Realization of Verbal Appropriacy/ Inappropriacy in Persian: A Variational Pragmatics approach

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Abstract: Avoiding the current terminology debates in the literature on politeness research and following a variational pragmatics approach, this study attempted to illuminate how appropriacy/ inappropriacy is realized in Persian language in light of five speech acts of introduction, apology, refusal, congratulation, and condolence. Additionally, it was aimed to see to what extent appropriacy/ inappropriacy is a function of variables such as age, gender, job, and level of education. In order to achieve this aim, 300 participants (m=150, f=150) completed an Open-ended Production Test (OPT) consisting of twenty situations. Analyzed within a two-component part variational pragmatics framework; namely pragmatic level and social factors, the data revealed that the variables in the study in quite different forms guide the expectations, perception, and performance of the participants in the study. Giving an appropriacy (Marked/unmarked) taxonomy of the study speech acts in Persian, it is illustrated how in most cases, the norms of appropriate verbal behavior seem to be subject to the variables of the study. It was further shown that talk and acts between speakers at a social situation are governed by converging and diverging norms in different communities of practice in Persian. Thereupon, the study can highlight the significance of including variational perspective on conventions of language use for language teaching.

Keywords: Variational Pragmatics; Persian; Talks and acts, Open-ended Production Test; Speech Act

Introduction

Language is one of the major vehicles for the transmission of culture. Besides, each communication occurs in a social setting which limits the linguistic forms individuals use.

Accordingly, the way these individuals define the social situation, their perceptions of what others know, think and believe, and the claims they make about their own and others' identities will affect the form and content of their acts of speaking (Krauss & Chiu, 1997). To put the point more clearly, one of the main concerns of the individuals is how to maintain their relationships with other people in their social life by an appropriate way of speaking.

In addition, by the emergence of the concept of the communicative competence (Hymes, 1972a; 1972b), the language teaching has paid more attention to teaching appropriate language use in addition to general linguistic elements. As Brown and Yule (1983) suggest, many language use aims at interaction, by which they mean using language to build, maintain and improve social relationships. Indeed, if the speaker discourse is not appropriate, this objective will not be achieved.

Further, some factors such as rudeness and being deliberate or not, can break the social relationships down. In this vein, gaining an understanding of this feature of language use, both as a receiver and producer of language, is fundamental to success. In other words, appropriacy is central to the use of any language. However, this is quite challenging since this aspect of language is culture and context specific. In a word, appropriacy is chiefly connected to the situational context (Renkema, 2004).

In light of this last point, it would appear that various cultures (and languages) answer the following question differently: What is appropriacy and how is it realized in a particular language? To answer this basic question, one needs to consider some major issues such as socio-economic class, gender, age, and pragmatic considerations among other variables. Many studies have been done to address the given question from different perspectives (Barron, 2005a; Barron, Muderack, & Pandarova, 2015; Bieswagner, 2015; Farenika, 2015; Haugh & Carbaugh, 2015; Murphy, 2012; Rüegg, 2014; Schneider, 2012).

For instance, Schneider (2012) investigated appropriate behavior across varieties of English. To find out whether the informants notions of appropriateness vary in varieties of English, this study focused on small talk between strangers. It was revealed that gender and age variations existed within a national variety, and age-grading influenced the norms of appropriate verbal behavior. Moreover, the framework utilized for that study was a new approach called variational pragmatics.

Theoretical Framework

One of the current approaches for determining the appropriacy/inappropriacy in a language is known as Variational Pragmatics (VP). It can be considered as a newborn of the marriage of

pragmatics and modern dialectology by promoting the systematic investigation of the effect of different macrosocial features (such as region, gender, ethnic, socio-economic, & age) on language in (inter)action (cf. Schneider & Barron, 2005).

Typically, in pragmatics, variation has been studied across a variety of languages (inter-lingual variation) and across different circumstances (intra-lingual micro-social variation). Notwithstanding, the other type of variation which has been investigated restrictedly is variation across varieties of the same language, i.e. intralingual macrosocial variation (cf., e.g. Clyne, 2006; Kasper, 1992; Wierzbicka, 1985).

According to Schneider and Barron (2005), VP is a two-component part framework includes levels of pragmatic analysis and social factors. In addition, the levels of pragmatic analysis are distinguished as formal, actional, interactional, topic, and organizational levels. Besides, the second part of VP, the social factors, are regional, gender, ethnic, socioeconomic, and age variations (Barron & Schneider, 2006). Presently, VP focuses primarily on macrosocial variation that aims at identifying the effect of each macrosocial element on language use separately (Schneider & Barron, 2008).

