A Pragmatic Analysis of Speech Act of Suggestion among Iranian Native Speakers of Farsi

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ABSTRACT

The present study positions a research on the speech act of suggestion by Iranian native speakers of Farsi. The primary objectives of this study are to examine Iranian Farsi speakers' production and perception of speech act of suggestion. To this end, the data were collected through an oral discourse completion task and a follow-up post-structured interview from seventeen Iranian university students at Payame Noor University, Iran. The questionnaire was adopted from Bu (2011) and the responses were then transcribed and analyzed based on Martinez-Flor's (2005) coding scheme of speech act of suggestion. The findings show that the respondents used more directive strategies than conventionalized form and indirect strategies. Moreover, the data revealed the frequent use of mitigating devices to redress the face-threatening act. It is hoped that the findings of this study could add to the body of knowledge in pragmatics and speech act studies in general and to our understanding of Iranian Farsi speakers' production and perception of speech act of suggestion in particular.

Keywords: suggestion, strategies, ODCT, perception and production.

1. INTRODUCTION

People occasionally encounter situations where they give or receive suggestions. Making a suggestion means proposing an idea about what someone should do or how someone should behave. In fact, suggestion is a very important speech act in people's daily life. More and more people view suggestion as a panel from where they can improve their performance or how to do things better. For example, teachers suggest their students on how to study, lecturers suggest their colleagues to use a specific software program, or people suggest their friends to try a new shop in town, etc. For this study, the speech act of suggestion is selected as a unit of analysis. Making suggestions can be difficult since no one would like to be told that he or she should do or how to behave. Since suggestions invade the personal space of the hearer, a speaker should use the appropriate patterns of communication to participate in a smooth conversation and to minimize the chances of the hearer's being offended.

Studies on speech act can be discussed from two aspects: first, those studies which investigate native speakers' realization of a given speech act, and second, those which compare

EFL/ESL learners' realization of a given speech act with that of second language native speakers (Pishghadam and Sharafadini, 2011). The present study is of the first type. The attempt is to examine how Iranian native speakers of Farsi realize speech act of suggestion.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Suggestions are speech acts. Speech acts or "minimal unit of discourse" (Wolfson, Marmor, and jones, 1989, p.174) appeared in the second half of the twentieth centrury as one of the important approached in pragmatics whose main emphasis was language use. The concept was developed by Austin (1962) who proposed that speakers do not only say things, but also do things with words. For instance, when a speaker makes the statement "I promise to send you the letter", he performs the act of promising. In other words, speech acts are "utterances….which carry out an action or language function" (Dörnyei and Thurrell, 1994, p.45).

Austin (1962) stated that three levels of act can be found in anybody's speech: locutionary act, or what the speaker said. In other words, it is the literal meaning of speech. Illocutionary act or what the speaker means by what he said. Finally, the perlocutionary act, or the effect of what is said on the hearer. Searle (1976) elaborated the taxonomy of actions that can be performed by speaking through developing five categories of speech acts: representatives (i.e. the description of states or events, e.g. reports, assertions, claims) , directives (i.e. involving the listener to do something in a future action, e.g. requesting, ordering, suggesting, commanding, inviting), commisives (i.e. committing oneself to do something in the future, e.g. promising, threatening, offering, swearing), expressives (i.e. expressing one's psychological state of mind, e.g. apologising, thanking, congratulating), and declaratives (i.e. bringing about a change, e.g. declaring, appointing).

The speech act of suggestion is regarded as a directive act in which the speaker gets the hearer to commit themselves to some future action. In suggestions, as Rintell (1979, p.99) put it, "The speaker asks the hearer to take some action which the speaker believes will benefit the hearer, even one that the speaker should desire". Speech act theory is closely related to the concept of politeness. Politeness is a familiar concept which can easily be found in every day human interaction and conveyed either verbally or non-verbally. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), all members of a society tend to keep a certain image of themselves which is called "face". Brown and Levinson identified two kinds of face, namely negative and positive face. Negative face is the "basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61) while positive face, on the other hand, is the positive self-image that everybody wants for himself (Brown and Levinson, 1987), a desire to be "ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired" (p.62). Both positive and negative politeness include a variety of strategies depending on the degree of face-threat involved and social variables such as social distance, gender, relative power of interlocutors and the level of imposition. The fundamental principle of the face-saving view is face-threatening acts. Face-threatening acts are the acts which intrinsically threaten face and are utterances which challenge either a person's positive face (with disapproval or contempt) or negative face (through a request for action which impinges upon a person's freedom from imposition) (Brown & Levinson, 2009). Though suggestion is given for the benefit of the hearer, Brown and Levinson (1987) regarded this

