

Request Strategies Used by Persian Couples in Two Different Settings

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Abstract

Performing the request speech act which has a significant position in daily conversations and interactions, needs sufficient knowledge of the request strategies. In order to have a meaningful and purposeful communication, the speaker should know about some factors, such as social power, social distance, and imposition. This study aimed at examining Iranian couples' use of request strategies in their interactions in private mode and public mode. To achieve this goal, 30 couples were selected and their conversations with each other in the two settings were recorded. Then, to complement the gathered data, a discourse completion test (DCT) was distributed among the couples in order to elicit their answers regarding which request strategies they usually use in any situation. The data were then coded based on the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) model and frequencies and percentages of the strategies used by the couples in the two settings were calculated. The results of the study revealed that Persian couples perform direct request strategies more than other types of request strategies in their loneliness. Moreover, it was indicated that Persian couples use conventional indirect requests in the presence of others. The results of the current study suggest that presence of others can influence couples' choice of request strategies in their conversation with their spouses. The implications of this study may be useful for language teachers, syllabus designers, and curriculum developers.

Keywords: Couple Interactions, Persian Couples, Pragmatic Competence, Request Strategies, Speech acts

1. Introduction

The use of a second language (L2) to communicate effectively is one of the permanent ends in learning that language for many L2 learners, and it has mostly been assumed that successful L2 acquisition happens in L2 contexts. As the primary goals of language learning are to master the language and develop several competences, the goal of teaching is to improve communicative purposes (Morley, 1994). According to MacIntyre and Charos (1996), communication with the purpose of valuable interaction and high level of pragmatic competence is an essential part of L2 learning. Koike (1989) defined pragmatic competence specifically as "the speaker's knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness which dictate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts" (p. 279). Therefore, identifying the types of speech acts that should be used by learners is crucial to examining the elements that enhance language learners' chances to use language to make interaction and acquire language through meaningful conversation (Riahi, Mobini, & Aliasin, 2018).

It should be mentioned that investigations of request strategies have attracted much attention in recent years. Searle's (1969) classification of illocutionary acts (i.e., representatives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declaratives), has put requests under the third category, known as directives. Directives are that class of speech acts through which the speaker makes the hearer do something. Using the appropriate types of requests by learners to make purposeful communication and meaningful interaction is one of the problematic areas in language learning. In recent years, requests have been viewed as one of the most commonly explored speech acts in both interlanguage and cross-cultural studies (Jalilifar & Molavi, 2008). Researchers interested in cross-cultural pragmatics have analyzed speech acts across different

languages to investigate whether there are the same global pragmatic principles in the realization of speech acts and if so, what characteristics these universals might have (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 1999). However, the Iranian couples' use of request strategies have not been explored yet. More significantly, it is not clear whether they make use of the same or different request strategies in different settings. As the context of communication can influence types of pragmatic strategies and several kinds of request and speech acts, the investigation of these strategies can be useful to show which strategies to use where. As such, the purpose of the current study was to understand how request strategies are used by Persian couples when they are alone (private mode) and when they are interacting in the presence of others (public mode). In line with the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What request strategies are mostly used by Persian couples in the private mode?
2. What request strategies are mostly used by Persian couples in the public mode?
3. What are the differences between the request strategies used by Persian couples in their interactions in the private and the public modes?

2. Literature Review

In pragmatic competence, recognition and understanding of speech acts in an utterance is of great importance. It is necessary for learners to master the rules and conditions governing the use of speech acts in order to prevent the problem of misunderstanding either of the meaning or function of what is said by the speaker (Memarian, 2012). As White (1993) states, "attempts at being polite can come unstuck through unwitting violation of speech act rules, so that although an utterance is grammatically well formed, it may be functionally confusing or contextually inappropriate" (p. 193).

