

Pragmatic Awareness of the Request Speech Act in English as an Additional Language: Monolinguals or Bilinguals?

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Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the effect of bilingualism on pragmatic awareness and development among Iranian Turkish/Persian EFL learners. Data were collected through a personal profile questionnaire with questions about the participants' language background and a WDCT with 10 situations to determine the extent to which the bilinguals demonstrated their pragmatic awareness of requests. They were to read the situations and assess whether they realized the (in)appropriateness of the speech acts. For inappropriateness, they were also asked to explicate their selections and provide appropriate alternatives. Responses were analyzed according to 3 social factors of power, distance, and degree of imposition with the assumption that the more references to these factors, the more pragmatically aware the participants. Alternatives were coded according to the coding scheme of CCSARP. Results showed that none of the groups outperformed the others in their perception of the (in)appropriate acts and in the realization patterns of request acts in trilingual education. This failure may be due to their lack of cultural awareness, literary skills, and insufficient L2/L3 pragmatic input.

Keywords: Pragmatic Awareness; Bilingualism; Request Speech Act; WDCT

1. Introduction

To communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations, L2 learners should be able to use language appropriately in context. Having a high level of pragmatic awareness can aid L2 learners in achieving an effective communication in an EFL context. Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic competence as "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (p. 94). So, in order for learners to communicate more efficiently in a foreign context, they should develop their pragmatic awareness through pragmatic awareness-raising tasks and activities needed to provide learners with recognition of pragmatic features like speech acts in a foreign context (Safont Jorda, 2005).

In the field of language pedagogy, research on developing pragmatic competence of L2 learners has attracted lots of attention. Unfortunately, one of the neglected issues in this field and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) studies, as some scholars (e.g., Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Fouser, 1997; Safont Jordà, 2005) put it, is bilingualism and its effects on L3 learners' pragmatic awareness and development. The belief is that there is a link between previous pragmalinguistic information and the new pragmatic information in learners of a foreign language (FL) in order to understand pragmatic items. This point implies this fact that bilingual learners use their pragmatic competence due to their experience with two languages to recognize the pragmatic items in an L3 context. This claim in a way implies the superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals in the pragmatic aspect of an L3 (Safont Jordà, 2005).

Bearing the assumption in mind about the general agreement on the transference of some aspects of L1 into L2 because of universal pragmatic knowledge (Liu, 2007), this study seeks whether this can be the case for bilinguals in learning an L3 or not. Also, with regard to the fact that more than half of the world's population is bilingual and two thirds of the children in the world grow up in a bilingual environment (Crystal, 1997), this study aims at ascertaining the effect of bilingualism or bilingual pragmatics, that is "a cognitive perspective on the language use of speakers and hearers with more than one language in social encounters" (Kecskes, n.d., p. 1), on pragmatic competence of Iranian bilingual speakers of Turkish and Persian learning English as an L3. Moreover, it tries to make a comparison between the extent of Iranian bilingual and monolingual EFL learners' pragmatic awareness in the prediction and production of request acts.

As Brown and Levinson (1987) put it, requests are face-threatening acts (FTAs) because they threaten the hearers' negative face as they impose the requester's or speaker's interests on the hearer. So, in such a face-threatening context, the speakers "present a rich variety of strategies and modifiers necessary to mitigate their imposition effect" (Cenoz, 2013, p. 64). Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) in their Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) discussed about the levels of directness by requesting strategies. The first one is the direct level which names the act as a request. The second level is that of conventionally indirect level which "realizes the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance" (p. 201), and the nonconventionally indirect level is the third strategy which makes partial reference to the elements necessary for its realization. The nine strategy types introduced in CCSARP are as follows:

1. Direct level
 - i) Mood derivable: The illocutionary force of the request is marked by the grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance.
 - ii) Explicit performatives: The speaker explicitly names the illocutionary force of the utterance.
 - iii) Hedged performatives: The illocutionary force is embedded within the utterance.
 - iv) Obligation statements: Utterances which state the obligation imposed on the hearer to perform the act.
 - v) Want statements: Utterances which state the speaker's want of the hearer to carry out an act.
2. Conventionally indirect level
 - vi) Suggestory formulae: The utterances contain a suggestion to the hearer to carry out the act.
 - vii) Query preparatory: Utterances which make references to preparatory conditions like ability or possibility of carrying out the acts.
3. Nonconventionally indirect level
 - viii) Strong hints: Utterances which contain partial reference to objects or elements needed for the implementation of the acts.
 - ix) Mild hints: utterances which make no reference to the request proper but can be interpreted as requests from the context.