speech act as a negative face-threatening act since the speaker makes an imposition on the hearer by getting him to perform an act. Failure in performing the act properly may represent the speaker as rude, offensive or impolite (Martinze-Flor, 2010). When making suggestions, people should take several points such as "urgency of suggestion, degree of embarrassment in the situation and social distance and social power between speaker and hearer" into account (Barenjee and Carrell, 1988, p. 319). The speaker then use appropriate politeness strategies based on the extent to which a situation can be threatening. The use of mitigating devices can minimize the chances of the hearer's being offended.

The number of studies on Iranian's realization of speech acts is abundant, e.g. gratitude (Farnia and Raja Rozina, 2009; Pishghadam and Zarei, 2011), apology (Afghari, 2007; Shariati and Chamani, 2010), compliments (Karimnia and Afghari, 2011), request (Eslami-Rasekh and Noora, 2008; Jalilifar, 2009), condolence (Lotfollahi and Eslami-Rasekh, 2011; Samavarchi and Allami, 2012), disagreement (Parvaresh and Eslami Rasekh, 2009; Farnia, Sohrabi and Musarra, 2010), reprimands (Ahmadian and Dastjerdi, 2010), refusal (Allami and Naeimi, 2010), complaints (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004). However, studies on speech act of suggestion are rather scanty.

On a cross-cultural study of speech act of suggestion, Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011a) compared Iranian EFL learners' and English native speakers' realization of speech act of suggestion. The data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire in the form of Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT). The instrument consisted of six situations in which the respondents were asked to read each situation, imagine themselves in that situation, and write down what they would say in a real situation. The data were collected from Iranian native speakers of Farsi in Iran through WDCT. The data were then analyzed based on Jiang's (2006) classification of speech act of suggestion. The data for native speakers were used from a corpus of a previous study on speech act of suggestion by Jiang (2006). The data from both corpuses were then compared and contrasted through frequency and Chi-square analysis. The findings show that *modals*, *imperative*, and *to-clauses* were the most frequently used strategies by Iranian EFL learners while English native speakers used *Let's*, *modal* and *imperative* as the most frequently used strategies. The frequency pattern of other strategies by Iranian EFL learners are *conditional, yes-no question, wh-question, performative, let's* and *pseudo cleft* strategies. English native speakers also *used wh-question, conditional, pseudo cleft, performative, to-clause* and *yes-no* question as the most to least frequently used strategies. The findings also displayed the role of language proficiency and gender in realization of speech act of suggestion.

In another study of speech act of suggestion is Pishghadam and Sharafadini's (2011b). Through a contrastive pragmatic approach, Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011b) examined the realization of speech act of suggestion between Iranian native speakers of Farsi and American native speakers of English. The data were collected from Iranian native speakers of Farsi in Iran through WDCT. The data were then analyzed based on Jiang's (2006) classification of speech act of suggestion. The data for native speakers were used from a corpus of a previous study on speech act of suggestion by Jiang (2006). The data from both corpuses were then compared and contrasted through frequency Chi-square analysis. The findings showed variations in most of the suggestion strategy types: Native speakers of Farsi used significantly more *conditional forms*, *to-*

