

Requestive Speech Acts Realization Patterns: Observation from Persian

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Abstract

Without knowing the speech act functions, it would be difficult to make correct requests in a language. Studies in pragmalinguistics have shown that conventionally direct and indirect requestive patterns are perceived differently in different speech communities. This study investigates the perception of the requestive speech acts by Persian native speakers to determine the socially appropriate requestive patterns in Persian. It also examines whether there is any relationship between the use of the requestive patterns and contextual factors, namely relative power, distance, and rank of imposition. To these ends a total of 24 situations designed in the form of a questionnaire were used for written elicitation. The results show that Persian native speakers consider direct request strategy when accompanied with modifiers as an appropriate norm of making request in situations where interlocutors are socially intimate and where the speaker is more powerful than the hearer. On the basis of the results of the study, examining and investigating the notions of directness and appropriateness should be based on cultural norms and expectations as well as rational linguistic behavior.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Speech acts, Direct and Indirect Request Strategy, Politeness Theory

1. Introduction

The language of each society is a phenomenon by which the speakers are said to accomplish a set of functions. As Cook (1989) states, some philosophers believe that since the number of things we do with words is limited, it is possible to assign functions to utterances. One way of assigning functions is to look behind the literal and formal meaning of what is said or written, and focus on what the speaker intends to achieve with it. An utterance can have different functions depending on who says it, to whom, and in what situation. For example, "the window is open" may function as an order when said by a teacher to a student. It may also function as an interpretation when said by an inspector to the police. As it is seen, it is quite usual for an utterance to perform more than one function in different situations. Consequently, the important principle is that meaning varies with context. As Cook (1989: 29) states, "the meaning which the words take on in a particular context, between particular people is called pragmatic meaning." Levinson (1983:24) defines pragmatics as "the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate." One of the issues in the study of

pragmatics is "speech act theory". It is claimed by some researchers (see, e.g., Brown and Levinson, 1978; and Leech, 1983) that speech act theory is ruled by the universal principles of politeness and cooperation. Cook (1989) believes that these universal principles are not, on their own, sufficient to account for inferring the function of utterances. Therefore, he points out that "we also need the knowledge of the physical and social world and assumptions about the knowledge of the people with whom we are speaking" (Cook, 1989: 35). In addition, he states that the knowledge of the language rules studied by grammarians and taught in most language textbooks and the knowledge of what is going on around us as well as the context of situation play important roles in inferring the function of what is said. As it is seen, linguistic forms can serve different functions and speech acts deal with the functions and the use of language in contexts. Austin (1962) mentions three types of acts when we use language: 1. Locutionary act or apparent utterance meaning 2. Illocutionary act or utterance functions: offer, promise and ... 3. Perlocutionary act or the effects on hearer. Speech act theory is ruled by the universal principles of politeness theory and directives are related to politeness. Holmes (1993) considers "directives" as one of the functions of speech that gets someone to do things. For instance, "help me locate a book" can act as a directive speech act. By act we mean "what is intended to be done by a verbal or non-verbal communication, just as one or more speech acts can be assigned to an utterance" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 65). According to Richards et.al. (1985), "request" is one of the pragmatic categorization of directives. Conventionally "direct request" and conventionally "indirect request" are two subcategorizations of request. Brown and Levinson (1987: 65) state that 'conventionally direct request is a strategy type used to make request in in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way.' Conventionally indirect request, on the other hand, is defined as "a strategy type used to make request by phrase and utterances that have contextually unambiguous meanings (because of conventionalization) which are different from their literal meanings" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 132). Brown and Levinson (1987) believes that the more the speaker is indirect, the more he/she seems to be polite. In contrast, Blum-Kulka (1987) states that there is evidence to suggest that indirectness and politeness do not necessarily correlate with each other universally or for any given culture. Thus, to consider the level of directness as a universal factor in determining the level of politeness is under questions. That is why the researcher wants to study the perception of politeness in using conventionally direct and indirect requestive patterns with regard to the contextual factors namely, power, distance, and rank of imposition by Persian native speakers. Lee-Wong (1995: 500) believes that "judgements and perceptions of politeness in dyadic encounters need to be made in relation to cultural expectations". As a result, any analysis of the variations in linguistic behavior must be based on socio-cultural parameters.

2. Method

Although in sociolinguistics and pragmatic studies the most desirable procedure is authentic and spontaneous data gathering in natural situations, it seemed that it might be time-consuming and not yielding sufficient data for the present study. Considering the impracticality of collecting authentic and spontaneous data from natural situations, a random selection of university students and an elicitation procedure were used to obtain the necessary data.

