A Pragmatic Study of Requestive Speech Act by Iranian EFL Learners and Canadian Native Speakers in Hotels

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to shed light on the use of requestive speech act by Iranian nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English and Canadian native speakers (NSs) of English to find out the possible similarities and/or differences between the request realizations, and to investigate the influence of the situational variables of power, distance, context familiarity, and L1's possible influence. Participants were 4 different groups: Canadian NSs of English, Persian NNSs, Iranian hotel staff, and Iranian English learners. Data were obtained by a discourse completion test (DCT) including 12 situations and was translated into Persian to elicit the data from the Persian NNSs. Then, data were analyzed and codified based on the cross-cultural speech act realization pattern (CCSARP; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Findings indicated that the Persian culture is more direct and positive-politeness oriented, whereas the Canadian culture tends to be indirect and negative-politeness oriented. The Iranians revealed more variations in their request performance and were more sensitive to power differences. The Canadians were fixed and used conventionally indirect strategies in most situations.

Keywords: request, speech acts, cross-cultural speech act realization pattern (CCSARP)

1. Introduction

Different cultures have different values and norms that influence the way people interact with each other. To communicate successfully, people need more than linguistic competence; they need communicative competence, too

(Hymes, 1971, cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001). Knowledge of grammar and pragmatics is necessary for L2 learners, and this relates to a new domain of research in L2 pragmatics called *inter-language pragmatics* (ILP), defined by Kasper (1992) as the study of NNSs' use and learning of linguistic action patterns in an L2. It is claimed that ILP has two important aspects: language production and language comprehension. Therefore, L2 learners should be able to utter expressions considered as contextually suitable besides being aware of what constitutes proper linguistic behavior in different social contexts, which highlights the link between pragmatic competence and culture (Schaure, 2009).

One of the problems that L2 learners encounter in EFL contexts is lack of exposure to situations for communication with native speakers (NSs) that might lead to pragmatic failure. EFL learners have a limited chance to learn the sociolinguistic rules of the L2, and if they find a chance to communicate with the NSs, they may be misunderstood. Yazdani (1998) states that Iranian students have problems when producing the speech acts of request and apology. Soler (2005) showed how the L2 learners benefited from instruction to produce appropriate requests; also, he revealed the efficacy of instruction at pragmatic level. A comparison of a number of studies in cross-cultural pragmatics in Iran with other EFL countries shows that there is still a need to investigate more in this area of research in order to expand the scope of ILP research in the Persian context in order to use the findings of such research in teaching, syllabus design, and policymaking in the educational system.

Hotels are one of the places that Iranian nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English may have interactions with foreigners from other countries with different cultural backgrounds, and if they produce inappropriate speech acts, communication breakdown or misinterpretation may take place. Thomas (1983) illustrates that the majority of our misunderstanding of others is the result of our inability to understand their intentions. Speech acts have not attracted many researchers' attention in English in EFL contexts, especially in Iran. Request is one of the speech acts articulating the speaker's purpose that he or she wants the hearer to do something for him or her. This study aimed to see the degree of similarities and/or differences in the production of requests by Iranian EFL learners.

Because previous studies on requests in Iran focused on the relationship between proficiency level and directness in strategies (e.g., Eslami-Rasekh, 1993; Tabatabaee, 2008) and did not consider other aspects, the present

study aimed to investigate the Iranian L2 learners' request patterns cross-culturally in order to see the possible relationship between contextual factors and the L2 learners' request patterns and to examine the L2 learners' L1 influence on their ILP.

2. Background to the Study

With the development of communication technology and globalization of interactions, cross-cultural interactions seem to be the central issue of communication. Effective communication with people of different cultures is especially challenging because cultural values are reflected in people's speech, so speech acts are the most significant part of these interactions. Moreover, the speech act theory has a great contribution to pragmatics defined as the use of language in context and among social contexts. Hotels are one of the places that people with various cultural backgrounds encounter. Pragmatics of cross-cultural communication has a significant role because cross-cultural or intercultural pragmatics emerged from the problems of miscommunication between people coming from different areas of the world. Requests are the main concern of this study because of their high frequency of occurrence in hotel settings.

The speech act theory was put forward by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969). Speech acts are language functions that embrace a verity of functions like apologizing, requesting, complementing, and refusing. Yule (1996) defines speech acts as "actions performed via utterances" (p. 47). Searle believes that "speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands asking questions, making promises, and so on" (p. 16) He argues that speech acts should be studied because all linguistic interactions include linguistic acts, and speech acts are the basics of linguistic communication. For Searle (1979), the simplest cases of meaning are those in which the speaker utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what it says. Sometimes, the speaker's utterance meaning and sentence meaning are different.

Crystal (1991) defines pragmatics as "study of language from the point of view of language users" (p. 211), whereas Leech (1983) describes pragmatics as "communicative use of language" (p. 10). Yule (1996) describes pragmatics in terms of the relationship between forms and the users of those forms.