clauses, *interrogative forms* and *imperative* strategies than native speakers of English. On the other hand, native speakers of English used *let's* and *pseudo cleft* strategies more significantly than native speakers of Farsi. Their findings have also revealed that gender is a significant factor in the production of suggestion strategies. Although their study has contributed to our understanding of the knowledge in speech act studies, using only one method of data collection, i.e. written DCT, cannot generalize the findings. The present study, therefore, extend the study to collect data through other methods of data collection. The following section explains the purpose of the study.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The research on speech acts of suggestion is rather scanty compared to other studies on speech acts among Iranian native speakers of Farsi (Pishghadam and Sharafadini, 2011a). In fact, this study aims to investigate the realization of speech act of suggestion by Iranian native speakers of Farsi. In other words, this study aims to find out the pragmalinguistics (i.e. the use of forms) or strategies for performing the speech act of suggestion. It focuses on speech act of suggestion as an illocutionary act whereby a speaker wants the hearer to perform an act for the benefit of the hearer. In addition, the study also investigates the perception of suggestion which includes the sociopragmatic knowledge of factors affecting the realization of suggestions.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this section, the subjects selected, the instruments used, and the framework adopted is explained.

4.1. Subjects

The participants of this study were selected from Payame Noor University (PNU), Esfahan, Iran. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 both male and female. The data were collected by means of an oral discourse completion task and a structured interview. The data were collected through a voluntary action outside classrooms during autumn semester 2013.

4.2. Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect the data: an open-ended questionnaire in the form of oral discourse completion task and a structured interview. The description of the instruments are as follows:

4.2.1. Oral DCT

The oral DCT was comprised of eight situations. A brief description of the data collection was presented to each participant. The eight situations were read to each participant, and asked them to listen to the situation carefully, imagine themselves in that situation, and then say what they would say in the real situation. The oral DCT was audio-taped and after the task was completed, the interview was conducted. Their responses were recorded and transcribed.

4.2.2. Structured Interview

After conducting and recording of oral DCT, the structured interview was conducted to obtain information about the participants' perception of speech act of suggestions. Every respondent was asked to take part in post-structured interview. The questions were read to the respondents and their answers to the questions were audiotape. Each participant was asked the following questions:

What were you paying attention to when you want to offer a suggestion to somebody?

Would your response change if the person in the situations were younger or older than you?

Would your response be different if the person in the situations was a close friend or a stranger?

Does the sex of the interlocutor affect your response?

Each interview took between10 to 15 minutes. The interview was then transcribed and analyzed.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The responses were then transcribed and analyzed based on Martinez-Flor's (2005) coding scheme.

5.1. Taxonomy of suggestion

Subjects' utterances were classified and analyzed based on the taxonomy of suggestions adopted from Martinez-Flor (2005). The taxonomy is developed based on both speech act and politeness strategies. Table 1 explains Martinexz-Flor's (2005) taxonomy of speech act of suggestion. Based on the taxonomy, the speech act of suggestion is divided into three types: direct, conventionalized forms and indirect types. According to Marinze-Flor (2005), the *directive strategies* refer to the acts in which the speakers clearly state what he/she means. They are stated by performative verbs (e.g. I suggest that you move to a new place), noun of suggestion (e.g. My suggestion for you is to go bed early), imperative (e.g. Clean the stains from the cloths first), and negative imperative (e.g. Don't remove the flash from USB in that way). The second *conventionalized forms* strategies are not as direct as the directive strategies but the hearer could yet understand the speaker's intention behind the suggestion. This second type includes a variety of linguistic realization such as interrogative forms (e.g. why don't you call him?), possibility/probability (e.g. You may remove your flash from the USB first.), should (e.g. You should see a doctor), need (e.g. You need to talk to the professor first) and conditional forms (e.g. If I were you, I would never talk to him again).

Table 1: Taxonomy of suggestion adopted from Martinez-Flor (2005)

Type	Strategy	Example
Direct	Performative verb	I suggest that you...
		I advise you to…
		I recommend that you…
	Noun of suggestion	My suggestion would be…
	Imperative	Try using…
	Negative imperative	Don't try to…
Conventionalized forms	Specific formulae	Why don't you…?

