A Contrastive Study into the Realization of Suggestion Speech Act: Persain vs English

UNE ETUDE CONTRASTIVE DANS LA REALISATION DES ACTES DU LANGAGE DE SUGGESTION: LE PERSAIN VS L'ANGLAIS

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Abstract

This study intends to conduct a contrastive analysis between English and Persian with regard to suggestion speech act. To this end, some Iranian university students were asked to complete a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) consisting of six situations in which their suggestion act was explored. The research data was analyzed using percentage and Chi-square test. The study findings were compared with the previous research carried out by Jiang (2006) exploring natives' use of suggestion act in order to detect the similarities and variations between 2 cultures. The results revealed the variations in almost most of the suggestion types. Furthermore, gender proved to be a significant factor in the production of suggestion strategies. Finally, pedagogical implications were discussed in the context of second language learning.

Key words: Culture; Pragmatic competence; Speech act; Suggestion act

Résumé

Cette étude vise à effectuer une analyse contrastive entre l'anglais et le persain à l'égard de l'acte de parole suggestion. A cette fin, certains étudiants universitaires iraniens ont été invités à remplir une tâche d'achèvement du discours (DCT), composé de six situations dans lesquelles leur acte suggestion a été explorée. les données de recherche a été analysée à l'aide de pourcentage et de test du chi carré. les résultats de l'étude ont été comparés avec les recherches antérieures effectuées par Jiang (2006) explore indigènes utilisation de la suggestion agir afin de détecter les similitudes et les différences entre les deux cultures. les résultats a révélé des variations dans la plupart des types presque suggestion. Par ailleurs, le genre s'est révélée être un facteur important dans la production de stratégies de suggestion. Enfin, les implications pédagogiques ont été discutés dans le contexte de l'apprentissage des langues secondes.

Mots clés: Culture; Compétence pragmatique; Acte de parole; Agitationde suggestion

INTRODUCTION

Communicatively appropriate interaction in every language entails grammatical as well as sociolinguistic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Paulston, 1974; Richards, 1980; Schmidt & Richards, 1980). As Yorio (1980) stated every language speaker should utilize the language grammatically, appropriately, and effectively; grammatically is involved with formality of language, whereas appropriately and effectively refer to sociolinguistic aspects of language. In fact, successful communication in a language requires not only the grammar and vocabulary knowledge but also pragmatic competence and cultural knowledge. In other words, pragmatic competence has been regarded as one of the integral aspects of communicative competence (Bachman, 1990). Kim and Hall (2002, p. 332) define pragmatic competence as "This competence entails knowing how to connect utterances to locally situated circumstances" (Davies, 1989), and thus is a mixture of both linguistic and cultural knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge and skills that are vital to effective communication encompass

knowledge of contextually situated vocabulary words, routinized language patterns, and extralinguistic behavior. On the other hand, interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) studies have absorbed significant attention within pragmatic competence realm which most of them have been involved with realization of different speech acts. Thus, speech acts studies appear to be crucial in understanding of intercultural studies.

Many people face with communication conflict or even communication breakdown in their cross-linguistic and cross-cultural interactions with people from different language backgrounds. Chick (1996, as cited in Yousefvand, 2010) detects such intercultural miscommunication in various value systems evoked by speakers L1cultural background. Different value systems might be revealed in speech act patterns; some scholars state (e.g. Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) speech acts are organized by universal principles, whereas some others (Green, 1975; Wierzbicka, 1985) emphasize on the variations in speech act verbalization and conceptualization across different cultures. Therefore, a great deal of studies have been conducted across different languages to hypothesize the universalities and variations in regard to different speech acts such as request (Belza, 2008), Apology (Fahey, 2005), complaint (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2007), compliment (wolfson, 1981), refusal (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008), among which suggestion speech act has received scant attention.

Suggestions are frequently uttered whether in our daily interactions such as receiving suggestions from our friends, family members, and doctors or in academic setting such as a class in which students seek for teachers' hints. Generally, a suggestion is a directive type of speech act stated as a possibility by the speaker which is believed to be desirable for the hearer to perform a future course of action (Sum-Hung Li, 2010). Regarding the intricate complexities of this speech act in different cultures, it seems essential to investigate suggestion expressions in different languages' discourse patterns.