Koike (1989) argues that the “speech act of request is particularly important to investigate in L2 learners since most of their future interaction with native speakers of L2, if there is any at all, will probably take place in the form of requests” (p. 280). In the same vein, Jalilifar (2009) states that requests have received great popularity in the last decades’ research. Regarding the main reasons for popularity of request strategies, Kahraman and Akkuş (2007) lay emphasis on the views that look at requesting as a social transaction. Moreover, requests are necessary and they happen frequently, more particularly among learners of a new language. Ellis (1994) defined requests as “an attempt on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to perform or to stop performing some kind of action” (p. 167). According to Searle’s (1969) order of illocutionary performs, requests belong to the classification of directives, which are expressed as “an attempt to get the hearer to do an act which the speaker wants and which it is not obvious that hearer will do in the normal course of events of hearer’s own accord” (p. 66).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), requests are the acts in which both the speaker’s and hearer’s features are at risk, because “by performing a request, the talker influences on the hearer’s claim to freedom of action and freedom from encumbrance” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 201). In order to decrease the encumbrance, talkers tend to apply extra indirect request strategies which seem more pleasant and protect the hearer’s face. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain represented three important levels of directness of request strategies: a) the most direct, explicit level, obtained by requests syntactically identified like imperatives, performatives, and “hedged performatives”; b) the conventionally indirect level, that is, systems that recognize the performance by indicating the contextual preconditions required for its appearance, as conventionalized in a presented language; c) nonconventional indirect level, that is, the open-ended collection of indirect strategies (hints) that actualize the request by either

incomplete reference to the object or component needed for the implementation of the act (e.g., “Why is the window open?”), or by dependence on contextual evidence (e.g., “It's cold in here.”).

Speech acts have been studied by some researchers (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1984; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Jalilifar, Hashemian, & Tabatabaee, 2011). Blum-Kulka (1984), for example, studied the use of request strategies by adult learners of Hebrew, adult native speakers of Hebrew, and adult English native speakers. The examination of the participants' answers to a DCT consisting of 17 scenarios showed that both native speakers and learners were sympathetic to the setting and interpersonal relationships which was seen in the choice of the strategies they used in each dialogue. However, the use of strategies by learners was systematically different from that of native speakers. Another insight from the study was that learners preferred less direct forms than native speakers which, according to the author, is “partly due to transfer of social norms, but in some cases it may also be due to reluctance on the part of the speaker to express emotion directly in a language over which he does not have full control” (Blum-Kulka, 1984, p. 212). Moreover, in one of the most extensive cross-cultural comparisons of pragmatic competence, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) examined the understanding patterns of requests and apologies by native and non-native lecturers. They concentrated on three distinct types of variability: situational, cross-cultural, and individual variability for which they employed a DCT and the typology of request models. The consequences of their research showed rich cross-cultural variability and indicated that the accomplishment of speech acts is strictly correlated with the interaction between situational and cultural circumstances.

In Iran, Jalilifar, Hashemian, and Tabatabaee (2011) through a cross-sectional study investigated the use of request strategies by Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners and foreign native speakers of English. The findings showed that, as far as social dominance was concerned, the EFL learners displayed closer performance to the native speakers. But with regard to social distance, many contrasts were observed between the types of request methods accomplished by the native speakers and those employed by Iranian EFL learners. Furthermore, Ebadi and Seidi (2015) examined Iranian EFL learners' request preferences and tried to find whether gender and proficiency levels play a role in the pragmatic choices of the learners. They concluded that proficiency level and gender are effective in participants' use of request strategies. The participants in high proficiency level adopted the indirect strategies in their production which indicates that linguistic development is effective in the use of request strategies. Moreover, it was indicated that females tend to use more indirect strategies. In another study, Yazdanfar and Bonyadi (2016) explored the request strategies used in daily communications of Persian and English speakers. English and Persian TV animation and films were used to gather the data which consisted of written types of requests. The results of the study showed that Persian and English speakers use a variety of request strategies such as direct and indirect types of requests which show the politeness and formality (or in some cases informality) in the communication. Review of the literature suggests that request strategies used by native and non-native speakers of English have been greatly studied; however, the Iranian couples' use of request strategies has not been explored yet. More significantly, it is not clear whether they make use of the same or different request strategies with and without others in their community.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and falls mainly within the interpretative paradigm. The researchers tried to figure out the types of request strategies used by Iranian couples which required qualitative data analysis. It also involved quantitative statistical analysis for comparing the request strategies employed by the participants.

