(Im)politeness Strategies in Top Notch and Iran Language Institute Book Series

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Abstract

Politeness strategies are those factors that should be taken into account since they have significant and crucial role in everyday communication. It is one of the outstanding features of teaching and learning a second or foreign language too. In this regard, and based on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) of politeness strategies, the current study set to investigate the politeness strategies in Top Notch and Iran Language Institute (ILI) book series. The conversations of these two books were analyzed and Chi square was conducted to find the difference between strategies. Results revealed that there was no significant difference between the two series. To some extent the two series considered the strategies in the same way.

Keywords: (Im)politeness strategies, Top Notch Books, ILI Books

INTRODUCTION

Significance of role of politeness and impoliteness in everyday communication is crystal-clear. Politeness is defined as "series of social practices of good manners" (Rong, 2009, p.100). On the other hand, impoliteness "is the use of communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony" (Culpeper, Bousfield, & Wichmann, 2003, p. 1545). However, the concept and exploitation of (im)politeness is different from one culture to another. In other words, "what is

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considered polite in one cultural society may be considered impolite in another" (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 47). In learning second language, achieving both linguistic and communicative competence play an important role, awareness of politeness and impoliteness are of utmost importance.

The (im)politeness of some linguistic expression is one of the major concerns of teachers and learners in second language classes (Cruz, 2008, p. 799). Based on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) of politeness strategies, a vast amount of research has done in the area of (im)politeness strategies and the relationship between them and teaching environment. In this regard, the current study set to investigate the differences between teaching politeness strategies in ILI and Top Notch series.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rules of politeness are integral part of cultures. In this line, teaching politeness is significant part of TEFL, and TESOL. In many articles the important role of politeness is pointed up. For instance, Purwanto and Soepriatmadji (2013) stated that "politeness is an important element in interactional activities and should therefore be taught in early education during the critical period of four to ten years of age"(p. 76)

Based on Brown and Levinson (1987) theory of politeness strategies, other researchers have also examined politeness and impoliteness in EFL contexts. Khomeinjani and Molkizadeh (2013) focused on application of politeness strategies in disagreement by Iranian advanced EFL learners. To achieve their goal, 40 MA EFL learners were invited to participate in the project. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used as the instrument of the study. The statistical analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between the two genders with regard to the type of politeness strategies in disagreement speech act. The result of the study suggested to teacher and material developers to note that male and female students use almost the same types of politeness strategies in disagreement speech acts.

The other study in the field of material development compares the use of request speech act strategies presented in Iranian high school textbooks (1,2,3) and Top Notch series(Fundamental A, B and 1A,B) which are quite popular in Iranian high schools and institutions. In this regard, this study focused on speech acts of request in the language functions and conversations of these two series were analyzed to find out how they were presented on the basis of the framework of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989). The result of the study revealed that the numbers of speech act strategies in Top Notch books are almost 1.5 times more than in high school textbooks. The reason is that, Iranian school book are not communicatively oriented so they are not good source for developing pragmatic competence.

Tamimi Sa'd and Mohammadi (2014) work on a cross-sectional study of Iranian EFL learner's polite and impolite apologies. The study aimed to investigate the politeness strategies employed by Iranian EFL learners in the speech act of apology. The data for

aforementioned study were collected from 30 EFL learners who responded to a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which realized the speech act of apology consisted of six situations. The models exploited in this study were Olshtain & Cohen's (1983) and Brown and Levinson's (1987). The study indicated that for apologies Iranian EFL learners employed an expression of regret, an explanation or account of situation, expressing self-deficiency, and an offer of repair.

In the field of textbook evaluation, Alemi and Irandoost (2012) evaluate speech act of complaints and compliments in English Result series. The result indicated that the books were rich in terms of the number of the two speech acts, but in presenting them, there were one or two dominant strategies in both cases. However, the books were reported to provide learners with adequate amount of complaints and compliments, but with low variations in strategy types, which may result in learners not having sufficient conceptual and practical knowledge of speech acts to use them appropriately in different context.

Another study examines politeness strategies in model conversation in English textbooks (Purwanto and Soepriatmadji, 2013). They carry out a qualitative research to find politeness strategies integrated in the conversation models in five English textbooks for grade-6 elementary school student. They chose the book "Recommended for Use" since it puts politeness strategies as one of the teaching contents in support of communication, information and globalization era. The result of the study revealed that politeness strategies have been adopted in the five books under study with the most significant use of non Face Threatening Act (FTA).