Therefore, this study makes a contrastive analysis to investigate the differences between English and Persian, and find patterns of suggestion act between the two cultures. Finally, some guidelines are proposed to improve the present situation of teaching speech acts. Furthermore, since there has been an increasing interest in gender differentiations regarding the realization of speech acts (Holmes, 1989, as cited in Zhiying, 2005), this study intends to probe the gender role in the suggestion production as well.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Austin (1962) characterized 3 levels for each speech act utterance: "act of saying something, what one does in saying it and what one does by saying it" which respectively match with "locutionary, illocutionary

and perlocutionary" acts. In fact, locutionary act deals with an utterance, whose meaning can be recognized, in illocutionary act the emphasis is on intention of a speaker and perlocutionary act is concerned with the effect that is produced by saying that utterance. Therefore, to perform appropriate speech acts, both socio-cultural and sociolinguistic knowledge are required (Jiang, 2006; Leech, 1983; Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan, 2006; Thomas, 1983). Socio-cultural knowledge involves how to perform a speech act appropriately in a certain condition, whereas sociolinguistic knowledge focuses on the speech acts' linguistic forms.

Most of interaction sequences consist of several connected and interdependent speech acts. Clyne (1994) suggested that the relation between them is not so routinized. Such sequences are called complex and are labeled according to their focal speech act. Thus, we return to more traditional classifications to categorize intercultural variations more efficiently.

Searle (1976) distinguished the acts according to their "illocutionary point" to representatives (we tell people how things are), directives (get people to do something), commissives (the speaker is committed to do something), expressives (feelings and attitudes are expressed) and declarations (they cause to happen a change).

One of the important questions in the study of speech acts is the question that whether speech acts are universal and which aspects of them and to what extent are universal. According to Schmidt and Richards (1980), the most significant discussion for universality of speech act strategies is posited by Brown and Levinson (1978). They discussed that speech acts are somehow threatening to either speaker or hearer and continue that speakers should consider some elements such as social distance, degree of power, ranking of imposition in a special culture and then choose some strategies to perform the act. According to Brown and Levinson (1978, as cited in Schmidt & Richards, 1980), speaker may utilize a strategy of positive politeness by assuring the hearer that he is valued. On the other hand, he may choose a negative politeness strategy by redressing the threat for instance by being indirect or apologizing. Also, they scrutinized speech act universality in three distinct languages and found much parallelism in regard to politeness among them.

Felix-Brasdefer (2008) divides existing studies of speech acts into two main catagories: those kinds of studies which scrutinize the realization of native speakers' speech act. This category which is the main focus of this paper may comprise one language or two languages. On the other hand, the second category involves with non-natives' realization of speech acts. Regarding the first category, copious studies have been conducted in different cultures (Farnia, Buchheit & Salim, 2010; Hinkel, 1997; Tang & Zhang, 2009; Wolfson, 1981). A bulk of studies have also been carried out in Persian language on the realization of different speech acts such as complaint

(Eslami-Rasekh, 2004), compliment (Sharifian, 2008), request (Abdolrezapour & eslami- rasekh, 2010), gripping (Allami, 2006), invitation (Salmani-Nodoushan, 2006), while suggestion speech act has received no attention.

Eslami Rasekh (1993) investigated request realization patterns of native speakers of American English and Persian. Degree of directness was regarded as well. Research data was gleaned via an open questionnaire. Results showed that Persian speakers were more direct and used more alerters, supportive moves and internal modifiers than Americans. In fact, it was discussed that Persians utilize such strategies to mitigate for level of directness.

Koutlaki (2002) investigated offers and expressions of thanks and Persian ritual politeness (ta'arof) samples. In addition, social organization in Iranian society (Persian face) which consists of two interrelated aspects of sˇaxsiat (pride) and ehteram (honour) were considered. The research data was obtained by recording naturally occurring data, field notes and interviews. The study findings indicated that some acts that have been classified as FTAs (Face Threatening Acts) by Brown and Levinson should be regarded as Face Enhancing Acts in Persian. Furthermore, enhancing the face of both interlocutors at the same time should also be attended.