When considering speech acts, the social factors of social power, social distance, and degree of imposition associated with FTAs (Brown & Levinson, 1987) should be noticed by the interlocutors. Brown and Levinson define the former as “the degree to which the hearer can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of the speaker’s plans and self-evaluation” (p. 77). Social distance between the hearer and the speaker is referred to as the “symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which” the speaker and hearer “stand for the purpose” of an act (p. 76) and “the kinds of goods exchanged between them” (Jalilifar, 2009, p. 47). The degree of imposition is “a culturally and situationally defined ranking of impositions by the degree to which they are considered to interfere with an agent's wants of self-determination or of approval” (p. 77).

By gaining insight into this important issue, we can recognize the problems throughout the way of pragmatic development of EFL learners, and discover those factors which may affect the acquisition and the use of English speech acts.

Above all, the present study sought answers to the following questions:

1. Do Iranian Turkish bilingual learners of EFL differ from Iranian Persian monolingual learners of EFL in their pragmatic awareness?
2. Do Iranian Turkish and Persian EFL learners differ in recognizing the appropriateness of speech acts of EFL?

3. What are the request strategies used by Turkish and Persian EFL learners when inappropriate acts are recognized?

2. Literature Review

Safont Jordà (2005) claimed that the first empirical studies on bilingualism started in the 1960s, and Weinreich (1968) was the founder of this new-born research field. According to Jessner (1997), Grosjean (1985), and Safont Jordà (as cited in Safont Jordà, 2005), bilingualism should be viewed as “a holistic system” which includes competence in two languages and not the “mere sum of two linguistic systems” (p. 36).

One of the main studies focusing on the speech act use from cross-cultural perspective is that of Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989). The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) aimed at investigating the native and nonnative speakers' use of request and apology strategies. The authors collected data about the linguistic realization of these acts by means of a DCT. This study, as Safont Jordà (2005) puts it, raised the issue of verbosity in language learners and “that of the transfer of certain first-language pragmatic norms into the second language” (p. 68). As Blitvich (2005) noted down, L3 acquisition is a new underresearched field and within this field, much less attention is given to the acquisition of pragmatic competence of L3 learners. He believes that Safont Jordà's study (2005) can be a nearly thorough project within this field. The participants of her study were 160 female university students in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course at the Universitat Jaume I in Castellon, Spain, with 40% of them attending bilingual programs and 60% of them attending monolingual programs. By administering several tests (e.g., proficiency-level test, discourse completion test, discourse evaluation test, and etc.) and role plays, this project aimed at analyzing the bilinguals and monolinguals' linguistic realizations of request speech acts. The results revealed a higher degree of pragmatic awareness and development, and a better realization of request speech acts in bilinguals rather than monolinguals. The bilingual participants resort more to sociopragmatic factors in the justification of their evaluation. Also, it has been shown that bilingual learners use conventionally indirect strategies more than their monolingual counterparts. However, no significant differences were found in the use of direct and indirect strategies between the two groups.

Again, Jessner (1997, as cited in SafontJordà, 2005) acknowledged the cognitive superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals in acquiring an L3 (Bialystok, 1991; Hamers& Blanc, 1989; Lambert, 1997, as cited in SafontJordà). He pointed to the advantages of bilingualism in terms of interactional and communicative competence in the TL (TL). Many authors (e.g., Baker, 2002; Cummins, 2000b; Hakuta, 1990, as cited in Hélot& de Mejia, 2008) highlighted the linguistic,

academic, and cognitive superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals. Also, many others (e.g., Ben-Zeev, 1977; Cummins, 1976; Kessler & Quinn, 1982; Leopold, 1939, 1949, as cited in Harmer & Blanc, 2004) asserted metalinguistic superiority of bilinguals over monolinguals. Within the broader realm of learning an L3, SafontJordà pointed to Bild and Swain (1989), Hufeisen (1998), Cenoz and Genesee (1998), and Jessner (1999) who asserted that knowing an L2 would foster the development of a third one.