The first level of VP, the formal level, pertains to the analysis of linguistic forms, such as discourse markers, hedges, and upgraders. Additionally, the analyses of this type can be characterized as form-to-function mappings (Schneider & Barron, 2008). As an illustration, Farr and O Keeffe (2002) explored would as a hedging device, and Kallen (2005) compared gambits, such as I mean and you know to British English choices.

On actional level, the focus is on speech acts. Schneider and Barron (2008) posited that realization and modification of speech acts are studied with regard to directness and politeness, considering both the conventions of means (i.e. speaker strategies) and the conventions of form that is linguistic devices (Clark, 1979 on these expressions). This level investigates how particular speech acts, for example, refusals, offers, or apologies, are realized in different intralingual varieties. Therefore, analyses of this type can be characterized as function-to-form mappings. For instance, Schneider (1999), compared compliment responses in American English and Irish English, or in another study, Barron (2005b), examined offers in Irish English and English English.

The interactional level is related to how speech acts combine into larger units of discourse, such as adjacency pairs, interchanges, interactional exchanges, or phases (Barron, 2014). As an example, Barron (2005b) studied offer negotiation in two varieties of Irish English and English English (Tottie, 2002, p. 181-182, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006, p. 97-98).

The topic level is concerned with discourse content and the issues of topic selection, like identifying suitable topics for small talk (e.g., Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006), or finding appropriate subject of an apology or a compliment (e.g., Holmes, 1995), and also topic management issues which pertain to how topics are introduced, maintained, developed, changed, and terminated (Barron, 2014).

In the final level, ethno methodological analysis and conversation analysis are combined by the organizational level (Barron, 2014). The concentration is on turn taking. In one study, Tottie (1991) compared back channels in British and American English, and in another one, McCarthy (2002), contrasted response tokens in British and American conversations. Grounded in this theoretical framework, the more inclusive report of related studies is presented in the subsequent section.

Related Studies

Considering some more related research studies using VP approach in this field of study, a growing body of literature has investigated (Barron, 2005a; Barron, 2005b; Barron et al., 2015; Bieswagner, 2015; Farenika, 2015; Haugh & Carbaugh, 2015; Murphy, 2012; Rüegg, 2014; Schneider, 2012). For instance, for the first time, Barron (2005a) used the term *variational pragmatics* in her paper: *Variational pragmatics in the foreign language classroom* (Barron 2005a). It emphasized the research for the study of macrosocial pragmatic variation across intralingual varieties, tried to stress several parameters related to speech act studies of this variation. Accordingly, a case was created for language teaching to consist a variational perspective on conventions of language use.

Besides, Murphy (2012) concentrates on two macrosocial factors, age and gender, in order to understand how they influence the use of response tokens in Irish English. It was shown that a high level of dispersion across the male subjects which emphasized how one or more speakers use of the forms played a part in influencing the overall frequency.

Further, in a research carried out by Rüegg (2014), the researcher investigated another aspect, that is to say, variation along the socio economic scale. As the results demonstrated, there is a difference in the frequency and use of thanks responses in Los Angeles. Expanding on this theme, Bieswanger (2015) examined responding to thanks in two varieties of English, New York and Vancouver. The results stressed on regional variation in the use of this speech act in spontaneous real-life interaction. Further, this study proposed the term Imbalance Reducer after Thanks (IRAT) as a more appropriate term for the speech act of responding to thanks.

Moreover, in a study conducted by Haugh and Carbaugh (2015), the researchers focused on self-disclosure practices in initial interactions between native speakers of English from Australia and the United States. It was discovered that although both Americans and Australians volunteered self-disclosures in the presentation-eliciting questions context, the Americans have a tendency to self-disclose without being induced by questions from the other individual. In addition, the Australians tend to use positive assessments in response to self-disclosures less frequently and with a lower intensity than the Americans. Finally, it was concluded that preferences in self-disclosure practices were argued to demonstrate the ways in which underlying cultural premises were deployed by the participants.

Furthermore, Barron, et al. (2015) did a research which contrasts tag question use in two regions of Ireland and Great Britain by analyzing formal and functional levels of VP. The researchers found many similarities in the use of tag questions across the varieties, a lower use of tag questions in Irish English and in a range of variety-preferential features on both the formal and functional levels.