Trosborg (1995) defined requests as "an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he or she wants the

requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker" (p. 187). She classifies requests as an *imposetive speech acts* because they impose on the hearer. Ellis (1994) defines request strategies as "attempts on the part of speaker to get the hearer to perform or to stop performing something" (p. 167).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) compared the realization pattern of two speech acts—request and apologies—across eight languages including American English, Australian English, British English, Canadian French, German, Danish, Hebrew, and Russian to find out about the ways NSs and NNSs produce the two speech acts. They defined nine strategies in the production of requests as follows:

1. Mood derivable: The grammatical mood of the verb in the utterance marks its illocutionary force a request (e.g., "*Clean up this mess, please.*").
2. Explicit performative: The illocutionary force of the utterance is explicitly named by the speakers (e.g., "*I'm asking you not to park the car here.*").
3. Hedged performative: Utterances that embed the naming of the illocutionary force (e.g., "*I would like you to give your lecture a week earlier.*").
4. Locution derivable: The illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution (e.g., "*Madam, you will have to move your car.*").
5. Scope stating: The utterance expresses the speaker's intentions, desire, or feelings via the fact that the hearer does X (e.g., "*I really wish you would stop bothering me.*").
6. Language specific suggestory formula: The sentence contains a suggestion to X (e.g., "*Why don't you get lost?*").
7. Reference to preparatory conditions: The utterance contains reference to preparatory conditions (i.e., ability or willingness, the possibility of the act being performed) as conventionalized in any specific language (e.g., "*Could you clean up the kitchen, please?*").
8. Strong hints: Utterances contain partial reference to objects or elements needed for the implementation of the act (e.g., "*You've left this kitchen in a right mess.*").
9. Mild hints: Utterances that make no reference to the request proper but are interpretable through the context as requests (e.g., "*I'm a nun.*"—in response to a persistent boy).

Since the cross-cultural speech act realization pattern (CCSARP; Blum-Kulka, & Olshtain, 1984) project has been introduced, some researchers

have attempted to fit their investigations of various speech acts into this framework. Cedar (2006) explored Thai's compliment responding speech act, and the compliment responses of 12 American NSs were compared with 12 Thai's compliment responses. Results showed noticeable differences between English and Thai compliments.

Al-Eryani (2007) investigated refusal strategies in Yemeni with 20 EFL learners. Data were obtained through a discourse completion task (DCT) with six refusal situations. The Yemeni learners' performance was compared to the American NSs to find any deviation from the L2 norms. The refusal strategies selection by the learners revealed the occurrence of both pragmatic competence and pragmatic transfer according to their social status (i.e., higher, equal, or lower) and based on the situation itself. Similar semantic formulas were used by both American English NSs and Yemeni EFL learners.

Afghari (2007) studied the apologetic utterances of 100 Persian speakers. Data were collected through a modified version of a DCT that consisted of 10 apology situations with regards to the situational factors of social dominance and social distance. Results revealed that Persian apologies follow the same semantic formula as in other languages studied in Western countries. Furthermore, it was found that direct apology is more frequent in Persian.

Nureddeen (2008) examined the apology speech act realization patterns in 110 Sudanese Arabic graduate students. Data were generated through an Arabic version of a DCT, including 10 apology situations that considered the contextual factors of power and social distance. Findings confirmed the universality of apology strategies, whereas the participants showed tendency toward positive politeness strategies, and this affected their apologetic strategic choice.

Jalilifar (2009) investigated the request strategies used by Iranian learners of English and Australian NSs of English among 96 B.A. and M.A. Persian students and 10 NSs of English. Choosing the request situations was based on the social factors of power and social distance. Results indicated that the learners with higher proficiency displayed indirect kind of requesting, whereas the native group displayed a balanced use of this strategy.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) considered some contextual variables that may affect request behaviors like social distance and social dominance and introduced the CCSARP coding scheme for coding produced patterns,

according to which any request can be divided into three parts: head act, alerter, and adjunct to the head act.

Eslami-Rasekh (1993) compared the request patterns of Persian NSs with those of American NSs. Data were gathered from 50 NSs of American English and 52 Persian. She found out that the Persian NSs used more direct requests than the American NSs did. Also, they used more alerters, supportive moves, and internal modifiers than the American NSs did.

Salmani-Nodoushan and Allami (2011) investigated the types of supportive discourse moves used by Persian speakers. Through studying 372 respondents who answered a discourse completion test (DCT), the acts were analyzed. The results indicated that the Persian speakers used external and internal discourse moves.

The present study sought to find answers to the following questions:
• Is there any significant difference between the request strategies used by Iranian NNSs and those used by English NSs?
• Is there any relationship between contextual factors and type of request strategies?
• Is there any relationship between L1 and Iranian NNSs' request performance?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Participants consisted of four groups: 1) Group A with 40 male and female Persian NSs who were sophomores at the Isfahan University of Technology studying computer sciences, whose average age was 20.39 and their L1 was Persian; 2) Group B with 40 male and female NSs of Persian majoring in TEFL at Shahrekord University and Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, whose mean age was 23.19 and who were M.A. students at the time of the study; 3) Group C with of 40 male and female Persian hotel staff working in different hotels in Iran who were all educated and their mean age was around 23 and whose L2 proficiency was at a workable level that enabled them to interact with foreign guests in the hotels; and 4) Group D with 40 male and female Canadian English NSs who were freshmen and sophomores at Ryerson University located in Toronto, Canada. They were majoring in nutrition and deities, whose mean age was around 19 and all of whom spoke English as their L1.