Eslami-Rasekh (2004) compared Persian speakers' use of face-keeping strategies in reaction to complaints with American English speakers' performance and discussed them in terms of different cultural concepts. It was concluded that Persian speakers vary their face-keeping strategies according to contextual factors whereas English speakers mainly apply one apology strategy and intensify it based on contextual factors.

Afghari and Kaviani (2005) explored apologizing strategies employed in Persian language. It intended to investigate effect of the two context-external variables of social distance and social dominance on the frequency of the apology intensifier. The research findings revealed that Persian apologies are formulaic in pragmatic structures and it seemed that social distance and social dominance had a significant effect on the frequency of the intensifiers in different situations. The most intensified apologies were offered to friends and the least intensified apologies were offered to strangers. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that Persian speakers used ostensible invitations in their daily activities as a manifestation of ritual politeness (ta'arof).

Allami (2006) explored gripping strategies across Iranian students. The data was collected through a DCT. In fact, it investigated the participants' responses in terms of six major categories including: 1) topic switch/blank reply, 2) question, 3) contradiction, 4) joking/teasing, 5) advice, 6) agreement/commiseration. The findings suggested that Iranian students employ griping strategies for commiseration and less for other purposes such as advice, joking and contradiction.

Afghari (2007) focused on apology speech act realization patterns in Persian. The study intended to investigate first, if Persian apologies were formulaic in pragmatic structure as their English counterparts and the second, involved the investigation of the effect of social distance and social dominance on the frequency of the apology intensifiers. Persian apologetic patterns were recorded via a DCT. The research findings suggested that Persian apologies are formulaic pragmatic structures as well. Furthermore, social distance and social dominance proved to have significant effect on the frequency of the intensifiers in different situations.

Sharifian (2008) discussed the relationship between speech acts and cultural conceptualizations. The study aimed at exploring to what degree compliment responses produced by Persian speakers in their L1 and L2 (English) were affected by the Persian concept of *shekasteh-nafsi* 'modesty'. The data was collected through DCT and findings revealed that even where this concept is reflected in a speaker's compliment response in his/her L2, it may be absent from the corresponding L1 response. Moreover, results suggested that context of receiving the compliment plays a significant role.

Parvaresh and Eslami-Rasekh (2009) investigated the effects of solidarity and deference on the ways young Iranian women perform disagreement speech act in their own language and culture. Therefore, a DCT comprising of four tasks was distributed to 80 native Farsi-speaking university students. They suggested that in Iranian Islamic culture, young women in their disagreement with their close male friends demonstrate more considerations of deference rather than solidarity whereas they employ conflictives when their addressee is of the same sex.

Samavarchi, Allami and Smavarchi (2009) investigated speech act of giving condolences in English and Persian. Thus, an English 12-item DCT was given to 30 native speakers of English and to 30 Iranian EFL learners. The results indicated a significant difference between the two groups.

Eslami-Rasekh, tavakoli and Abdolrezapour (2010) investigated Americans and Iranians' use of requests with regard to the speaker's assumed expectations of compliance in choosing from the conventionally indirect spectrum. 22 Native American students of Fresno State University and 30 Iranian English M.A students at Isfahan University participated in this research. The data was collected through role plays, post performance interviews and questionnaires. Result indicated that in comparable situations the Americans are more certain that addressee would comply with the request than Iranians, and it seemed that conventional indirectness express different social meanings in English and Persian

Generally regarding the literature, no study has been conducted on suggestion speech act in Persian. Therefore, this study intended to investigate suggestion speech act realizations through English and Persian language in order

to detect the intercultural similarities and variations.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

According to Wierzbicka (1985) speech act studies have suffered from ethnocentrism and there is a necessity to include non-western cultures (Blum-kulka, House & Kasper, 1989 as cited in Afghari & kaviani, 2005). The present study is a contribution to such a need. Therefore, to expand the cross-cultural literature, this study is an attempt to compare and contrast English and Persian suggestion speech act in order to detect the cross cultural values. In fact, this study intends to extract Iranians' suggestion strategies comparing them with that of English native speakers stated in previous literature. Furthermore, the following questions are probed:

Q1: what are the similarities and differences in the production of suggestion acts between English natives and Persian natives?