Regarding VP in varieties of the same language, Farenkia (2015) studied invitation refusals across regional varieties of French. This study analyzed the strategies utilized by French speakers of Cameroon and France to refuse an invitation to a friend birthday party and other situations. The results of this paper revealed similarities in both varieties considering the tendency to face saving refusal strategies. Nevertheless, there were many differences in choices of indirect refusals. Besides, it was observed that the Cameroonians tended to produce more complicated utterances and more relational address forms than the French participants.

This Study

Reviewing the aforementioned literature indicates that several pieces of research have been done using different levels of VP approach studying various languages in distinct contexts around the world. Comparatively, a number of studies have been conducted within the field of pragmatics and speech acts in Persian in the context of Iran (see Afghari, 2007; Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Allami & Montazeri, 2012; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Izadi, 2015; Jalilfar, 2009; Salmani-Nodushan, 2006; Shahidi Pour & Zarei, 2016a,b; Shariati & Chamani, 2010). However, lack of studies employing VP approach in this language is appeared.

Thus, this study aims to first see how appropriacy/ inappropriacy is realized in Persian language in light of five speech acts of introduction, apology, refusal, congratulation, and condolence. Second, it investigates the extent appropriacy/ inappropriacy is a function of

variables such as age, gender, job, and level of education. Bearing this in mind, to close the gap and more clearly realize the verbal appropriacy/ inappropriacy in Persian, this study tries to seek the answers of the following questions:

1. How is appropriacy/ inappropriacy realized in Persian language regarding five speech acts of introduction, apology, refusal, congratulation, and condolence?

2. To what extent is appropriate verbal behavior in Persian a function of age, gender, job, and level of education?

The Appropriacy Taxonomy of Speech Acts in Persian

To answer the questions, a taxonomy of appropriacy/inappropriacy in Persian was needed. Hence, first and before the bottom-up analysis out of the data in light of the variables of the study along with an in-depth analysis of the literature, a taxonomy of Persian appropriacy/ inappropriacy of the study speech acts was developed (see Table 1). The taxonomy is occupied by the percentages distracted from the participants᾽ answers.

Table 1. Appropriacy Taxonomies Realized in Persian in Light of Five Speech Acts of the Study

Speech Act	Realization Types	Frequency
1) Introduction	*Approach	31.75%
	*Disclose identity	26.5%
	*Acknowledge predicting meeting	22.5%
	Express happiness	16.25%
	No introduction	3%
2) Apology	*Explain situation. justify	34%
	*Preparing for apology	33%
	*Direct apology.	31.5%
	(request for forgiveness)	1.5%
	No response	
3) Refusal	*Regret-reason-explanation	40%
	*Convincing-swearing	23.5%
	No refusal	18.5%
	Direct refusal	17.5%
	No response	0.5%
4) Congratulation	*Direct congratulation	39.25%
	*Wishing more happiness	24.5%
	Surprise with congratulation	19%
	Congratulation with flattery	16.75%
	No response	0.5%
5) Condolence	*Raise hope. hearten	59.25%
	Offer help. support	16.5%
	Wishing no more grief	14%
	Wishing god blessing	9%
	No response	1.25%

Note. The marked appropriate behaviors realized by Persian speakers are marked by an asterisk [*].

As it can be seen from the Table 1, different appropriate verbal behaviors are realized in Persian in light of the five speech acts of the study. The further details with discussion of the most appropriate behaviors realized by Persian speakers is presented in 3.1.

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Participants

The participants of this study included 300 Iranian individuals chosen from varied communities. That is to say, they were teachers, college students, clerks, salespeople, hairdressers, etc. with regard to differing age, gender, and educational level. In addition, the subjects belonged to various groups of jobs were assigned to two main groups of public and private jobs (cf. Sahaa, Royb, & Karc, 2014 on these terms). A sizeable random sample of 300 was employed for this study due to having a more externally valid representation of the population since large sample weakens the effect of having selected an unusual individual (Elmes, et al., 2012). Half of the subjects were from the north east of Iran, Golestan province, and the others were from the west of the country, Ilam province. Fifty percent of the speakers were male, and the others were female.