Also, Lasabagaster (1997; as cited in SafontJordà, 2005) examined the effects of bilingualism on metalinguistic awareness in acquiring an L3. Malakoff (1992, as cited in SafontJordà) defines “metalinguistic awareness” as follows:

It is the ability to think flexibly and abstractly about the language; it refers to an awareness of the formal linguistic features of language and ability to reflect thereupon. Metalinguistic awareness allows the individual to step back from the comprehension or production of an utterance in order to consider the linguistic form and structure underlying the meaning of the utterance. To be metalinguistically aware, then, is to know how to approach and solve certain types of problems which themselves demand certain cognitive and linguistic skills. (p. 518)

Moreover, conducting a research on bilingual children’s pragmatic differentiation with unfamiliar others, Genesee, Boivin, and Nicholadis (1996, as cited in Tare & Gelman, 2010) found them capable of using the “context-appropriate language” relative to their “language production” which in itself shows their early high pragmatic awareness (p. 139).

Results from studies by Bialystok (1988, 2001) on bilingual children revealed a correlation between higher levels of bilingualism and achievement in the ability to think about the language which therefore relates to bilinguals’ skills in evaluating the appropriateness of language use and their pragmatic competence.

Cenoz and Valencia’s (1994, as cited in SafontJordà, 2005) study on 260 monolingual (i.e., Castilian speaking) and bilingual (i.e., Euskera/Castilian speaking) learners of English as an L3, by involving factors such as age, intelligence, and exposure to various tests and questionnaires, again confirmed the advantage of bilingualism over monolingualism in learning an L3.

Applying an open DCT, Eslami-Rasekh (1993) evaluated the requesting behavior of native speakers of Persian and American English. The findings indicated that Persian speakers apply more direct strategies along with mitigators and supportive moves to soften the illocutionary force of the speech acts. So, it means

that unlike native speakers, nonnative speakers provide longer stretches of speech and linguistic forms to soften or intensify the communicative acts.

In an attempt to investigate the request strategies used by Iranian learners of English as a Foreign Language and Australian native speakers of English, Jalilifar (2009) used a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) to generate the data. The findings revealed a good deal of development in the case of indirect strategies; on the one hand, the overuse of indirect strategies on the part of high-proficiency learners and on another hand, the overuse of direct strategies by low-proficiency learners were observed. He added that regarding the social power of the interlocutors, the participants revealed a closer performance to that of native speakers, whereas in the case of social distance, the participants did not display sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge to show appropriate social behavior.

In a study by Shcherbakova (2010) on Russian EFL learners' perceptions about the appropriateness of requests, a semi-oral DCT was used to elicit the required data. The findings of this study supported this fact that when addressing someone of higher status, Russian EFL learners evaluate more conventionally indirect request patterns as more appropriate or polite and regard these patterns as less polite when addressing someone of lower status. Another finding of this study was that the social standing of the interlocutors used in the contextual situations has no influence on the perceptions of the participants about the appropriateness of requests. So, evidence for negative pragmatic transfer from Russian to English was observed in the Russian EFL learners.

The relationship between sociopragmatic competence and pragmalinguistic competence in the development of L2 pragmatic competence has been investigated in a study by Barron (2003) who examined the improvement of request, offer, and refusal speech acts in Irish learners of German. These participants showed an acceptable development in their pragmalinguistic competence but not a good growth in their sociolinguistic competence. After L2 input exposure, however, the participants displayed development in the application of lexical and syntactic downgraders and routines. It is worth pointing out that following Fouser (1997) and SafontJordà (2005), further research to shed more light on different aspects of pragmatic competence of bilingual L3 learners is needed.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

On the basis of simple random sampling, 102 undergraduates and M.A. students of English Translation Studies, English Literature, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), studying at several universities in Iran were selected as the participants of the study. To make sure about the participants' homogeneity in terms of their proficiency, the Oxford Placement Test (OPT; Allen, 2004) with

notable reliability and validity measures was administered to the EFL students. A total number of 68 upper-intermediate students were selected for the study. According to Kasper and Dahl's (1991) findings, when using production questionnaires like DCTs, "with homogeneous groups", in terms of their proficiency levels, larger groups of respondents are unnecessary because responses provided by them tend to concentrate around a limited number of issues" (Belza, 2008, p. 116). So, a total number of 68 participants with homogeneous proficiency levels seemed to be sufficient for the purpose of this study. The participants included 35 monolingual Persian speakers (i.e., 51.5%) and 33 bilingual Turkish speakers (i.e., 48.5%), between the ages of 20 and 35 and average age of 23.73 years old.

