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**Research Article**

# Intercultural Pragmatics and Language Pedagogy: Speech Act Strategies among Iranian Male and Female EFL Learners

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**Abstract**
Speech acts are essential for effective communication, yet research has largely focused on cross-cultural variation, with limited attention to how non-native English speakers use them in multilingual, intercultural contexts. This study investigates the speech acts of suggestion, promise, and persuasion in English by analyzing the tactics utilized by a cohort of Iranian non-native speakers at Near East University in Cyprus. It specifically examines the production and perception of these behaviors, highlighting the potential impact of gender on communication methods. The study also aims to contribute to pedagogical understanding of pragmatic competence in English language education by examining how culturally shaped speech act strategies may influence communication in a multilingual learning environment. A cohort of Iranians completed a questionnaire and engaged in a structured follow-up interview. Responses were examined according to three categories for each speech act and were additionally classified based on the respondents' gender, employing a coding scheme specifically designed for speech act analysis. The findings indicate that Iranian non-native speakers of English employ directive methods rather than indirect ones. Male participants had a greater propensity to employ directive methods during interactions with females, signifying a gender-based disparity in the execution of speech acts. This study elucidates distinctive patterns in speech acts and enhances comprehension of their production and perception in cross-cultural contexts, thereby augmenting knowledge in pragmatics and establishing a foundation for further research on culturally influenced communication strategies. These results highlight the pedagogical need to develop learners' awareness of gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate communication strategies in English.

**Keywords:** Promise, Suggestion, Persuasion, Speech Act, Language Pedagogy

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental human action occurring within a context of linguistic, cultural, and social elements (Kurmanbekova et al., 2023). Among the complex components of communication, speech acts hold a major position because they reflect what utterances are intended to achieve and their impacts on interlocutors (Alshraah et al., 2024). Speech act theory has its roots in Austin's 1962 work and Searle's 1969 work, explaining how speakers perform requests, apologies, and persuasion with language (Smith, 2010). Speech acts depend on the situation, and their execution depends on sociocultural convention, interpersonal relationships, and intention. For example, promising shows commitment to future action regarding the reliability and responsibility of a speaker (Egner, 2006). The speech act of suggestion presents an idea or advice to be conducive to the benefit of the listener, thus calling for tact and sensitivity to save interpersonal relationships (Alfghe & Mohammadzadeh, 2021). Understanding speech acts is essential in language education because pragmatic competence constitutes a major component of communicative competence in EFL and ESL classrooms. Whereas persuasion, the more difficult of these acts, aims at changing beliefs and/or behavior, often by a conscious act of language use designed to appeal to ethos, pathos, or logos (Amakali, 2016). Knowledge of ways such acts are performed and interpreted across

particular social contexts offer both sides of valuable insight into communication-cultural and linguistic differences therein (Morley et al., 1996). These speech acts frequently occur in classroom interaction, academic discussion, peer collaboration, and teacher-student communication, making them highly relevant for language pedagogy.

One of the effective factors, which has been identified in a relationship with communication styles and strategies, is gender (Wood-Downie et al., 2021). Previous research undertaken from a sociolinguistics and pragmatics standpoint has shown that male and female speakers often differ from each other in their ways of using language. These differences reflect expectations flowing from their sociocultural roles (Coates, 2015). While female speakers are commonly associated with cooperative and rapport-building strategies, men are often connected to assertive and status-oriented models of communication. Such generalizations, however, are not across the board and may vary significantly across cultures. Awareness of gender-based pragmatic variation can help language teachers develop more culturally responsive and inclusive communicative practices in multilingual classrooms. In Persian-speaking contexts, gender roles and expectations are deeply embedded in sociocultural norms that may influence the realization of speech acts (Keshtiari & Kuhlmann, 2016).