Instruments

The data was collected by an Open-ended Production Test (OPT) which was developed by the researchers of the study. The test was given to the respondents to assess the way they produce the speech acts of introduction, apology, refusal, congratulation, and condolence in Persian. The OPT included 20 situations, four situations for each speech act (two formal and two informal), each of which had a situation and a blank space followed by a rejoinder, where a certain kind of speech act was expected. Different combinations of the sociopragmatic variables (i.e. job, age, gender & level of education) were considered in constructing the situations and assessing variability.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The developed OPT was administered to two main groups of Public jobs (e.g. teachers, clerks, lawyers, nurses, etc.) and Private jobs (e.g. salespeople, hairdressers, drivers, etc.) totally 300 participants in both regions of Golestan and Ilam equally. Although it is not easy to formulate open-ended questions and the scoring can be time consuming, OPT provides more freedom for test takers in answering and also makes them use technical terms in producing answers, which is not the case with closed-ended questions. Further, a written format of data collection was preferred given it removes respondents anxiety and more closely illustrates what they want to really produce in oral interactions (Kasper, 1992; Rose, 1992).

The questionnaire was composed in Persian, and the participants were asked to write as much as it was thought to be appropriate or what they would answer in the provided situations in the five speech acts. After analyzing the responses to the situations in each speech act, the realization of appropriacy/ inappropriacy in Persian was investigated

generally. Then, the relationship between factors stated in the second research question (i.e. job, age, gender, & level of education) and appropriate verbal behavior in Persian was explored. Finally, the degree of possible effects of speech acts on the appropriate verbal behavior of participants was investigated. In addition, the findings of the study were disseminated by utilizing various tables and statistics (such as Frequency and Chi-Square Test) calculated by SPSS software, version 20.

The Analysis of Appropriacy/ Inappropriacy in Light of Age, Gender, Job, and Educational Level

In this part of the study, effort was made to see whether the realized appropriate/ inappropriate behavior of Persian speakers (see 2.1.) is a function of variables such as age, gender, job, and level of education or not. In what follows, the given analysis is reported followed by the detailed discussions.

Results and Discussion

This study intended to realize appropriacy/inappropriacy in Persian using a variational pragmatics across different communities of practice as participants for the study. The norms of appropriate verbal behavior are subject to gender, age, job, and level of education. Based on the data collected through OPT, the subsequent findings were seen.

Appropriacy across Pragmatic Levels

Regarding the five speech acts, several realization types are observed among all participants answers to the twenty scenarios related to different speech acts (see Table 1). On the one hand, the marked appropriate behaviors among the participants for the introduction speech act are approach (31.75%) which is the most frequent verbal behavior, disclose identity (26.5%) as the second one, and acknowledge predicting meeting (22.5%) as the third marked appropriate behavior. On the other hand, Iranians employ express happiness (16.25%) and no introduction (3%) as the least usual introduction strategies.

Strikingly, the most frequent behavior, approach, can thus suggest that Iranians usually tend to use some statements in order to establish social bonds. In other words, they exploit phatic communion such as weather-talk, greeting, and so on to begin an introduction act. Generally, Persian speakers confirm the definition stated by Devito (1986) that phatic communication is the small talk that precedes the big talk [that] opens up channels of communication (p. 228). In fact, employing phatic communion is a common strategy among Persians in order to attract the attention of the listener in the given speech act. Additionally, the third realized frequent strategy,

acknowledging predicting meeting, is considered as a kind of respect or politeness in Iranian tradition and culture, which may not be shared as much in other cultures.

The marked appropriate behaviors for apology speech act are realized as explain situation-justify (34%), preparing for apology (33%), and direct apology-request of forgiveness (31.5%), respectively. All these three strategies are seen as common verbal behaviors in apology situations among different Persian communities while the first one is more frequent than others.

The results are compatible with Tajvidi (2000), Eslami-Rasekh (2004), Afghari (2007), and Shariati and Chamani (2010), in which they found almost the same apology realization types in Persian. For instance, the most frequent behavior observed in this study, explain situation-justify, is observed in Shariati and Chamani (2010) research, which is stated under the heading of justifying the hearer as a sub-strategy of responsibility. Also, another marked appropriate behavior identified in the current paper, direct apology-request of forgiveness, is discovered in Shariati and Chamani (2010) with the same title. Further, the apology strategies realized by Persian speakers in different contexts in this paper supports the earlier observations (Afghari, 2007; Shariati & Chamani, 2010) that indicate Persian apologies are pragmatically formulaic as in English.