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study were 30 Iranian couples (60 people) who were selected through convenient sampling. Based on the nature of the study, the participants should have given the researchers access to their conversations with their spouses. However, many couples do not agree to attend such studies. Due to this limitation, the researchers had to use convenient sampling. The first researcher selected the couples whom she knew so that she could easily gather data in various situations. Finally, 30 couples (30 male and 30 female), with the age range of 20 to 50 accepted to attend the study. It should be mentioned that all the participants were Iranian educators with at least Bachelor degrees in different fields of education.

3.3 Instruments

Two instruments were used to gather the data for answering the three questions of the study. Conversation recordings constituted the first of these two instruments. The data were gathered through recording 30 Iranian couples' conversations performed in two different settings, that is, when they were alone and when they communicated in the presence of others. At least 10 sessions (each lasting at least 30 minutes) of the conversations between each couple were recorded. Half of the situations recorded were related to when the couples were alone and half

to when other people were present. All utterances in which requests were used were written word by word and came into transcription forms. The corpus was authentic and gathered in natural settings in which the couples communicated with each other. The unit of analysis was limited to the types of request strategies and the other speech acts were excluded from the final analysis.

The second instrument was a discourse completion test (DCT) prepared by the researchers and used to gather more data on the request strategies employed by the couples participating in this study. A DCT consists of a one-sided role play containing a situational prompt which is used to elicit the responses of another participant. This type of instrument was originally developed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). This test was used in pragmatics research to study speech acts and find the medium between naturally-occurring speech and scripted speech acts. This test consists of scripted dialogue representing various scenarios, preceded by a short prompt describing the setting and situation. The prompt generally includes information on social distance between participants and pre-event background to aid the participant in constructing the scenarios. The DCT in this study consisted of two parts, each consisting of ten scenarios. One of the two parts was related to when the couples are alone and one to when they are not. The scenarios were similar in the two parts and they focused on the power of imposition in each request. In order to make request strategies tangible and accessible, the researchers selected ten scenarios among twenty-two scenarios closely related to the couples' life and ordinary problems. The reason for choosing these scenarios was the accessibility and tangibility of the topics for these couples. Some of these scenarios were as follows:

- You are sitting in the hall and you need a plate. You see your spouse standing in the kitchen.
How would you ask him/her to give you a plate?

- You are studying at home. Your spouse opens the window and the cold wind blows right into your face and bothers you. You want to ask him/her to close it. What would you say?
- Your daughter has told you that you need to meet her teacher. But, you are busy the next day and cannot go to school. How would you ask your spouse to go to school.
- You need some money very urgently and you know your spouse has the money. You want to borrow the money and you are almost sure that you cannot pay it back in a short time. What would you say?

To ensure the validity of the DCT as much as possible, the scenarios used in other DCTs in the literature on request strategies were closely examined. Moreover, the everyday topics discussed among couples were listed (22 scenarios) and discussed with five couples to make sure that the listed topics were among the frequent topics about which the couples normally talk and make requests. Then, 12 of these 22 scenarios were randomly selected to be included in the DCT. In addition, to check the reliability of the DCT, prior to its use in the main phase of the study, it was administered to 10 couples and based on their responses, the reliability was calculated (0.74).

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

First, the participants were selected from couples who were familiar and near to the first researcher. Then, conversations between the couples were recorded in the two different settings, that is, when they were alone and when they were in the presence of others. Next, the DCT was prepared and was given to the couples in order to triangulate the data. After the completion of this test, the types of request strategies used by the couples and also those reported to be used in the DCT were coded based on the order introduced by Blum-Kulka