The current study aims to enrich the ever-growing literature on cross-cultural pragmatics with an investigation into the performance and perception of the speech acts of promising, suggestion, and persuasion by Iranian university students. By focusing on Iranian non-native speakers of English in a foreign setting, this study explores in detail how these acts would be adapted or modified due to relevant cultural and situational variables. Such multilingual educational environments provide valuable insight into how EFL learners develop pragmatic competence through intercultural exposure and authentic communication. It also looks at how much gender is a determining factor in the strategies used by both male and female speakers in performing these acts. Added to that is the foreign context in which speakers will have to negotiate not just cultural differences but intercultural communication challenges as well. Although Persian cultural norms can be the staple of their speech act strategies, exposure to the foreign environment could lead to new ways of speaking or hybrid strategies. This is another level of the interplay between cultural identity and adaptation that calls for an analysis of speech acts in context among speakers operating in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

More precisely, the research is of a pragmatic approach, putting the main stress on the interaction between the linguistic form, the intention of the speaker, and the listener's interpretation. The study, then, pursues the aspects related to both production and perception while identifying the specifics of speech acts' realization and their perception by Iranian university students. Such an approach brings up the holistic view of pragmatic competence, highlighting how individuals deal with managing communication across cultures. This perspective highlights the importance of integrating explicit pragmatics instruction into English language teaching programs to improve learners' communicative effectiveness.

Key purposes of the research include seeking to identify the strategies, exactly, employed in three speech acts: promising, suggestion, and persuasion, as carried out by Iranian non-native speakers of English, the differences in their employable usage strategies according to speaker sex towards highlighting differences in men-women interactions based on speaking power, and the use made towards examining how the three actions, under study, will turn out in a foreign speech environment, highlighting what alterations the sociocultural contingencies effect in pragmatic behavior.

By addressing these goals, therefore, the research will contribute towards the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication. These findings ought to have an impact both on the understanding of gender and/or culture's contribution to determining pragmatic competence and on teaching cross-cultural communicative discourse and language more effectively. More specifically, this may be useful in teaching either Iranian non-native speakers of English or in offering a platform for language programs that focus on practical teaching. The findings may contribute to curriculum design, teacher education, and classroom practices that aim to improve intercultural communicative competence and pragmatic awareness among EFL learners.

In sum, the analysis of pragmatic speech acts like promising, suggestion, and persuasion provides a means of gaining insight into a complex interplay in the triangle of language, culture, and gender. Particular attention to Iranian non-native speakers of English in a foreign context will provide a unique perspective on the realization and perception of these acts in intercultural settings. By investigating the relationship

between gender and cultural standards on communicative strategies, the article contributes to a deeper interpretation of human interaction and continues to grow the broader-based discourse on cross-cultural pragmatics.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatic speech acts have widely been of interest in linguistics, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication studies. As Austin put it in 1962, and Searle later developed in 1969, speech acts mean performing actions with utterances, requesting, apologizing, promising, suggesting, among others (Salzborn, 2016). Speech acts are very vital in human interaction since they reflect the intention of the speaker and the cultural norms behind the communication (Streeck, 1980). This literature review is an overview of the theoretical and empirical grounds for speech act theory in general and promising, suggestion, and persuasion in particular. It also encompasses the realm of gender in pragmatic competence and considers any cross-cultural studies relevant to Persian non-native speakers of English contexts. In language education, speech act competence is considered a central component of pragmatic competence because learners must understand not only grammatical forms but also the socially appropriate use of language in authentic communication.

Austin worked on speech act theory that initially distinguished between locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, showing how utterances are used to perform certain functions. In 1969, Searle developed a classification of speech acts into assertive, directives, commissure, expressive, and declarations (Fish, 1976). The speech acts of promising, suggestion, and persuasion fall into these categories, which involve varying degrees of speaker intention, listener interpretation, and social appropriateness. Promising falls in the category of a commissive, which commits the speaker to be going to take a later course of action. Pragmatically, among the felicity conditions we might include in promising in an analysis is that the speaker intends to carry the action out, and that the recipient believes the speaker so intends (Black, Max, 2014). Suggestions would be directive acts of advising or proposing and would most often need tact and culturally sensitive ways to make such acts polite in maintaining interpersonal harmony (Shofwan & Mujiyanto, 2018). Persuasion, less explicitly treated in classical speech act theory, is a set of strategies to affect the listener's beliefs or actions. It is studied within the context of rhetoric and argumentation; it draws on ethos, pathos, and logos as persuasive appeals (Suryandani & Budasi, 2022). These speech acts are context-dependent, requiring speakers to navigate social relationships, power dynamics, and cultural norms to ensure effective communication. Previous studies in EFL pedagogy have emphasized that explicit instruction of speech acts can enhance learners' intercultural communicative competence, classroom interaction skills, and awareness of contextually appropriate language use.