As for refusal, the data analysis reveals four main types of realizations with regret-reason-explanation (40%) as the most frequent appropriate behavior among Persians, and after that, convincing-swearing (23.5%) is in the second position. Besides, the next verbal behavior in refusal, no refusal (18.5%) is more frequent than the less shared behavior direct refusal (17.5%) among respondents. Noticing this number of employing no refusal strategy more than using direct refusal among Persians is not surprising because Iranians, similar to Japanese (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990), are supposed to be not as much direct, to avoid disagreement or telling what people do not like to hear.

As Felix-Brasdefer (2004) argues, native speakers of Spanish usually use prerefusal strategies to initiate a refusal speech act. These prerefusals involved various politeness strategies like willingness or showing a positive opinion. The results of the current study about using prerefusal strategies by Persian speakers, using regret-reason-explanation (40%) before refusing, indicates remarkable similarities between Iranians and Spanish regarding Felix-Brasdefer s (2004) study.

As the participants of this study showed, Persian speakers, first and foremost, prefer to use regret. By using this strategy, Iranians show that they wish they had not refused the other

person s request or invitation. Afterwards, to support their refusal and to decrease the other party s displeasure at being rejected, they usually give reason/s followed by sufficient explanation. In another marked appropriate behavior in refusal situations, convincing-swearing, Persians initially tend to convince the other individual and then swear God or a saint person in order to lessen the face threat existing in this speech act and also reemphasize the truth of what has been said by using swear expressions.

According to the results, there are many similarities between the refusal strategies realized in this paper, and those observed from the study conducted by Aliakbari and Changizi (2012) in which direct refusal , regret , excuse and reason , wish , postponement and swearing (as a culture-bound strategy) were the most frequently used strategies by participants of both studies. Further, the frequency of no refusal was more than direct refusal among the participants of the current study which may show Iranians tendency to face saving acts over face threatening acts even in refusing others requests/ invitations.

The next speech act, congratulation, represents four common strategies among Iranians. Considering the two observed marked appropriate behaviors in this speech act, firstly, direct congratulation (39.25%) is the most frequent realization type and then wishing more happiness (24.5%). In the study of Allami and Nekouzadeh (2011), the most common congratulation strategies Persians tended to utilize were, Illocutionary Force Indicating Devise (IFID) , Offer of good wishes and Expression of happiness .

On the one hand, the most frequent marked appropriate behavior realized in this paper, direct congratulation, is different from Allami and Nekouzadeh s (2011) realization. On the other hand, in both studies, the second common appropriate behavior is wishing more happiness/ An offer of good wishes (as cited in Allami & Nekouzadeh, 2011).

The other types that are observed in participants responses, surprise with congratulation (19%) and congratulation with flattery (16.75%), can be regarded as the unmarked behaviors among Persians. Accordingly, a surprising observation from the results of this study is that Persian speakers rarely use congratulation with flattery strategy in their conversations while Iranian writers frequently use flattery in their letters (RimaniNikou & RimaniNikou, 2012).

The last speech act, condolence, shows raise hope-hearten (59.25%) as the marked appropriate behavior among Persians. Further analysis indicates that the other realization types in condolence, offer help-support (16.5%), wishing no more grief (14%), and wishing God blessing (9%) are dramatically less frequent than the most common one.

Finding appropriate verbal behaviors for offering condolence can be a demanding task. For instance, saying I m sorry to a bereaved or defeated person is not considered the most appropriate and efficient verbal act in Iranian culture. Instead, Persians usually prefer to initially show their support to that individual and then try to make him/her feel more hopeful. The findings are consistent with those of Lotfollahi and Eslami-Rasekh (2011) who found that Expression of sympathy is the most frequently used semantic formula by Persians in condolence situations. Besides, the results of the study shows raise hope-hearten as the most appropriate verbal behavior, about three-fifths of all condolence realization types, among Persians in this speech act.

Job Variations

It is apparent from Table 2 that the marked appropriate behaviors quite common in introduction speech act are different in the two main job groups in the study. As an illustration, the individuals who belong to public jobs use approach (32%) and disclose identity (26%) while the participants belong to private jobs employ acknowledge predicting meeting (30%) and disclose identity (28%) more than other realization types in this speech act. Accordingly, one common strategy with different frequency between both groups of jobs is disclose identity among Persian speakers.