3.2 Instruments

To make sure about the participants' homogeneity in terms of proficiency, the OPT with the Cronbach's alpha value of .81 was employed. The test consists of 100 multiple-choice items evaluating the grammatical knowledge of the participants. In line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the test is attuned to proficiency levels.

Another questionnaire employed in the course of this study includes a personal profile questionnaire (see Appendix) including questions about the participants' age, gender, educational background, L1, home language (i.e., the language they use at home), official language (i.e., the language they use at formal and educational establishments), and so forth. Also, according to the main goal of this study, namely evaluating pragmatic awareness and the speech act realization ability of bilingual and monolingual EFL learners, Liu's (2006) standard written discourse completion test (WDCT) was used. The original version of this test consists of 24 situations or scenarios evaluating the request and apology formulations of EFL learners in different situations with the sociopragmatic factors, namely those of power relations, social distance, and imposition level of the situation, used variably across the situations. For time purposes and the extra tasks (i.e., choice justification) added to this test, 10 out of 14 requesting situations were taken for this study. These exchanges required learners to gauge the appropriateness of the existing speech acts on a 5-point rating scale—1 (*very inappropriate*) and 5 (*very appropriate*)—justify their evaluations, and provide an alternative appropriate to the existing situations. The descriptions provided for each situation shed light on some of the sociopragmatic factors like the social distance, social power of the interlocutors, and the context to lead learners choose the right options. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this test was found to be .77 which is acceptable. Besides, the test validity was measured and confirmed by expert judgments including two TEFL professors and two knowledgeable M.A. TEFL students. For obtaining truthful WDCT results, the participants were assured that their results would be kept confidential.

3.3 Procedure

First, the OPT was administered to 102 undergraduates and M.A. students of English Translation Studies, English Literature, and TEFL, and based on the associated rating scale of the OPT advanced by Allen (2004), 68 participants who scored above 68 out of the total score were labeled as upper-intermediate learners and selected for the purpose of this study.

Second, the participants were asked to fill out the personal profile questionnaire about their age, gender, level of education, language background, home language, and official language to provide us with some demographic information and help us make a distinction between the monolingual and bilingual participants. So, based on these data, those with the Turkish language as their L1 were regarded as the bilinguals, and those with the Persian language as their L1 were regarded as the monolinguals.

Then, the WDCT to measure the pragmatic awareness and speech act realization ability of the participants was administered. This test required the participants to read several exchanges which involve request speech acts. They were asked to evaluate the (in)appropriateness of these acts, justify their choices or evaluations, and suggest alternatives where they evaluated the suggested acts as inappropriate in order to improve the inappropriate speech acts.

To analyze the data gathered from the rating assessment part of the test, the participants' judgments when rating the appropriateness of the requests employed in different situations on a 5-point rating scale were taken into account. So, in order to find out the association between the participants' language background (i.e., bilingualism vs. monolingualism) and their pragmatic awareness, a chi-square test was run. In addition, the total number of reasons provided by the participants to justify their judgments and the total number of reasons written with reference to sociopragmatic factors (i.e., social power, social distance, and degree of imposition) were counted separately for each group, and then a *t* test was conducted to compare the means of performance of each group. Moreover, the alternatives provided were classified into three main categories of direct, conventionally indirect, and nonconventionally indirect levels, and the frequency of the use of these strategies were calculated. For the purpose of this study, only the head acts of the speech acts classified based on the directness level were taken for analysis. Also, to find out statistically significant differences between the bilinguals and monolinguals in the frequency of strategies used in their suggested alternatives, a series of chi-squares were run.

4. Results

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 18.0 for Windows). The learners' performance in the WDCT was

analyzed with regard to their (in)appropriate judgments of the acts, their reasons for their evaluative comments, their politeness-dependent reasons, and their given alternatives.

Accordingly, to see if the bilinguals were more likely to care for appropriateness or inappropriateness of the given acts for the descriptions provided, a chi-square test was run. The results of the chi-square test are presented in Table 1. The findings demonstrate that the proportion of the bilinguals who cared for the (in)appropriateness of the given acts was not significantly different from the proportion of the monolinguals who cared for the (in)appropriateness of these acts. In other words, the two groups were not significantly different in identifying the appropriate or inappropriate request moves.