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 48 native Persian-speaking university students. The participants were majoring in different fields such as sciences, agriculture, literature, and humanities, and were enrolled in different majors at Kerman Azad University. The participants were randomly pulled out among the 1250 freshmen students. The participants had the following characteristics in common: 1. Their mother tongue was Persian; 2. All of them were from Iran; 3. They ranged in age from 18-25; and 4. All of them were freshmen university students.

2.2 Data Collection

As Holmes (1990) states, elicitation procedures have been used by many researchers. There are, of course, some criticism with regard to elicitation procedures. Holmes (1990), for example, points out that elicitation procedures put the subjects in unreal situations to elicit data, and such data are collected from a small number of subjects in limited and structured contexts. Therefore, the subjects' utterances may be in disagreement with what they may actually say in real contexts. And such obtained data may be unable to determine the possible range of strategies and linguistic forms used by participants in real conversations. In spite of such criticism, elicited data have some advantages. Eslamirasekh (1993) points out that written elicitation techniques help researchers to obtain only the required data. Researchers do not observe the way that people use language for different purposes in different situations, but they emphasize, for example, on a large sample of one specific speech act used in the same contexts. Hill et.al. (1986: 353) believe that "the virtue of authenticity in naturally occurring speech must be weighed against its reflection of speaker's sociolinguistic adaptations to very specific situations". It illustrates that people make use of certain and stereotyped responses in actual situations and these responses can be obtained through elicitation techniques. In the light of the above reflections the present study used an elicitation procedure for its data collection.

2.3 Data Collection Instrument

Following Banerjee and Carrell (1988) and Lee-Wong (1995), this research used a discourse-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 24 situations each of which leading to a possible request by the participant. The

participants were instructed to read the description of each situation, pretending they were in such a situation, and write down what they felt they would say. It was emphasized the participants should consider themselves in actual situations in order to approximate more to real verbal interactions. To check the consistency of the results, regrounding procedure which is a type of test-retest reliability was used. The researcher went back to the data a second time and compared the frequencies of elicited data with the frequencies obtained the first time. It showed that the data are retrievable and the researcher could almost reach the same frequencies of elicited data after some time has elapsed. Then, correlational procedure was performed to obtain the value of correlation coefficient which is called reliability coefficient (r) was .86 which indicated that 86 percent of the observed variance was true variance and 14 percent was error variance.

Based on the contextual factors namely, power, distance, and rank of imposition, and following Lee-Wong (1995) the researcher wrote the situations of the questionnaire in such a way that they fell into three categories. Each of these categories and situations and the related items in the questionnaire is represented in the next section.

1. Power situation: such situations were marked as: High (H), Equal (E), and Low (L).

Power	Situation (questionnaire item)
H	S8
H	S15
H	S6
E	S2
E	S7
E	S10
L	S17
L	S21
L	S19

2. Social Data Collection Instrument distance situations: Such situations were marked as Close (C), and Distant (D).

Social	Situation (questionnaire item)
D	S3
D	S5
D	S18
C	S20
C	S14
C	S4

3. Ranking situations: Such situations were marked as High (H), Mid (M), and Low (L).

If the situations were more face threatening to the hearer, they were marked high. Less face threatening situations were characterized mid. And those situations in which there were a little face threatening to the hearer, they were marked low.

Rank of Imposition Situation (questionnaire item)

H	S11
H	S12
H	S1
M	S13
M	S16
M	S22
L	S9
L	S23
L	S24

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher during the regular class period. Most within the 50-minute period. Incomplete questionnaires were discarded, as were those in which the student gave the content of request rather than the exact words of the request. For instance, a response such as "I would politely ask her to lie down" was discarded. In general, students seemed to understand the task and were able to complete the questionnaire without difficulty.

To identify requestive patterns, the researcher made use of the felicity conditions. The felicity conditions were applied to derive the request forms of Persian. Searle (1969), as stated by Levinson (1983: 240), suggested the following felicity conditions for requests.

Table 2.1 *Searle's felicity conditions on requests*

Conditions	Requests
Propositional Content	Future act A of H
Preparatory	1. S believes H can do A 2. It is not obvious that H would do A without being asked
Sincerity	S wants H to do A
Essential	Counts as an attempt to get H to do A

A= Action S= Speaker H= Hearer

Based on the above felicity conditions and characteristics, conventionally direct and indirect requests of Persian were derived. The frequency distribution of these linguistic forms has been tabulated in a number of tables in the "Result"

section. Then, the linguistic forms used by Persian native speakers were analyzed to find out how these forms were socially perceived in Persian speech community.