	(interrogative forms)	How about you…?
	Possibility/Probability	What about…?
		Have you thought about…?
		You can…
		You could…
		You may…
		You might…
	Should	You should…
	Need	You need…
	Conditional	If I were you, I would…
Indirect	Impersonal	One thing (that you can do) would be.,.
		Here's one possibility:…
		There are a number of options that you.,,
		It might be better to…
		A good idea would be…
		It would be nice if…
	Hints	I've heard that…

The third type is the indirect strategies which are expressions which the speaker does not clearly state his/her suggestion. In other words, since there is no suggestive force in the utterance, the hearer has to understand the speaker's intention. This category type includes impersonal strategies and hints as the most indirect form of strategy (see Table 1).

5.2. Mitigation Devices

In addition to major suggestion strategies elicited from the respondents, mitigation devices used in the producing suggestions were also considered in this study. It has been mentioned that suggestions are FTAs and as such should be softened and mitigated in order to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. Mitigation devices are classified into two categories, i.e. verbal and nonverbal devices as explained below (examples are cited from some samples of the oral DCT responses).

5.2.1. Verbal strategies

The verbal strategies include opener, justification/explanations/reasons, hedges, mocking, negative evaluation, and awareness strategies:

1. Opener:
   The verbal strategies include the opener strategy in order to open the conversation. This strategy has four sub-strategies which include using titles, using attention getters like saying "excuse me", offering help and posing interrogative questions. The interrogative questions often posed in the four following senses:
   a. Making awareness, e.g. "What is this stain on your shirt?" (Situation #2)
   b. Expressing sarcasm, e.g. "Did you buy your shirt with the price tag on it?" (Situation # 3)
   c. Asking reasons, e.g. "Why do you want to borrow this book?" (Situation #8)
   d. Expressing criticism, e.g. "Why did you prepare the presentation wrongly?" (Situation #5)

    e. Offering help, e.g. "May I help you?" (Situation #1)

Title and names were also used to open the conversation. Titles include sir, madam, or hypothetical names like Sarah, Ali, etc. The respondents also opened the conversation by offering help to the interlocutor using sentences like, "May I help you?" (Situation #1)

2. Justification

Besides giving suggestions, the respondents used justification/ reasons or explanations to support their suggestion or perhaps to redress the effect of threatening the hearer's face. This strategy was preceded before and mainly preceded after direct strategies (i.e. imperative, negative imperative) and conventionalized strategy (i.e. should, need, conditional) and indirect strategy (i.e. impersonal). The respondents aim to explain why she or he believes the hearer should do or not do the action. Examples are provided as follows:

    a. Justification for imperative strategy: e.g. "Come to teach you how to run the program. <u>So later you know how to work with computers</u>" (Situation #1)
    b. Justification for negative imperative strategy:
    c. Justification for impersonal strategy: e.g. "It's better to find another place to study <u>because the library is not good at this moment</u>." (Situation #8)
    d. Justification for should: e.g. "You should remove the stain first" (Situation # 2)
    e. Justification for need: e.g. " You need to talk to the professor" (Situation #5)
    f. Justification for conditional: e.g. "If you like, I can introduce you a better book. <u>That book reads more interestingly and explains the materials better</u>." (Situation # 8)

3. Hedges
    - OMG!! Look at your sleeve! (Situation # 2)
    - Oh! Look at the stain!! (Situation # 2)

4. Mocking
    The respondents mocked the hearer in the form of expressing interrogative question or statement:
    - How much did you buy your suit?
    - Did you buy your suit with its price tag?

5. Awareness
The respondents informed the hearer of the things happened. The respondents restated the situation happened to the hearer.
    - The price tag is on your suit (Situation #3).
    - There are some inks on your sleeves (Situation #2).

6. Negative evaluation
    The respondents expressed criticism over the action occurred.
    - There were some problems in your presentation (Situation #6)
    - The way you remove the pen drive will damage the computer (Situation # 4)

7. Compliments

The respondents expressed their compliments to the interlocutor or the situations before expressing other strategies.

- Your slides were very beautiful (situation #6)
- Your presentation was awesome (situation # 6)
- This book is very good (situation #8).

5.2.2.   Non-verbal strategies

The non-verbal strategies include taking measure and opt out strategies:

1. Taking measure

The respondents mentioned that they would perform some actions without expressing a word. For example, in the situation in which the interlocutor's price tag was on his suit, the respondents said that they would remove it without saying any words. They also mentioned that in the situation where the interlocutor failed to print a paper, the respondents would press the bottom or perform the action without expressing anything.