Q2: Is there any significant difference between Iranian males and females in their suggestion production?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Setting and Participants

A total of 150 Iranian university students participated in this study who were studying different majors such as mechanical engineering, civil engineering, statistics, politics, history, social sciences, etc. in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad - a university in Iran. This study intended to probe the gender effect, therefore, participants involved 75 males and 75 females aged from 17 to 45 with different socio-economical backgrounds. As a matter of fact, since studying a second language may influence learners' L1, language students (Persian, English, Arabic, French and Russian language students) were excluded.

3.2 Instrumentation

The instrument utilized for the present study consists of a DCT (Discourse Completion Task). An appropriately prepared DCT can inform us of how respondents' pragmatic knowledge is activated (Martinez-Flor, 2006). Therefore, research data was collected through a DCT in which 6 natural situations were defined elaborately, and participants were required to imagine themselves in the situations and respond as they would say in their daily conversations. The DCT was a Persian version of an English DCT devised by the researchers which was based on the guidelines provided by Banerjee and Carrell (1988), Martinez-Flor (2006), Martinez-Flor (2005), Martinez-Flor and Alcon Soler (2004), Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005). According to Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1995, as cited in Martinez-flor & Alcon soler, 2004) the DCT presented a familiar context to the students. Each situation consisted of a short dialogue in order to include the necessary interaction in authentic communication.

Furthermore, since participants involved both males and females, the situations were gender neutral and regarding the status, the situations involved inferior, equal and superior relationship to allocate a representative sample of authentic discourse.

Furthermore, 20 Iranian university students participated in the pilot study among which some of the participants were interviewed and had a think aloud as well. A team of specialists substantiated the content validity of the DCT and consequently, its ambiguities and obstacles were eliminated. Moreover, to reach a sound reliable data, two raters corrected the respondents' replies.

3.3 Procedure

The DCT was distributed among participants individually which took them about 15 minutes. The researchers first asked for their permission and then provided them with the necessary instruction. Since the task required to be understood thoroughly, an example was given by the researchers.

After gleaning the research data, responses were analyzed quantitatively. Speech utterances were regarded as the unit of analysis. The Iranians' suggestion strategies were categorized on the basis of the taxonomy of suggestion adapted from the study conducted by Jiang (2006). The suggestion samples were classified into nine categories on the basis of their grammatical features such as:

• Let's (let's try…)
• Certain modals and semi-modals (You have to. . . You need to. . . You'd/had better…)
• Wh-questions (Why don't you . . .?)
• Conditionals (If I were. . .)
• Performatives (I suggest…/ I propose…, my suggestion is … / my recommendation is …)
• Pseudo cleft structures (All you need to do is…)
• Extraposed to-clauses (It might be difficult to ...)
• Yes/ no questions (Have you heard…)
• Imperatives (do your best ...)

The Persian equivalents for suggestion expressions according to Jiang's taxonomy comprise:

• Let's (Bia baham berim teria ye ghahve bokhorim/ Let's go to a cafe to drink coffee.)
• Modals: (Dar ye ketabforooshiye dige in ketabo mitoonin be gheymate kamtari bekharin/ You can buy this book with a less price in another book)
• Wh-questions : (chera ye safar be ye keshvare dige nemikoni?/ Why don't you travel to another country?)
• Conditionals: (Age kare zaroori nadari behtare ye vaghte dige beri/ If you don't need to go, it's better to go another time.)
• Perormatives: (Behet pishnehad mikonam nazareto taghyir bedi./ I suggest you to change your idea.)
• Pseudo clefts do not exist in Persian language as a suggestion strategy.
• Extraposed to-clauses (Hamishe rahhaye khoobi

baraye ertebat vojood dare. There are always good ways to communicate.)
• Yes/ no questions: (Behtar nist barnameye safare khod ra ba tavajo be in sharayet tanzim konid?/ Is not it better to schedule your trip according to the available conditions?)
• Imperative: (Az in shokolatha nakhar/ Don't buy these bars of chocolates.)