2.4 Codifying the Questionnaire Items

Each item was codified according to whether there was a response; whether the response was a request, and whether it was direct or indirect. For instance, "I would politely ask him to help me locate a book" was codified as "10" accordingly. The above utterance was regarded as a response, but it was not a request. And, it was neither direct nor indirect. Such responses were discarded. "Please, help me locate a book," for example, was codified as "111". This code indicates that such an utterance would be a response, a request, and a direct request. But, an utterance such as "can you help me locate a book" might be codified as "112" indicating a response, a request, and an indirect request. Then, direct and indirect requests were tallied to see which one was more frequent, appropriate, and socially acceptable in Persian based on the perception of the participants. Finally, internal and external modifiers were also tallied to determine their roles in the speech acts of requests in Persian. Faerch and Kasper (1989: 244) point out that "external modifiers" are longer and more explicit whereas "internal modifiers" are the embedded part of the head act. Lotfan ân pkâkon râ yek lahze be-de-hid (internal): please give me that eraser for a moment. Reza, lotfan sedâay-e râdeyo râ kam kon, man dâram ketâb mikhân-am (external): Reza, please slow down the radio, I am reading a book.

2.5 Statistical Procedures

The statistical techniques used in this study were correlations and Chi-square procedures. Because the obtained data were nominal, that is, a request might be either direct or indirect, the Chi-square procedures, especially designed for nominal data, were used. The Chi-square procedure was used because of having frequencies in terms of proportions and percentages. Correlational analyses, on the other hand, helped the researcher to determine the degree of relationship between the variables of the study. Correlations were used between the type of requestive pattern used by Persian native speakers and each of the contextual factors, namely Power (P), Social Distance (D), and Ranking of Imposition (R), in different situations. The correlations between the choice of requestive forms and the contextual parameters would determine the more appropriate linguistic behavior in different situations in Persian speech community.

3. Results

To show the data and the results more distinctively they are tabulated in a number of tables. Findings in Figure 3.1 show that the direct request strategy was more frequent than indirect one. It means that Persian speakers displayed a preference for direct request forms.

3.1 Main Strategy Type

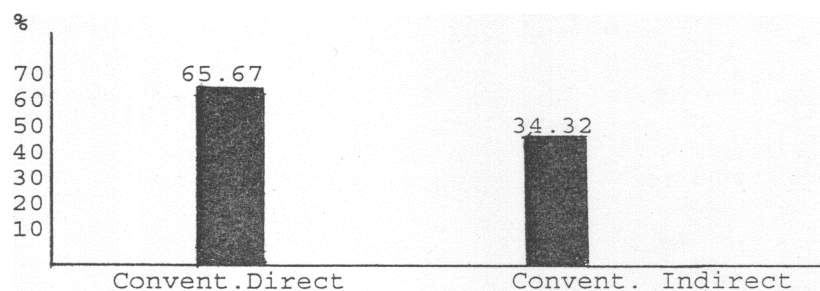


Figure 3.1 Frequency Distribution of the Main Request Types.

A relatively high percentage of usage at 65.67% shows the dominance of direct request forms in Persian speech community. It reveals that direct strategy is considered as socially acceptable and appropriate norm among Iranian university students. In addition to this, preference for direct request forms as a strategy of request realization suggests that direct request forms, unlike English and most other European languages, are not regarded as impolite.

As Table 3.1 shows the obtained value for χ^2 is 113.51. Because the critical value for χ^2 with 1 d.f. is 10.828 for the .001 level, we can claim that the difference between the observed and the expected frequencies is not by chance and it is statistically significant.

Table 3.1. Calculation of χ^2 for the Direct and Indirect strategy types

Strategy types	Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
Convent. Direct	1	755	574	57.07
Convent. Indirect	2	394	574	56.44

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O-E)^2/E = 113.51$$

$$\text{d.f.} = 1$$

$$P < .001$$

Because the researcher wanted to investigate the effect of the social parameters, namely power, Social Distance, and Ranking of Imposition, on the use of the main strategy types, namely conventionally direct and indirect requestive forms, the social parameters were considered as independent variables and the main strategy types as dependent variables.

As Table 3.2 displays, the observed frequency distribution of the main strategy types for the social parameters are different.

Table 3.2: Frequency Distribution of the Main Strategy Types for the Social Parameters

Social Parameters	Power	Social Distance	Ranking of Imposition
Strategy Types			
Convent.Direct	331	173	251
Convent.Indirect	101	114	179

To make sure that such differences (see Figure 3.1 and Table 3.2) were statistically significant and were not by chance, the Chi-square procedure was used. Table 3.3 represents the summary data for obtaining the value of X^2 .