3.2 Instruments

Data were obtained through DCTs. DCTs are written questionnaires consisting of a brief description followed by a dialog with a blank line, where the participant has to write down what he or she believes to be an appropriate response. Two versions of the DCT (i.e., English and Persian; see Appendixes A and B for sample items), each with 12 situations, were given to the participants to collect the data. The Persian version was the translated form of the English questionnaire, and it was checked in terms of clarity and correctness by a Persian literature professor. Two external factors of power (P) and social distance (D) were considered in the situations that varied from lower to equal and higher. The D variable refers to the degree of familiarity of the interlocutors. Therefore, they may know each other (-D), or they may be strangers (+D). The variable of P refers to the social dominancy of the interlocutors over each other. They may have equal status (=P), lower status (-P), or higher status (+P). All the 12 situations happened in the hotels. The situations were selected based on the two social factors (i.e., D and P) that were combined, and they resulted in six combinations and were presented in 12 situations. Each two situations showed one of the combinations (see Table 1):

Table 1. Power and social distance combinations

Combination	P	D	Situations
A	-	-	asking a friend for paying in cash
			asking an older brother to close the window
B	-	+	asking a hotel manager for interview
			asking a manager to go home earlier
C	+	-	asking some workers to do some additional jobs
			asking some workers to come earlier
D	=	-	asking a colleague to stop nagging
			asking a friend to lend you money
E	+	+	asking a waiter for a menu
			asking a housekeeper for extra shampoo
F	=	+	asking a guest to turn down the music
			asking a guest for a pen

3.3 Procedure

Prior to the administration of the DCT, a pilot study was conducted. After piloting, the Persian version of the DCT was administered to Group A in order to minimize the influence of executing the DCT to one group twice and to increase the reliability of their answers; moreover, the Persian data were evaluated as the criterion to investigate the influence of their L1. Then, Group B (i.e., the NSs of Persian) completed the English version of the DCT first. Also, Group C (i.e., the hotel staff) was asked to complete the English and the Persian versions of the DCT to see the influence of the context familiarity on the production of request strategies and to trace the influence of their L1, as well. The English version was sent to Canada via postal package, and someone who was a student in Ryerson University distributed the English version of the questionnaire to the Canadian NSs. They were requested to complete the English version, and their responses were considered as a baseline to compare with the other groups of responses and to see whether there was any deviation or not.

3.3.1 Coding scheme

The coding schemes were primarily based on the previous taxonomy developed by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) in the CCSARP to recognize the participants' request strategies, based on which request utterances are divided into three constituents: alerter, head act, and supportive move. For a request, there are three levels of directness as follows:

1. Direct: A request is coded as a directive if its meaning is directly determinable from its linguistic content alone.
2. Conventionally Indirect: An utterance is perceived as conventionally indirect if its meaning is interpreted through its linguistics content in relation to contextual cues.
3. Non-conventionally Indirect: A request is described as non-conventionally indirect if its illocutionary force relies on contextual inferences.

Also, for the head act, nine strategies from the most level of directness to the most level of indirectness are considered as below:

- Direct Strategies
    1. Mood Derivable
    2. Explicit Performative
    3. Hedged Performative
    4. Locution Derivable

5.Want Statement
•Conventional Indirect Strategies
6.Suggestory Formula
7.Query Preparatory
•Nonconventional Indirect Strategies
8.Strong Hint
9.Mild Hint
The participants' responses were coded in this way, for example:
•*Sam, could you lend me some money? I want to buy a drink.*
  A   B   C
(alerter)   (head act) (supportive move/adjunct to the head act)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results of head act strategies

To address the first question, the data from the four groups were codified and analyzed from three facets of alerter, head act, and supportive moves, and the participants' head act strategy use was analyzed in three dimensions: First, the overall strategy use in all 12 situations by the participants in each group was compared. The second dimension examining the participants' use of head act strategy in situations with different combinations of social variables focused on the influence of social factors on the head act strategy. Third, it compared each strategy by all the groups in each combination. Thus, the frequency of occurrence and percentage of each strategy was computed and is included in Table 2.

To determine the significance of the differences among the groups, chi-square was computed. Because the chi-square value exceeded the critical value, it indicated a considerable significance of difference ($x2 = 429.567$, $p < 0.05$, $df = 24$). Because the chi-square showed a statistically significant difference, *SR* was calculated that showed the difference arose from four strategies out of the nine head act strategies because their *SR* value was more than 2.00. As seen in Table 2, mood derivable, obligation, want statement, and query preparatory strategies were the main sources of difference in head act strategies among the four groups because their *SR* value was greater than 2.00.

As shown in Table 2 in Group A, the most frequently used strategy was the mood derivable that was the most direct strategy in the continuum of directness level of request strategies, whereas the query preparatory was the

favorite strategy chosen by Group D. Because these two groups were the baseline for the inferential analysis of the data, Groups C and B were compared with Groups A and D:

Table 2. Distribution of head act strategies

Strategies		A	B	C	D	Total
			Groups			
Mood	F^*	262	22	214	46	545
	P^{**}	53.2%	8.2 %	44.7%	9.7%	31.7%
	SR	8.5	-6.9	5.0	-8.5	
Performative	F	0	1	2	3	6
	P	0%	4%	4%	6%	. 3%
	SR	-1.3	1	.3	1.0	
Hedge	F	1	13	6	5	25
	P	2%	4.8%	1.3%	1.1%	1.5%
	SR	-2.3	4.6	-.4	-.7	
Obligation	F	5	24	10	37	76
	P	1.0%	8.9%	2.1%	7.8%	4.4%
	SR	-3.6	3.5	-2.4	3.5	
Want Statement	F	8	41	5	43	97
	P	1.6%	15.2%	1.0%	9.1%	5.6%
	SR	-3.8	6.6	-4.2	3.1	
Suggestory	F	3	3	10	15	
	P	9.7%	9.7%	32.3%	48.4%	
	SR	-2.0	-.8	.5	2.2	
Query	F	196	151	214	306	867
	P	39.7%	56.1%	44.7%	64.4%	50.5%
	SR	-3.4	1.3	-1.8	4.3	
Strong Hint	F	18	14	18	17	67
	P	3.6%	5.2%	3.8%	3.6%	3.9%
	SR	-34	1.1	-.2	-.4	
Mild Hint	F	0	0	0	3	3
	P	.0%	.0%	.0%	.6%	2%
	SR	-.9	- .7	-.9	2.4	
	Total	494	269	479	475	1717
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$^*F$ = Frequency
$^{**}P$ = Percentage

4.2 Distribution of head act strategies

To explore whether there was a significant relationship between type of request strategies and the six combinations of situations, Chi-squares were employed for each combination:

4.2.1 Combination A

In Combination A, the requestee requests a familiar person with greater P (-P, -D). Table 3 indicates that the mood derivable was the favorite strategy used by Group B, and the query preparatory was the frequent strategy used by Group D, whereas Group B showed more tendencies to use the mood derivable strategy than the other groups. Group C had the tendency of using the preparatory strategy more than Groups A and B did.

To calculate the difference among the groups, Chi-square was employed, based on which there was a statistically significant difference among the four groups in Combination A ($x2 = 76.961$, $df = 15$, $p = .000$); the Chi-square value was more than the critical value (24.995) that was evidence for a significant difference among the groups. To find out which strategies were responsible for the difference, *SR* was employed for each strategy. Results revealed that mood, strong hint, obligation, and suggestory were the strategies that were the main contributors to the difference (see Table 3):

Table 3. Frequency/percentage of head act strategies in combination A

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Mood	F^*	35	40	27	9	111
	P^{**}	43.2%	48.2%	33.8%	11.3%	34.3%
	SR	1.4	2.2	-.1	-3.5	
Hedge	F	0	2	0	0	2
	P	.0%	2.4%	.0%	.0%	.6%
	SR	-.7	2.1	-.7	-.7	
Obligation	F	2	7	2	15	26
	P	2.5%	8.4%	2.5%	18.8%	8.0%
	SR	-1.8	.1	-1.7	3.4	
Query	F	36	24	46	42	148
	P	44.4%	28.9%	57.5%	52.5%	45.7%
	SR	-.2	-2.3	1.6	.9	
Strong Hint	F	8	10	5	14	37
	P	9.9%	12.0%	6.3%	17.5%	11.4%
	SR	-.4	.2	-1.4	1.6	
	Total	81	83	80	80	324
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$^*F$ = Frequency $^{**}P$ = Percentage   Critical value = 7.814, $df = 3$

4.2.2 Combination B

Combination B consisted of situations in which a requestee requests an unknown person with greater P (+D, -P). By resorting to Chi-square, it was revealed that there was a significant difference among all the groups ($x2 = 99.922$, $df = 18$, $p = .000$). Thus, the *SR* was applied, and it was found that mood, want statement, and query preparatory strategies were the origin of the difference because they obtained *SR*s that exceeded the absolute value (i.e., 2.00):

Table 4. Frequency/percentage of head act strategies in combination B

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Mood	F^*	34	40	27	0	101
	P^{**}	42.5%	51.3%	36.5%	0.%	32.4%
	SR	1.6	2.9	.6	-5.1	
Performative	F	0	2	0	0	2
	P	.0%	2.6%	.0%	.0%	.6%
	SR	-.7	2.1	-.7	-.7	
Hedge	F	1	4	0	0	19
	P	1.3%	5.1%	.0%	.0%	6.1%
	SR	-2	2.5	-1.1	-1.1	
Want Statement	F	1	6	32	14	23
	P	1.3%	7.7	43.2%	17.5%	7.4%
	SR	-2.0	.1	-.6	3.3	
Query	F	41	23	32	55	151
	P	51.3%	29.5%	43.2%	68.8%	48.4%
	SR	.4	-2.4	-.6	2.6	
Strong Hint	F	1	0	10	0	11
	P	1.3%	.0%	13.5%	.0%	3.5%
	SR	-.1.1	-1.7	-4.6	1.7	
	Total	80	78	74	80	312
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$^*F$ = Frequency
$^*P$ = Percentage

4.2.3 Combination C

This combination gathered data from (+P, -D) situations. Here, Group A selected the most direct strategy (i.e., mood), whereas Group D chose the query preparatory. Group C used the direct strategy, and Group B used the mood strategy more; Group D employed the least direct strategy from which it could be concluded that they had completely different language and cultural norms. In line with the Chi-square, a statistically significant difference was found among the four groups ($x2 = 109.614$, $df = 21$, $p < .05$). Consequently, SRs were calculated, and it was specified that mood, want statement, and query had SRs value greater than the absolute value (i.e., 2.00):

Table 5. Frequency/percentage of head act strategies in combination C

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Mood	F^*	53	30	43	6	132
		67.9%	38.5%	53.8%	7.5%	41.8%
	P^{**}	3.6	-.5	1.7	-4.7	
	SR					
Performative	F	0	1	0	0	1
	P	.0%	1.3%	.0%	.0%	.3%
	SR	-.5	1.5	-.5	-.5	
Hedge	F	0	1	5	5	11
	P	0%	17.9%	6.3%	.6.3%	3.5%
	SR	-1.6	-1.0	1.3	1.3	
Obligation	F	5	14	3	11	33
	P	6.4%	17.9%	3.8%	113.8%	10.4%
	SR	-1.1	2.1	-1.9	-.9	
Want Statement	F	5	19	5	26	55
	P	6.4%	24.4%	6.3%	32.5%	17.4%
	SR	-2.3	1.5	-2.4	3.2	
Suggestory	F	3	0	0	0	3
	P	3.8%	0%	0%	0%	.9%
	SR	2.6	-.9	-.9%	-.9	
Query	F	9	13	21	31	74
	P	11.5%	16.7%	26.3%	38.8%	23.4%
	SR	-2.2	-1.2	.5	.9	
Strong Hint	F	3	0	3	1	7
	P	3.8%	.0%	3.8%	1.3%	2.2%
	SR	1.0	-1.3	.9	-.6	
	Total	78	78	80	80	316
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$^*F$ = Frequency $^{**}P$ = Percentage

4.2.4 Combination D

In this combination, the data came from the situations that included requests to a known person with equal P as the requester. Table 6 shows that Group A preferred the direct strategy of mood, and Group D applied the conventionally indirect strategy of query preparatory more than the other groups did. Group B opted for the mood strategy, but Group C chose the query preparatory (see Table 6).

Chi-square was administered, and it was determined that there was a significant difference among the groups in this combination ($x2 = 102.976$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$). Thus, by comparing of the observed Chi-square with the critical value (i.e., 32.670), the evidence for the significance of differences was provided. Result of the *SR* in Table 6 show that the mood and suggestory strategies had a *SR* value superior to the absolute value, so they were responsible for the chi-square difference:

Table 6. Frequency/percentage of head act strategies in combination D

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Mood	F^*	49	47	26	14	136
		613%	56.6%	32.5%	17.5%	42.1%
	P^{**}	2.6	2.0	-1.3	-3.4	
	SR					
Performative	*F*	0	3	0	0	3
	P	.0%	3.6%	.0%	.0%	.9%
	SR	-.9	2.5	-.9	-.9	
Hedge	*F*	0	3	0	0	3
	P	0%	3.6%	0%	0.%	.9%
	SR	-.9	2.5	-.9	-.9	
Obligation	*F*	1	0	0	0	1
	P	1.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.3%
	SR	1.5	-.5	-.5	-.5	
Want Statement	*F*	0	0	0	3	3
	P	.0%	0%	0%	3.8%	.9%
	SR	-.9	-.9	-.9	2.6	
Suggestory	*F*	0	3	2	15	20
	P	.0%	3.6%	2.5%	18.8%	6.2%
	SR	-2.2	-.9	-1.3	4.5	

Query	F	28	26	46	48	148
	P	35.0%	31.3%	57.5%	60.5%	45.8%
	SR	-1.4	-2.0	-1.5	1.9	
Strong Hint	F	2	1	6	0	9
	P	2.5%	1.2%	7.5%	.0%	2.8%
	SR	-.2	-.9	2.5	-.1.5	
	Total	80	83	80	80	323
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*F = Frequency
**P = Percentage

4.2.5 Combination E

The informants' responses in (+P, +D) situations were obtained (see Table 7). The most favorite strategy performed by Group A was mood, but Group D preferred to behave indirectly and used the query preparatory noticeably more than the other groups did. Group C showed a performance strikingly similar to Group A, but Group B showed variation and chose the mood and the query preparatory strategies in an equal way. The Chi-square provided support for a statically significant difference among the groups ($x2 = 132.271$, $df = 15$, $p < .05$). By calculating SR, it came to light that the major contributors to the chi-square significance were the mood and the query strategies because their SR value was more than the absolute value (i.e., 2:00):

Table 7. Frequency/percentage of head act strategies in combination E

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Mood	F^*	59	29	43	8	142
	P^{**}	75.6%	36.3%	57.5%	11.0%	45.7%
	SR	3.9	-1.2	1.6	- 4.4	
Performative	F	0	0	0	3	3
	P	.0%	0. %	.0 %	4.1%	1.0 %
	SR	-.9	2.1	-. 9%	2.7	
Hedge	F	0	1	0	0	1
	P	0 %	1.3%	.0%	.0%	.3%
	SR	-.5	1.5	--.5	-.5	

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Want Statement	*F*	0	16	0	0	16
	P	. 0%	20.0%	.0%	.0%	5.1%
	SR	-2.0	.5.9	-.2.0	-1.9	
Query	*F*	19	34	34	60	147
	P	24.4%	42.5%	42.5%	82.2	47.3%
	SR	-2.9	-.6	-.6	4.3	
Strong Hint	*F*	0	0	0	2	2
	P	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.7%	.6%
	SR	-.7	-.7	-.7	2.2	
		80	78	74	80	311
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[*]*F* = Frequency
[**]*P* = Percentage

4.2.6 Combination F

Combination F includes the requests from an unknown person with equal P (=P, +D). As in Table 8, it could be inferred that all the groups, for performing their requests in such a situation, just relied on direct (i.e., mood) or the conventionally indirect (i.e., query preparatory) strategies, and only six nonconventionally indirect (i.e., strong hint) strategies were produced in this situation. The chi-square showed a significant difference among the groups because the value of the Chi-square ($x2 = 54.150$, $df = 24.995$, $p < .05$) was greater than the critical value. The *SR* examined the categories of the request strategies and recognized mood and query as the major contributors to the Chi-square significance because their *SR* went beyond the absolute value:

Table 8. Frequency/percentage of head act strategies in combination F

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Mood	*F*[*]	35	43	35	9	122
	P[**]	43.8%	53.8%	43.8%	11.3%	38.1%
	SR	.8	-2.3	.8	- 3.9	
Performative	*F*	0	1	0	0	1
	P	.0%	1.3 %	.0 %	.0 %	.3 %
	SR	-.5	1.5	-. 5	-. 5	

Strategies		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Hedge	F	0	1	0	0	1
	P	0 %	1.3%	.0%	.0%	.3%
	SR	-.5	1.5	--.5	-.5	
Want Statement	F	1	1	0	0	2
	P	1.3%	1.3%	.0%	.0%	.6%
	SR	.7	.7	-.7	-.7	
Query	F	41	31	40	71	183
	P	51.3%	38.8%	50.0%	88.8%	57.2%
	SR	-.7	-2.2	-.9	3.7	
Strong Hint	F	3	3	5	0	11
	P	3.8%	3.8%	6.3%	0.%	3.4%
	SR	.2	.2	1.4	-1.7	
	Total	80	80	80	80	320
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[*]F = Frequency
[**]P = Percentage

4.3 Distribution of alerters and supportive moves

Besides head acts, there are two other elements in a request: supportive moves and alerters. Alerters, or attention getters, are address terms that function to draw the attention of the hearer, and they occur at the initial of utterance, and supportive moves precede or follow the head act and modify its impact on the request by mitigating or aggravating it (Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989). While analyzing the data, head acts, alerters, and supportive moves were isolated, and their frequencies and percentages were computed and are shown in Table 9. Results show that Group D used alerters most frequently, and they used the least frequency of supportive moves. Group A used supportive moves more frequently than the other three groups did. Group B had a performance similar to Group A, and Group C used alerters less than the other groups did, but they used supportive moves more than Group D and less than Groups A and B did.

The Chi-square showed that a significant difference was found across the groups in using alerters and supportive moves ($x2$ = 37.568, df = 3, $p <$ .05, critical value = 7.814), and the computation of the SR indicated that alerters and supportive moves for Groups C and D were greater than the absolute value. The conclusion is that the significant difference among the groups emanated from these two groups:

Table 9. Alerters and supportive moves distribution

Items		Groups				
		A	B	C	D	Total
Alerters	F^*	166	184	131	203	684
		45%	37.9%	33.6%	49.2%	38.7%
	P^{**}	-1.5	-.3	-1.6	3.4	
	SR					
Supportive	F	315	301	259	210	1085
Moves	P	65.5%	62.1%	66.4%	50.8%	61.3%
	SR	1.2	.2	1.3	- 2.7	
	Total	481	485	390	413	1769
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$^*F$ = Frequency
$^{**}P$ = Percentage

Blum-Kulka (1984) found that the conventionally indirect strategies are universal. It is claimed that the negative politeness strategy, or the indirect strategy, is related to politeness, and the more the degree of indirectness, the more polite the act is considered to be (Brown & Levinson, 1987). From the foregoing illustrations, it seems that Persian speakers are assumed to be impolite, but Blum-Kulka (1997) illustrated that there is a cultural diversity in interactional style. Although indirectness is the conventional polite behavior in a specific culture, directness is an accepted norm in the similar situation in another culture. Therefore, in some cultures like Mediterranean and Slavic that highlight involvement and cordiality, directness is not possibly impolite. Therefore, Blum-Kulka concluded that, based on these examples, Brown and Levinson's scale of politeness is not necessarily applicable. Accordingly, the Iranian and Canadian cultures are asymmetrical cultures, and it is normal to have different choices of request strategies. Nine strategies are specified for requests that can be scaled for directness level in a continuum as shown in Figure 1:

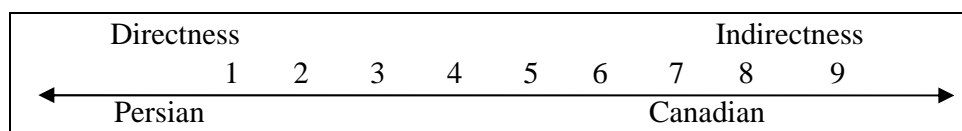| Directness								Indirectness	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
← Persian						Canadian			→

Figure 1. Directness scale.

To deepen understanding of the abovementioned cultural differences, the Iranian basic schemas should be stated as, "Persian is a language with a very simple grammatical structure and rich set of stylistic variables that help individuals to covey accounts of their feelings. An individual has many choices in speaking that must be determined on 'pragmatic' grounds" (Beeman, 1986, p. 10).

Hofstede (2001) proposed cultural dimensions and developed collectivism versus individualism index values (IDV) for the experiential study, and the index shows that Iran and Canada stand in opposite positions. Iran's IDV was estimated (i.e., 41) that indicates that Iran is a collectivist society that fosters in-group relationships and an individual relates to a larger group and is inclined to be group-oriented, whereas Canadians are individualistic and view individuals as independent of others. As a result, the difference on group relatedness between individualist and collectivist cultures forces communication patterns, and there are not many differences in the ways of speaking to others in individualist cultures, whereas collectivist cultures put more emphasis on P differences (Fukushima, 2000). Therefore, being polite in a collectivist society like Iran is to uphold accord with others and not to look for individuals' goals.

Subsequent to comparison of Group C with Groups A and D, it was understood that Group C realized their requests extremely similar to Group A, rather than Group D. Although they were familiar with the setting of a hotel, no difference was found in their request utterances except in the use of alerters less than the other three groups. It appears that the hotel staff used the direct request like Group A that can be explained by the notion of transferability. Inter-language and cross-cultural pragmatic studies have provided sufficient evidence that L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge significantly influences their comprehension and production of pragmatic performance in an L2 (Kasper, 1992; Takahashi, 1996).

Kasper (1992) illustrates pragma-linguistic transfer as "the process whereby the illocutionary force or politeness value assigned to a particular linguistic material in native language influences learners' perception and production of form-function mappings in target language" (p. 209). Another justification for the tendency to follow L1 patterns in uttering requests may refer to pragmatic transfer. It seems that lack of linguistic repertoire is one of the reasons for transfer, or their deficient pragmatic knowledge may lead to pragmatic transfer from their L1. Ensuing Kasper's model of pragmatic transfer, the frequencies that are similar among the L1 group, the L2 group,

and the inter-language group are considered as positive transfer and those frequencies that are analogous between the inter-language group versus the L1 group but dissimilar between the inter-language group versus the L2 group and the L1 group versus the L2 group are perceived as a result of negative transfer.

The second question examined the influence of the contextual variables like D and P on Iranian L1 and Canadian L1 and Iranian inter-language production of requests. Hudson, Detmer, and Brown (1995) state that the P and D variables are culturally sensitive that can be experienced to trace variation due to context because L2 learners may have various perceptions of relative P rather than NSs. In Combination, Groups A and B manifested parallel behavior and used more direct versus indirect.

Results documented the influence of situational variables on the articulation of the requests across the groups. Based on the findings in Combination A, the possible interpretation for the variation among the groups is negative pragmatic transfer or the influence of L1 on Group B's request performance as they realized a behavior different from the L2 and similar to their L1. For Group C, the contextual familiarity of the hotel staff affected their pragmatic behavior because they worked in a hotel and knew the hierarchical relationship between the costumers and the staff. Beeman (1986) states that hierarchical segregation looks like a universal attribute of human life, but in some societies like Japan and India, it receives more significance. Additionally, Iran is among the few societies that consider status parameter not only to be more influential on sociological relations but also as a typical cultural feature. So, hierarchy and intimacy are two palpable characteristics of Iranian interactions.

Something remarkable in Group C was utilizing of the strong hint strategy that is the non-conventionally indirect strategy in some responses that may reflect an aspect of the Iranian culture, namely *rudarbaayesti* (translation "*standing on ceremony*") as putting constraint on one's desires and wishes in front of others (Sahragard, 2003). The requester's intention should be inferred from the context, and the strong hints strategies are context-bound. Therefore, for their comprehension, both interlocutors should have a shared knowledge, and from among the four groups, Group C uttered the highest frequency of the strong hints strategy in all combinations except for Combination E. The possible reason can be explained as the influence of context. Because the staff in a hotel should behave politely with the guests, they may express their requests indirectly to minimize the FTAs

of their requests. Another possible reason is transfer of that aspect of their L1 culture (i.e., *rudarbaayesti*). As Trosborg (1995) claims, "strong hints strategy in inter-language can be subcategorized into two clusters: The first group results from inadequate command of the L2, and the second group relates to those in which transparency is diminished deliberately in order to mitigate the request" (p. 192).

Findings reveal that pragmatic transfer occurred in the request responses by Group C and, also, in some of the strategies for Group B, occurrence of pragmatic transfer was evident, especially in the predominant use of direct strategies. Because the frequencies of the alerter and the supportive moves for these groups were extremely near to those of Group A, the conclusion is that pragmatic transfer had happened. In many occasions, Groups C's and B's performance differed from that of Group D. It was found that they transferred their L1 norms in uttering L2 requests, and their request realization patterns looked like those of the Persian language.

As to the third question, first, regarding Group B's utilizing of direct strategies, they apparently followed Group D's in the use of direct request strategies (i.e., Group A: 53.2%, Group B: 8.2%, Group C: 44.7%, Group D: 9.7%), but in using conventionally indirect strategies, Group B still showed much similarity to Group A in choice of indirectness level (i.e., Group A: 39.7%, Group B: 56.1%, Group C: 44.7%, Group D: 64.4%) that documented the existence of pragmatic transfer. Group C in the use of direct strategies did not go after Group D (i.e., Group A: 53.2%, Group B: 8.2%, Group C: 44.7%, Group D: 9.7%) that proved the occurrence of pragmatic transfer.

Second, the frequencies of the supportive moves by Groups B and C were different from those of Group D but similar to those of Group A (i.e., Group A: 65.5%, Group B: 62.1%, Group C: 66.4%, Group D: 50.8%) and showed there was pragmatic transfer of supportive moves to L2 realizations of requests. The results confirm Eslami-Rasekh's (1993) findings that Iranian speakers use more supportive moves to soften the force of a request, though their request utterances are lengthier than those of Americans.

Third, in case of alerters, evidence of pragmatic transfer was found in Groups B and C, whose frequencies were similar to Group A and different from Group D (i.e., Group A: 34.5%, Group B: 37.9%, Group C: 33.6%, Group D: 49.2%). According to Aliakbari and Toni (2008), the Persian address terms are gender-sensitive, relatively formal, culturally, socially, and politically loaded. Therefore, the probable reason for alerters use less

than English in the Persian requests ties closely to the situational variable of P and D, and it can be attributed to the distinctive features of the Persian social structure and cultural values attached to it.

5. Conclusion

This study focused on requests as a means to investigate pragmatic transfer from Persian to English by Persian L2 learners and to realize the interplay between request strategies and the situational variables of P and D. Also, it aimed at providing some insights into the request behavior of Persian and English to determine possible similarities and/or differences. An analysis was made on four groups with regard to their performance on requests in a DCT with 12 situations.

Results show that the Persian culture is more direct and positive politeness-oriented, whereas the Canadian culture tends to be indirect and negative politeness-oriented. Findings show that the norms of communication in the two cultures are different, which is due to different cultural orientations. These differences in communication norms are in consonance with the Canadian's high (i.e., 80) and the Iranian's low (i.e., 41) scores along the individualism scale. Iran is a collectivist society, but Canada is an individualist society, so people from these two cultural contexts have their own shared cultural values and communication preferences. The Iranians displayed more variations in their request performance, and they were more sensitive to P differences. The Canadians were fixed and used conventionally indirect strategies in most situations. Results indicate that requests production is under the influence of cultural orientation, contextual factor, and contextual familiarity of interlocutors.

The Persian L1 speakers tended to be direct because solidarity politeness and intimacy could be expressed through explicitness and redressing factors in requests. Accordingly, the Persian requests were lengthier than the English ones because they used supportive moves more to soften the face-threatening aspect of the requests. Findings indicate that indirectness does not guarantee politeness, and that each culture has its own perception of politeness. So, the Persian L1 speakers manifested directness to show closeness. Also, the L2 learners followed their L2 culture norms and uttered more indirect requests and showed pragmatic competence development in overall request strategies other than in realizing request strategies. With respect to situational variables, they transferred their L1 pragmatic knowledge in their inter-language of requests, but the hotel staff

followed their L1 pragmatic conventions in their L2 realization. Therefore, socio-pragmatic transfer apparently occurred.

One facet of Persian politeness is called *rudarbaayesti* manifest in the requests of the hotel staff and the Persian NSs through the use of strong hints. It was used more frequently with familiar interlocutors or those who were in equal status, and it was illustrated that strong hints are context-dependent, so they were interpreted based on the contextual clues. For this reason, the application of strong hints is in harmony with the claim by Fukushima (2000) that collectivist cultures are high context communication in which little has to be said or written as most of the information is either in physical environment or within the person.

In terms of the influence of contextual variables, results showed the Canadian were steady and did not display any variation in relation to the variables of P and D. Although the Persian NSs were sensitive to these variables and culture, they expressed their requests differently to in-group or out-group members. As for the L2 learners, findings reveal the occurrence of negative pragmatic transfer and socio-pragmatic transfer of their L1 politeness system. Also, it was found that the hotel staff variation in the request strategies preference was under the influence of familiarity to the hotel context, and in some cases, the occurrence of negative pragmatic transfer was evidenced and, the hotel staffs were also aware of the hierarchical relationship in hotels. In sum, results show that L2 learners should not limit their L2 competence to linguistic competence and should boost the communicative competence, too. Therefore, L2 learners require having knowledge of an L2 culture and cultural conventions.

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Appendix A
English DCT

1. You are trying to study in your room at a hotel and you hear loud music coming from another guest's room. You don't know the guest, but you decide to tell him/her to turn the music down. What would you say?

YOU:

…………………………………………………………………………...

Appendix B
Persian DCT

۱. شما در حال مطالعه در اتاقتان در هتل هستید و صدای موزیک بلند مهمان اتاق کناری برای شما ایجاد مزاحمت کرده است. مهمان را نمی شناسید ولی تصمیم می گیرید که از او بخواهید صدای موزیک را کم کند. چگونه درخواست خود را بیان می کنید؟

شما: ....