### 2.1. Cultural and Contextual Influences on Speech Acts

Cross-cultural pragmatics emphasizes the differences in the execution of speech acts among various languages and cultures. The CCSARP, developed by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, empirically shows the influence of sociocultural norms on the execution of speech acts, including requests and apologies (Östman & Verschueren, 2022). Other research has also investigated how context affects speakers' choices of linguistic forms and techniques to achieve their communication objectives. Speech acts among Persian non-native English speakers reflect cultural ideals of politeness, indirectness, and deference to social hierarchies (Alavi & Zare, 2023). Eslami-Rasekh noted that Persian non-native English speakers employ complex politeness methods, prioritizing honorifics and indirectness to preserve face (Eslami et al., 2023). These findings indicate that the methods of suggestion and persuasion employed by Persian non-native speakers of English may differ from those of other linguistic groups, particularly in international contexts. Understanding these culturally shaped pragmatic patterns is important for English language teachers because learners may transfer sociocultural norms from their first language into EFL communication contexts.

Another significant aspect to examine in the study of speech acts is intercultural pragmatics. It examines how individuals navigate communicative challenges in multicultural and multilingual contexts. According to Cogo and House, effective intercultural communication presupposes an ability to recognize and switch between different pragmatic norms—a kind of "pragmatic flexibility"(Cogo & House, 2017).

The latter might be of particular significance for Iranian university students while managing speech acts of promising, suggestion, and persuasion in an English context. Kecskes and Zhang's use of the term "intercultural pragmatics" suggests meaning is obtained through co-development by the interlocutors along different aspects of cultures (Kecskes, 2020). Observably, during such an event in communication, the speakers negotiate between grammatical forms and strategies for mutual consideration, but in actual practice, these most often give way to the birth and crystallization of hybrid approaches toward communication. Therefore, this will go a step further in emphasizing the need to investigate any possible variation that Persian non-native speakers of English may reveal in their accommodative speech act strategies toward English contexts. From a pedagogical perspective, intercultural pragmatics can help language educators design classroom activities that improve learners' pragmatic flexibility, intercultural awareness, and context-sensitive communication skills. These insights highlight the importance of integrating intercultural communicative competence and pragmatics-based instruction into contemporary ELT curricula, particularly in multilingual educational settings.

### 2.2. Gender and Pragmatic Competence

It has long been the central focus in sociolinguistics and pragmatics how far males and females differ in their communication styles and strategies. According to Rachmawati, men and women usually adopt different conversational styles, men adopting an assertive and competitive, women a rapport and cooperation-oriented type of communicational strategy (Rachmawati, 2023). Holmes went further and explored the same concept of gendered use of language across speech acts: women would be more polite and mitigating, whereas men would use more direct and authoritative forms (Holmes, 1990). In speech acts, the differentiation in the realization of promises, suggestions, and persuasion seems to be a well-researched field of interest. For instance, Baxter notices that women are more inclined to frame a suggestion as a suggestion of collaboration while males advance it as a kind of directive. On the other hand, the strategy for persuasion also exhibits gendered tendencies, such that females use more emotive persuasion whereas men do it with rationality (Davidson, 2016). These, however, are not across-the-board generalizations, as these can easily be mitigated by some cultural norms, social roles, and even preferences.

Research on gendered communication in intercultural settings has pointed out complex interactions between cultural norms, gender roles, and individual agency. As Holmes and Stubbe have asserted, gendered patterns of language use are often amplified or modified in cross-cultural interactions, depending on the speakers' awareness of and sensitivity to cultural differences (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). The interaction between gender and culture may be particularly pronounced among Persian non-native English speakers, due to the significant cultural expectations on gender roles in global contexts (Abasi, 2012). In an intercultural situation, Iranian men and women may strategically engage in speech actions by either adhering to the demands of the English context or by applying the norms from their native cultures (Yousefvand, 2010). Persian women typically prioritize politeness and indirectness in proposals, whereas Persian men often value clarity and directness in making promises (Esfahlan & Boroumand, 2020). Such distinctions indicate that the interplay between gender and culture must be refined for a comprehensive understanding of pragmatic behavior.