Table 3.3: Calculation of x^2 for the data in Table 3.2

Observed (o)	Expected (E)	(O-E)²/E
331	283.86	7.83
173	188.85	1.29
251	282.55	3.52
101	148.13	14.99
114	98.41	2.46
179	147.45	6.75

$$X^2 = \sum (O-E)^2/E = 36.84$$

$$d.f. = 2$$

$$P < .001$$

As Table 3.3 displays the obtained value for X^2 is 36.84. Because the critical value for X^2 with 2 d.f. is 13.816 for the .001 level, we can claim that the differences in Figure 3.1 and Table 3.2 are not by chance. There seems to be a statistically significant difference between the observed and the expected frequencies of the main strategy types and the social parameters. In addition, the supportive moves, namely internal and external modifiers, which accompanied the main request types were tallied. As Figure 3.2 represents, a large number of supportive moves accompanied conventionally direct and indirect requestive forms. This shows that such modifiers play a crucial role in the speech acts of requests in Persian.

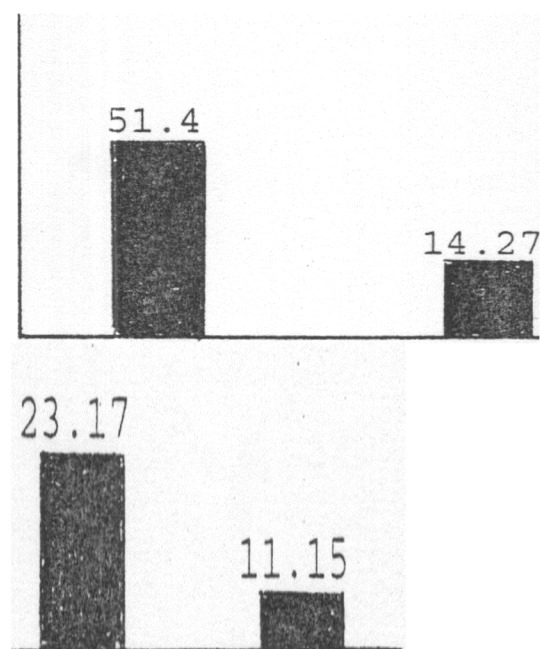


Figure 3.2 Frequency Distribution of Internal and External Modifiers in the Main Request Types

Figure 3.2 shows that a high percentage of supportive moves (65.67%) are accompanied with direct requests. It means that supportive moves enable Persian speakers to act on a level of directness which is appropriate and acceptable in Persian speech community. In other words, Persian speakers' use of supportive moves compensate for their directness.

3.2 Strategy Types and Contextual Factors

The interactions between the choice of requestive strategy type and each of the social factors namely, power (P) , social Distance (D) , and Ranking of Imposition (R) , in different situations were investigated to see the relationships between them. Table 4.4 represents the frequency distribution of direct and indirect requestive forms for the power situations. This shows that the selection of requestive forms is affected remarkably by the speaker's power.

Table 3.4: Frequency Distribution of Main Strategy Type for Power (High, Equal, and Low)

Power	High	Equal	Low
Strategy Type			
Convent. Direct	144	131	56
Convent. Indirect	0	13	88

Table 3.4 obviously shows that the use of direct strategy is under the influence of speaker's power. It indicates that power plays an important role in the selection of the requestive strategy by Persian native speakers. As power increases the use of direct requestive forms increases.

Chi-square procedure was used to assess the significance of the differences between the use of the main request strategy type and power. The observed frequency data in Table 3.4 are manipulated to calculate the Chi-square (X^2). The obtained value for X^2 will show whether there is a statistical significance between the observed and the expected frequencies.

Table 3.5: *Calculation of X^2 for the data in Table 3.4*

Observed (O)	Expected (E)	$(O - E)^2/E$
144	110.33	8.52
131	110.33	3.87
56	110.33	26.75
0	33.67	33.67
13	33.67	12.68
88	33.67	87.67

$$X^2 = \sum (O-E)^2/E = 173.16$$

$$\text{d.f.} = 2$$

$$P < .001$$

The obtained value for X^2 from the data in Table 4.5 is 173.16 and the critical value of X^2 with 2 d.f. is 13.816 for the .001 level. So, we can feel fairly confident that the differences between the observed and the expected frequencies are not due to chance. They are statistically significant.