Table 2. Frequency of Marked Appropriate Behavior(s) Realized in Persian in Light of Five Speech Acts among Different Job Groups

Speech Act	Realization Types	Public	Private
1) Introduction	Approach	*32%	25%
	Disclose identity	*26%	*28%
	Acknowledge predicting meeting	21%	*30%
	Express happiness	17%	15%
	No introduction	4%	2%
2) Apology	Explain situation. justify	28%	*47%
	Preparing for apology	*32.5%	*39.5%
	Direct apology.(request for forgiveness)	*37%	13.5%
	No response	2.5%	0%
3) Refusal	Regret-reason-explanation	*42%	*37.5%
	Convincing. swearing	*30%	*27.5%
	No refusal	13%	19%
	Direct refusal	15%	13%
	No response	0%	3%
4) Congratulation	Direct congratulation	*36%	*44%
	Wishing more happiness	*27%	*22.5%
	Surprise with congratulation	20%	17.5%
	Congratulation with flattery	17%	16%
	No response	0%	0%
5) Condolence	Raise hope-hearten	*60%	*58%
	Offer help-support	15%	19%
	Wishing no more grief	13%	15%
	Wishing God blessing	10%	7%
	No response	2%	1%

Considering the marked appropriate behaviors in apology speech act, preparing for apology (32.5%) and direct apology-request for forgiveness (37%) are the most shared strategies among Public jobs. In the other group, private jobs, explain situation-justify (47%) and preparing for apology (39.5%) are used more than other types of strategies. Accordingly, preparing for apology is prevalent in both groups of jobs.

As the results show, participants from the public job group are more direct in apologizing situations while the others tend to be more indirect, explaining the situation and justifying the interlocutor. As Wierzbicka (1985) claimed, different tendencies in the use of apology types appear to be originated from various cultural assumptions and norms. Thus, in a country like Iran, strong religious tendencies toward Islam may lead participants to respect the rights of others considering their body, feeling, face and properties, on the one hand. Another possible factor can be related to the ostensible behaviors from Iranians for apologies which lead the individuals to take more indirect strategies, on the other hand. In other words, as the results of this study indicate, almost half of the participants tend to use explain situation-justify and preparing for apology which supports the culture-relatedness claim of Wierzbicka (1985) in using the apology strategy types.

In refusal situations, both public and private job groups have similar marked appropriate behaviors. The proportion of the most frequent verbal behavior in this speech act, regret-reason-explanation, is realized in the following way: Public jobs (42%) and Private jobs (37.5%). Another marked appropriate behavior in refusal situations for these job groups, convincing-swearing, is observed 30% for Public jobs and 27.5% for the other group of job.

Observing the higher amount of other realized behaviors, no refusal strategy in comparison with direct refusal type, shows that not rejecting the others request/invitation may confirm the fact that people in collectivist cultures (such as Iranians) are more indirect than people from individualistic cultures such as Americans (Ambady, et al., 1996; Holtgraves, 1997).

In congratulation speech act, it can be seen from Table 2 that Public and Private jobs have similar marked appropriate behaviors, that is to say, direct congratulation and wishing more happiness. Regarding the first marked appropriate behavior, the frequency of using this strategy for Public jobs is 36% and for Private jobs is 44%. Considering the second one, the percentage of employing this realization type for Public jobs is 27% and for Private jobs is 22.5%.

According to Table 2, one of the realization types, raise hope-hearten, has an obvious marked difference from all other types observed in condolence situations by both groups of

jobs. Indeed, the frequency of this marked appropriate behavior for Public jobs were seen a bit more than the other group of job (i.e., Public jobs = 60%; Private jobs = 58%).

To summarize, the marked appropriate verbal behaviors in introduction and apology speech acts are a function of job variation. Nonetheless, refusal, congratulation, and condolence speech acts are not a function of job difference in Persian language.

According to the results, Persians demonstrate a particular pattern for each speech act, which confirm the appropriacy taxonomies realized in Persian in 2.1.4., Table 1. For instance, the most commonly used strategies in introduction situations among all respondents are: 1) approach (31.75%), 2) disclose identity (26.5%), and 3) acknowledging predicting meeting (22.5%) which indicates the way verbal appropriacy realized for this speech act in Persian. According to these frequent realization types (see Table 1) which occur in all variant communities, it can be taken as a strong evidence to ascertain that the common appropriate patterns realized in Persian in section 2.1.4 is reliable.