(1984). In coding the data, all requestive utterances used in each of the two settings were placed under appropriate categories, and the frequencies for each of the categories were calculated. In/directness of requests and politeness were originally motivated by the work carried out within a project investigating realization patterns of requests and apologies in different languages (the CCSARP project'). CCSARP stands for Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns by Blum-Kulka (1984). CCSARP studies requests and apologies by following the same coding scheme for the analysis of perceived variation in both speech acts. The application of the same coding scheme for the examination of patterns in different languages is meant to secure cross-linguistic comparability. For requests, one of the central categories on the coding scheme is the classification of request patterns in terms of a scale consisting of three levels which include the Direct Level (Explicit Performative, Hedge Performative), Conventional Indirect Level (Query Preparatories), and Non-Conventional Indirect Level (Mild Hints). Table 1 presents these categories along with examples for each category from the data of the present study. The data were also categorized based on the used external and internal mitigation devices (if any), and the frequency of their occurrence was calculated.

Table 1.*Classification of Request Patterns based on Blum-Kulka (1984)*

Descriptive Category	Explanation	Examples
Direct Level Explicit Performative Hedge Performative Want Statement	The most direct, explicit level, realized by requests syntactically marked such as imperatives, performatives and 'hedged performatives'	پس ماکارونیم بخر! دو کیلو بخر! حالا یکم سالاد ماکارونی برای من درست کن!
Conventional Indirect Level Mild Hints	The conventionally indirect level; procedures that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language;	میشه خواهش کنم وقتی داری برمیگردی یه کیلو شیر هم بخری؟ اگر دیدی سنگینه از پارسا کمک بگیر باشه؟
Non-Conventional Indirect Level Query Preparatories	The nonconventional indirect level, i.e. the open-ended group of indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by either partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act ('Why is the window open'), or by reliance on contextual clues ('It's cold in here').	شما عکسشو گرفتین نشونش دادین (معنا : ببرین نشون بدین) حالا شما خودتون میدونین میخواین تلفنشونو بدم برین بگیرین با یکی بفرسته براتون بیاره دم در (معنا: من شماره رو رو خودتون انجام بدین) میدم بقیه کارها

The typology of request patterns listed in Table 1 was based on Blum-Kulka (1984). The scale is based on assuming degrees of illocutionary transparency. Additionally, the notion of (in) directness, when applied to speech acts, is taken to match the relative length of the inferential path needed to arrive at an utterance's illocutionary point. Thus, the more "indirect" the mode of realization, the higher the interpretive demands on the hearer will be. In the case of requests, probably more than in other speech acts, it is possible to identify the devices that distinguish between levels of indirectness. The request patterns considered as the most direct or transparent are the ones in which the requestive force is either identified syntactically or indicated explicitly, as in Imperatives and Performatives. Between these two extremes are patterns that derive their relative transparency either from conventions in the wording of the speech act, such as Hedged Performatives or from indirectness which is divided into two categories of

conventional indirect level and non-conventional indirect level. The first category includes nonconventional indirect level, for instance, the open-ended group of indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by either partial reference to the object or element needed for the implementation of the act (e.g., “Why is the window open?”), or by reliance on contextual clues (e. g., “It's cold in here.”). The second category consists of the conventionally indirect level; procedures that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language such as "We have guests today" by means of "Please help me." These two indirectness categories regarding the semantic contents, by social convention, count as potential requests, such as Obligation and Want Statements and Suggestory Formulae.

3.5. Data Analysis

The collected data were coded according to Blum-Kulka's (1984) coding model. Frequencies and percentages of the couples' use of each strategy type based on both recordings and the DCT results in both settings were calculated to answer the first two questions. Finally, to answer the third question, the frequencies of the strategy types used in the two settings were compared with each other qualitatively.

4. Results

4.1 The Request Strategies Used in Couples' Private Mode

This study used the DCT, which contains a set of very briefly described situations to elicit requests orally or in writing. In this study, the researcher used it to elicit request orally. In order to achieve the goals of the study, twelve situations which reflected the everyday lives of the Persian couples were selected. Then, the couples were asked to complement the DCT

together. In addition, each couple's voices were recorded both separately and in the presence of others for at least ten 30-minute sessions. After this part, all of the voices were transcribed and the frequencies of request strategy types in the recorded voices and also in the DCT were analyzed by one of the researchers and a third person. They were coded using the CCSARP coding manual. Finally, an average was computed for the frequencies based on recorded data and those based on DCT responses. In addition the percentage of each strategy type to all the requests being made in the recorded data was calculated. The first research question addressed the types of request strategies the couples used in the private mode. The average frequencies of these strategy types through the two data collection procedures (i.e., voice recordings and DCT) in addition to the percentages of each strategy type to all the requests performed in the private mode (i.e., 152 requests) are shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Request Strategies Used by the Persian couples in the Private Mode

Descriptive Category	Frequency in Private Mode	Total Request Statements of the transcriptions	Percentage	Examples in Private Mode
Direct Level	115	152	75.65%	پس ماکارونیم بخر! دو کیلو بخر! حالا یکم سالاد ماکارونی برای من درست کن!
Conventional Indirect Level	2	152	1.31 %	میشه خواهش کنم وقتی داری برمیگردی به کیلو شیر هم بخری؟ اگر دیدی سنگینه از پارسا کمک بگیر باشه؟
Non-Conventional Indirect Level	35	152	23.07%	شما عکسشو گرفتین نشونش دادین (معنا : ببرین نشون بدین) حالا شما خودتون میدونین میخواین تلفنشونو بدم برین بگیرین با یکی بفرسته براتون بیاره دم در (معنا: من شماره رو میدم بقیه کار هارو خودتون انجام بدین)
Total	152	152	100%	

According to Table 2, the results of the first question revealed that Persian couples performed direct requests more than other types of request strategies in their loneliness. They used direct strategies in 75.65 percent of the cases they made requests. This directness can be regarded as imperatives verbs that are used more than performative verbs to make requests and that are perceived as the most direct strategies and Hints which can be considered as the least direct ones. The results showed that of the two indirect request strategies, non-conventional indirect strategies were used more than conventional indirect strategies. Non-conventional indirect strategies occurred 23.07 percent of the time while conventional indirect strategies happened 1.31 percent.

4.2 The Request Strategies Used in Couples' Public Mode

Regarding the second question, which focused on the request strategies mostly used by Persian couples in the presence of others (i.e., the public mode), the same procedure as the one taken to answer the first question was followed and finally the average frequencies were computed for each strategy type. The whole number of requests made by the couples in the public mode were 95. The results are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3.*Request Strategies Used by the Persian couples in the Public Mood*

Descriptive Category	Frequency in Public Mode	Total Request Statements of the transcriptions	Percentage Of usage in Public Mode	Examples In Public Mode
Direct Level	15	95	15.79%	پس ماکارونیم بخر! دو کیلو بخر! حالا یکم سالاد ماکارونی برای من درست کن!
Conventional Indirect Level	40	95	42.10 %	میشه خواهش کنم وقتی داری برمیگردی به کیلو شیر هم بخری؟ اگرم دیدی سنگینه از پارسا کمک بگیر باشه؟
Non-Conventional Indirect Level	40	95	42.10%	شما عکسشو گرفتین نشونش دادین) معنا : ببرین نشون بدین)
Total	95	95	100%	

Based on Table 3, Persian couples used conventional and non-conventional indirect strategies equally (42.1% each) and noticeably more than the direct level (15.79%). On the whole, 84.20% of the request strategies used by the couples were indirect and less than one-fifth of them were direct.

4.1.3 Differences between the Request Strategies Used in Couples' Private and Public Mode

To answer the third question which dealt with the differences between the types of request strategies the Iranian couples used in their interactions in the two private and public modes, the frequencies and percentages used to interpret the previous two questions were compared with each other. Comparison of the frequencies in Table 2 and Table 3 indicated that in the private mode, the majority of the strategies employed to make requests were direct whereas in the public mode more than 80 percent of the strategies used were indirect. Based on the results, in

the private mode, the direct level was the mostly used level which occurred more than 50 percent of the time. On the other hand, the conventional indirect level was the least employed level happening in less than two percent of the situations. In the public mode, however, the two indirect levels happened with the same frequency and constituted together 84.2 percent of the all the requests made in this mode. Thus, the least occurring level in this mode was the direct level which was used only 15.79 percent of the cases. Based on the comparisons made here, it became evident that presence of others has a great impact on the types of strategies couples use to communicate with each other.

5. Discussion

According to the results of the study, Persian couples perform and accomplish direct requests more than other types of request strategies in interacting with their spouses when no one else is present. On the other hand, in the presence of others, the couples prefer to use indirect request strategies (whether conventional or non-conventional). The results, thus, indicated that the context in which the couple interactions happen influences the strategy types they use to request each other. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the presence of others as a factor which can lead to more formality of the context leads to the choice of more indirect strategies.

The first finding of the study showed the preference of direct over indirect request strategies by Iranian couples in the private mode. This preference can be attributed to the informality of the context in which the couples make requests. In this regard, the results are in line with the study of Blum Kulka (1987) and Blum Kulka and Olshtain (1984). In addition, the results confirm the finding by Hussein and Alakbari (2019) who showed that language speakers try to

use direct types of requests where the people are in the same social distance or have familiarity about the context and subject. Moreover, the results are consistent with the studies by Barron (2016) and Hesam and Bemani (2017), as they have shown that people use direct strategies in more informal contexts based on their relationships. Nonetheless, the results are in contrast with Clark (1979)'s report that people use non-direct strategies more than direct strategies in private conditions.

The results related to this question also showed that the couples used non-conventional indirect strategies much more than conventional indirect strategies which suggests that, as Clark (1979) has found, conventionality is an important factor in choosing the request strategies in the private mode. Therefore, the results of the study revealed that Persian couples use off records and non-conventional indirectness to talk about their wants and make requests in private conversations. According to Clark, in responding to information-seeking questions, phrased either as "Can you tell me ...?" or as "Are you able to tell me ...?" respondents were more likely to comply with the request for information only (and disregard the literal meaning) when the conventional "Can you ...?" form was used. In requests, conventional indirectness seems distinct from non-conventional indirectness by a shift in the balance between these two factors. In conventional indirectness, properties of the utterance play the more dominant role, while in non-conventional indirectness pragmatic context is probably as, if not more, important. In other words, as noted by Brown and Levinson (1987) 'off record', non-conventional indirectness is not different from any other kind of indirectness in discourse, and its process of interpretation

should be sought within psychological and pragmatic theories of inferencing (Clark, 1979; Dascal, 1983; Sperber & Wilson, 1982).

The results regarding the second question indicated that in the public mode the couples use indirect strategies noticeably more than direct strategies. It can be concluded that for the couples probably the issue of indirectness is related to politeness, causing the couples to use more indirect strategies to seem more polite in the presence of others. This pattern of usage is in line with the study of Megaiab, Wijana, and Munandar (2019) which showed that language speakers address their issues more politely in indirect ways. The results also conform to the findings by Sipjora and Lynch (2019) who observed that conventional indirect requests are employed by the majority of language speakers. In addition, based on the results, in the public mode the couples used conventional and non-conventional strategies with the same frequency. This shows that for the couples, conventionality was not important in the public mode while it was important in the private mode. In the private mode, they used non-conventional strategies much more than the conventional ones.

The last finding of the study indicated that the choice of strategy types by the couples varies from the private mode to the public mode. The results showed that Persian couples can adapt their request strategies based on their contexts and settings. The study, thus, confirms the role of context in determining the strategy types used by users of a language to communicate appropriately and effectively. In this respect, the study supports other studies, such as Hashemian and Farhang (2017), Helenko (2017), Tanto (2018), and Alshakhi (2019), which showed that the types of requests can differ from one context to another. The results of the study were in accordance with many other recent findings (e.g., Barron, 2016; Daskalovska et

al., 2016; Dong et al., 2020; Hesam & Bemani, 2017). For example, the results of the study of Dong et al (2020) showed that request strategies are related to the selection of speech acts and politeness of the learners. In line with this, the results of the study revealed that request strategies were different in terms of private or public mode. In other words, Persian couples used more indirect and polite strategies in the public mode. According to Yazdanfar and Bonyadi (2016), the variation of linguistics and pragmatic features are very important to affect the communication. In this regard, the results of the study show various pragmatic and linguistic features in terms of Persian couples.

The analysis of the participants' responses demonstrated that Persian couples were sensitive to the setting and interpersonal relationships which was seen in the choice of the strategies they used in each dialogue. The use of strategies in the private mode was highly different from those in the public mode. The insight from the study is that in the public mode the couples prefer less direct forms of requests than in the private mode. This may be "partly due to transfer of social norms, but in some cases it may also be due to reluctance on the part of the speaker to express emotion directly in a language over which he does not have full control" (Dong et al., 2020, p. 47). Opposite findings were reported in the study conducted by House and Kasper (1981) who investigated the use of request strategies by Persian speakers of English and native English speakers. As a result of using more direct strategies in the private mode, Persian Speakers of English were considered less polite in the realization of the speech act of requests.

6. Conclusion

One of the objectives of this study was to find out which request strategies are mostly used by Persian couples when they are alone. The results revealed that Persian couples perform direct requests more than other types of request strategies in their loneliness. The second objective was to examine the request strategies that are mostly used by Persian couples in the presence of others and it was found that Persian couples mostly use conventional and non-conventional indirect request strategies in presence of others. Finally, considering the last objective which was to see whether the presence of others has any significant effect on the choice of request strategies by Persian couples, the result indicated that the presence of others can influence the request strategies used by Persian couples. According to the results, the number of direct strategies decreases in presence of others and Persian couples try to use conventional and non-conventional indirect strategies more. Thus, in order to use indirectness strategies, these Persian couples perform more performative verbs than imperative verbs.

This study has some fruitful and tangible pedagogical implications for language teachers, EFL learners, and material developers. Firstly, language teachers should do their best to enhance students' pragmatic competence and classroom engagement by incorporating more request strategies. If language learners are well pragmatically supported, they would not feel confused and mistreated in their communication and conversation. As long as EFL teachers do not concern themselves with EFL students' request strategies and pragmatic competence and do not engage students in an active conversation, the constructive process of making interaction for learning and monitoring, regulating, and controlling cognition, motivation and behavior, they fail to create a constructive atmosphere which can enhance students' request strategies.

Low request opportunities in classroom talk can be overcome by teachers' attempts to create various situations for the learners to practice the use of request strategies. A learner who is afflicted with low usage of request strategies is generally brittle and would fail to pursue academic career meaningfully. Given this, it is highly recommended that more and more request and pragmatic strategies be incorporated in language classes. The findings of this study might also provide assistance to learners in the performance of the request speech act by emphasizing the role of context in language use and identifying the strategy types mostly used in each setting. The results can, in fact, contribute to learners' pragmatic awareness, in general, and awareness of the appropriate employment of request strategies, in particular. In addition, the findings seem to have implications for coursebook designers and material developers encouraging them to incorporate in the teaching materials more about the speech acts, including request strategies.

This study had several shortcomings that need to be taken into consideration when making generalizations about the findings. Pragmatic competence is the main concept of the study; however, this study limited itself to couples' use of request strategies. Moreover, the number of participants was limited to 30 couples and these couples were non-randomly selected. Additionally, the age of the participants was not taken into account although the results might be affected by personal factors, including the age of the participants.

On the basis of the above-mentioned limitations of the present study and also its findings, the following research topics can be suggested to be investigated by other researchers. Other studies are recommended to examine couples' implementation and interpretation of other

speech acts. Furthermore, since the sample of the present study was not large enough, additional studies with higher numbers of participants are suggested to verify the findings of the present investigation with more generalizability. Moreover, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to explore the role of request strategies in enhancing students' meaningful conversation and language competencies. Future studies should clarify whether request strategies have any possible impact on students' language skills (e.g., productive vocabulary use, reading comprehension, or listening ability). In addition, future studies can attempt to clarify whether request strategies have any facilitative impact on EFL learners' critical thinking and cognition-based communication. Furthermore, it would be interesting to determine the potential correlation between learners' successful use of request strategies and important affective factors, such as willingness to communicate.

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