Table 3.6: *Frequency Distribution of Main Strategy type for Social Distance (Distant and close)*

Distance	Distant	Close
Strategy Type		
Convent. Direct	40	133
Convent. Indirect	103	11

Table 3.6 makes it clear that Persian native speakers make direct requests in their course of conversation when they feel intimate with their interlocutors. But, they use indirect requests when there is no intimacy between them. As Table 3.6 shows there is a two-way 2x2 table and the d.f is 1, so the Yates

Correction Factor must be used to adjust the observed frequency data to calculate the Chi-square. The obtained value for X^2 from the data in Table 3.3 is 126.94. The critical value of X^2 with 1 d.f is 10.828 for the .001 level. Because the obtained value for X^2 is larger than the critical value, it can be claimed that the observed and the expected frequencies of the main strategy types in social distance situations are statistically significant.

Table 3.7 *Frequency Distribution of Main Strategy Type for Ranking of Imposition*

Rank of Imposition	High	Equal	Low
Strategy Type			
Convent. Direct	17	94	140
Convent. Indirect	127	48	4

Table 3.7 reveals that native Persian speakers prefer to use indirect requestive forms where the weighing of the ranking of imposition is high and to use direct requests where the weighing of the imposition is low.

The data used in Table 3.7 are represented in Table 3.8 to calculate the chi-square. We want to see whether the differences between the observed and the expected frequencies of the main request strategy types used by Persian native speakers in the ranking situations are statistically significant or not.

Table 3.8 *Calculation of X^2 for the data in Table 4.7*

Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) ² /E
17	84.05	53.49
94	82.89	1.49
140	84.05	37.24
127	59.94	75.01
48	59.11	2.09
4	59.94	52.21

$$X^2 = \sum (O-E)^2/E = 221.53$$

$$\text{d.f.} = 2$$

$$P < .001$$

The obtained value for X^2 as Table 3.8 shows is 221.53 and the critical value of X^2 with 2 d.f. is 13.816 for the .001 level. As it is obvious, the obtained value for X^2 is large enough to claim that the differences between the observed and

the expected frequencies in the ranking situations are statistically significant. It means that the differences are not due to chance.

Table 3.9 *Interaction of Relative Power with two levels of Request Strategy In Different Situations*

Power	Situation	Convent. Direct (N)	Convent. Indirect (N)
H	S8	48	0
H	S15	48	0
H	S6	48	0
E	S2	46	2
E	S7	44	4
E	S10	41	7
L	S17	17	31
L	S21	19	29
L	S19	20	28

Table 3.9 shows that in situations marked high P or equal P, direct strategy type was preferred to indirect one as shown by raw frequency data (N). It means that the more power the speaker has, the less the tendency to ask for agreement as to 'whether X can be done.

Table 3.10 *Interaction of Social Distance with Two Levels of Request Strategy in Different Situation*

Social Distance	Situation	Convent. Direct	Convent. Indirect
D	S3	13	35
D	S5	12	36
D	S18	15	32
C	S20	43	5
C	S14	46	2
C	S4	44	4

Table 3.10 shows that the use of conventionally indirect requests is perceived to be appropriate in situations that are characterized as maximal in social distance and inappropriate in situations where social distance is minimal such as S20, S14, and S4. Within the family (S4 and S14), or between close neighbors where social distance is at its minimal, directness is perceived as the norm.

Table 3. 11 *Interaction of Ranking of Imposition with Two Levels of Request Strategy in Different Situation*

Ranking of Imposition	Situation	Convent. Direct (N)	Convent. Indirect (N)
H	S11	10	38
H	S12	0	48
H	S1	7	41
M	S13	33	5
M	S16	31	17
M	S22	30	16
L	S9	44	4
L	S23	48	0
L	S24	48	0

Table 3.11 shows that as the weighing of the ranking of imposition increases, the use of conventionally direct requests decreases. It means that conventionally indirect requests are perceived to be appropriate in situations that are marked as "high" in ranking of imposition and inappropriate in situations where ranking of imposition is "low" such as S9, S23, and S24.

To sum up, it seems that R is a remarkable factor in determining the level of directness. Frequency percentage distribution of request strategy type in Table 3.11 illustrates the point that the use of direct requests in situations where R is marked "high" such as S12, S11, and S1 has a much lower percentage of occurrence when compared with the situations where R is marked "low" such as S9, and S23. It means that the use of direct requests decreases as R increases and the use of indirect requests increases as R increases. Therefore, there seems to be a close relationship between the rank of imposition and level of acceptability in directness. For example, in a situation of high R (S1) using direct request is not regarded acceptable while in a situation of low R (S24) it would be acceptable. Consequently, Persian speakers avoid using direct requests where they might be perceived to pose difficulty for hearer to comply. As it is seen, the contextual factors have influence on the choice of linguistic forms. Correlation coefficients also supported the above suggestions about the interaction of P, D, and R with two levels of request strategy. Point Biserial Correlation procedure and the data in Table 3.9, Table 3.10, and Table 3.11 were used to calculate the following correlation coefficients.