Appropriacy Across Social Factors

Two sample varieties were chosen from two parts of Iran, Gorgan (i.e., center of Golestan province in north-east of country) and Ilam. 198 participants were from the former region and 102 individuals were from the latter one. Both groups were Muslim and Iranian. Regarding socioeconomic factors such as Level of Education, Income, and Social Status, the two main job groups investigated in this research can be ordered from high to low.

According to Iran *Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare* details about social status (Introduced based on a survey, 2005) and the report published by *Fararu news agency* about income of various jobs in Iran (Which job, 2015), public jobs have higher social status and requires a higher level of education to be employed, but they have less income in comparison with Private jobs. Besides, the individuals belong to private jobs usually have lower level of education and social status in Iran.

Educational Level Variations

According to Table 3, the marked appropriate behaviors for the respondents with M.A. degree, in introduction speech act are disclose identity (31%) and approach (25%) while the most frequent strategy types for B.A. are approach (32%) and acknowledge predicting meeting (27%). Besides, the last group of informants with Diploma degree, indicates that disclose identity (27%) is taken as the most appropriate behavior for them. Related to this, acknowledge predicting meeting and approach have equal frequency (26%) among participants with this level of education realized as second priority.

As Table 3 shows, the participants at all levels of education use one common marked appropriate behavior, preparing for apology, more than other ones in apology situations. Additionally, its frequency percentage for Diploma is 32%, for B.A. is 34%, and for M.A. is 32% which is equal to the first group. The quantity of another marked appropriate realization type in this speech act, explain situation-justify, for Diploma is 47%, and for B.A. is 32%. Besides, direct apology-request for forgiveness is in the same range of frequency, 32%, with explain situation-justify for B.A.s while it is the most frequent appropriate behavior for M.A.s (41%).

As Table 3 reveals, the most appropriate verbal behavior in refusal situations is regret-reason-explanation among all levels of education with the following percentages: M.A. (44%), B.A. (42%), and Diploma (32%). Nonetheless, the Diploma group has another frequent realization type, convincing-swearing (31%) with a close percentage to the former marked appropriate behavior realized in this group.

As shown in Table 3, two groups of educational levels, Diploma and B.A., have equal types of marked appropriate behaviors in congratulation speech act, direct congratulation and wishing more happiness. The frequency of former realization type for Diploma is 43% and for B.A. is 38% while the frequency of latter realization type for Diploma is 25% and for B.A. is 26%. The third group of education level, M.A., exhibits direct congratulation (35%) as its first strategy occurred in this speech act and surprise with congratulation (27%) as its second marked appropriate behavior.

As can be observed in Table 3, all levels of education have the same marked appropriate behavior, raise hope-hearten, in condolence speech act. Its frequency proportion for all of these groups is more than half, for Diploma (60%), for B.A. (57%), and for M.A. (62%). The use of other realization types in condolence, in every variety of educational level, is much less than the marked appropriate behavior.

By and large, based on the observed results of the current study, the appropriate verbal behavior is a function of educational level for introduction, apology, refusal, and congratulation while it is independent for condolence speech act in Persian language.

Table 3. Frequency of Marked Appropriate Behavior(s) Realized in Persian in Light of Five Speech Acts across Social Factors

