study also sought to discover the extent to which one's cultural background affects his or her way of interpreting implicature and in what way. It also attempted to find out to what extent linguistic ability and structural complexity affect the way Egyptian Arabic speakers interpret implicatures. In addition, this study endeavored to investigate the effectiveness of explicit teaching for enhancing nonnative speakers' ability to interpret implicature.

Previous investigations have indicated that foreign language learners' communicative problems are often pragmatic in nature and that nonnative speakers of English do not interpret implicatures the way native speakers do. Previous research has also provided a picture considerable time needed for nonnative speakers to master many of the implicature types that are quite easy for the native speakers to unravel. In addition, research has posited that, as commonplace as implicatures are within a given community, a question arises when we think of implicature as a conversational strategy in cross-cultural interaction. Evidently, there are important questions that still need further investigation. In reaction to these questions, this study investigated the similarities and differences between the way Egyptian Arabic speakers and American English speakers interpret implicatures in English in an attempt to identify the factors that may account for such variation or consistency.

The 96 subjects who represented the Arabic-speaking learners of English in this study were all fourth-year students in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. The 18 subjects who represented the native speakers of English were all North Americans. Three instruments were used for collecting the data needed for this study. The first instrument was a paper-based TOEFL test to determine the non-native subjects' level of proficiency in English. The second instrument was an implicature elicitation task in the form of a multiple-choice test which was intended to test the native and nonnative

subjects' interpretation of implicatures. Focus interviews were also held with some of the nonnative subjects to see whether the nonnative subjects' line of thought during the inferential process and rationale for their choice were similar to those of the native subjects. The Pragmatics course which was employed as the treatment was basically an introductory one. The course generally aimed to familiarize the students with the difference between the literal meaning of words and the intended meaning of speakers and to sensitize the students to native speaker strategies in the direct and indirect uses of language. The data gathered was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The study generally concluded that the reasons behind the wide disparity between the scores of the NS and the NNS subjects were essentially due to their unfamiliarity with certain elements of the target culture where the understanding of the utterance depended on their knowledge of the cultural orientation of the source of the implicature. The study's findings also revealed that learners of a foreign language are not free of the influences of their native culture which are reflected in their interpretive thought processes. The findings further indicated that aspects of surface structure do not essentially account for the variation in interpretation and that language proficiency and the ability to interpret implicature are distinct skills which cannot be considered determinants of each other. It logically follows that culture has an overriding effect on interpretation of implicature to which that of structural complexity and language proficiency are subordinate.

This study was able to demonstrate that training in the interpretation and use of implicature should be incorporated in a foreign language teaching syllabus if foreign language learners are to become more pragmatically and discourse competent as the failure to do so means to leave an important gap in our students' communicative competence. The present study also stressed the importance of the fact that one crucial principle of foreign language teaching should be that cultural awareness should grow simultaneously with the knowledge of the target language, that culture elements should not be overlooked in language learning, and that providing prior target cultural knowledge is vital.

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