Research on speech act realization in Persian non-native speaker populations emphasizes unique pragmatic characteristics, especially with politeness and indirectness. The research conducted by Shariati and Chamani on apologetic tactics in Persian indicated that cultural norms prioritize detailed justifications and professions of contrition (Shariati & Chamani, 2010). Eslami and Mirzaei examined request techniques, observing that Persian non-native English speakers often employ indirect forms and honorifics to preserve face and uphold social hierarchies (Eslami et al., 2023). Research on promising, suggestion, and persuasion among Persian non-native English speakers is scarce; nonetheless, studies such as those by Pishghadam and Ebrahimi illuminate how these speakers modify their communication methods in intercultural settings (Pishghadam & Khosropanah, 2011). This modification demonstrates a dynamic interplay between cultural identity and contextual requirements. The data indicate that Persian non-native speakers of English frequently utilize hybrid tactics in executing speech actions in English contexts, balancing their own cultural norms with the expectations of the host culture.

This research is important for two reasons. While some advancements have been achieved in the examination of speech acts and their cultural and gendered aspects, notable gaps remain: firstly, the speech

acts of promising, suggestion, and persuasion have not been sufficiently investigated among Persian non-native English speakers, particularly in intercultural contexts; secondly, there has yet to be a comprehensive analysis of the influence of gender on these speech acts among Persian speakers. Last but not least, the dynamic relation between the native cultural norms and the imperatives of a foreign context remains an under-explored field. Addressing these gaps may contribute to a better understanding of pragmatic competence development in multilingual educational environments.

This study fills these gaps by examining the pragmatics of the speech acts promising, suggestion, and persuasion among Iranian male and female Persian non-native speakers of English. The setting of interest is foreign—a context which has so far received little interest in studies dealing with such speech act realizations but is useful to explore for the assessment of adaptation to an intercultural setting regarding the effects of gender on communication strategies. The output of this study will benefit the larger domains of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and intercultural communication with worthy insights for researchers, educators, and practitioners. Furthermore, investigating these issues can provide valuable implications for English language teaching and intercultural communication pedagogy.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Participants, Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the use of speech acts among Iranian EFL learners. A total of 57 Iranian male and female students participated in the study. Participants were selected using convenience sampling. Their ages ranged from 18 to 38 years, and all were Persian-speaking learners of English as a foreign language. During the Spring semester of 2022, they were enrolled in various undergraduate and postgraduate programs at Near East University in North Cyprus. Participants' demographic and educational information was collected using a Background Questionnaire (BQ), which gathered data such as age, gender, educational level, and English language learning background.

The data collection involved two major instruments: a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and a structured interview. The DCT was designed to elicit participants' pragmatic realization of speech acts in English. To ensure that all participants clearly understood the situations presented, the instrument was initially developed in Persian and then translated into English, making it suitable for learners whose English proficiency was still developing at the School of Foreign Languages.

The DCT consisted of six items, each presenting a situational prompt representing one of three speech acts: promise, suggestion, or persuasion. The prompts reflected realistic social and academic communication scenarios that required participants to produce contextually appropriate responses as they would in everyday interactions. Participants were instructed to imagine themselves in each situation and write the response they considered most natural. The estimated completion time for the DCT was approximately 20 minutes. After completing the task, participants were given 24 hours to review and submit their final responses, allowing sufficient time for thoughtful and complete answers.

A total of 57 participants were interviewed. Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes and consisted of two structured questions designed to explore participants' perceptions and strategies in producing the speech acts of suggestion, promise, and persuasion in intercultural communication contexts. Apart from the given written responses, there was also a ten-minute structured interview. The interview shall determine the participants' perceived ways and strategies in the production of the speech acts of suggestion, promise, and persuasion, especially in intercultural communication contexts:

- What do you consider most important when you suggest, promise, or persuade someone to do something?
- Do factors such as age, gender, or relationship with the interlocutor influence the choice of words and strategies to convey the message?

Both DCT and interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis by a coding scheme adapted for the pragmatic analysis of the three speech acts. The data were independently coded by two researchers using the same coding scheme. Any discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached, thereby ensuring the consistency and reliability of the coding process. These were further segmented based on the gender of the participants to show the patterns and variation in the realization of speech acts. The

percentages presented in Tables 1–3 represent the proportion of each speech-act strategy relative to the total number of responses within each category. They were calculated by dividing the frequency of each strategy by the total frequency of responses and multiplying the result by 100. This therefore allowed the in-depth investigation of strategies that Iranian non-native speakers of English use and the influence of gender and cross-cultural context on them.