Table 1. *Chi-Square Values for the Association Between Monolingualism/Bilingualism and Perception of Request Acts Appropriateness*

	Chi-square Value	df	Sig.
Very appropriate	2.75	3	.431
Slightly appropriate	2.76	3	.430
Neutral	3.84	3	.278
Slightly inappropriate	.57	3	.903
Very inappropriate	5.89	3	.117

In the second step of data analysis, the learners' comments on their judgments about appropriateness or inappropriateness of the stated situations were analyzed. For this purpose, the total number of reasons presented by reference to sociopragmatic factor (i.e., social power, social distance, and degree of imposition) as well as those written with reference to other issues like formality/informality of the situation, colloquial vocabulary, rudeness of speech, and so forth were counted. The total number of reasons provided with regard to the three social factors was taken into account with the assumption that the more references to these factors, the more pragmatic awareness was likely to be exercised by the participants. This step, as Safont Jorda (2005) put it, is of utmost importance in examining the learners' understanding of the task and acknowledging the extent to which their pragmatic awareness truly deals with the pragmatic issues and not the grammatical ones. She adds that providing other formulations of the present acts demonstrates their focus on the grammatical nature or, better to say, the formal matters of the formulations and not their ability to justify their choices or evaluations on pragmatic grounds and contextual issues. For example, as shown in the following excerpt, the 3rd subject stated three reasons and two of them seemed to observe politeness (i.e., social distance and degree of imposition), whereas the 32nd subject in his or her evaluation did not exactly observe the social and contextual factors.

- **Situation 1:**

You are trying to study in your room and you hear loud music coming from another student's room down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him to turn the music down. You tell the student:

Excuse me, what's name of the music? Sounds good, I like it. But, oh, I'm sorry it is not the right time, I'm just doing some important work. Do you mind turning it down? Thanks so much. I wish I have another chance to listen to it, but not now.

- S3: Polite-dependent reason: Too much explanation is inappropriate due to the unfamiliarity between the two speakers. That is such a small request!
- S32: Polite-independent reason: I think it is OK because when we behave someone in a polite way, we can reach to our goal easier than by force and offensive words.

To find out if the two groups were significantly different in their evaluative comments and their politeness-dependent reasons, a *t* test was performed. As the results in Table 2 suggest, the bilinguals' mean score did not seem to be significantly different ($p = .943$) from the monolinguals' mean score in presenting reasons to justify their evaluations. Furthermore, the groups' mean scores did not seem to be significantly different ($p = .736$) in corresponding their evaluative reasons to politeness. In other words, both bilingual and monolingual learners made use of almost equal number of reasons. Moreover, the elicited reasons of both groups of participants seemed to be equally politeness-wised.

Table 2. *Effects of Monolingualism and Bilingualism on the Participants' Justifications for (In)appropriate Selections*

	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	Mean
Monolingual–reasons provided	.137	-.072	.943	8.42
Bilingual–reasons provided				8.48
Monolingual–reasons related to politeness	.086	-.339	.736	1.71
Bilingual–reasons related to politeness				1.90

In order to examine the effect of knowing two languages on using a third one, the directness level of requesting strategies used on the part of bilingual and monolingual participants was taken into account. Therefore, a series of chi-squares was performed to find out the significant differences between the frequency of requesting strategies in different situations between the bilinguals and monolinguals. According to Table 3, the results demonstrate that there was not actually a significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in their ability to choose

the requesting strategies to cope with different sociopragmatic situations. However, the frequency analysis of the strategy types used by these two groups of learners show that monolinguals applied conventionally indirect strategies more often than their bilingual counterparts but not in a significant way. Also, the former employed direct and nonconventionally indirect request formulations more often than the latter, again not significantly.

One example which illustrates the participants' pragmalinguistic performance is that in cases of -power, -imposition, and -social distance (i.e., situation 3), the most common strategy among all the participants was the conventionally indirect strategy, namely that of "Query Preparatory" with an interrogative form as one of the syntactic downgraders and the use of grounders as adjuncts to the head act to support it, as illustrated in the following example: *I'm so sorry, but I can't follow what you are saying. Would you please repeat it?* Again, when +power, -imposition, and +social distance (situation 5), the most preferred strategy by almost all of the participants was the direct strategy mostly the "Mood Derivables" with the use of politeness maker *please* and grounders to support the head act when considered the suggested act as inappropriate. The following example best shows the use of "Mood Derivables" for the described situation: *Please turn off your mobile phone for the duration of this class.* Moreover, syntactic downgraders such as conditionals, past tense, and interrogatives, and lexical downgraders like consultative devices and politeness maker *please* as mitigating supportives were observed in most of the acts.