In fact, the research data was analyzed on the levels of syntax and semantics. The suggestions' frequency and percentage were calculated and the results were compared with those of English natives in order to explore the socio-pragmatic values between the two cultures. Furthermore, to investigate the gender effect, chi-square test was conducted.

4. RESULT

This study aims to make a contrastive analysis between English and Persian culture in regard to production of suggestion speech act. Since the study was conducted in a foreign setting and English natives were not accessible, the data related to English natives was adopted from the previous findings conducted by Jiang (2006) on the basis of T2K-SWAL Corpus. Therefore, a suggestion taxonomy by Jiang (2006) was utilized to analyze the suggestion strategies, and also their frequency and percentage were calculated. Furthermore, regarding Persian natives, the gender variable was probed too using Chi-square test.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage of Suggestion Strategies by English Natives and Persian Natives

	English Natives		Persian Natives	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	percentage
Let's	213	40.8%	28	2.1%*
Modal	148	28.3%	224	16.9%
Wh question	34	6.5%	35	2.6%
Conditional	18	3.4%	282	21.3%*
Performative	11	2.1%	53	4%
Pseudo cleft	13	2.4%	0%	0%*
To clause	3	0.5%	220	16.6%*
Yes-no question	0	0%	79	5.9%*
Imperative	82	15.7%	398	30.1%*

As Table 1 demonstrates, regarding the type of suggestion strategies, save for "Pseudo cleft" which was not employed by Persian natives, and "yes-no questions" which was absent in English language, all the suggestion types were utilized in both languages. However English and Persian Natives varied their frequencies while making suggestions. The research findings are summarized as below:

English Natives: *Let's > Modal > Imperative > Wh-question > Conditional > Pseudo cleft > Performative > To- clause*.

Persian natives: *Imperative > Conditional > Modal> To-clause> Yes-no question > Perforamative > Wh-question > Let's*.

As the results suggest, English natives utilized let's (P=40.8%), modals (P=28.3%) and imperatives (P=15.7%), whereas their Persian counterparts applied imperative (P= 30.1%), conditional (P= 21.3%), modal (P= 16.9%) and to-clause (P= 16.6%) structures as the most common strategies. In fact, English natives utilized let's structure, whereas in the Persians' speech it is regarded as the least commonly used strategy. On the other hand, Persian speakers also apply conditionals and to-clauses as the most frequently strategies, whereas conditionals are frequently used and to-clauses are among the least preferable strategies in English language.

Moreover, the least frequently used suggestion strategies in English consist of pseudo clefts (P= 2.4%), performatives (P= 2.1%) and to-clauses (P= 0.5%), whereas Persian language involves wh-questions (P= 2.6%) and let's (P= 2.1%). English people use pseudo clefts in contrary to Persian luage which does not possess such strategy as a suggestion expression. Moreover, English people utilize performatives rarely, while Persians use this strategy quite frequently. On the other hand, English people utilize to-clauses as their least common strategy while Iranians regard it as one of their most preferable suggestions.

Generally, several noticeable areas of variations can be observed between English and Persian language such as let's, modal, conditional, pseudo cleft, to-clause, yes-no question and imperative strategies. Thus, it can be concluded that English language and Persian language demonstrate totally different patterns in production of suggestion samples.

Table 2
Chi- square Results of Iranian Suggestion Strategies Considering Gender

	Observed		Expected N		Df	χ^2	Sig
	Male	Female	Male	Female			
Let's	20	8	14.0	14.0	1	5.143	.023*
Modal	99	125	112.0	112.0	1	3.018	.082
Wh-question	22	13	17.5	17.5	1	2.314	.128
Conditional	155	127	141.0	141.0	1	2.780	.095
Performative	25	28	26.5	26.5	1	.170	.680
To clause	95	125	110.0	110.0	1	4.091	.043*
Yes-no question	30	49	39.5	39.5	1	4.570	.033*
Imperative	213	185	199.0	199.0	1	1.970	.160

As Table 2 illustrates, regarding the suggestion types and orders, both Iranian males and females utilized the similar pattern in their production of suggestions. They employed imperatives, conditionals, modals and to-clauses as the most frequent strategies and wh-questions and let's structures as the least frequent ones, though they demonstrated some variations in suggestions' frequency.