2. Opt-out

The respondents would rather not to say anything. The major reasons are to avoid misunderstanding or interference in the situation.

6.   RESULTS

The present study intended to explore the realization of speech act of suggestions by Iranian native speakers of Farsi. The data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire in the form of Oral Discourse Completion Task and a follow-up structured interview. The results are presented in two sections: the first section presents the analyses of oral DCT and the second section explain the results of the structured interview.

6.1 Oral DCT

The data from Oral DCT were transcribed and analyzed against Martinze-Flor's (2005) coding scheme of speech act of suggestion. Table 2 represents those suggestion strategies elicited from Iranian native speakers of Farsi.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the findings show that the respondents used direct types (#57.90%) more frequently than conventionalized forms (#32.50%) and indirect types (#9.60%). Among the direct types, the respondents used imperative strategies (#42.20%) more frequently than negative imperative (#15.70%) strategies. No use of performative verbs or a noun of suggestion was found in the data elicited from the respondents. The findings show that the respondents used conditional strategy (#22.90%) more frequently than other conventionalized form types, i.e. possibility/probability strategy (#3.60%), should (#4.80) and need (#1.20).

Table 2: Suggestion strategies based on Martinez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy

Type	Strategy	Frequency	
Direct	Imperative	35	42.20%

	Negative imperative	13	15.70%	57.90%
Conventionalized forms	Possibility/Probability	3	3.60%	32.50%
	Should	4	4.80%	
	Need	1	1.20%	
	Conditional	19	22.90%	
Indirect	Impersonal	6	7.20%	9.60%
	Hints	2	2.40%	
Total		83	100%	100%

Moreover, the findings display that among indirect types, the respondents used impersonal strategy (#7.20%) more frequently than hints (#2.40). Moreover, the data analyses had given other strategy types which could not be classified under Martinez-Flor'(2005) coding scheme. These strategies which were adjunct to suggestion are classified as mitigation devices. These strategies were used to soften and mitigate the linguistics realization or patterns used in making suggestions. A summary of mitigating strategies are presented in table 3.

Type 3: Mitigation devices

Type	Mitigation		Frequency	Percentage	
Verbal	Opener	Title	10	6.30%	31.60%
		Attention getter	6	3.80%	
		Interrogative forms	34	21.5%	
	Justification /Reasons	Imperative	4	2.55%	13.35%
		Impersonal	4	2.55%	
		Negative imperative	7	4.40%	
		Conditional	4	2.55%	
		Should	1	0.65%	
		Need	1	0.65%	
	Hedges		12	7.60%	
	Mocking		8	5.10%	
	Awareness		26	16.40%	
	Negative evaluation		23	14.55%	
	Compliments		9	5.70%	
Non-verbal	Take measure		6	3.80%	5.70%
	Opt out		3	1.90%	
Total			158	100 %	

As demonstrated in table 3, the frequency pattern in the use of mitigating devices are as follows: opener (#31.60%), awareness (#16%), negative evaluation (#14.55%), justification (#13.35%), hedges (#7.60%), compliments (#5.70%), non-verbal strategies (#5.70%) and mocking (#5.10). Overall, the respondents prefer to choose verbal strategies more frequently than non-verbal strategies. The findings show that respondents used interrogative forms (#21.5%) more frequently than other opener strategies, i.e. title (#6.30%) and attention getter

(3.80%). Moreover, the frequency of justification for negative imperative (# 4.40%) is higher than other justification or reasons given for imperative (#2.55%), impersonal (#2.55%), conditional (#2.55%), should (#.65%) and need (#.65%) strategies. With regard to the use of non-verbal strategies, the respondents show more tendencies to perform an act (#3.80%) instead of ignoring the situation (#1.90%).