In Iranian context, Akbari Kelishadi and Sharifzadeh (2013) evaluate Top Notch series based on Littlejohn's (1988) framework. In this regard, 30 Iranian English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers were selected from different language institutes. To collect and interpret the data, both qualitative and quantitative statistics were used. The findings indicated that the series fulfill the intended objectives and enjoy benefits for language learners through encouraging the L2 learners to communicate successfully by offering opportunities for interaction. However, one shortcoming of the series is the lack of activities or discussions for presenting new words that require EFL teachers' consideration. The results of this study have some pedagogical implications for teachers and materials developers in EFL contexts. The results of the study help L2 teachers know the detailed points of the series and detect areas of weakness and strength. Moreover, novice English teachers profit from this study because they have an idea about the nature of the textbook they want to teach.

METHOD

Framework

In order to start textual analysis, Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) of politeness strategies forms the theoretical basis of this study. They categorize politeness strategies

as bald on record politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record politeness strategy. This framework, as a comprehensive model of politeness, offers different strategies.

Instrument

The data for the present study are collected from Top Notch series and ILI (Iran Language Institute) books. The main reason for selecting Top Notch is that it is the only series which is widely accepted and published in Iran, and ILI books is the only organization in Iran that has its own books and publications.

Procedure

Based on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987) strategies, Top Notch series and ILI books were chosen in terms of exploiting politeness strategies. The conversations were carefully analyzed. Then for finding the amount of interrater and intra-rater reliabilities we calculated Cronbach's alpha. The amount of intra-rater and inter-rater reliability were 83 and 94 respectively and the inter-rater and intra-rater reliability were calculated. At the end, Chi square was administered to find the significance of politeness strategies in these two series. The concept of impoliteness strategies were also taken account.

RESULTS

Table 1 does not show the five categories of politeness strategies; it only demonstrates the total number of politeness utterances used in each book. To compare the use of politeness strategies (bald-on record, positive, negative, off -record) in detail, we calculated the frequency of each impoliteness strategy and put them in appropriate categories and then normalized the data.

Table 1: Total Number of Politeness Strategies Used in Top Notch and ILI Books

	Top Notch	ILI
F (Politeness Strategies)	15	23

Table 2: Politeness Strategies in Top Notch and ILI Books

	Top Notch		ILI			
	F	(%)	F	(%)	x^2	p-value
Bald-on Record	3	13.04	3	15	0	1
Positive Strategy	0	0	5	25	2.6	0.1
Negative Strategy	12	52.17	15	60	0.3	0.5
Off-record Strategy	0	0	0	0	0	1

As demonstrated in Table 2, chi square revealed a statistically no significance difference between bald on record politeness strategy in these two series. In the same line with bald-on record politeness strategy, the amount of chi square for other politeness

strategies is not significantly different. For instance, as it is shown in table 2, off-record politeness strategy is not exploited in these two books.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The role of textbook in language learning is very important. "No one can deny the vital role of textbook in the process of language learning and teaching (Razmjoo & Jozaghi, 2010, p. 59). On the other hand, politeness and impoliteness are two crucial and inevitable factors in everyday communication. Implementing these two factors in textbook receive utmost importance. With respect to the politeness strategies implied in the conversation of Top Notch and ILI books under study, we can say that they are in good positioning in that both of them present politeness strategies in some degrees. In learning second and foreign language learning, many factors play roles; teacher, learner and textbooks (Akbari Kelishadi& Sharifzadeh, 2013). In spite of the high influence of the modern technologies, textbooks undoubtedly play a crucial part in EFL context. One of the well-known textbook is Top Notch series. "Nowadays, the Top Notch series have become one of the most frequently used series in almost all of the institute and also most of the tutoring for English teaching and learning especially in Iran" (Akbari Kelishadi & Sharifzadeh, 2013, p. 60). Collecting an authentic corpus of vocabulary and conversations, makes this series one of the best seller books. As the results reveal, it also consider the use of politeness strategies in most of the conversations.

Furthermore, ILI books represent corpus of conversation and as the results show there is no significant difference between the two books in considering politeness strategies. The main reason is that, ILI conversation mostly extract from commercial books like interchange and etc.

The research undertaken in the study can contribute to better understanding of politeness strategies in L2 book series. Top Notch series is one of the most exploited English series in Iran, and ILI books are the only officially published English book series taught in Iranian Language Institute. So, it is hoped that this stud helps both teachers and Iranian EFL learners and material designers to have better understanding of the undeniable role of politeness strategies in everyday conversations. However, ILI book series are the only officially accepted books in Iran. So the limitation of the study is the lack of other book to be focused on.

The concepts of politeness and impoliteness have to take into account, since they are factors in everyday communication. As this study focuses on different politeness strategies in Top Notch and ILI books, the other studies can consider politeness strategies in other English course books, or school books. Variables such as gender, social class, level of education are also valuable factors that can be considered.

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