Moreover, regarding the suggestion frequencies, as Chi-square results show male and female differences were significant in three suggestion types namely let's ($x^2 = ٤.٠٩١, p < .٠٥$), to-clauses ($x^2 = ٥.١٤٢, p < .٠٥$) and yes-no questions ($x^2 = ٤.٥٧٠, p < .٠٥$). Male participants employed let's structure (N= 20) more frequently than the expected frequency (N= 14), whereas female participants used to-clauses (N= 125) and yes-no questions (N= 49) more often than its expected frequency (N=110, N= 39.5). Therefore, participants' gender proved to be a significant factor in production of suggestion expressions.

5. DISCUSSION

This study intended to explore the similarities and discrepancies between English and Persian culture in regard to suggestion speech act. Furthermore, it aimed at investigating elaborately Iranians' use of suggestions considering the variable of gender.

Regarding the first goal of study, English and Persian natives revealed some variations in their suggestion strategies. Therefore, our study results confirm previous findings in Persian language (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004; Eslami-Rasekh et al, 2010; Samar, Navidnia & Mehrani, 2010; Samavarchi et al, 2009) as well as other languages (Al-Khateeb, 2009; Belza, 2008; Felix-Brasdefer, 2008; Tang & Zhang, 2009; Wolfson, 1981; Yu, 2005) in which some variations were detected regarding two cultures .

Although in our study both groups utilized modals and imperatives as the most preferable strategies, they differed in their frequencies. Regarding the modals, English natives demonstrated more frequency, which this might refer to lack of modals' variety in Persian language. In English, natives may use modals such as must, have to, need to, should, ought to (T2K-SWAL Corpus as cited in Jiang 2006), whereas Persian natives have fewer types of modals including: can, should, and might. Thus, it seems quite logical that Iranian natives utilize them less frequently while suggesting.

Regarding the imperatives, "power distance" (Belza, 2008, p. 66) in Persian culture leads to using imperatives, though imperatives were also sometimes employed in situations in which no "power distance" was exerted. This might be clarified via 2 languages' cultural values. According to Shang-chao (2008) the Western society appreciates egalitarianism and assertiveness in contrast to non-egalitarian eastern society who value hierarchical structure and group harmony. In fact, as Eslami-Rasekh et al. (2010) indicate on the basis of category provided by

Scollon and Scollon (2001), Iranian culture is considered as the hierarchal one in which social hierarchy is assumed as a natural structure and social order should be maintained, whereas American culture works on the basis of a deference politeness system. The American society believes that the interlocutors share the equal social level and should have equal rights. On the other hand, this hierarchy is closely tied to the concept of Ehteram. Koutlaki (2002) p.1742) defines Ehteram as " Ehteram (near equivalents 'honour', 'respect', 'esteem', 'dignity') establishes the positions and statuses of the interactants with respect to one another and is shown through the adherence to the established norms of behavior according to the addressee's position, age, status and interlocutors' relationship (Goffman, 1967, p. 9 ''duty to wider social units''). Ehteram is shown among others through the use of appropriate address terms, conformity to the rules of ritual politeness (tæ'arof) and other conventions". Additionally, imperatives may be regarded as the same semantic category but pragmatically they are realized differently within 2 communities. In Persian language, regarding the situations there is "power distance", since an imperative may threaten others' face, it is softened using different mitigating devices. Facing with higher status interlocutor, Iranians used a plural form of pronoun you (Vous) as well as a plural sentence verb to offer the necessary respect for the interlocutors. Moreover, they have employed statement structures as the reasons for a suggestion and the word of please to preserve interlocutors' face. Their imperatives were softened using these types of devices. Hence, they are regarded as suitable suggestions strategies and are employed quite frequently in their suggestions. Even sometimes in their suggestions Iranians have utilized several mitigating devices simultaneously to maintain the "power distance" and the hierarchy mentioned as well as the interlocutors' face.