6.2. Interview

With regard to the findings of interview, the participants in the current study were questioned about their attitude and perception toward expressing suggestion in different situation. Results obtained provided a deep insight into the way Iranians perceive the communicative act of suggestion. The findings are as follows:

Something conspicuous in the responses of the most, if not all, participants of this study is that they regard themselves as omnipotent sources able to handle whatever problem they encounter, so in every situation they are, they seem to be inclined to offer for help. However, an overall scrutiny of the situations the respondents encountered, reveals that three factors, namely age, gender, and the level of intimacy with a given interlocutor generally forms respondents' attitudes towards making suggestions.

The prime factor influencing respondents' attitudes towards making suggestions is the interlocutor's gender. Depending on their own gender, for most, but not some, of the respondents, the gender of the person to whom they want to suggest is important. That is, female respondents feel more comfortable with female interlocutors and male respondents feel more comfortable with female interlocutors. However, it should be pointed out that for a few respondents, gender is not issue.

The next factor, however, is an interlocutor's age a given respondent wants to suggest to. Accordingly, a majority of the respondents are more comfortable with interlocutors younger than them. This is while a small minority of the respondents elucidate that they do not care about an interlocutor's age and they are more concerned with the nature of the problem their interlocutors should take care of.

Finally, the level of intimacy with an interlocutor is also a major factor playing a role in the overall attitude of the respondent's in making suggestion. While a few respondents hold that this factor does not impact the way or ease with which their interlocutor may be involve in a conversation for tackling a problem, most of the respondents believe that their level of intimacy with someone is definitely influential in adopting an appropriate strategy for making a suggestion regarding a situation.

7. DISCUSSION

The primary objectives of this study are to examine Iranian Farsi speakers' production and perception of speech act of suggestion. In terms of production, the study focused on the strategies used in realizing the speech act of suggestion. As mentioned before, the respondents of this study chose to use more direct strategies than other strategy types (i.e. conventionalized forms and indirect strategies). This is in line with Pishghadam and Sharafadini's (2011b) findings in which imperative form was the most frequently used suggestion strategy among native

speakers of Farsi. Like the previous studies, the respondents of the present study used different mitigating devices in order not to threaten the hearer's face. Moreover, the respondents used other structures such as justification to mitigate the danger of losing face.

This, therefore, oppose Allami and Naeimi's (2010) claim that people of high-context culture like Iran used more implicit strategies than explicit ones which is proved the importance of the concept of face in Iranian culture. The frequency of mitigation devices used in making a suggestion, however, shows that the respondents tend to redress the face threat of the interlocutor and keep the speaker's own face by avoiding stating a direct strategy. The results show that although the respondents tend to use more direct strategies by using imperative and negative imperative which is a face-threatening act, they tried to redress the face-threatening act of suggestion by using other strategies such as justifying the reason of using direct strategies (i.e. imperative and negative impetrative). The use of openers as a strategy to avoid jumping into offering a suggestion and as a result to threat the speakers' face can also display the importance of face among Iranians. This fact is reflected in the analyses of the interview responses. The respondents admit that their attempt is to offer suggestion without causing offense or making the hearer hurt. Therefore, where offering suggestions is needed, the suggestions are accompanied by some redressing strategies.

In terms of mitigation devices, results of this study seem to reinforce the notion stated by Brown and Levinson (1987) that people cooperate in maintaining face in interactions. Suggestions might be considered as face threatening. Thus, native speakers of Farsi employed different types mitigating patterns when making a suggestion. For example, interrogative formula was the most frequently used mitigating device. As reported in the previous studies, the use of interrogative formula was one of the most also frequently used strategies by Iranian EFL learners' realization of speech act of suggestion (Pishghadam and Sharafadini, 2011a) and native speakers of Farsi in which data were collected through written DCT (Pishghadam and Sharafadini, 2011b). This strategy, according to Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011), is an indirect suggestion strategy used by EFL learners compared to more direct strategies used by native speakers of English.

The use of direct or indirect strategies is dependent to one's community cultural values. For instance, American tend to use more direct and explicit strategies in their communication (Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, and El Bakary (2002), cited in Allami and Naeimi, 2010), "while Iranian tend to use more implicit communication style" (Pishghadam and Sharafadini, 2011b, p. 157). However, the respondents of this study used interrogative forms to open a conversation and not necessarily to offer a suggestion. As explained in the methodology earlier, the interrogative forms in this study were used to express criticism, awareness, and sarcasm, asking for reasons, or offering help.