Table 3. *Chi-Square Values of the Request Strategy Types Used by the Participants*

Situations	Language Background		Conventionally Indirect	Direct	Nonconventionally Indirect
Situation 1	Monolingual / Bilingual	Chi-Square Value	.152	.742	–
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.509	.389	–
		Per cent (Monolingual)	52.8	32.8	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	60.6	39.4	0
Situation 2	Monolingual / Bilingual	Chi-Square Value	.540	.001	–
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.462	.976	–
		Per cent (Monolingual)	57.15	42.85	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	60.6	39.4	0
Situation 3	Monolingual / Bilingual	Chi-Square Value	.044	.207	–
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1

		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.834	.649	–
		Per cent (Monolingual)	75.7	24.3	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	75.75	24.25	0
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.889	.674	.976
		Per cent (Monolingual)	47.15	52.85	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	51.54	45.44	3.0
		Chi-Square Value	0.000	.007	.001
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	1.000	.934	.976
Situation 5	Monolingual / Bilingual	Per cent (Monolingual)	47.15	52.85	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	0	94.3	5.7
		Chi-Square Value	1.864	.197	–
		<i>df</i>	1	1	–
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.172	.658	–
Situation 6	Monolingual / Bilingual	Per cent (Monolingual)	65.75	34.25	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	53	47	0
		Chi-Square Value	.859	.742	.457
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.354	.389	.499
Situation 7	Monolingual / Bilingual	Per cent (Monolingual)	51.45	42.85	5.7
		Per cent (Bilingual)	53.05	46.95	0
		Chi-Square Value	0.000	.164	–
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	1.000	.626	–
Situation 8	Monolingual / Bilingual	Per cent (Monolingual)	58.3	41.7	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	55.1	44.9	0
		Chi-Square Value	.288	.187	–
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.146	.308	–
Situation 9	Monolingual / Bilingual	Per cent (Monolingual)	60.5	39.5	0
		Per cent	6	37.6	0

		(Bilingual)			
Situation 10	Monolingual / Bilingual	Chi-Square Value	.164	.157	–
		<i>df</i>	1	1	1
		<i>Sig.</i> (2-sided)	.626	.438	–
		Per cent (Monolingual)	70.3	29.7	0
		Per cent (Bilingual)	66.1	33.9	0
Total (Frequency) / Monolingual		539.1	393.65	5.7	
Total (Frequency) / Bilingual		477.48	453.14	8.7	

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As it was indicated before, the main task of this study was to investigate the extent to which Iranian Persian and Turkish learners elicit the pragmatic awareness and exercise appropriate request formulations in English as an additional language. Although it was expected that the bilingual learners of this study would outperform their monolingual counterparts in their English pragmatic performance, neither showed any superiority in their evaluation, justification, politeness-dependent reasons, and realization strategies about English request acts. Concerning the development of the so called interactional competence in bilingual learners (Jessner, 1997), it seems that there are new skills originated from learners' previous experience with more than one language (Safont Jorda). This experience leads bilingual learners of an additional language to “have a highly developed ability to communicate and interpret communication” (Jessner, 1997, as cited in Safont Jorda, p. 160) as well as a higher degree of pragmatic awareness and pragmatic competence (Fouser, 1997, as cited in Safont Jorda). All in all, the findings of this study suggest that Iranian Turkish and Persian learners of English do not show so much discrepancy in their degree of pragmatic awareness and request realization abilities.

Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011) maintain that “people of different cultures perceive speech act realization in different ways” (p. 158). The cross-cultural variations in the realization of speech acts are of great importance in interlanguage pragmatic studies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). In other words, the use of speech acts, as Safont Jorda (2005) puts it, can be highly influenced by their sociolinguistic context, and the contextual and situational norms in each speech community. Respectively, the findings of this study can be interpreted in line with Thomas' (1983, as cited in Sum-hung Li, 2010) claim that learners to be aware of cross-cultural pragmatic differences, need to be competent enough both in their pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic abilities. Thus, it can be argued that the participants' lack of cultural awareness and their inability to perceive the situational

and contextual norms of the target society led to these results. In other words, it seems that the so-called interactional competence and the accumulated pragmatic knowledge acquired owing to bilinguals' experience in and exposure to their L1 and L2 were not effectively tapped due to the wide cultural gap between their own culture and English culture. Moreover, the culture-likeness of Turkish and Persian in the context of Iran may be another matter of concern in this regard.

Another reading of the findings can be in terms of the learners' curricula which usually provide them with insufficient recognition of pragmatic issues and lack of exposure to L2 or L3 out of class context. Obviously, English is taught as an FL in Iran and the learners do not have enough opportunity to use it efficiently and their access is only restricted to what the curriculum offers (Schauer, 2006). In addition, the failure of Turkish bilinguals who did not outperform their monolingual counterparts in pragmatic awareness and production could be attributed to this fact that in contrast to the Persian language which is widely used both orally and academically in educational settings of Iran, the Turkish language as an L1 is only used orally in naturalistic settings without academic training (Keshavarz & Astaneh, 2004). Such a context provides a case of subtractive bilingualism in Iran where the learning of an L2 subtracts the L1 (Arefi & Alizadeh, 2008). Arefi and Alizadeh added that this subtractive context reduces the chance of bilinguals to enjoy the potentialities of bilingualism in cognitive development.

Further, with regard to the request strategy types used by the learners, the overuse of the conventionally indirect strategy might imply this fact that Iranian EFL learners do not acquire the sociopragmatic knowledge necessary for realization of contextually appropriate request acts with a reference to social factors (Jalilifar, 2009). As Blum-Kulka (1987, as cited in Marti, 2006) reports, in English culture, the conventionally indirect strategies seem to be the most polite ones. So, in most of the situations of this study, both groups of participants utilized this strategy to almost the same extent in order to show their sincerity and politeness as well as their not being straightforward when dealing with requesting situations with unfamiliar others or those of higher or equal status. Jalilifar believes that "It is likely that Iranian EFL learners are not taught how to perform appropriate speech act under varying situational features. So they may produce grammatically correct utterances, but inauthentic performance in terms of real language use" (p. 52). Furthermore, the use of the second most-used strategy type in this study, namely that of direct requests could be justified by the respondents' tendency to speak to the point and be clear enough when requesting. In other words, as Eslami-Rasekh (1993) put it, the less individualistic nature of Persian society leads learners to use direct strategies as one of positive politeness strategies. Not having so much tendency to use nonconventionally indirect strategies by both groups of participants might be

attributed to the fact that, as in the case of nonconventionally indirect strategies, the speaker “hardly voices his or her need to change the present situation by mentioning events, commenting upon them, referring to the knowledge” (Lubecka, 2000, as cited in Belza, 2008, p. 104) shared with the hearer. In such a case, the hearer may either ignore the speaker’s request or make the speaker believe that she or he misunderstood the meaning (Weizman, 1993). Furthermore, not all speech communities perceive nonconventionally indirect strategies as the most polite strategy (Blum-Kulka, 1987). Thus, the findings of the present study might provide some evidence for the argument put forth by Weizman (1989) who believes that “conventional politeness correlates with politeness, nonconventional indirectness (as in Hints) does not” (p. 92). Also, the high-processing cost nature of this strategy makes it difficult for learners to acquire it, and due to the late acquisition of such inherently opaque strategies in pragmatic acquisition, the underuse of these strategies might be natural on the part of participants of this study.

In the case of social variables, the findings of this study suggested that both groups of participants noticed the social power of the interlocutors, whereas almost ignored the social distance and familiarity between the two speaking parties. As far as the degree of imposition or severity of situations is concerned, there seemed to exist a linear relationship between conventional indirectness and degree of imposition in a way that the more severe the situation or the more imposition on the hearer to perform the act, the more use of conventional indirectness was observed. However, it was variable due to the social power of the two speaking parties which in some situations (i.e., situations 4 and 7) led them to use conventional indirect as well as direct request strategies almost equally.