Table 3.12 *Correlation Matrix*

Positive Correlations	r	Negative Correlations	
1. Convent. Direct and Power	.90	1. Convent. Indirect and Power	.91
2. Convent. Indirect and Social Distance	.90	2. Convent. Direct and Social Distance	.91
3. Convent. Indirect and Ranking of Imposition	.90	3. Convent. Direct and Ranking of Imposition	.90

P < .05

As Table 3.12 shows the interaction of relative power with two levels of request strategy is positively correlated with conventionally direct request strategy but negatively with indirect one. The obtained value for positive correlation is $r = .90$ and for negative correlation $r = -.91$. Because the critical value for r with 7 d.f is .66 at .05 level, we can fairly claim that the use of direct requests increases with a corresponding increase in power, and the use of indirect requests decreases with a corresponding increase in power. In other words, the more power the speaker has the less the tendency to solicit agreement as to 'whether X can be done. Similarly, the closer the relationship the greater the tendency to be direct and explicit. Additionally, as Table 3.12 represents, the correlation between conventionally indirect requests and social distance is positive but between conventionally direct ones and social distance is negative. The obtained value for positive correlation is $r = .90$ and for negative one is $r = -.91$. Because the critical value for r with 4 d.f is .81 at .05 level, we can assert that the use of indirect requests is appropriate where the social distance is maximal and inappropriate where the social distance is minimal. It means that the more distant the speaker is from the listener the greater the tendency to be indirect.

Finally, Table 3.12 displays that the interaction of ranking of imposition with two levels of request strategy is positively correlated with conventionally indirect request strategy and negatively correlated with direct one. The obtained value for positive correlation is $r = .90$ and for negative one $r = -.90$. the critical value for r with 7 d.f is .66 at .05 level. Therefore, it can be claimed that as ranking of imposition increases, the use of direct requests decreases. In other words, the greater the weighing of ranking the less the tendency to be direct and explicit.

To sum up, the above empirical evidence supports the claim that P, D, and R have influence on the selection of the request strategy types in Persian speech community.

4. Discussion

Persian speakers displayed a preference for direct request forms which are economical, clear and explicit. It is interesting that Grice's (1975) Maxims of Quantity and Quality conform with the principles of economy, clearness, and explicitness. Oliver (1971: 92) states that: If the speeches are too long, 'they sound artificial. If they are too short, they fail to convey the speaker's meaning. The perfection of the speaking art is to make speeches that convey the speaker's meaning and no more. Blum-Kulka (1987:143) believes that the shortest path is the preferred strategy when the length of the inferential process is important. Persian speakers by using action verbs in their direct inquiries showed a preference for conciseness and explicitness in making requests. Consider the following examples:

1- lotfan meqdar-i šekar be man be-d-id

Please some - INDEF sugar to I NiN-give. NPS - IMPVE.2SG

Please, give me some sugar.

2. agar miš-e ejaze be-d-id man meqdar-i šekar

bardar-am

if iMPF-become . NPS-3SG let NiN-give .NPS-

IMPVE . 2SG I some-INDEF sugar NiN-take .NPS- ISG

If possible, let me take some sugar.

Regarding utterance length, utterance (1) is shorter than (2). Regarding conciseness and explicitness it is utterance (1). Because there is a relatively high percentage of usage at 65.69% for direct requestive forms (see Figure 3.1), It seems that Persian speakers consider utterance (1) more appropriate because of the conciseness of the proposition and explicitness of the speaker's Intention.

Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that the more speakers endeavor not to pose difficulty for hearer to comply, the more they may appear polite. Because Persian speakers act at a level of directness in their communication and it may impose something on hearers, they make use of internal modifiers to compensate for their directness. A relatively high percentage of internal modifiers (51.4%) as "politeness marker" in direct requests (Figure 4.2) shows that such modifiers and softening mechanisms help Persian speakers give the hearer an option, letting him think that his response is not imposed on. "Politeness markers" or polite expressions such as lotfan (Please), bebaxšid (excuse me) bexater xoda (for God's sake), dastet dard nakone (please), and etc. are used frequently with direct requests as norms of linguistic politeness in Persian. Such expressions mitigate the force of direct requests and act as softeners in the course of conversation.