Moreover, the findings of this study confirm Pishghadam and Sharafadini's (2011a,b) study in which the use of conditional forms, as an indirect suggestion expression, has been one of the most frequently used strategy. The low frequent use of modal confirms Pishghadam and Sharafadini's (2011b) findings and the claims that native speakers of Farsi have fewer types of modals compared to native speakers of English the reason for which urge them to utilize them less frequently while making a suggestion.

8. CONCLUSION

The present paper was an attempt to investigate the realization of speech act of suggestion by Iranian native speakers of Farsi. The present study investigated the pragmalinguistics and the sociolpragmatic knowledge of suggestions. The findings show variation in the use of suggestion strategies. The respondents also tend to use several mitigating devices to soften the face-threatening act of expressing suggestion. Results obtained in the present study deviated from the norm that has been shown by previous studies and which indicated that direct strategies are less used when making a suggestion in a high context culture such as Iran. The respondents of this study chose to use more direct strategies than other strategy types (i.e. conventionalized forms and indirect strategies). They tried to redress the face-threatening act of suggestion by using mitigation devices such as justifying the reason of using direct strategies (i.e. imperative and negative impetrative) or through the use of openers as a way to avoid jumping into offering a suggestion. This is in line with the fact that Iranian values face saving in every day interaction. With regards to the perception of suggestion, findings also indicated that there are three factors that respondents would consider when making a suggestion, i.e. age, gender, and the level of intimacy with a given interlocutor.

However, there are some drawbacks to this method of data collection (ODCT) for this type of study. The present study was based on tape-recorded oral responses to written hypothetical situations by a small number of Iranian native speakers of Farsi. Although the Oral DCT allowed the participants to respond quite freely, it lacks the actual interaction between the speakers as would happen in a normal suggestion situation. It is therefore recommended to use other types of pragmatic instruments to elicit more reliable results. Moreover, the present study focused only on one level of contextual factors (i.e. equal social status, low social distance). Further research in this area could focus on situations with variation in contextual factors (i.e. social status and social distance) as the respondents may display different politeness strategies. Furthermore, this study concentrated on pragmalinguistics aspect of speech act of suggestion. Other studies are recommended to consider the sociopragmatics aspect of speech act of suggestion by Iranian native speakers of Farsi. Other factors such as gender and age of the respondents may be taken into consideration as well.

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APPENDIX

DCT Questionnaire

Instruction: In the following situations, if you would like to say something to your classmate, please write down the exact words you have said. Thank you for your corporation.

1. You are using a computer at the computer centre on campus. Your classmate sits next to you. He would like to use the printer but fails to get it to operate because he does not know that the printer requires clicking a certain button before printing can be proceed. What would you say to him?

2. You are walking on campus. A classmate walks by. You see that the classmate has an ink stain on his sleeve. What would you say to him?

3. You are sitting in the classroom, waiting for class to begin. One of your classmates walks into the classroom and sits right in front of you. You notice that the price tag of his T-shirt has not been removed and it can be easily seen. What would you say to him?

4. Your classmate would like you to help him with an electronic file. After he copies the file from his USB flash drive to the computer, he directly unplugs the USB without using the safe removal procedure. This could damage the USB flash drive and the computer. What would you say to him?

5. A classmate is going to have an oral presentation in tomorrow's class. At the beginning of this semester, the teacher has distributed the outline format for the oral presentation. However, you find that the outline your classmate has prepared is different from the one the teacher requires. You think that it is better to follow the teacher's format. What would you say to him?

6. Your classmate is delivering his presentation in class. You are interested in the topic and you have enjoyed the presentation very much. But you notice that there is a mistake in one of his PowerPoint slides. What would you say to him?

7. You are walking down the hall on campus. You encounter a classmate. He is going to the reading room in the library. You are aware that the reading room is undergoing repairs and therefore noisy. What would you say to him?

8. In the library, a classmate would like to borrow a novel and you know there is a more interesting one. What would you say to him?