### 3.2. Data Analysis

The responses obtained from the DCT questionnaires were categorized based on the type of speech act under investigation. The six scenarios in the questionnaire were divided into three categories: suggestions, promises, and persuasion. The categorization and analysis were conducted as follows:

Suggestions:

The first two scenarios focused on the speech act of making suggestions. These responses were analyzed using the taxonomy of suggestions developed by Martínez-Flor, which integrates speech act theory and politeness strategies (Martínez-Flor, 2005). Suggestions were classified into three types:

- Direct Strategies: These include responses where speakers explicitly state their intentions using performative verbs, nouns of suggestion, or imperative sentences.
- Conventionalized Strategies: These are less direct and use directive strategies where the hearer can infer the speaker's intention through context, such as modal verbs or polite requests.
- Indirect Strategies: These involve more implicit expressions of suggestion, including impersonal strategies or hints.

In addition to the classification, verbal and non-verbal mitigation devices, such as justifications, explanations, reasons, or negative evaluations, were considered to interpret the suggestions fully.

Promises:

The third and fourth scenarios focused on the speech act of promising. These responses were analyzed using categories. (Bogusławski, 1983) These responses were categorized into four types:

- Direct Promising: Clear and explicit promises stated by the speaker.
- Evasive Promising: Promises that are vague or intentionally ambiguous.
- Satirical Promising: Promises made with a sarcastic or ironic tone.
- Conditional Promising: Promises dependent on specific conditions being met.

The analysis was based on the frequency of each type in the participants' responses, providing insights into the preferred promising strategies among Persian speakers.

Persuasion:

The final two scenarios (fifth and sixth) addressed the speech act of persuasion. Responses were coded based on the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Research Project framework (Apreutesei, 2023), which categorizes persuasive strategies into three levels:

- Direct Level: Utterances where the speaker uses imperatives, performative verbs, or obligation statements to directly influence the hearer. These may include polite hedging or strong assertions.
- Conventionally Indirect Level: Utterances that suggest the desired action through indirect but socially recognized forms, such as polite requests or interrogative forms.
- Non-Conventionally Indirect Level: Use of hints (strong or mild) to suggest the desired action implicitly, often accompanied by contextual reasoning to persuade the hearer.

The primary focus of this analysis was on the directness level of persuasive strategies. Utterances were examined for their form, intent, and accompanying linguistic devices.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In analyzing the responses to the two scenarios of suggestions, approximately one-fourth of the utterances contained performative verbs and nouns such as "I suggest you…" or "I recommend you…"

Five responses included imperatives, both positive and negative, such as "Try using…" or "Don't try using…" Some respondents, particularly females, tended to use conventionalized interrogative forms, with phrases like "What about…?" or "Have you ever used…?" The use of "should" and "need" was most commonly observed in responses from males in informal situations. For females, nearly half of the suggestions were indirect, especially in formal contexts when the interlocutor was male, using expressions like "It would be nice if…" or "I have heard that…". These findings highlight the importance of teaching both direct and indirect suggestion strategies in EFL classrooms to improve learners' pragmatic competence and context-sensitive communication (Shofwan & Mujiyanto, 2018). The variation in pragmatic choices also suggests that language instruction should incorporate authentic communicative scenarios that reflect gender and situational differences (Cogo & House, 2017).

Regarding the interview responses to the question of which factors influence their suggestions, females prioritized relationship and situation, followed by age and gender. Males, on the other hand, focused more on friendship and context. Based on these responses, it can be inferred that females tend to use indirect strategies in suggesting, particularly when considering the age and gender of their interlocutors, and they aim to keep the situation as formal as possible (Holmes, 1986). In contrast, males tend to use direct strategies, placing more emphasis on friendship and gender over age and formality. From a pedagogical perspective, these differences demonstrate the need for intercultural pragmatics instruction that raises learners' awareness of social variables influencing communication (Kecskes, 2020). The findings may help language teachers design classroom activities that promote appropriate speech act use across formal and informal interactional contexts. Table 1 shows the percentages of using different pragmatic speech acts in giving suggestions.

**Table 1.** The Percentages of Using Different Pragmatic Speech Acts in Giving Suggestions

| | **Suggestion** | **Responses** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Scenario 1** | | **Scenario 2** | |
| | | **Male** | **Female** | **Male** | **female** |
| Categories | Direct strategies | 39.1% | 23.1% | 36.5% | 24.7% |
| | Conventionalized strategies | 32.2% | 33.7% | 33.7% | 37.5% |
| | Indirect strategies | 28.7% | 43.2% | 29.8% | 37.8% |

From the gathered responses to the third and fourth scenarios, which addressed promising situations, it can be inferred that Iranian male Persian speakers tend to use direct strategies when making promises. They often employed utterances such as "I will try my best…" or "Sure, I will…" Conditional responses were also noted, but they were less frequent compared to the responses from females. It appears that promising is universally understood as a form of commitment (Egner, 2006). Phrases like "I will try, but I cannot promise" or "Enshallah" were used by both males and females.