The overall findings can challenge the existing curricula in Iran for its insufficient and unsuitable English pragmatic input for learners. All in all, the need to focus on pragmatic awareness-raising tasks to develop pragmatic awareness of Iranian EFL learners and familiarize them with cross-cultural differences with a focus on sociopragmatic factors and pragmalinguistic ability (Thomas, 1983) is of utmost importance in educational settings.

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Appendix
Pragmatic Awareness Questionnaire

Directions: *Please fill in the blanks and tick the description that best fits you.*

Age: Gender: Major: Semester:
What is your home language (i.e., the language you use at home)?
Persian Turkish

What is your official language (i.e., the language you use at university, formal settings, and etc.)?
Persian Turkish

Which option is suitable for you?
I solely understand Turkish language and cannot speak it.
I understand Turkish language but speak it with difficulty.
I both understand and speak Turkish language well.
I neither understand nor speak Turkish language.

Directions: *Please read the following requesting situations carefully and give an overall rating of the given acts on the 5-point scale. This scale assesses the appropriateness of acts for each situation from very inappropriate to very appropriate. You are expected to justify your evaluation and provide an alternative expression if you rated the acts based on numbers 1 to 5 (i.e., from very inappropriate to slightly appropriate). Remember that you are making requests to English native speakers. Rest assured that the information obtained in the course of this study will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of academic research.*

Situation 1:
You are trying to study in your room and you hear loud music coming from another student's room down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him to turn the music down. You tell the students:

Excuse me, what's name of the music? Sounds good, I like it. But, oh, I'm sorry it is not the right time, I'm just doing some important work. Do you mind turning it down? Thanks so much. I wish I have another chance to listen to it, but not now.

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:
If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 2:

You are now shopping in a department store. You see a beautiful suit and want to see it. You ask the salesperson to show you the suit. You tell the salesperson:

Lady, I'd like to have a look at that suit. Would you please do me a favor?

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 3:

You are now discussing your assignment with your teacher. Your teacher speaks very fast. You do not follow what he is saying, so you want to ask your teacher to say it again. You tell you teacher:

Sorry, teacher, can you repeat it?

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 4:

Your computer is down because of a virus. One of your teachers is very skillful in fixing computers. You know he has been very busy recently, but you still want to ask him to fix your computer. You tell your teacher:

Good morning, Mr. Smith, I hear you are very skillful at fixing computers. So I hope you can help me. It is a little trouble; it won't take you much time, OK?

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 5:

You are a teacher. In class, the mobile phone of one of your students rings. You ask your student to turn off his mobile phone. You tell your students:

I don't appreciate mobiles ringing in my class, please make sure they are switched off for the duration of this class.

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 6:

You are watching a basketball game. A student you don't know comes and stands just in front of you blocking your view. You want ask the student not to block your view. You tell the student:

Hi, so you are interested in basketball. So am I. Let me stand beside you and exchange opinions about the game.

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 7:

You are applying for a new job in a small company and want to make an appointment for an interview. You know the manager is very busy and only schedules interviews in the afternoon from one to four o'clock on Wednesday. However, you have to take the final-term exam this Wednesday. You want to schedule an interview on Thursday. You tell the manager:

I have an exam on Wednesday. Would it be possible to schedule the interview for sometime on Thursday?

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 8:

You are the owner of a bookstore. Your shop clerk has worked for a year, and you have gotten to know him or her quite well. It is the beginning of the semester, and you are very busy selling and refunding textbooks all day. Today you have a plan to extend business hours by an hour, though you know the clerk has worked long hours in the past few days. You ask the clerk to stay after store hours.

Tom, I need you to work a couple of extra hours today. You'll make more money!

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 9:

For the first time this semester, you are taking a mathematics course. You have had a hard time following lectures and understanding the textbook. A test is scheduled to be held next week. You notice that one student sitting next to you seems to have a good background knowledge of math, and is doing well. Because it is the beginning of the semester, you do not know him or her yet. You want to ask him or her to study together for the upcoming test.

I was wondering if we could possibly get together some time to study for the test.

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression:

Situation 10:

Something is wrong with your computer, but you have to finish some homework which is due tomorrow. Your roommate has a computer, but he is also writing a course paper on his computer. His homework is due the day after tomorrow. You want to ask him to stop his work and let you use his computer to finish your homework first.

Hi, Lucy, you know my homework is due tomorrow and my computer is down, give me a hand.

Very inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 Very appropriate

Explain why:

If inappropriate, provide an alternative expression: