

## **Supportive discourse moves in Persian requests**

Mohammad Ali Salmani Nodoushan, Iran Encyclopedia Compiling Foundation  
Hamid Allami, Yazd University, Iran

This paper reports the findings of a study designed to investigate the types of supportive discourse moves employed by Persian speakers in their Requestive Speech Acts. 372 respondents took a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) with six scenarios ranging from formal to informal degrees of Perceived Situational Seriousness, and returned 2232 Requestive Speech Acts (RSAs). The acts were then analyzed according to models proposed by Færch and Kasper's (1989), Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), and Scollon and Scollon (2001). Results, after analysis of the data, indicated that Persian speakers use external and internal discourse moves to negotiate face in RSAs. It was concluded that Perceived Situational Seriousness was the determining factor in the choice of the type and number of discourse moves in a given RSA.

**Keywords:** Persian Requests; Perceived Situational Seriousness; Requestive Speech Acts; Discourse Moves.

### **1. Introduction**

The seminal work of Brown and Levinson (1987) on "politeness" and its relation to "indirectness" and "face" resulted in an upsurge of interest in conversational analysis. Since then, many linguists have sought to fathom the depths of communicative events and speech acts to uncover their unspoken and tacit purposes; speech acts were classified to include directives, commissives, expressives, assertives and declaratives. Requests, as a subcategory of directives, were found to be intrinsically face threatening in that they are often intended to threaten the addressee's negative 'face want' because negative face is the want of every important adult individual that his actions be unimpeded by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Requests are pre-events in that they can initiate the negotiation of face during a conversational interaction (Félix-Brasdefer, 2005).

A number of studies have thus far ventured to describe the speech act of requesting. Blum-Kulka, Færch and Kasper (1989), House and Kasper (1989), Marquez Reiter (2000), Sifianou (1999), Safont (2005), and Trosborg (1995) among others, have proposed an almost similar model for the discourse moves involved in Requestive Speech Acts (RSAs). A request, in their models,

is a speech act that includes an obligatory element of the core request (i.e., a Head Act (HA)), and one or more optional peripheral elements that work to modify the force of the request head act. The head act is the main part of the request act and can stand on its own. The peripheral elements, on the other hand, are additional items that can mitigate or aggravate the force of the request head act without changing its propositional content. These peripheral elements can be internal or external, or to use Færch and Kasper's terms: (a) External Supportive Moves (ESM), and (b) Internal Supportive Moves (ISM). Internal moves, where present, are to be found inside the utterance that carries the head act whereas external moves are placed, often in separate collocative utterances, on either side of the utterance carrying the request head act (i.e., can be pre-posed or post-posed). An in-depth discussion of internal/external modifications of request head acts has been presented in chapter one of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), and the interested reader is motivated to see that chapter.

As such, the present study was designed to investigate the types of supportive discourse moves which are employed by Persian native speakers in their performing Requestive Speech Acts.

## **2. Background**

### **2. 1. Defining requests**

A thorough review of the literature on "Requestive Speech Acts (RSA)" reveals that the term "request" finds occasion in the contexts of "politeness" and "face" (Brown & Levinson, 1987). While acknowledging that their notion of face is derived from that of Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1987) view face as a powerful constraint that controls the way people interact verbally. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is the manifestation, through speech, of respect for another individual's face. We all evaluate the people to whom we talk partly on the basis of their ability to interact verbally. That is, we develop a feeling about others partly based on how they speak. The overall impression (of themselves) that people leave in us can be called their face (cf. Wolfson, 1989).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), two aspects of people's feelings are involved in face: (1) negative face is the desire of the individual not to be imposed on (i.e., freedom from imposition), and (2) positive face is the desire of the individual to be liked or approved of (i.e., freedom of action). An example of positive politeness is our positive evaluation of our interlocutor's accomplishments, appearance, etc. Positive politeness also includes hints and signals that show the listener he or she is considered a friend and member of the speaker's "in-group." This may be accomplished through such strategies as giving gifts, showing interest in the other, extending invitations towards

the other, etc. Negative politeness, however, involves a show of deference. The speaker, through negative politeness, usually tries to show the listener that he does not wish to disturb or to interfere with the other's freedom. Apologies, indirect requests, and other forms of remedial work usually appear in this category.

Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced. They noticed that three variables determine the distribution of face among interlocutors: (1) solidarity or the horizontal social distance between participants (D), (2) power relation or the vertical social distance (P), and (3) the weightiness of the imposition negotiated by interlocutors (R).

Social distance is concerned with the degree of familiarity between speakers (S) and hearers (H). Social distance can influence the use of modification elements in that strange interlocutors are likely to employ more of them than those who know each other quite well. According to Nikula (1996, 27), "an act which is likely to be non-risky among friends and can thus be performed directly (e.g., Request for a cigarette) may be much more risky among strangers and require use of modifying devices and other politeness strategies to be successfully accomplished."

Power simply refers to the relative power of the speaker over the hearer. Thus, people with lower power are apt to use more modification elements when making requests to those with higher power in order to mitigate the impositive force of their requests.

The third factor (i.e., the weightiness of imposition) refers to the type of imposition the speaker exerts on his addressee. It is concerned with the size of the request. A great request requires use of modification elements to soften the imposition whereas a small request may not even need modification devices. Impositions are ranked on the basis of the expenditure of services (including provision of time) and of goods (non-material goods like information, expression of regard and other payments included) (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Brown and Levinson (1987) contend that any speech act has the potential of threatening either the face of the speaker or that of the hearer. They believe that conversation is much more concerned with observing politeness expectations designed to ensure the redress of face than with the exchange of information. They have proposed a direct relationship between social distance and politeness in such a way as to indicate that an increase in social distance will bring about an increase in the degree of politeness and vice versa.

It should be noted that the variables identified by Brown and Levinson (1987) were later subjected to criticism by Fraser (1990) and Spencer-Oatey (1996). In an attempt to modify and organize these variables, Scollon and Scollon (2001) maintained that there are three types of politeness system to be observed in different contexts. The use of these systems, which they call the deference politeness system, the solidarity politeness system, and the hierarchical politeness system, depends not only on whether there is a power difference but also on the distance between participants. As such, they proposed a politeness system with three degrees of Perceived Situational Seriousness (PSS); they used the term "hierarchy" to refer to Brown and Levinson's "Power," and the term "deference" to refer to their "distance." Instead of using the term "imposition," Scollon and Scollon (2001) noticed that "social closeness" or "solidarity" could affect speakers' perception of "size of imposition." As such, they used the term "solidarity" to signify Brown and Levinson's "size of imposition." Their model of politeness is, therefore, based on three factors: (a) hierarchy, (b) deference, and (c) solidarity. Scollon and Scollon's model of Perceived Situational Seriousness (or politeness systems) can be summarized as this:

<b>Perceived Situational Seriousness (PSS)</b>	<b>Power</b>	<b>Distance</b>
Hierarchical Politeness System (HPS)	+	+
Deferential Politeness System (DPS)	-	+
Solidarity Politeness System (SPS)	-	-

In HPS one person is in a subordinate position and the other in a superordinate position (*e.g.*, boss vs. employee); in DPS both interlocutors are of equal social status but share a distant relationship (*e.g.*, classmates); in SPS both interlocutors are of equal social status and their relationship is close (*e.g.*, roommates).

The studies reviewed hitherto indicate that the notion of politeness finds meaning when it is studied in the context of face-threatening acts (or FTAs) which include positive and negative ones. In other words, some FTAs threaten negative face while some others threaten positive face. The former includes directives such as commands, requests, advice, invitations, etc. The latter, on the other hand, includes criticisms, insults, disagreements, and corrections.

By the same token, a request is a directive speech act that counts as an attempt to bring about some effect through the action of H. Through requests, the S requires the H to perform actions which will satisfy the speaker's needs and wants. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model, Félix-Brasdefer (2005) identified three types of requests: direct or on-record

requests, indirect or off-record requests, and hybrid requests (i.e., a compromise between direct and indirect requests). It is generally agreed that indirect strategies are used for politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Clark, 1979; Clark & Schunk, 1980; Lakoff, 1973; Leech, 1983; Searle, 1975). Searle (1975, p. 64) suggested that "politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness." He argued that in indirect speech acts, "the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the rational powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer" (Searle, 1975, pp. 60-61). By way of contrast, direct requests intrude in the addressee's territory and are, therefore, inherently impolite and face-threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983).

Leech (1983) suggested that indirect illocutions increase the degree of politeness "(a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be" (p. 108). In any description of conversational indirectness, it should be clearly acknowledged that Blum-Kulka (1989) came up with two types of indirectness: (a) conventional indirectness (CI), and (b) nonconventional indirectness (NCI). Conventional indirectness was also labeled 'pragmatic duality' by Blum-Kulka (1989) since it can always be interpreted on at least two levels (i.e., the literal or the requestive); it relies heavily on conventions of language including propositional content (literal meaning) and pragmalinguistic form used to signal an illocutionary force. Nonconventional indirectness, however, centers on sociolinguistic context and is, therefore, open-ended in terms of propositional content, linguistic form, and pragmatic force (Blum-Kulka, 1989). Using nonconventional indirectness, the speaker can avoid the responsibility for making a request (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In this connection, Wierzbicka (2003) noticed that the pragmalinguistic resources and the illocutionary force employed to perform an indirect request tend to vary across languages (also see Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989).

## **2. 2. Discoursal Analysis of Request Speech Act**

Requests, when analyzed in terms of discourse sequences, include two elements: (a) head acts, and (b) supportive moves. Head acts are core elements and refer to the request itself or to the main strategy employed to make the request; supportive moves are peripheral elements that can modify the intensity of requests. If supportive moves occur in the same sentence that carries the request itself, they are called Internal Supportive Moves (ISM); however, if they occur in other sentences that precede or follow the request-carrying sentence, they are called External Supportive Moves (ESM). As such, ESMs can either be pre-posed or post-posed (see Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989).

Supportive moves are not always obligatory and their use depends very much on speakers' degree of Perceived Situational Seriousness—the politeness system in which the request is made (see section 3.1. below for more explanation on this). On the contrary, request head acts are obligatory; it is not possible to perform requests in the absence of head acts. Take the following example in which a student asks his instructor for some extension for a delayed homework assignment; for ease of reference, the instructor's utterances have been removed from the example:

Move 1: ESM *Sir, I need to ask you a favor.*

Move 2: HA *I need some extension for my homework assignment;*

Move 3: ESM *you know, I was sick for a few days and could not finish it in due time.*

In this example, the student begins with a pre-posed external supportive discourse move (a preparator) and then utters the request head act. Then he goes on with a post-posed external supportive discourse move (a reason). Even inside the head act itself, it is possible to include lexical and syntactic modifications (i.e., internal supportive discourse moves). So, the general structure of a request can be shown in this formula:

$$\text{Request} = \begin{array}{c} \text{(Pre-posed} \\ \text{Supportive Moves)} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Head Act} \\ \text{(HA)} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{(Post-posed Supportive} \\ \text{Moves)} \end{array}$$

In their classification of request head acts, Blum-Kulka et al (1989) included three levels of indirectness: Direct Strategies (DS), Conventionally Indirect Strategies (CIS), and Nonconventionally Indirect Strategies (NIS). Direct head acts employ one of the following strategies: (a) Mood Derivable, (b) Performative, (c) Obligation Statement, (d) Need Statement, or (e) Want Statement; conventionally indirect head acts use either of the following two strategies: (a) Query Preparatory, or (b) Suggestory Formulae; nonconventionally indirect head acts employ 'Hints' that can be either strong or mild. Take the following examples selected either from our corpus or from our previous observations (See Appendix B for the phonetic guide to Persian examples):

### 1. Direct Strategies (DS)

#### a) Mood Derivable

*e.g.,*

jozvahaato be man əamaanat bede ziraaks mikonamo zud barmigardunam. bashe?

Lend me your class notes and I will have them Xeroxed and give them back to you soon. Okay?

b) Performative

*e.g.,*

əaz shomaa mikhaam lotf konin əjaaze bedin əemruz zudtar beram.

I would like to ask you to please let me leave the office sooner today.

c) Obligation

*e.g.,*

shomaa əakhlaaqan baayad be man komak konin.

You are ethically obliged to help me.

d) Need Statement

*e.g.,*

baraaye bardaashtane əin baste be komake shomaa əehtiyaaj daaram.

I need your help with this parcel.

e) Want Statement

*e.g.,*

əazetun mikhaam takaalifetuno taa əakhere hafte tahvil bedin.

I want you to submit your homework by the end of this week.

2. Conventionally Indirect Strategies (CIS)

a) Suggestory Formulae

*e.g.,*

chetore əin hafte to xune ro nezaafat koni hafteye dige man?

What if you clean the house this week and I will do it next week.

b) Query Preparatory

*e.g.,*

mishe jozvahaato chand saaəat be man əamaanat bedi?

Could you lend me your class notes for a few hours?

3. Nonconventionally Indirect Strategies (NIS)

a) Mild Hint

*e.g.,*

man jozvahaaye ein darso aehtiyaaaj daaram va tu ein kelaas shomaa tanhaa kasi hastid ke mishnaasam.

I need the class notes and you are the only person I know in this class.

b) Strong Hint

*e.g.,*

man jozvahaaye ein darso niyaz daaram va motmaennam shomaa unaaro behem amaanat midin.

I need the class notes and I am sure you will lend them to me.

Following House and Kasper (1981), Færch and Kasper (1989) examined request head acts in terms of their external and internal modifications. Internal modifications are linguistic mitigators that are meant to soften direct requests. In fact, they are lexical and syntactic modifications that are made into the request head acts themselves. Internal modifications operate at two levels: lexical and syntactic. Lexical modifications include mitigators (*e.g.*, please, ...), and mental verbs (*e.g.*, think, believe, ...); syntactic mitigators include structural modifications (*e.g.*, using conditional sentences, questions, etc.). External modifications, on the other hand, are optional supportive moves that precede or follow head acts to modify them. They include reasons, preparators, disarmers, etc. Take these examples selected either from our corpus or from our previous observations:

1. Internal Supportive Moves (i.e., Internal Modifications)

a) Lexical

Use of Mitigators

*e.g.,*

lotfan saalaado dorost kon, baashe?

Please do the salad. Will you?

Use of Mental Verbs

*e.g.,*

fekr konam betuni chand daqiqe tu darse riyazi komakam koni.

I think you can spare a few minutes to help me with my math problem.

b) Syntactic

Use of Conditionals

*e.g.,*

əaga momkene lotfan xaride mano ham əanjaam bede.

If possible, please do the shopping for me.

Use of Questions

*e.g.,*

mitunam əemruz zudtar beram?

Can I leave the office sooner today?

## 2. External Supportive Moves (i.e., External Modifications)

### a) Providing Reasons

*e.g.,*

bebinid, man chand ruz mariz budam o natunestam tu kelaasha haazer baasham. mitunam jozvahaatuno əamaanat begiram? ziraaks mikonamo xeyli zud behetun barmigardunam.

Look, I was sick a few days and missed some class sessions. Can I borrow your class notes? I will Xerox them and return them to you within an hour.

### b) Use of Preparators

*e.g.,*

shomaa midunid ke cheqadr nazm baraaam mohemme. man se saal daaneshjutun budam va əin əavvalin baariye ke natunestam perojamo be moqe tamum konam. momkene se ruze dige behem mohlat bedin?

You know how important it is to me to be punctual. I have been your student in the past three years and this is the first time I could not finish my project in time. Would you please give me three days extension?

### c) Use of Disarmers

*e.g.,*

hame əaz mehrabuniyo mardomdariye shomaa sohbat mikonan. momkene behem bishtar vaqt bedin perojamo tamum konam? midunam ke na nemigin.

Everyone is talking about your being so considerate, caring, and nice. Would you please give me some more time to finish my project? I am sure you won't say no.

### d) Use of Precursors/Alerters

*e.g.,*

bebaxshid, mishe lotfan əin baste ro be man bedin?

Excuse me, can you hand that parcel to me please?

e) Suggesting Alternatives

*e.g.*,

bebin, man əaləaan xeili əajale daaram. əin bar to otaaəo nezaafat kon.  
hafteye bəad man be jaat əanjaam midam. bashe?

Look, I am in a hurry now. Do the cleaning instead of me this time. I will do your turn next week. Okay?

f) Use of Positive Politeness Strategies

*e.g.*,

mikhaastam ye khaaheshi əazet bekonam. ye kam xarid daaram.  
mikhaastam bebinam mituni baraam əanjaam bedi? əaga nemituni  
əeshkali nadaare.

I wanted to see if I can ask a favor. I have some shopping to do. Could you do that for me? It is okay if you cannot.

Concerning various aspects of requests, a plethora of studies have thus far been conducted by researchers in diverse languages (Walters, 1979 on Puerto Rican Spanish; Blum-Kulka, 1987 on Hebrew and American English; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989 on German, Hebrew, Australian English, Canadian French, and Argentine Spanish; Sifianou, 1992 on Greek and British English; Wierzbicka, 2003 on Polish, and Félix-Brasdefer, 2005 on Mexican Spanish, to name only a few). These studies show Requestive Speech Acts to be a worthwhile focus for researchers.

As such, the current study addresses Persian requests in terms of supportive discourse moves. It attempts to investigate the types of supportive discourse moves employed by Persian speakers in their Requestive Speech Acts in contexts that range from formal to informal in terms of degrees of Perceived Situational Seriousness. Adopting a discourse perspective, we have analyzed the corpus of the study in terms of internal and external supportive moves to arrive at the conclusions of the study. The frameworks proposed by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), Scollon and Scollon (2001), and Færch and Kasper (1989) are used to inform data tabulation and analysis.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Instrument

A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) written in Persian—respondents native language—with six formal and informal scenarios was used as the main tool

for data collection (See Appendix A for the English translation of the DCT). The scenarios for the DCT were based on our observations in the Iranian society. In other words, all of the scenarios had occurred in actual naturalistic contexts and we had observed and recorded them. We then used these scenarios in the compilation of the DCT. The scenarios portrayed formal and informal situations of language use. In fact, the scenarios on the DCT described the place where the event took place, level of familiarity between participants in the event (+ or – Distance), and the power relationship between the interlocutors (+ or – Power). The politeness system proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2001) was used for the development and classification of the situations portrayed by the scenarios. This politeness system is based on three factors: hierarchy, deference, and solidarity:

#### Hierarchical Politeness System (HPS) [+ Power, + Distance]

*Scenario 1:* A student asks a teacher/professor for an extension on a project (Project)

*Scenario 2:* An employee asks his boss for the afternoon off (Office)

#### Deferential Politeness System (DPS) [– Power, + Distance]

*Scenario 3:* A student asks a classmate to borrow class notes (Notes)

*Scenario 4:* An individual asks a passerby for help with a parcel (Parcel)

#### Solidarity Politeness System (SPS) [– Power, – Distance]

*Scenario 5:* An individual asks a roommate to clean the house (Cleaning)

*Scenario 6:* An individual asks a friend to do the shopping for him/her (Shopping)

The DCT scenarios were written in such a way as to comply with this politeness system. As such, scenarios 1 and 2 belong to the hierarchical politeness system and are therefore formal, scenarios 3 and 4 are semi-formal, and scenarios 5 and 6 are informal. The DCT procedure, originally developed by Blum-Kulka (1982), has been widely used by researchers like Olshtain and Cohen (1983), Olshtain and Cohen (1987), Beebe (1985), and Allami (2006) in their investigations of speech acts in different languages.

Notwithstanding the fact that the use of DCT as a reliable tool for collecting naturalistic data has been called into question by some researchers, the advantages of the DCT technique make it a still widely-used and fruitful data elicitation procedure. In one case, Wolfson (1989, pp. 69-70) argued in favor of DCTs:

One great advantage of this type of data collection is that it permits the researcher to control for specific variables of the situation, thus giving

coherence to the findings which may be very difficult to achieve otherwise . . . . Another great advantage . . . is that they allow investigators to collect a considerable amount of data on a given type of speech behavior within a relatively short time.

Kasper (2000) argued that a DCT is an effective means of data collection when the purpose of the study is to “inform about speakers’ pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their sociopragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategic and linguistic choices are appropriate” (p. 329). Reacting to the scenarios in a DCT, the respondent is, in fact, “providing the prototype of the variants occurring in the individual’s actual speech”, and hence the DCT tends to “trigger subjects’ mental prototypes, while natural speech data are more likely to include atypical items” (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki and Ogino, 1986 cited in Kwon, 2004, pp. 341-342). For thorough evaluation of DCTs, please see McNamara and Roever (2006).

### **3.2. Participants and procedures**

The DCT was written in respondents' native language (i.e., Persian). After the compilation of the DCT, two procedures were followed for the circulation of the DCT:

1. We posted it on a personal website so that each visitor could voluntarily complete and submit it to us.
2. We sent the DCT through e-mail to Internet users who were enlisted members of famous Internet service providers in Iran.

Both of these procedures returned a total of 372 completed DCTs. As such, we had a corpus that consisted of 2232 instances of requests across different levels of situational formality (i.e., 372 responses to each scenario). Each request was then analyzed to see if it only included the head act, the head act with internal supportive moves, the head act with external supportive moves, or the head act with both internal and external supportive moves. The frequencies of supportive moves were counted and tabulated as the data for this study, which were then submitted to statistical analyses. The participants of the study belonged to four age groups (20-30 years with 25.5% of the participants, 30-40 years with 27.2%, 40-50 years with 26.6%, and 50+ years with 20.7%). Moreover, 52.4% of the participants were male and 47.6% were female. As for the level of education, 20.2% of the participants had completed primary education, 18.5% secondary education, 31.5% undergraduate college/university, and 29.8% graduate college/university (See Appendix C).

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Responses to the DCT were then tabulated and analyzed according to the analytic frameworks proposed by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), Scollon and Scollon (2001), and Færch and Kasper (1989) in terms of request head acts, politeness systems, and supportive discourse moves. Request head acts were examined according to three degrees of directness discussed above (i.e., DS, CIS, and NIS). External supportive discourse moves (i.e., external modifications) that either preceded or followed the head acts were also taken into account. They included precursors, preparators, disarmers, reasons, alternatives, and positive politeness strategies. The assumption was that the use of internal and external supportive discourse moves was sensitive to degree of perceived situation seriousness. In other words, it was hypothesized that the three politeness systems proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2001) affect the frequency and type of supportive discourse moves Persian speakers employ when they perform requestive speech acts. As such, "politeness system" is the independent variable of the current study and "discourse moves" the dependent variable.

The data were then submitted to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 15.00) for analysis. Two statistical tests were employed for the analysis of the data: (a) Frequency Analysis, and (b) Kruskal-Wallis H Test.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Internal discourse moves

On the whole, 372 respondents completed and returned a total of 2232 scenarios. Analyzed in terms of head acts and supportive moves, their responses afforded a total of 6048 strategies of which 2013 (33.28%) were Internal Supportive Moves (ISM), and the remaining 4035 (66.72%) External Supportive Moves (ESM). Table 1 reports the results of data analysis for ISM strategies.

Table 1

*Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for ISM Strategy Use Across Politeness Systems*

Internal Supportive Move	N	Percentage	Chi-Square	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
(a) Lexical Modification	1029	17.01%	328.41	2	.000
(b) Syntactic Modification	984	16.27%	341.31	2	.000

\* Total Strategies Found in the Corpus N = 6048

\*\* Total ISM Strategies Found in the Corpus *n* = 2013; (33.28%)

The first aim of the study was to see if the use of lexical modifications was context sensitive. In our corpus, lexical modifications were found in 608 (81.72%) of the formal scenarios (i.e., Hierarchical Politeness System (HPS)), in 294 (39.52%) of the semi-formal scenarios (i.e., Deferential Politeness System (DPS)), and in only 127 (17.07%) of the informal ones (i.e., Solidarity Politeness System (SPS)). The result of Kruskal-Wallis H Statistic presented in table 1 shows that the difference in respondents' use of lexical modifications across levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness (i.e., HPS, DPS, and SPS) is statistically significant (Chi-Square = 328.41, and Asymp. Sig. = .000). The mean ranks for HPS, DPS, and SPS responses were 760.85, 520.99, and 393.66 respectively.

In our corpus, lexical modifications were, for the most part, found in Conventionally Indirect (CI) requests. We further noticed that the respondents had used two major types of lexical moves for the modification of head acts in their responses to DCT scenarios: (a) Lexical Mitigators, and (b) Mental Verbs. Lexical mitigators are words or phrases that seem to be patently "conventionalized" for use in requestive speech acts (*e.g.*, *lotfan* = please, *momkene* = is it possible, *mitunam* = may I, *mituni* = can you, *baashe?* = okay?). They are quite often used as devices for 'testing the waters' to see if the addressee is "willing" or "able" to act according to the request. Mental verbs like '*fekr konam*' (I think), '*gamaan konam*' (I imagine), '*nemidunam*' (I wonder), etc. were also used as lexical modification to request heads. Like mitigators, mental verbs, too, were, for the most part, found in CI request heads. Mental verbs, especially when used together with modal auxiliary verbs, turn the request head into a suppositional clause; they are appropriate for expressing requests in deferential and hierarchical politeness systems. The corpus indicates that mental verbs are frequently used in Persian as 'hedging' tools in DPS requests, and less so often in HPS requests. They are almost infrequently used in SPS requests.

One the whole, out of the total 2013 ISMs found in the corpus, 1029 instances were lexical modifications. Of the total 1029 lexical modifications used by the respondents, 915 (88.92%) were Mitigators and 114 (11.08%) were mental verbs. Mitigators were found in 560 (54.42%) of HPS scenario responses, in 237 (23.03%) of DPS scenario responses, and in 118 (11.46%) of the SPS ones. Mental verbs were found in 48 (04.66%) of the HPS responses, in 57 (05.53%) of the DPS responses, and in only 9 (0.9%) of the SPS responses. Table 2 reports the frequencies and percentages of Internal Supportive Move (ISM) strategies found in the corpus.

A second aim of the study was to see if perceived situational seriousness (i.e., type of politeness system) affected respondents' use of syntactic modification of request head acts. In our corpus, syntactic modifications were found in 596

(60.57%) of the HPS responses, in 283 (28.76%) of the DPS responses, and in only 105 (10.67%) of the SPS responses. The result of Kruskal-Wallis H Statistic presented in table 1 (above) shows that the difference in respondents' use of syntactic modifications across levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness (i.e., HPS, DPS, and SPS) is statistically significant (Chi-Square = 341.31, and Asymp. Sig. = .000). The mean ranks for HPS, DPS, and SPS responses were 762.44, 524.06, and 389.00 respectively.

Table 2  
*Frequency and Percentage of Internal Supportive Move (ISM) Strategies*

Strategy	Perceived Situational Seriousness						Total	%
	HPS	DPS	SPS					
	Project	Office	Notes	Parcel	Cleaning	Shopping		
Lexical	309	299	149	145	66	61	1029	51.1
a) Use of Mitigators	293	267	123	114	64	54	915	45.4
b) Use of Mental Verbs	16	32	26	31	2	7	114	05.7
Syntactic	301	295	143	140	56	49	984	48.9
a) Use of Conditionals	263	271	64	59	6	5	668	33.19
b) Use of Questions	11	8	67	63	47	42	238	11.83
c) Other	27	16	12	18	3	2	78	3.88
Total	610	594	292	285	122	110	2013	
Percentage	30.3	29.5	14.5	14.16	06.07	05.47		

The two main types of syntactic modifications used by respondents were "conditionals" and "questions." This, of course, does not mean that other types of syntactic modifications were not identified. An interesting observation was that HPS requests employed much more "conditionals" than "questions." The opposite was true of SPS requests; the preferred syntactic strategy found in SPS requests was the use of questions rather than conditional. This finding is very important because "questions" are the default unmarked syntactic formulae for requests. On the contrary, conditionals have the potential of making requests less direct. SPS requests, being socially informal, may employ questions while HPS requests require more indirect syntactic formulae like conditionals. The frequencies for questions and conditionals for DPS requests in the corpus were roughly the same. Figure 1 shows mean rank comparisons for the two major types of ISM strategies (i.e., Lexical and Syntactic) across different levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness (i.e., HPS, DPS, and SPS).

Of the total 2013 ISM modifications, 984 were syntactic. Conditionals were found in 534 (54.27%) of HPS responses, in 123 (12.5%) of the DPS responses, and in 11 (01.12%) of the SPS requests. Questions, on the other hand, were found in 19 (1.93%) of the HPS, in 130 (13.21%) of the DPS, and in 89 (9.04%) of the SPS responses. Other types of syntactic modifications accounted for 43 (4.37%), 30 (3.05%), and 5 (0.5%) of the HPS, DPS, and SPS responses respectively. The difference between lexical and syntactic

modifications was not statistically significant within any of the three politeness systems. The use of lexical modifications across politeness systems was, however, significantly different. The same was true about syntactic modifications across politeness systems.

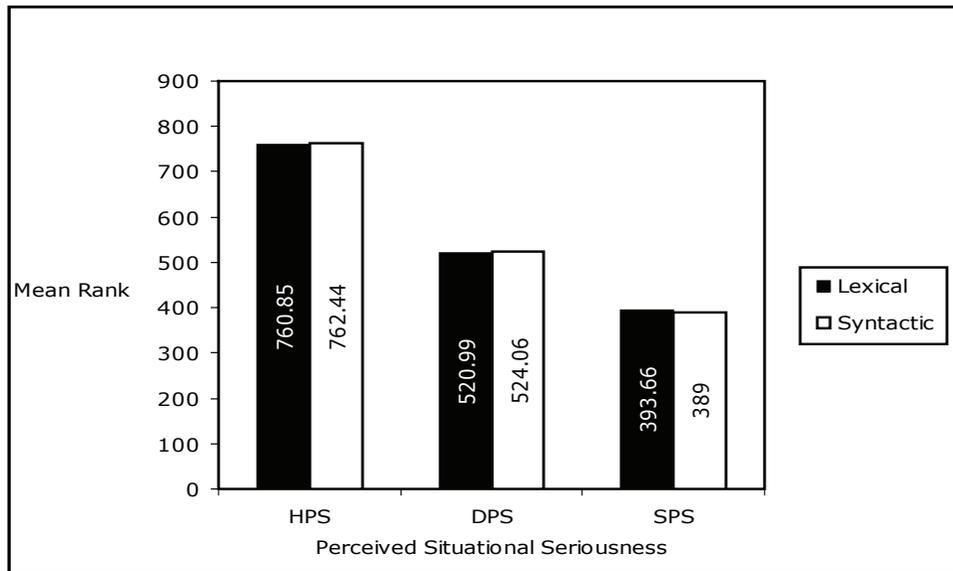


Figure 1. Comparison of mean ranks for syntactic and lexical ISM strategies.

Other less frequent syntactic modifications observed in our corpus included the use of 'future tense' to express 'willingness' in some SPS requests, and the use of 'subjunctive forms' in suppositional causes to make DPS requests hesitant and at the same time polite. Conditionals, subjunctives, and future tenses are internal supportive moves that may serve as a distancing tactic to express deferential politeness whereby speakers distance themselves from both their addressees and the content of the proposition expressed in the request.

#### 4.2. External discourse moves

In addition to lexical and syntactic modifications of request head acts (i.e., Internal Supportive Moves), Persian speakers quite frequently use External Supportive Moves or external modifications that either precede or follow request head acts (i.e., are pre-posed or post-posed). In some cases, it is possible to find more than one ESM in the same request. It is even possible to find both ESM and ISM modifications in a given request. As such, we decided to analyze the corpus in terms of ESM strategies as well.

Of the total 6048 strategies found in the corpus, 4035 (66.72%) were External Supportive Moves (ESM). During classification, out of the total 4035 ESM strategies found in the corpus, six types of ESM strategies were identified: Reasons (1218; 30.2%), Preparators (287; 07.1%), Disarmers (106; 02.6%), Precursors/Alerters (1025; 25.4%), Alternatives (184; 04.6%), and Positive Politeness Strategies (1215; 30.1%). Table 3 displays the results of Descriptive Analyses of ESM strategies found in my corpus.

Table 3  
*Frequency and Percentage of External Supportive Move (ESM) Strategies*

Strategy	Perceived Situational Seriousness						Total	%
	HPS		DPS		SPS			
	Project	Office	Notes	Parcel	Cleaning	Shopping		
a) Reasons	314	338	226	6	243	91	1218	30.2
b) Preparators	79	66	61	0	66	15	287	07.1
c) Disarmers	12	13	23	0	39	19	106	02.6
d) Precursors/Alerters	351	344	164	43	49	74	1025	25.4
e) Alternatives	6	12	71	47	19	29	184	04.6
f) Positive Politeness	363	351	232	120	83	66	1215	30.1
Total	1125	1124	777	216	499	294	4035	
Percentage	27.89	27.85	19.26	05.35	12.36	07.29		

In our corpus, out of the total 4035 responses in which Persian speakers had used ESM strategies for modifying request head acts, 'Reasons' were used in 652 (16.16%) cases to modify HPS requests, in 232 (05.75%) cases to modify DPS requests, and in 334 (08.27%) cases to modify SPS requests. As a second strategy, 'Preparators' were used in 145 (03.59%) cases in HPS requests, in 61 (01.51%) cases in DPS requests, and in 81 (02.00%) cases in SPS requests. Along the same lines, 'Disarmers' had been used in 25 (0.62%) cases in HPS contexts, in 23 (0.57%) cases in DPS contexts, and in 58 (01.43%) cases in SPS contexts. Moreover, 'Precursors/Alerters' had been used in 695 (17.22%), 207 (05.13%), and 123 (03.05%) cases in HPS, DPS, and SPS requests respectively. Another category of ESM strategies was 'Alternatives'. Out of the total 4035 ESM strategies, 'Alternatives' were the dominant ESM strategy in 18 (0.44%), 118 (02.92%), and 48 (01.19%) cases in HPS, DPS, and SPS contexts respectively. The respondents had also used 'Positive Politeness Strategies' as ESMs in their responses to DCT scenarios. 'Positive Politeness Strategies' were found in 714 (17.69%) cases in HPS requests, in 352 (08.72%) cases in DPS requests, and in 149 (03.69%) cases in SPS requests. Figure 2 shows mean rank comparisons for the six major types of

ESM strategies across different levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness (i.e., HPS, DPS, and SPS).

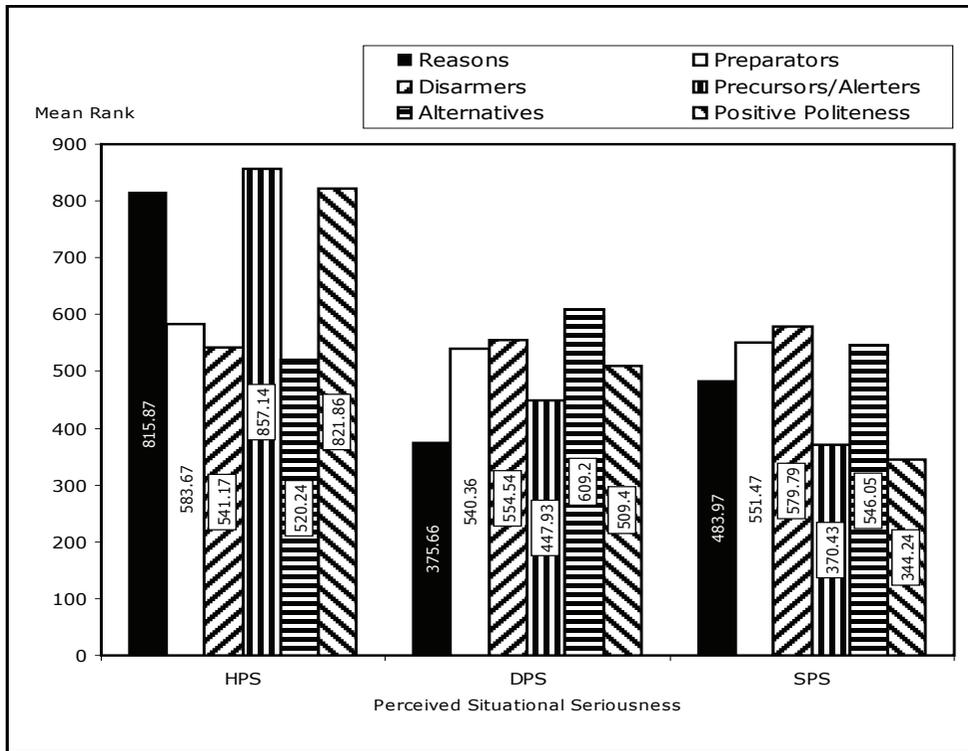


Figure 2. Mean rank comparison for six different types of EMS strategies.

Table 4  
Descriptive and Inferential Statistics for ESM Strategy Use Across Politeness Systems

External Supportive Move	N	Percentage	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
(a) Reasons	1218	20.14%	426.18	2	.000
(b) Preparators	287	04.74%	007.94	2	.019
(c) Disarmers	106	01.76%	014.63	2	.001
(d) Precursors/Alerters	1025	16.95%	588.37	2	.000
(e) Alternatives	184	03.04%	055.24	2	.000
(f) Positive Politeness	1215	20.09%	510.10	2	.000

\* Total Strategies Found in the Corpus N = 6048

\*\* Total ESM Strategies Found in the Corpus n = 4035; (66.72%)

A set of Kruskal-Wallis H Tests were conducted to determine if the differences in ESM strategy use in each politeness system (i.e., HPS, DPS, and

SPS) were statistically significant. Table 4 displays the results of descriptive and inferential statistics for ESM strategy use across different politeness systems.

The results of Kruskal-Wallis H Statistic presented in table 4 show that the difference in respondents' use of "Reasons" across levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness (i.e., HPS, DPS, and SPS) is statistically significant (Chi-Square = 426.18, and Asymp. Sig. = .000). The mean ranks for HPS, DPS, and SPS responses were 815.87, 375.66, and 483.97 respectively. As for the second ESM strategy—Preparators—the result of Kruskal-Wallis H Statistic indicated that the difference in the use of "Preparators" across levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness was statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05 but not at an alpha level of 0.01 (Chi-Square = 007.94, and Asymp. Sig. = .019). In this case, the mean rank for HPS was 583.67, for DPS was 540.36, and for SPS 551.47. Disarmers were also used as external modifiers. In this case, too, there was a statistically significant difference in the use of disarmers across different politeness systems (Chi-Square = 014.63, and Asymp. Sig. = .001). Here again, the mean ranks were 541.17, 554.54, and 579.79 for HPS, DPS, and SPS respectively.

A fourth type of ESM frequently used by Persian speakers in their Requestive Speech Acts was "Precursors" or "Alerters." This type of ESM was also sensitive to the type of politeness system in which the request was performed (Chi-Square = 588.37, and Asymp. Sig. = .001). In this case, the mean rank for HPS was 857.14, for DPS 447.93, and for SPS 370.43. Still another type of ESM strategy sometimes used by Persian speakers to modify request head acts is "Alternatives." The mean ranks for alternatives were 520.24, 609.20, and 546.05 for HPS, DPS, and SPS respectively. In this case, too, the observed difference in speech act performance was statistically significant across different levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness (Chi-Square = 055.24, and Asymp. Sig. = .000).

The last type of ESM quite frequently found in Persian requests was "Positive Politeness Strategies." Respondents indicated that they used this type of ESM in significantly different ways across different levels of Perceived Situational Seriousness (Chi-Square = 510.10, and Asymp. Sig. = .000). Here, the mean ranks were 821.86, 509.40, and 344.24 for formal, semi-formal, and informal contexts.

As discussed earlier, ESMs accounted for the majority (66.72%) of supportive moves in our corpus (n=4035). As shown in table 4, disarmers, alternatives, and preparators were the least preferred ESM among the respondents. Take the following example from the corpus; for ease of reference, the addressee's utterances have been removed from the example:

- (Precursor) salaam.  
Hi.
- (Preparator) mixaastam əzəzət xaaheshi bekonam.  
I want to ask you a favor.
- (Preparator + Reason) ye kam miveo sabzi əhtiyaaj daaram vali baayad bemunam  
xune chun daare baraam mehmun miyaad.  
I need some groceries but have to stay home to receive a guest.
- (Head Act) mishe sare raahet baraam bexari?  
Would you please buy for me on your way home?
- (Disarmer) motmaenam əin lotfo mikoni. to vaagheəan duste xubi hasti.  
I am sure you do. You are a friend in need.

Another type of ESM was the use of precursors or alerters. These are external elements which function to draw the addressee's attention to the request—are 'attention getters' or 'attention grabbers'. Attention getters often happen at the beginning of the interaction. On the whole, five different types of precursors were found in our corpus: (a) titles, (b) greetings, (c) names, (d) discourse markers, and (e) apologetic formulae. Figure 3 compares the frequencies of precursors/alerters across different politeness systems.

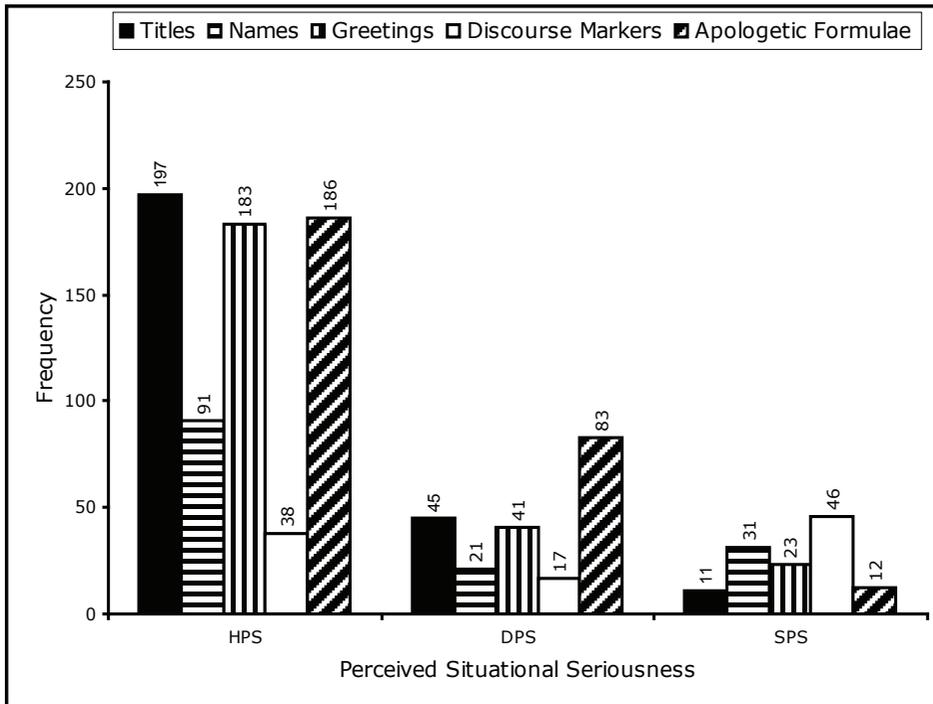


Figure 3. Frequencies of precursors/alerters across politeness systems.

Titles were quite frequently found in HPS and DPS requests (*e.g.*, *əostaad* = Professor; *qorbaan* = Sir; *əaaqa* = Mr; *xaanom* = Madam) and were sometimes accompanied by greetings (*salaam* = Hello; *hale shomaa chetore?* = How are you?). Less formal greetings (*e.g.*, *xubi?* = Are you OK?; *salaam* = Hi) and addressees' first names were observed in SPS requests. This signifies the impact of power and social distance on language use. The use of titles in SPS requests was quite infrequent. Discourse markers were frequently seen in SPS requests (*e.g.*, *migam* = I say; *bebin* = look; *gush kon* = listen; etc.). In the rare cases where discourse markers were used in DPS or SPS requests, they were regularly used in the plural form (*e.g.*, *bebinid* = look (plural); *əeltefaat konid* = listen (plural); etc.). It should be noted that in Persian 'shomaa' (meaning 'you' in the plural sense) is a sign of politeness; the clitic or PRO-ending '-id' (*e.g.*, 'bebin + id = bebinid' which changes the singular verb 'bebin' [meaning look] into the plural form 'bebinid') was also found in HPS and DPS requests. Apologetic formulae, however, were found to be more appropriate for HPS and DPS requests (*e.g.*, *əozr mixaam ke mosadde əoghaatetun misham* = Sorry to bother you; *bebaxshid* = excuse me; *mazerat mixaam* = sorry to bother; etc.). In general, precursors/alerters were found in 1025 (25.4%) of the total 4035 ESM strategies.

Reasons were the most preferred ESMs, and accounted for 1218 (30.2%) out of the total 4035 external modifications (see table 3 above). Reasons occurred across all politeness systems as either pre-posed or post-posed modifications. By employing reasons, addressors may explain to addressees why they 'have to' make the request. Take the following example from our corpus:

Reason	man midunam ke baayad taklifamo əemruz tahvil midaadam vali <u>mariz budamo natunestam be moqe əanjaameshun bedam.</u> I know that I was obliged to submit my homework today but I <u>was sick and could not finish it.</u>
Request Head	lotfan yek hafteye dige behem mohlat bedin. Please give me a one-week extension.
Positive Politeness	əalbatte əaga baratun momkene. xaaheshi mikonam. Of course, if you can. Please.

In this example, the request head has been further modified by the clause "əalbatte əaga baratun momkene" (Of course, if you can). This kind of modification is an example of positive politeness whereby the addressor signals to the addressee that s/he does not like to appear impolite by leaving the addressee with the possibility of rejecting the request. To appear polite, the addressee is socially but tacitly expected to accept the request. Positive

politeness strategies were quite frequent in HPS and DPS requests. They were used in SPS requests too, but their frequency was not as high in comparison to HPS and DPS requests.

In some of their responses to DCT scenarios, the respondents had used "Alternatives" as external modifications to request heads. Alternatives are clauses in which the addressor implies a commitment for something in exchange for the favor he receives from the addressee. As such, they often imply cooperation on the part of the addressor. Take the following example from the corpus; for ease of reference, the addressee's utterances have been removed from the example:

- (Precursor) salaam əostad.  
Hello, professor.
- (Preparator) bebaxshid mozaahem misham, mitunam ye xaaheshi bekonam?  
Sorry to bother you. Can I ask a favor?
- (Reason) man chand ruz mariz budamo natunestam taklifamo tamum konam.  
I was sick a few days and, could not finish my assignment.
- (Head Act) əaga momkene, mixaastam mohlate bishtari behem bedin.  
If possible, I wanted to ask for some extension.
- (Alternative) dar əavaz qol midam perojeje kaameltari tahvil bedam.  
I promise to hand in a more precise assignment.

In this example, there were ten conversational turns (five by the students and five by the instructor). The student has used four types of external modifications (three pre-posed ESMs and one post-posed ESM). The request head itself has also been mitigated by the use of "əaga momkene" (if possible), and the clitic "-in" which is the conversational version of the plural PRO-ending "-id" (which changes "singular" verbs into "plural" to make them more polite). In fact, this clitic is a politeness marker in standard Persian and in most regional dialects of Persian.

Another type of ESM found in the corpus was the use of positive politeness strategies. Three types of positive politeness strategies were seen in the corpus: (a) agreement, (b) gratitude, and (c) empathy. Take the following examples:

- (agreement) əaga baraatun maqdur nist, əeshkaali nadare.  
If you cannot make it, that is okay.
- (empathy) əaga əemkaan pazir nabaashe, əeshkaali nadaare.  
If it is not possible, that is okay.
- (gratitude) əaga əin lotfo bekonin xeili xeili mamnunetun misham.  
I would really, really appreciate it if you do me this favor.

Empathy was often achieved through making ESMs impersonal (compare 'əgaga baraatun maqdur nist' with 'əgaga əmkaan pazir nabaashe'). A further point I noticed in my corpus was that 'passive voice' and 'intensifiers' were frequently used a positive politeness strategies. Like alternatives, positive politeness ESMs were usually post-posed. Positive politeness strategies were more frequent in HPS and DPS requests indicating that "power" and "distance" are factors that control the use of this type of ESM whereby making its use situation-dependent.

## 5. Discussion

The goal of the present study was to gain insights into performance of the communicative act of requesting in Persian. Specifically, our aim was to examine from a pragmatic approach the internal and external supportive moves which are used by Persian speakers in producing requests.

A general result of the inquiry showed that the use of both ISM and ESM strategies is situation dependent. HPS requests, it was found, required the greatest number of discourse moves (both internal and external). DPS requests were second in rank in terms of the frequency of use of ESMs and ISMs. In SPS requests, however, fewer ESM and ISM strategies were observed. As such, it can be concluded that 'perceived situational seriousness' is the main motivation behind the use of ISM and ESM strategies in Persian requests. The findings of the present study also indicate that direct requests (DS), where used, were signs of 'closeness', 'affiliation', or 'solidarity'. This finding is consistent with the results of studies that focused on German and Polish cultures (Pavlidou, 2000; Wierzbicka, 2003).

The results further indicated that the participants in the study were more inclined to employ External Supportive Moves than Internal Supportive Moves. Detailed analysis showed that lexical modifications including Lexical Mitigators and Mental Verbs were often found in Conventionally Indirect requests. The results also indicated that mental verbs were mostly used as 'hedging' tools in DPS requests, and less in HPS requests. However, the type of politeness system was found to affect respondents' use of syntactic modification (conditionals, subjunctives, and future tenses) of request head acts more in HPS responses than in DPS and SPS responses.

The results also showed that the participants made use of 'reason' as an external modifier more than others. They were found to be used as indirect strategies for two purposes: (a) to mitigate the illocutionary force of the request, and (b) to smooth conversational interaction. This is in line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that providing reasons makes the request more polite and can convey either positive or negative politeness. Other ESM, including disarmers, alternatives, and preparators, were the least preferred

among the respondents. Preparators, where used, had either or both of the two functions: (a) to prepare the hearer for an upcoming request, and/or (b) to introduce the request. Disarmers, too, were used infrequently. It is quite easy to understand why. As Marquez-Reiter (2000) rightly says, speakers employ disarmers in their requests only when they want to provide "reasons to 'disarm' the addressee from the possibility of refusal" (p.93). As such, disarmers oppose 'positive politeness'. They are, therefore, least expected in HPS and DPS requests. Another interesting observation in our corpus was that neither disarmers nor preparators had been used in the "parcel" scenario. The explanation might be that, in the "parcel" scenario, the addressee is present in the event and can see for himself/herself what is going on. So, there is no need for the addressor to use preparators to modify the request. Moreover, there is a tacit ethical assumption that the addressee is expected to help the addressor in this social setting. As such, disarmers are not needed either. Concerning the use of precursors or alerters, the present study found five different types of precursors (titles, greetings, names, discourse markers, apologetic formulae) to be employed more frequently.

It was also found that positive politeness strategies as a type of ESM were often used in Persian requests to balance pragmatic clarity and non-coerciveness whereby allowing the interlocutors to end their conversational interactions successfully and politely. This finding is consistent with the results of studies done by Blum-Kulka (1987) and Marquez-Reiter (2002). Very often, the aim of positive politeness is to leave the addressee with the possibility of rejecting the request; they allow the listener freedom from imposition. As such, they stand against disarmers.

## **6. Conclusion**

The results of this study cannot be generalized to all native speakers of Persian, but rather, can only be taken as an indicator of "appropriate" conduct when initiating a request in Persian. Replications of the study in which other means of data collection and larger subject populations are involved will definitely shed light on the issues of "socio-economic" and "gender" differences in requestive speech act behavior. Finally, other studies may examine requests in the light of prosodic features of speech.

### ***The Authors***

Mohammad Ali Salmani Nodoushan has received a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Tehran, an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Isfahan, and a BA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) from Shiraz University. He has also mastered IT and Statistical Analysis skills. He has over 20 years of teaching experience and has taught

major EFL courses at under-graduate and graduate levels. The main courses he has taught include Language Testing, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Critical Appraisal of Language Teaching Methodology. He has published over 40 scholarly papers in international journals including Teaching and Teacher Education, Speech Communication, TESL Canada Journal, and so on. In addition, he has published 4 books. He is a member of the editorial boards of several international scholarly journals. His main areas of interest include language testing and pragmatics.

Hamid Allami is assistant professor in applied linguistics at Yazd University, Iran. He has published several papers in scholarly journals both national and international. His main areas of interest include Discourse Analysis, Interlanguage Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics.

## References

- Allami, H. (2006). A sociopragmatic analysis of griping: The case of Iranian students. *The Linguistics Journal*, 1(1), 59-76.
- Beebe, L. M. (1985). Speech act performance: A function of the data collection procedure? Paper presented at the 18th Annual TESOL Convention, New York, April.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1982). Learning to say what you mean in a second language: A study of the speech act performance of learners of Hebrew as a second language. *Applied Linguistics* 3(1).
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and politeness in requests: Same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 11, 131-146.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1989). Playing it safe: The role of conventionality in indirectness. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp.37-70). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (Eds.). (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, H. (1979). Responding to indirect speech acts. *Cognitive Psychology*, 11, 430-477.
- Clark, H., & Schunk, D. (1980). Polite responses to polite requests. *Cognition* 8, 111-143.

- Færch, C., & Kasper, G. (1989). Internal and external modification in interlanguage request realization. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 221-247). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.
- Félix-Brasdefer, J. C. (2005). Indirectness and politeness in Mexican requests. In D. Eddington (Ed.), *Selected Proceedings of the 7th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium* (pp. 66-78). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Fraser, B. (1990). Perspectives on politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14, 219-236.
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face to face behavior*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Hill, B., Ide, S., Ikuta, S., Kawasaki, A., & Ogino, T. (1986). Universals of linguistic politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 10, 343-371.
- House, J., & Kasper, G. (1981). Politeness markers in English and German. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *Conversational routine* (pp. 157-185). The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kasper, G. (2000). Data collection in pragmatics research. In H. Spencer-Oatey (Ed.), *Culturally speaking* (pp. 316-341). New York: Continuum.
- Kwon, J. (2004). Expressing refusals in Korean and in American English. *Multilingua*, 23, 339-364.
- Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness, or, minding your p's and q's. *Chicago Linguistic Society*, 9, 292-305.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. New York: Longman.
- Márquez-Reiter, R. (2000). *Linguistic politeness in Britain and Uruguay: A contrastive study of requests and apologies*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Márquez-Reiter, R. (2002). A contrastive study of conventional indirectness in Spanish: Evidence from Peninsular and Uruguayan Spanish. *Pragmatics*, 12(2), 135-151.
- McNamara, T., & Roever, C. (2006). *Language testing: The social dimension*. London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Nikula, T. (1996). *Pragmatic force modifiers: A study in interlanguage pragmatics*. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

- Olshtain, E., & Cohen, A. (1983). Apology: A speech act set. In N. Wolfson, & E. Judd (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Olshtain, E., & Cohen, A. (1987). The learning of complex speech act behavior. Paper presented at the Colloquium on TESOL and Sociolinguistics, 8th Annual TESOL Convention, Miami, Florida.
- Pavlidou, T. (2000). Telephone conversations in Greek and German: Attending to the relationship aspect of communication. In H. Spencer-Oatey (Ed.), *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures* (pp. 121-140). London: Continuum.
- Safont, M. P. (2005). *Third language learners: Pragmatic production and awareness*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. (2001). *Intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Searle, J. (1975). Indirect speech acts. In P. Cole, & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics*, (pp. 59-82). New York: Academic Press.
- Sifianou, M. (1992). *Politeness phenomena in England and Greece. A cross-cultural perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sifianou, M. (1999). *Politeness phenomena in England and Greece. A cross-cultural perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (1996). Reconsidering power and distance. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26, 1-24.
- Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics. Requests, Complaints and Apologies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Walters, J. (1979). Strategies for requesting in Spanish and English: Structural similarities and pragmatic differences. *Language Learning*, 29, 277-293.
- Wierzbicka, A. (2003). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: The semantics of human interaction* (2nd ed.). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Wolfson, N. (1989). *Perspectives: Sociolinguistics and TESOL*. New York: Newbury House Publishers.

### **Appendix A: DCT for Data Collection\***

---

Age:            20-30  30-40  40-50  50+

Sex:            Male  Female

Education:    Primary School  Secondary School  Bachelor  Graduate

---

Dear Respondent,

Please read the following scenarios carefully and write your answer for each case in the spaces provided. Thank you very much indeed.

---

- 1 You have failed to complete your homework assignment in due date. You go to your teacher's office to ask for some extension. What do you say to your teacher?

---
- 2 You have to work late in your workplace. There is a great soccer match in the city stadium and you would like to go to see the match. You decide to go to your boss's office to ask permission for leaving the workplace earlier. What do you say to your boss?

---
- 3 You have missed some of your class sessions due to illness. You are not intimate with any of your classmates, but decide to ask one of your classmates whom you are somewhat familiar with to lend you his notes. What do you say?

---
- 4 You come out of a shop with your arm full of what you have bought. A parcel drops and you are not able to pick it up. You decide to ask a passerby to hand the parcel to you. What do you say?

---
- 5 This is your turn to do the cleaning today, but you must go to pick up your father from the airport. You decide to change turns with you roommate. What do you say?

---
- 6 Your friend goes shopping from a mall which is far from your place, but you cannot go with your friend. You want to ask your friend to do your shopping too. What do you say?

\* This is the translated version of the DCT. All the respondents received the Persian version of the DCT (i.e., their native language version) with very detailed scenarios.

**Appendix B: Guide to phonetic symbols used for reporting Persian examples.**

Symbol	Example	Symbol	Example	Symbol	Example
aa	<u>a</u> rm	p	p <u>e</u> n	t	t <u>e</u> a
o	<u>o</u> r	s	s <u>o</u>	j	j <u>o</u> ke
u	t <u>oo</u>	ch	<u>ch</u> ange	h	<u>h</u> ouse
a	h <u>a</u> t	x	<u>x</u> ub	d	<u>d</u> oor
e	t <u>e</u> n	z	<u>z</u> oo	r	<u>r</u> ed
i	sh <u>ee</u> p	zh	vi <u>si</u> on	sh	<u>sh</u> oe
q	<u>Q</u> om	n	<u>n</u> oon	f	<u>f</u> oot
k	<u>k</u> ill	y	<u>y</u> ard	g	<u>g</u> ood
l	<u>l</u> and	ə	<u>ə</u> aləaan	m	<u>m</u> oon
v	<u>v</u> oice	b	<u>b</u> ad		

**NOTES:**

1. The /ʔ/ symbol represents glottal stop, and is used at the beginning of Persian syllables followed by a vowel.
2. The /q/ and /x/ symbols represent Persian-specific consonants.
3. The Persian sporadic feature *tashdid* is represented by the repetition of the phoneme that receives it.

**Appendix C: Participant Profile**

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Sex	Male	195	52.4	52.4	52.4
	Female	177	47.6	47.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>372</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Age Range	20-30	95	25.5	25.5	25.5
	30-40	101	27.2	27.2	52.7
	40-50	99	26.6	26.6	79.3
	50+	77	20.7	20.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>372</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Education	Primary	75	20.2	20.2	20.2
	Secondary	69	18.5	18.5	38.7
	Bachelor	117	31.5	31.5	70.2
	Graduate	111	29.8	29.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>372</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	