The variations also were observed in some other suggestion expressions namely let's, conditionals, yes-no questions, and to-clauses. English natives preferred let's structure, whereas their Persian counterparts employed conditionals, yes-no questions and to-clauses more frequently. On the basis of the studies conducted by Blum-Kulka (1982) and Liu and Zhao (2007), it can be inferred that let's may be respected as a more direct strategy, whereas conditionals, to-clauses and yes-no questions can be applied as indirect suggestion expressions. Therefore our findings confirm Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, as cited in Samar et al, 2010), Tang and Zhang (2009) and Samar et al. (2010) whose findings reported more direct strategies among target group and more indirect samples in the speech of international participants. Furthermore, our study is in contrast with Eslami-Rasekh (1993)' s findings which indirect strategies were common in two cultures. As Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, and El Bakary (2002, as cited in Allami & Naeimi, 2010; Shang-chao,

2008) indicate American culture prefers direct and explicit communication style, while Iranians tend to apply more implicit approach in their interactions. As a matter of fact, the concept of face is crucial in Iranian culture. The difference might be clarified in terms of high and low-context cultures. According to Allami and Naeimi (2010) in a high-context culture such as Iran, people care for more implicit samples rather than explicit ones, whereas in a low context culture information is mostly represented explicitly. Furthermore, English natives' frequent usage of let's utterances might be related to their culture's egalitarianism which do not regard any "power distance" and consequently, they might utilize more involvement strategies such as let's. Generally our findings confirm Tang and Zhang (2009) who regarded different cultural and linguistic systems between 2 cultures. These findings reveal the dynamic interrelationship between language and culture. Therefore, foreign language learners must be taught about the cultural similarities and variations in regard to their L1 and L2. In other words, as Wei (2005) mentions, integrating learners' home culture in EFL context is of great significance. Consequently, learners may be more aware of cultural differences between two cultures, and on the other hand, maintain their home cultural identity.

Regarding the second goal of the study, Iranian participants' gender proved to play a significant role in the production of several suggestion strategies including let's, to-clauses and yes-no questions. Therefore, our study is in line with Yousefvand (2010) and Salmani-Nodoushan (2007) who revealed significant variations between male and female Persian participants in their speech act performances. Our findings also are in contrast with those of Allami (2006), Ahangar and Amou Ali Akbari (2007), who regarded gender as an insignificant factor. Male participants utilized the direct structure of let's, whereas their female counterparts revealed more frequency in employing indirect strategies of to-clauses and yes-no questions. This can be illuminated by male and female language characteristics. Men's speech is more assertive and direct then that of women (Lakoff, 1973, 1975, as cited in Crosby & Nyquist, 1997). In fact, As Crawford (1983) posits female language is less forceful and indirect. Furthermore, men's dominant role in conversations, and women's cooperative role in their interactions who use more involvement strategies (Tannen, 1990 as cited in Lorenzo-Dus, 2001) may be a crucial factor. On the other hand, according to Holmes (1986, as cited in Yousefvand, 2010) females care more about concept of face than man do in their speech act production; therefore, they use indirect speech samples to preserve the interlocutors' face.

The study results can be discussed in terms of several implications: first, language and culture are interrelated (Belza, 2008). In fact, foreign language teachers should be equipped with necessary tools to raise awareness of learners about the necessary information regarding the 2

cultures. Consequently, a direct approach to teaching the pragmatics in the second language classrooms should be attended. Second, suggestion speech act patterns provide a useful tool for non-native learners and teachers of both cultures to detect the similarities and variation between home and target languages. Third, syllabus designers also may benefit the information regarding the production of suggestions since they should make learners cognizant of how natives realize a certain act. Next, as Karimnia and Afghari (2010) state the study findings also provide translation students and translators with socio-pragmatic information norms; and consequently they utilize such socio-pragmatic knowledge while translating from one language into another.

This small scale research of suggestion act may not extend its generalizability beyond this study, and it cannot be claimed that all types of Persian natives' suggestion expressions have been detected. Therefore, further studies need to be conducted. Second, since the research data was gleaned via DCTs, ethnographical methods are required to provide more in-depth data regarding suggestion speech act. Moreover, other social variables such as age, social class, educational background as well as contextual factors such as social distance and power may be attended.

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