Examples:

(1). Javad: xaheš mi-kon-am. komak 0-kon-0 jay-e yek kitab ra peyda

0-kon-am

Javad: Please iMPF-do.NPS-ISG help NiN-do.NPS- IMPVE . 2SG
 place-LiNK one book COMP
 visible NiN- do.NPS-ISG
 Javad: Please, help me locate a book.
 (2). Nazi: dast-et dard na-kon-e, ân panjereh râ be-band-0
 Nazi: hand-you pain NEG - do. NPS - 3 SG , it
 window COMP NiN-d0Se.NPS-IMPVE.2SG Nazi: Please, close
 that window.

The above direct requests are imposing something on hearers who are not given a choice of 'whether you would' or 'could/would you'. However, Persian speakers seem to show disregard for such impositions and make direct requests which are appropriate in Persian speech community. These instances also support our claim that native Persian speakers prefer direct requestive forms and make use of softening mechanism to compensate for their directness. Comparing frequency distribution of internal and external modifiers (Figure 3.2) reveals that internal modifiers have a higher frequency of occurrence than external modifiers (74.57% > 25.42%). It may be due to the point that internal modifiers are considered as part of the structure of the core request and require less effort in their formulation and production while external modifiers need a separate structure with a different propositional content and consequently require more effort in their formulation and production. Therefore, showing a preference for direct strategy type and internal modifiers by Persian speakers agrees with the "Principle of Least Effort" and the principle of "Sufficient Effort" that Horn (1984: 13) identifies them with Grice's (1975) Maxim of Quantity. Following such principles shows that Persian speakers tend to make their request in such a way that needs minimal effort. Persian native speakers use direct strategy where it does not pose any difficulty for the hearer to comply. For example, asking a friend to close a window does not pose great difficulty for the hearer. So, many Persian speakers may use direct strategy to make such a request. Take the following extracted examples from the questionnaire:

(3) . Ali: miš-e, panjereh ra be-band-i hava sard ast-0
 Ali: IMPF - become .NPS-3 SG window COMP NiN-
 close.NPS-iMPVE.2sG air cold be.NPS-3sG Ali: If possible, close the
 window. It is cold.
 (4). Ali: man sard-am ast-0, lotfan panjereh ra be-band
 Ali: I cold-am be.NPS-3sG please window COMP NiN-close . NPS -
 IMPVE . 2SG Ali: I am cold, please, close the window. The above examples also support our claim that Persian native speakers consider direct requestive forms as socially appropriate norm where some difficulty is not imposed on the hearer. On the other hand, it fairly supports our claim that the choice of requestive patterns is affected by contextual factors. Additionally, as it is seen Persian speakers may give

reasons for closing the window but they avoid lengthening the request utterances by asking for the possibility or the willingness of the hearer if s/he would mind him closing the window. Such avoidance agrees with the "Principle of Least Effort" and sincerity. Gordon and Lakoff (1975: 85) list three rules of the sincerity of requests as follows:

3. a wants b to do request;
4. a assumes that b can do request; and
5. a assumes that b would be willing to do request.

From these rules, it can be seen that the hearer is cooperative and would not mind doing request. So, asking for the willingness of the hearer would contradict the sincerity. Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that negative politeness strategies have the function of minimizing certain imposition that the face threatening acts (FTAs) have. In request utterances, there is still an imposition that would constitute an FTA. Data (see Table 4.6) show that, except for situations where rank of imposition is marked "high", Persian speakers tend to disregard the impositions and prefer direct bald on record strategy, some with politeness markers, others without. Consider the following examples:

(5). Zan: meqdar-i šekar be-xar-0. šekar tamam kard-im

Woman: Some - INDF sugar NiN-buy.NPS-iMPVE.2sG sugar finish do.PS-IPL

Woman: buy some sugar, we have run out of it.

6. Zan: lotfan, meqdar-i šekar tu rah-e xune
be-xar-0

Woman: Please, some-INDF sugar on way-LINK home NiN-buy. NPS
- IMPVE . 2SG

Woman: Please, buy some sugar on your way home.

Asking for sugar by means of an indirect request strategy may have different implicatures for a native Persian addressee as opposed to an English-speaking native addressee.

7. Zan: mi-tun-i šekar be-xar-i

Woman: IMPF-CAN.NPS-2SG sugar NiN-buy.NPS-2SG Woman: Can you buy sugar?

It seems that an indirect request like (7) is not the perfect norm in Persian as it is in English. It, on the one hand, may be due to the cultural values and beliefs that do not let a Persian speaker makes a request which contradicts his/her sincerity. On the other hand, the speaker does not feel confident whether the hearer would want to buy some sugar for her or not, the hearer may be offended, that is, the speaker is doubting his/her generosity.