When asked in the interview about the most important factors to consider when making promises, the majority of both males and females emphasized formal and informal relationships, as well as age. They tend to promise more directly and with certainty to older individuals with whom they have formal relationships. Males appeared more comfortable making conditional promises to their friends, stating that they tend to promise indirectly or conditionally, even when they are certain they will fulfill the promise. Females, on the other hand, seemed to place greater importance on age and gender, expressing reluctance to make direct promises to the opposite sex, except in formal contexts such as professional settings (Davidson, 2016). Table 2 illustrates the related percentages of the responses to promising situations.

**Table 2.** The Related Percentages of the Responses of Promising Situations

| | **Promising** | **Responses** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Scenario 1** | | **Scenario 2** | |
| | | **Male** | **Female** | **Male** | **Female** |
| Categories | Direct strategies | 11.2% | 25.9% | 16.2% | 23.4% |
| | Evasive strategies | 11.9% | 14.7% | 16.3% | 16.7% |
| | Satirical strategies | 18.2% | 18.3% | 17.6% | 21.2% |
| | Conditional strategies | 54.7% | 41.1% | 49.9% | 48.7% |

In the use of persuasive pragmatic speech acts, Iranian male Persian non-native speakers of English tended to employ mood-derivable forms, such as imperatives or performatives, as well as obligation statements that explicitly convey a sense of force, for example, "Leave me alone" or "Lend me money." Female responses, on the other hand, often included hedged performatives and want statements, such as "I would like to ask you to leave me alone" or "If you leave me alone, I…" (Coates, 2015). Both males and females also used conventionally and non-conventionally indirect forms of persuasion, with females using non-conventional forms more frequently. Suggestion formulas and query preparation were common in female responses, especially in formal relationships, with phrases like "Would you mind…" or "How about…?" In contrast, male responses were more likely to include strong or mild hints, such as "This is not enough" or "Isn't it enough?"

In the interview, it was revealed that the most important factors considered by females who are Persian non-native speakers of English, when persuading someone, were the relationship and age of the interlocutor. They also took sex and formality into account when choosing their speech acts (Esfahlan & Boroumand, 2020). Males, however, gave different responses, prioritizing sex as the primary factor in selecting speech acts and considering age as a secondary factor. Table 3 illustrates the related percentages of gathered responses to persuasion scenarios.

**Table 3.** The Related Percentages of Gathered Responses to Persuasion Scenarios

| | | Responses | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Persuasion** | **Scenario 1** | | **Scenario 2** | |
| | | **Male** | **Female** | **Male** | **Female** |
| **Categories** | Direct level | 35.9% | 33% | 41.7% | 34.3% |
| | Conventionally direct level | 33.4% | 50.4% | 30.3% | 43.5% |
| | Non-conventionally direct level | 30.7% | 16.6% | 28% | 22.2% |

The predominance of directive strategies among Iranian non-native English speakers may be attributed to the influence of their first language and cultural communication norms, where directness can be perceived as a practical and appropriate means of conveying intentions in certain contexts (Shariati & Chamani, 2010). In addition, limited pragmatic competence in English may lead learners to rely on more explicit forms of expression rather than conventional or indirect strategies. The greater tendency of male participants to employ directive strategies when interacting with female interlocutors may reflect culturally shaped gender roles and sociocultural expectations that influence patterns of communication. These findings suggest that both linguistic background and cultural norms contribute to gender-based differences in the realization of speech acts among Iranian EFL learners (Yousefvand, 2010).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to investigate the realization of the speech acts of suggestion, promising, and persuasion by Persian non-native speakers of English, focusing on both pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic aspects. It highlighted how language use varies across different contexts, emphasizing that appropriate language usage often depends on the situation and is necessary for correct understanding. Analyzing these speech acts provides valuable insights into the speakers' cultural and social practices. The findings also reinforce the importance of pragmatic competence in English language teaching, particularly in helping learners use language appropriately across diverse social and cultural contexts.

The research examined the cultural distinctions among Persian non-native speakers of English, emphasizing social hierarchy and the exhibition of knowledge and abilities. Consequently, variations in the use of suggestion, promise, and persuasion tactics were discovered. Analyzing the responses gathered from Persian students in NEU, through a questionnaire and structured interviews, it was found that males frequently used performative verbs and nouns for suggestions, as well as imperatives (both positive and negative). Females, on the other hand, leaned towards using conventionalized interrogative forms and more indirect expressions. In suggestion speech acts, females appeared more indirect in formal situations, considering factors such as relationships, age, and sex. These differences indicate the need for classroom instruction that explicitly addresses culturally influenced speech act strategies and gender-sensitive communication patterns.

Regarding promising, male Persian non-native speakers of English primarily employed direct strategies, viewing promises as commitments. Age and the nature of the relationship (formal or informal) played important roles in how promises were made. In persuasive speech acts, males tended to use imperatives and performatives, as well as obligation statements with explicit force. Both males and females used indirect strategies more often than direct ones when making persuasive statements, highlighting a preference for indirectness in Persian communication. Such findings may support the integration of authentic pragmatic tasks and intercultural communication activities into EFL curricula and teacher education programs.

Sex and formality emerged as crucial factors influencing speech act choices in interactions among Iranians. This study focused on the pragma-linguistic aspects of suggestions, promises, and persuasion, and noted similarities with requests and other speech acts. For language educators, they highlight the importance of explicitly teaching speech acts through authentic, context-based activities that promote pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative awareness. Curriculum developers and material designers may incorporate tasks that reflect real-life communicative situations, gender differences, and sociocultural variables to better prepare learners for authentic interactions. Teacher educators may use these findings to strengthen pre-service and in-service training by emphasizing the role of pragmatics and intercultural communication in language teaching. For educational policymakers, the findings support the integration of pragmatic competence into language curricula and assessment frameworks. Finally, researchers are encouraged to further investigate additional socio-pragmatic aspects of speech acts, including the effects of age, social status, and cultural background, to deepen our understanding of pragmatic development among Persian non-native speakers of English.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the participants were limited to Iranian non-native speakers of English studying at a single university in North Cyprus, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other EFL populations and cultural contexts. Second, the study relied primarily on Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) and structured interviews, which may not fully capture the complexity of naturally occurring interactions. Future research is therefore encouraged to include participants from different educational and cultural backgrounds, employ larger and more diverse samples, and incorporate additional data collection methods, such as naturalistic observations or role-play interactions, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of speech act realization across different communicative contexts. Future research should explore additional socio-pragmatic aspects of speech acts to further examine similarities and differences in communication contexts among Persian non-native speakers of English. Other factors, such as the identity and age of respondents, may also be important areas for further investigation. Overall, the study contributes to pragmatics pedagogy by providing insights that may assist educators in developing learners' intercultural communicative competence and contextually appropriate language use. Future pedagogical research may further explore how explicit instruction of speech acts can improve pragmatic awareness and communicative effectiveness among EFL learners.

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The AI tool was not used to generate or analyze research data or to make research-related decisions. The author takes full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and content of the final manuscript.

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**Appendix 1**

Suggestions:

You are using a computer at the computer center on campus. Your classmate sits next to you and would like to use the printer. However, he is unable to operate it because he doesn't know that the printer requires clicking a specific button before printing. What would you say to him?

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

Promising:

You want to stay in your friend's room over the weekend to prepare for your final exams, knowing that your friend will be away visiting family in another city and his room will be vacant. He agrees to let you stay if you promise not to mess up the room. How would you promise him?

You and one of your English teachers meet in a bookstore. He/she is considering purchasing an expensive book about English vocabulary learning, but you know that the same book is available in another bookstore at a lower price. Your teacher asks you to promise to buy it for him/her. How would you promise your teacher?

Persuasion:

Your friend is working at a job that is very time-consuming and not well-paid. Everyone around him/her is concerned about the future, as this job also occupies his/her mind in their free time. There are job vacancies available that would be a better fit, but your friend enjoys the current job. The family has requested that you convince him/her to resign and pursue new employment. What would you communicate to your friend?

You are employed at a company that has received numerous employee complaints. You are the sole individual entrusted by all to articulate their worries, and now you must convince your superior to implement changes. What approach would you take to persuade your superior, and what arguments would you present?