Gender Differences in the Expression of Gratitude by Persian Speakers

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Abstract

This study tried to investigate the strategies Persian native speakers employ for expressing gratitude in different situations. The current study intended to examine if there was any difference between gratitude strategies used by male and female Persian speakers. To collect the data, 60 participants (30 male and 30 female) were selected from among the population of BA and MA students at Kermanshah Islamic Azad University in Iran. Participants were asked to complete a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) designed by Eisenstein and Bodman (1993). The results revealed that there were significant differences in the ways Persian male and female speakers use the speech act of gratitude. The findings also suggested that female Persian speakers use gratitude strategies more than male speakers.

Keywords: gratitude, gratitude strategies, speech act, gender differences, Persian speakers

INTRODUCTION

The communicative aspect of the language can be said to be realized as 'pragmatic competence', which refers to "the ability to perform language functions in a context" (Taguchi, 2008, p. 34). Pragmatics is simply the study of meaning in interaction. Crystal (1997) defined pragmatics as "the study of language from the point of view of the user, especially of the choices they make, the constraint they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects of their use of language on other participants in the act of communication" (p. 301).

One of the most fundamental parts of pragmatics is speech act that is defined by Austin (1962) as actions which are performed in saying something (as cited in Cutting, 2002). To express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, but they also perform acts via those utterances. Examples of speech acts include invitations, refusals, suggestions, apologies, compliments, compliment responses and so on.

Expressing gratitude is one of the speech acts frequently used in interpersonal relationships between language users. Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) have defined gratitude or thanking as a kind of illocutionary act which a speaker perform based on the act done by the hearer in the past. This performed act has some benefits for the speaker and the speaker believes in this matter. Therefore, the speaker has the feeling of gratefulness or appreciation and expresses his/her feeling through an expression of thanking or gratitude. Kumar (2001) highlights the significance of expressions of gratitude in the following words:

> Expressions of gratitude in the normal day-to-day interactions between the members of a society seem obviously to fall in the category of the "social" use of language. Expressions of gratitude and politeness are a major instrument the use of which keeps the bonds between the members of a society well-cemented and strong (p. 114).

Saying thank you is a problem not only for NSs, but also for L2 learners who need to know when and how to thank in the target culture (Bodman and Eisenstein, 1988; Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986, 1993). Each individual gives thanks in many situations in his/her daily life interactions with family members, friends, classmates, acquaintances and strangers. It is necessary to learn how to understand and produce language that is appropriate to the situations in which one is functioning, because failure to do so may cause misunderstandings and miscommunications. Expressing gratitude is a speech act that is taught at an early age, and is commonly performed by NSs of most languages. It is, thus, often assumed that learners can successfully say *thank you* in the target language.

It is noticeable that the use of thanking may differ from culture to culture. For instance, 'thank you' used in American English is more common as an expression of gratitude; while in British English it is more a formal marker (Hymes, 1972, cited in Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993). As Coulmas puts it:

> The social relation of the participants and the inherent properties of the object of gratitude work together to determine the degree of gratefulness that should be expressed in a given situation. Differences in this respect are obviously subject to cultural variation (Coulmas, 1981, p. 14).

Thomas (1983) stated that the development of pragmatic and sociolinguistic rules of language use is important for language learners. He pointed out that it is necessary to understand and create a language that is appropriate to the situations in which one is functioning because failure to do so may cause users to miss key points that are being communicated or to have their message misunderstood. Misunderstandings may occur among people of different cultures.

Apart from cultural differences, gender differences should be taken into consideration. Mills (2003) points out that gender may play a significant role in determining which

strategies are appropriate in different situations and that the relationship between gender and politeness is even more complex when comparing different cultures. Therefore, knowledge about gratitude strategies in other languages can very beneficial. The current study is an attempt to fill this gab by examining gratitude expressions used by Persian male and female speakers in different situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lakoff (1975) argued that women identify themselves in terms of the men they are related to and that women tend to use more indirect requests, apologies, and qualifiers than men. Lakoff's work was criticized for over-generalizing anecdotal evidence from primarily Anglo middle-class Western women to women across cultures (Mills, 2003). Nevertheless, even though gender is considered an important factor influencing speakers' and listeners' use and interpretation of linguistic politeness strategies (Cordella, 1991; Ide, 1992; Mills, 2003), little research has specifically addressed gender and politeness in the second or foreign language setting. As the following review will reveal, there is an obvious gap in the literature related to gender and politeness studies across different cultures.

Ide (1992) investigated the phenomenon of politer speech among Japanese women than among Japanese men. Based on a survey of 256 men and 271 women, middle-class parents of college students at a college in Tokyo, the author concluded that gender differences in language are the result of the duplex indexing functions of deference and demeanor, two behaviors characterizing politeness in this context.

Also in Japan, Smith (1992) examined the linguistic practices of Japanese men and women giving directions and explained gender differences in terms of both a general theory of politeness as well as the culturally specific strategies for encoding politeness and authority in Japanese.

In another study, Saito (2010) explored seven Japanese male workplace superiors' linguistic practices, particularly their use of directive speech acts. Findings revealed that the gender of the speaker, in addition to various contextual factors, plays a role in the choice of the directive form chosen and that actual practice is not always consistent with gender stereotypes.

For Arab learners of English, Al-khateeb (2009) conducted a study to explore the speech act of thanking as a compliment response. Findings showed that gender did not have a great effect on the compliment responses since both males and females used politeness strategies when the situation requires a person to be polite. However, when it comes to the physical appearances, house decors, clothes styles, food and diet, women are more sensitive to compliments and thanking responses in such situations.

In another study, Kashdan, Mishra, Breen and Froh (2009) conducted a study on gender differences in gratitude. He found out that men's expression of gratitude is less familiar

and more discomforting compared with women's. Men's gratitude is more challenging and anxiety provoking and strengthens social bonds.

Froh, Yurkewicz, and Kashdan (2009) stated that females experienced and expressed gratitude more than male did. The reason might be that females' utterances are more elaborate. Most females enjoyed talking and using language to establish personal relationships, while males viewed language as a tool for sending and receiving information. They found that women's and men's dispositional gratitude related differently to aspects of well-being across time. Women derived greater benefits from gratitude, including (1) greater satisfaction of the need to feel connected to and cared for by others (belongingness) and (2) increased feelings of freedom to act in ways that are consistent with core values (autonomy).

In a similar vein, Fauziyah (2010) compared and contrasted gratitude expressions and responses between male and female characters of *Rachel Getting Married* movie based on Hymes's theory of gratitude expressions. The researcher found out that women were more polite in expressing gratitude in all conditions and situations, and their utterances were longer. Men, on the other hand expressed gratitude much in formal situation.

The relation between gender and politeness strategies has also been studied by Agis (2012). She observed the use of the politeness strategies suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987) in the popular Turkish series "Avrupa Yakasi" (European side). The aim of this study was to analyze the negative politeness, positive politeness, bald on-record, and bald-off record strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987) employed in the Turkish series. She concludes that women and men employ different politeness strategies in the same places and circumstances, talking to the same people.

Cui (2012) investigated the expressing gratitude among speakers from various language and cultural background. Data for NSs did not show the gender differences. They equally produced the same speech act set. The data for the rest of the language groups, to an extent, suggested gender differences. The data for NNSs showed that the number of idea unit produced by female participants were higher than those of male participants in each language groups. It suggested that generally women are more likely to express thanks than man. It also showed that female participants tended to use lengthy expressions than male participants when giving thanks.

THE PRESENT STUDY

As shown in the above review of the literature, there is an obvious gap in the literature related to gender and politeness studies especially in in Iranian context. Therefore, the current study sought to investigate the gratitude expressions used by Persian male and female speakers. In addition, another objective of this research is to examine if Persian male and female speakers differ in the expression of gratitude. To achieve these aims, the following research questions are raised:

1. What are the common gratitude expressions used by Persian male speakers?
2. What are the common gratitude expressions used by Persian female speakers?
3. How do Persian male and female speakers differ in the expression of gratitude?

METHOD

Participants

Eighty Iranian Persian speakers, 40 female and 40 male, studying at Kermanshah Islamic Azad University, participated in this study. Their age ranges from 22 to 30. All participants were native speakers of Persian. Therefore, they showed homogeneity in terms of age, education, profession and most importantly native language.

Instrument (DCT)

According to Nkwain (2011) responses from data elicitation procedures such as Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) reflect the sum of prior experience with language. Furthermore, data elicited in this method is consistent with naturally occurring data, at least in the main patterns and formulas (cited in Varghese and Billmyer 1996). They also accounted for some other advantages of using DCTs in pragmatics studies. They stated that DCT creates model responses, which are likely to occur in spontaneous speeches. Of course, the researcher was aware of the weakness of using the DCT, in cases, data might be unnatural, but regarding the kind of study, its limitations and the type of data needed, DCT was deemed the most suitable data gathering means for this study.

As for the purpose of this study, the mean of eliciting gratitude strategies was a DCT questionnaire which was a modified version of DCT designed by Eisenstein and Bodman (1993). The questionnaire consisted of eleven separate paragraphs describing various real life situations. The participants were asked to express their response(s) to each described situation, in the provided blank space after each of the paragraphs. These eleven scenarios varied on the contextual factors of interlocutor familiarity and social status. Familiarity (i.e., social distance) and social status (i.e., power) were selected because they have been identified as the salient factors that affect speech behavior in cross-cultural pragmatics research (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Procedures

The DCTs were distributed among the participants. At the beginning, the instructor explained the format of the DCT to ensure that participants clearly understand the instructions. She encouraged the participants to answer the questions and emphasize that their responses would be kept confidential, and they are just for conducting this research. They were given enough time, as long as they wished to complete the DCT carefully. The DCT consisted of scenarios describing various real life situations. Participants were supposed to read each situation and picture themselves in the

situations and respond accordingly. They wrote down as many words or utterances as they wanted to express their gratitude towards the speaker.

Date analysis

After the participants had filled in the DCTs, gratitude strategies were coded based on the scheme proposed by Cheng (2005). The collected responses were classified according to Cheng's taxonomy with regard to the gender of participants. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program. The frequencies, percentages, and Chi-square tests were used to analyze the data.

Gratitude strategies taxonomy

Cheng's (2005) taxonomy was based on 8 strategies for the expression of gratitude. The taxonomy of thanking is elaborated below:

1) Thanking
Participants say "thank you" in three ways:
a. thanking only by using the word "thank you" (e.g. Thanks a lot! Thank you very much!)
b. thanking by stating the favor (e.g. Thank you for your help!)
c. thanking and mentioning the imposition caused by the favor (e.g. Thank you for helping me collect the papers.)

2) Appreciation
a. using the word appreciate (e.g. I appreciate it!)
b. using the word "appreciate" and mentioning the imposition caused by the favor (e.g. I appreciate the time you spent for me.)

3) Positive feelings
a. by expressing a positive reaction to the favor giver (hearer) (e.g. You are a life saver!)
b. by expressing a positive reaction to the object of the favor (e.g. This book was really helpful!)

4) Apology
a. using only apologizing words (e.g. I'm sorry)
b. using apologizing words and stating the favor or the fact (e.g. I'm sorry for the problem I made!)
c. criticizing or blaming oneself (e.g. I'm such a fool!)
d. expressing embarrassment (e.g. It's so embarrassing!)

5) Recognition of imposition
a. acknowledging the imposition (e.g. I know that you were not allowed to give me extra time!)

b. stating the need for the favor (e.g. I try not to ask for extra time, but this time I need it!)

c. diminishing the need for the favor (e.g. You didn't have to do that!)

6) Repayment

a. offering or promising service, money, food or goods (e.g. Next time it's my turn to pay!)

b. indicating indebtedness (e.g. I owe you one!)

c. promising future self-restraint or self-improvement (e.g. It won't happen again!)

7) Others

Expressions that do not belong to the above strategies are categorized as other strategies. There are four subcategories under the other strategy:

a. here statement (e.g. Here you are!)

b. small talk (e.g. Your face is very familiar to me but I can't remember where I saw you. What do you study?)

c. leave-taking (e.g. Have a nice day!)

d. joking (e.g. Don't forget to pay again next time)

8) Attention getter

In the thanking situations, attention getter and address term are likely to occur in the same utterance. The alerters include:

a. attention getter (e.g. Hey, Hi, Well)

b. title (e.g. Dr., Professor! Sir!)

c. name (e.g. John, Mary)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, this study was an attempt to examine gratitude strategies used by Persian speakers. In addition, the current research was designed to see if Persian male and female speakers differ in the expression of gratitude. The results of DCTs are coded and reported separately comparing the data of gratitude speech act across gender.

Results for Persian male speakers

The first research question addressed the gratitude strategies used by Persian male speakers. In order to investigate this question, the frequency of the gratitude strategies among Persian male participants are reported in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of overall strategy use for Persian male NSs

Gratitude Strategies	Number	Percentage
Thanking	247	42.43
Appreciation	6	1.03

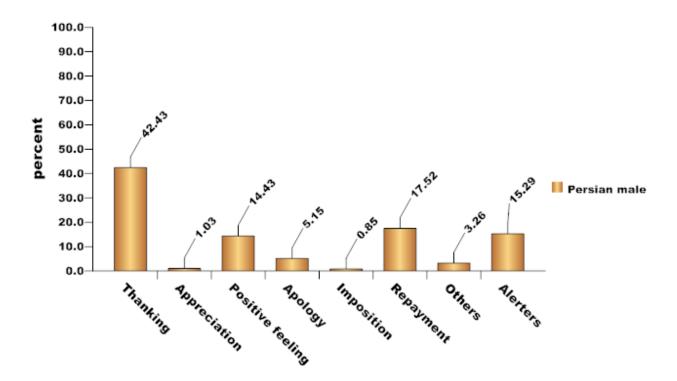|		
Positive feeling	84	14.43
Apology	30	5.15
Recognition of imposition	5	0.85
Repayment	102	17.52
Other	19	3.26
Alerter	89	15.29
Total	582	99.96

Figure 1: Frequency of overall strategy use for Persian males

Figure 1 and Table 1 show that *thanking* strategy (42.43%) is the most frequent strategy used by Persian males. The second most frequent strategy for Persian males is *repayment* strategy (17.52%). The third strategy in order of frequency was *alerters* (15.29). *Positive feeling* was the fourth most frequent strategy among males (14.43%). The other strategies *apology, other, appreciation* and *recognition of imposition* accounted for 5.15%, 3.26%, 1.03 and 0.85% respectively. It can be inferred from the results of the table that the Persian males' speakers use thanking, repayment and alerters strategies as the common strategies much more than the others. The summary of the results for Persian males is shown below:

Persian male speakers: Thanking > Repayment > Alerter > positive feeling > Appreciation > Apology >Imposition>other

Results for Persian female speakers

The second research question addressed the gratitude strategies used by Persian female speakers. In order to answer this question, the frequency of the gratitude strategies among Persian female participants are reported in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of overall strategy use for Persian female NSs

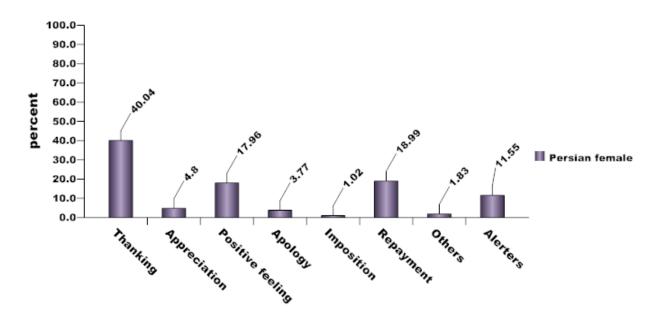| Gratitude Strategies	Number	Percentage
Thanking	350	40.04
Appreciation	42	4.80
Positive feeling	157	17.96
Apology	33	3.77
Recognition of imposition	9	1.02
Repayment	166	18.99
Other	16	1.83
Alerter	101	11.55
Total	874	99.92

Figure 2: Frequency of overall strategy use for Persian females

Figure 2 and Table 2 illustrated that the female participants used *thanking* strategy (40.04%) as the first most frequently used strategy. The second common strategy used by female participants, was *repayment* (18.99%). *Positive feeling* (17.96%) is the third most frequently used strategy for Persian females. The fourth strategy with the highest frequency was *alerters* (11.55%). Persian female speakers used *appreciation, apology, other* and *recognition of imposition* strategies 4.80%, 3.77%, 1.83% and 1.02% respectively. The summary of the results for Persian females is shown below:

Persian female speakers: Thanking > Repayment > Alerter > positive feeling > Appreciation >Apology >Imposition>other

Comparison of strategies used by Persian male and female participants

The third research question addressed the difference between male and female speakers with regard to gratitude strategies. In order to compare the whole gratitude strategy in detail between male and female participants in Persian results are reported in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage of overall strategy use for Persian NSs based on gender

Gratitude Strategies	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Thanking	241	41.37	350	58.62	597	99.96
Appreciation	6	12.5	42	87.5	48	100
Positive feeling	84	34.85	157	65.14	241	99.99
Apology	30	47.61	33	52.38	63	99.99
Recognition of imposition	5	35.71	9	64.28	14	99.99
Repayment	102	38.05	166	61.94	268	99.99
Other	19	54.28	16	45.71	35	99.99
Alerter	89	46.84	101	53.15	190	99.99

Table 4: The results of the chi-square for the difference between gender and gratitude expressions

Expression	Gender	Observed N	Expected N	Chi-Square	df	Sig. (p)
Thanking	Male	247	298.5	17.77	1	0.001
	Female	350	298.5			
Appreciation	Male	6	24.0	27.00	1	0.001
	Female	42	24.0			
Positive feelings	Male	84	120.5	22.11	1	0.001
	Female	157	120.5			
Apology	Male	30	31.5	0.14	1	0.705
	Female	33	31.5			
Recognition of imposition	Male	5	7.0	1.14	1	0.285
	Female	9	7.0			
Repayment	Male	102	134.0	15.28	1	0.001
	Female	166	134.0			
Others	Male	19	17.5	0.25	1	0.612

	Female	16	17.5			
Alerters	Male	89	95.0	0.75	1	0.384
	Female	101	95.0			
Total	Male	582	728.0	58.56	1	0.001
	Female	874	728.0			

A. Thanking

The first strategy in Cheng (2005) coding scheme is "thanking". Responses such as *"thank you, thank you very much; mamnoonam, kheili mamnoon"* are examples of this strategy. As it was shown in Figure 3 and Table 3, thanking strategy was used 597 times; Persian females composed 58.62% (350 times) of the responses while Persian male speakers used this strategy 41.37% (247 times). Results of the chi-square test (see Table 4) show that there is a significant difference in the use of the thanking strategy between Persian males and females. Thanking strategy frequency was significantly greater in females than in males (p=0.001<0.05). It implies that most Persian female participants tend to thank others in every situation to observe the rules of politeness.

Thanking Strategy

Figure 3: Percentage of thanking strategy between Persian speakers

B. Appreciation

Appreciation is the second strategy in Cheng (2005) scheme. Responses such as "*I appreciate it, I appreciate the time you spent for me; az shoma ghadr dani mikonam, be khatere vaghti ke be man dadid ghadr dani mikonam*" are examples of this strategy. Table 3 and Figure 4 show that the frequency of appreciation strategy was 48; Persian females composed 87.5% (42 times) of the responses while male used this strategy 12.5% (6 times). As it was shown in Table 3 Persian females agreed with gratitude through the appreciation strategy more than Persian males did. Results of the chi-square test show that there is a significant difference in the use of the appreciation strategy between Persian males and females. Appreciation strategy frequency was significantly greater in females than in males (p=0.001<0.05).
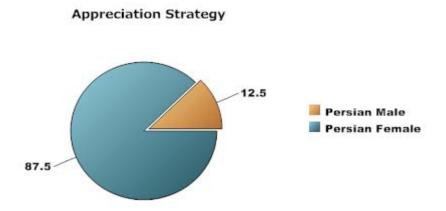
Appreciation Strategy

Figure 4: Percentage of appreciation strategy between Persian speakers

C. Positive feeling

The third strategy in Cheng (2005) coding scheme is positive feeling. Responses such as "*you are a life saver, this book was really helpful; shoma ye nejat dahand hasti, in ketan vaghean mofid ast*" are examples of this strategy. As it is shown in Figure 5 and Table 3, frequency of this strategy among Persian participants is 241 times and the female participants respond 65.14% (157 times) and males 34.85% (84 times) through this strategy. Based on the result in Table 3 Persian females tend to use this strategy more that Persian males. Results of the chi-square test, in Table 4, show that there is a significant difference in the use of the positive feeling strategy between Persian males and females. Results of the chi-square test show that the positive feeling strategy frequency was significantly greater in females than in males (p=0.001<0.05).
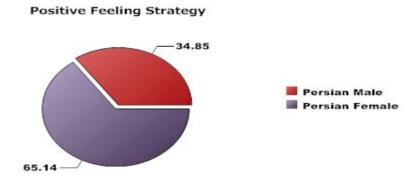
Positive Feeling Strategy

Figure 5: Percentage of positive feeling strategy between Persian speakers

D. Apology

The fourth strategy in Cheng (2005) coding scheme is apology. Responses such as "*I am sorry, It's so embarrassing; moteasefam, baes sharmandegi e*" are examples of this strategy. Table 3 and Figure 6 illustrated that apology frequency among Persian participants was 63 times in which the female participants responded 52.38% (33 times) and males 47.61 (30 times) through this strategy. Table 3 shows that Persian male and female respondents indicated approximately the same inclination in choosing

apology strategy. Results of the chi-square test in Table 4 show that there is no significant difference in the use of the apology strategy between Persian males and females. (p=0.705>0.05).
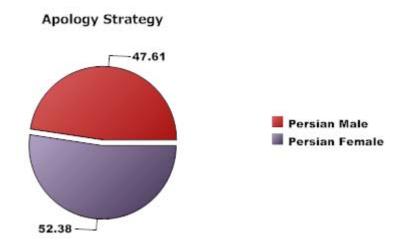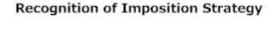
Apology Strategy

Figure 6: Percentage apology strategy between Persian speakers

E. Recognition of imposition

The fifth strategy in Cheng (2005) coding scheme is recognition of imposition. Responses such as "*I know you didn't have to allow me extra time, you didn't have to do that; midoonam ke nabayad vaght bishtari be man midadid, nabayad in kar o mikardi*" are examples of recognition of imposition strategy. Table 3 and Figure 7 show that recognition of imposition strategy frequency among Persian participants was 14 times in which the female participants responded 64.28% (9 times) and males 35.71% (5 times) through this strategy. Table 3 illustrated that Persian males and females indicated approximately the same inclination in choosing this strategy. Results of the chi-square test show that there is no significant difference in the use of the recognition of imposition strategy between Persian males and females. (p=0.285>0.05).

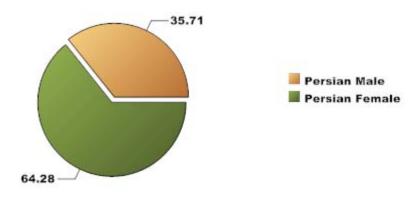**Recognition of Imposition Strategy**

Figure 7: Percentage of recognition of imposition between Persian speakers

F. Repayment

The sixth strategy in Cheng (2005) coding scheme is repayment. Responses such as *"next time is my turn, I owe you one; dafe bad nobat e man e, yeki talab man"* are examples of this strategy. As it was shown in Figure 8 and Table 3, frequency of this strategy among Persian participants was 268 times in which the female participants responded 61.94% (166 times) and males 38.05% (102 times) through this strategy. Based on the result in Table 3 the Persian females tend to use this strategy more that Persian males. As revealed in Table 4, results of the chi-square test show that there is a significant difference in the use of the repayment strategy between Persian males and females. Results of the chi-square test show that the repayment strategy frequency was significantly greater in females than in males (p=0.001<0.05).
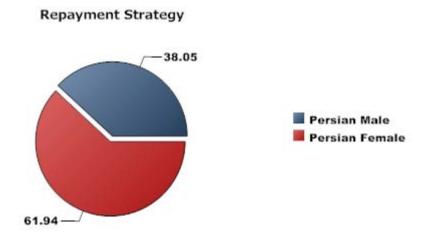
Repayment Strategy

Figure 8: Percentage of repayment strategy between Persian speakers

G. Other strategy

The seventh strategy in Cheng (2005) coding scheme is other. Responses such as *"here you are, good bye, have a nice day; befarmaeed, khoda negahdar, roz e khoobi dasht e bashi"* are examples of this strategy. Table 3 and Figure 9 illustrated that other strategy frequency among Persian participants was 35 times in which the female participants responded 45.71% (16 times) and males 54.28% (19 times) through this strategy. Table 3 illustrated that Persian males and females indicated approximately the same inclination in choosing this strategy. Results of the chi-square test show that there is no significant difference in the use of the other strategy between Persian males and females (see Table 4).
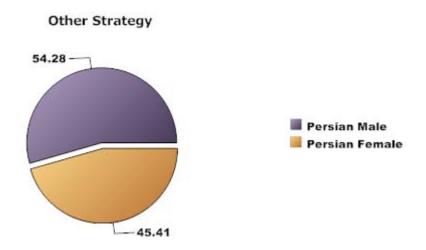
Other Strategy

54.28

45.41

Persian Male
Persian Female

Figure 9: Percentage of other strategy between Persian speakers

H. Alerters

The eighth strategy in Cheng (2005) coding scheme is alerters. Responses such as "*oh my god, Professor, John; vay khoda ye man, ostad, Ali*" are examples of this strategy. Table 3 and Figure 10 illustrated that alerters strategy frequency among Persian participants was 190 times in which the female participants responded 53.15% (101 times) and males 46.84% (89 times) through this strategy. Table 3 illustrated that Persian males and females indicated approximately the same inclination in choosing this strategy. Results of the chi-square test show that there is no significant difference in the use of the alerters strategy between Persian males and females (p=0.384>0.05).

Alerters Strategy

46.84

53.15
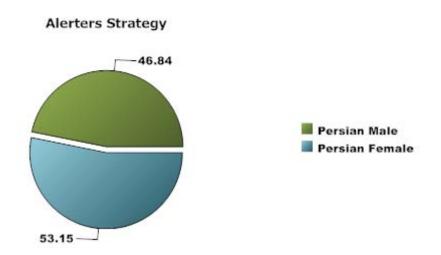
Persian Male
Persian Female

Figure 10: Percentage of alerters strategy between Persian speakers

I. Total

As reported in Table 4, results of the chi-square test show that the total gratitude strategy frequency was significantly greater in females than in males (p=0.001<0.05).

CONCLUSION

The results revealed that female participants used thanking strategy more than male participants. It showed that most female participant tend to thank others in every situation to observe the rules of politeness. There was a significant difference between the use of thanking strategy, appreciation, positive feeling and repayment, among male and female participants. Frequencies of these strategies were significantly greater in females than in males. These results also showed that generally women are more likely to express thanks than man. Besides, results of the Chi-square test illustrated that there are no significant differences between the usage of recognition of imposition, apology, alerter, and other strategies between male and female participants.

All in all, this study showed that women were more polite in expressing gratitude in all conditions and situations, and their utterances were longer than male. Moreover, results illustrated that there were no significant differences between the usage of recognition of imposition, apology, alerter, and other strategies between male and female participants. So, according to the results of this study thanking strategy is the most frequently used one by Persian speakers.

Some important pedagogical implications can be raised from the findings of this study Dornyei and Thurrell (1994) believed that teaching conversational skills according to a systematic approach, based on the knowledge of how conversations are structured, helps to have authentic teaching material for teaching languages especially for discourse. It is more useful to gain and base the material on the real information and strategies that people used in their interactions. This will grow learners who are capable of working out the new language in a natural, sensible way.

One important step in order to provide the sociopragmatic differences is to analyze the single languages and contrast them. Second or foreign language syllabus designers should examine learners' needs considering the understanding and production of gratitude speech acts in the target language. Results of the current research can be used to detect the range and variety of these needs by studying the Persian language features, cultural points and strategies that the Persian speakers use.

Several limitations come to light in interpreting the results of the present study. First, the main instrument which was used in this research was a written DCT. The biggest challenge is the fact that the collected data by this instrument may be different from reality. Another limitation is that, this research was limited to a particular group of respondents, thus the findings and results can be generalizable only to this population. That is Iranian and English undergraduate and graduate students in academic contexts.

The current study also leaves some room for other potential issues for investigation. First, further research like this is needed to provide a better understanding of expression of gratitude in Persian. Second, future research can also be done in private language institutes with younger participants. Third, in Iranian language many modern

language textbooks have appeared and are taught as an attempt to incorporate socio-cultural information as an integral part of language use. Therefore, one can examine the gratitude strategies used by learners who have more background knowledge of pragmatics in institutes and to discover the extent to which these learners transfer their L1 pragmatic patterns into L2 productions.

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