The above examples prove our claim that Persian native speakers do not prefer indirect requestive patterns. It may be due to the point that they do not feel

confident that they are making their requests suitably. On the other hand, the speaker doubts whether or not his /her idea is understood by the hearer appropriately.

That both Persian interactants consider the use of direct requests as appropriate linguistic forms reveals their common pragmatic knowledge. Lakoff (1973: 296) refers to pragmatic knowledge as "pragmatic competence" and mentions two rules of it: (1) be clear, and (2) be polite. As it is seen request utterances (5) and (6) have explicit and clear proposition. (5) consists of a core request (buy some sugar) and an external modifier or a reason (we have run out of it). (6) is made up of an internal modifier (please) and a core request (buy some sugar on your way home). The second rule of pragmatic competence, politeness, is conveyed by means of modifiers and softening mechanisms. Lakoff (1973: 298) puts forward three rules of politeness: "1. don't impose, 2. give options, and 3. make your receiver feel good."

According to the data, it seems that Persian native speakers try to moderate the imposition being made by means of reasonable limits and internal modifiers such as: "agar momkene" (if possible), "lotfan" (please), "xahes mikonam" (please), and etc. However, politeness rules can be modified in Persian speech community as follows:

8. do impose within reasonable limits;
9. choose linguistic forms that the hearer will be cooperative; and
10. make your receiver feel good.

As it is seen imposition in one society where speakers put forward reason for their action may be regarded appropriate, but in another society, it may be considered rude and impolite.

5. Conclusion

Persian native speakers show a preference for direct request strategy. Asking the hearer's willingness to do something is not considered as appropriate requestive forms. "Can you buy sugar?" as an indirect request may show that speaker is uncertain whether the hearer would want to buy sugar or not. And it may be considered quite pointless as a yes-no question. Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that cultural norms have put more emphasis on positive politeness or the need for social approval rather than negative politeness or the need to be unimposed upon. However, Persian native speakers consider negative politeness irrelevant in situations: (a) where the interlocutors are socially intimate, and (b) where the speaker is more powerful than the hearer. It means that the notions of directness and politeness cannot be investigated cross-culturally. Wierzbicka (1985: 174) discusses cultural diversity as, follows: "Natural logic" provides a considerable range of options. the choices embodied in individual languages reflect not only "natural logic", and not only a combination of "natural logic" with historical accidents. They reflect what Gumperz (1982: 182) aptly calls "cultural logic". As it is seen, "natural logic" and "cultural logic" are important factors in determining the appropriate and

rational linguistic behavior in the course of communication in any speech community. That requests are sincere, direct, and brief in Persian speech community is in agreement with cultural logic and belief and with the "Principle of Least Effort" and the "Principle of Sufficient Effort." Directness is perceived as the most rational way that involves the least cost and effort. So, being efficient and economical in Persian speech community means being rational in achieving goals.

To sum up, examining and investigating the notions of directness and politeness should be based on cultural norms and expectations as well as rational linguistic behavior. And, it should be brought into consideration that "it is futile to set linguistic behavior apart from other forms of human behavior" (Lakoff (1973: 303). The findings obtained from the analysis of the data reveal that there might be some interesting pedagogical implications. Language learning cannot be limited to grammatical sentences. Language learners should learn how to look behind the literal and formal meaning of what is said or written. Students should learn how to focus on what the speaker intends to achieve with words. Bruno Ambroise (2010) concludes that one may thus observe a radical change of perspective since the fifties: focus is not on acts done by speech anymore, but on non-explicit meaning (or content) conveyed by what is still called "speech act", even if nobody really knows what act is done here. Therefore, those who want to learn Persian must be taught to focus on pragmatic appropriateness of requestive Persian strategies from the first stages of language learning. They should learn how to mitigate or aggravate the force of an utterance in appropriate situations. In addition, there is an interesting point related to translation. Persian speech act strategies may not have the same speech act potential when translated into English. Hence, after distinguishing the function of an utterance, the translator should decide to find out the suitable form in the target language. Attention should be paid to the force and strength of the equivalent linguistic forms. Since the hearer/reader may misinterpret ambiguous utterance, it is also necessary to pay attention to the nature of the form of Persian equivalent speech act strategies. Finally, there are some suggestions for further studies. The relationship between politeness and directness can be reconsidered. It seems that in some societies politeness is achieved by means of other than directness/indirectness and other factors such as internal modifiers or softening mechanisms are involved. In addition, it is arousing curiosity to discover why there are pragmalinguistic failures. It seems that lack of appropriate teaching techniques and the ignorance of teaching speech act function of utterances may cause such failures. So, finding out the reasons of such pragmalinguistic failures will motivate researchers to revise teaching techniques and do further studies.

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