Speech Act	Realization Types	Gender		Age		Educational level		
		<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Y-Ad</u>.	<u>Ad.</u>	<u>Dip.</u>	<u>B.A.</u>	<u>M.A.</u>
1) Introduction	Approach	*27%	*30.5%	*30%	*28%	*26%	*32%	*25%
	Disclose identity	*26.5%	*26.5%	*27%	*28%	*27%	24%	*31%
	Acknowledge predicting meeting	*28%	23%	*25%	*24%	*26%	*27%	22%
	Express happiness	16.5%	16%	17%	16%	18%	14%	19%
	No introduction	2%	4%	1%	4%	3%	3%	3%
2) Apology	Explain situation. Justify Preparing for apology	*33.5%	*34.5%	*33%	*39%	*47%	*32%	26%
		*33.5%	*32.5%	*35%	*31%	*32%	*34%	*32%
	Direct apology. (request for forgiveness)	*31.5%	*31.5%	*32%	*30%	20%	*32%	*41%
	No response	1.5%	1.5%	0%	0%	1%	2%	1%
3) Refusal	Regret-reason-explanation	*45%	*35%	*44%	*32%	*32%	*42%	*44%
	Convincing. swearing	*21%	*26%	*25%	22%	*31%	20%	23%
	No refusal	17%	20%	15%	*24%	22%	18%	16%
	Direct refusal	16.5%	18.5%	16%	21%	14%	19%	17%
	No response	0.5%	0.5%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%
4) Congratulation	Direct congratulation	*40%	*38.5%	*39%	*41%	*43%	*38%	*35%
	Wishing more happiness	*28.5%	*20.5%	*25%	*23%	*25%	*26%	24%
	Surprise with congratulation	15%	23%	19%	19%	16%	17%	*27%
	Congratulation with flattery	16.5%	17%	17%	17%	16%	19%	13%
	No response	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
5) Condolence	Raise hope. hearten	*62.5%	*56%	*61%	*57%	*60%	*57%	*62%
	Offer help. support	15%	18%	19%	17%	19%	17%	13%
	Wishing no more grief	14.5%	13.5%	13%	15%	13%	15%	13%
	Wishing God blessing	7%	10.5%	7%	9%	7%	9%	11%
	No response	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%

Note. M: Male; F: Female; Y-Ad.: Young-Adults (19-33); Ad.: Adults (34-54); Dip.: Diploma.

Age Variations

To analyze age and gender differences, two subgroups were created for various ages existed in this study, 'young adults' and 'adults'. The former group included the ages from 19 to 33 and the latter one from 34 to 54. As can be seen from Table 3, both subgroups of ages have almost similar distribution with different frequency. The younger group is comprised of 200 participants and the older group is consisted of 100.

Regarding introduction speech act, in first group, approach (30%) is the marked appropriate behavior while in the second one, approach and disclose identity have equal frequency of 28% which are the most common realization types. Besides, other marked appropriate behaviors in young adults group are disclose identity (27%) and acknowledge predicting meeting (25%) while it is 24% in adults group.

Considering apology situations, two realization types, explain situation-justify and preparing for apology, are the most frequent appropriate behaviors among both age group

variations, as Table 3 illustrates. The proportion of first marked appropriate behavior for young adults is 33% and for adults is 39% while the frequency of second marked appropriate behavior for young adults is 35% and for adults is 31%. Besides, one more marked verbal behavior, direct apology-request for forgiveness, is observed in young adults group with the frequency of 32% which is a bit more than what it is for adults group (30%).

As Table 3 shows, young adults realization of appropriate behaviors in refusal situations differs from adults given they prefer to use regret-reason-explanation (44%) strategy as their first choice in this speech act. In addition, their second preference in such situations is employing convincing-swearing (25%). Similarly, adults use regret-reason-explanation (32%) as their most frequent appropriate behavior and no refusal (24%) as their second one.

According to Table 3, both groups of ages have the same marked appropriate behaviors, direct congratulation and wishing more happiness, in congratulation situations. The first marked realization type is a bit more common in adults group than in young adults group (adults= 41% > young adults= 39%). Though, the second marked realization type is more frequent in young adults group than in adults one (young adults= 25% > adults= 23%).

Based on Table 3, one marked appropriate behavior, raise hope-hearten, has the highest frequency range in both groups of ages in condolence speech act. In the first age group, its proportion is (61%) but in the second one, it is (57%).

Briefly, the appropriate verbal behavior in introduction, apology, congratulation, and condolence is not a function of age variations in Persian language. Whereas, in refusal situations, age differences make Persian speakers to adopt dissimilar strategies.

Gender Variations

Regarding gender variations, a balanced gender distribution (m=150, f=150) was achieved in order to study gender differences. Taking introduction speech act in consideration, as Table 3 illustrates, males prefer to use three behaviors more than other ones, namely, acknowledge predicting meeting (28%), approach (27%), and disclose identity (26.5%). On the other side, females tend to use primarily approach (30.5%) and then disclose identity (26.5%) more than other strategy types. Interestingly, both groups have the same frequency in employing disclose identity (26.5%) but they have different priorities in its using.

As Table 3 shows, three verbal behaviors are observed as marked appropriate behaviors in both males and females groups regarding apology speech act. Two of them have close frequency in gender varieties, explain situation-justify (male=33.5%, female=34.5%) and

preparing for apology (male= 33.5%, female= 32.5%). Further, one realization type, direct apology-request for forgiveness (31.5%), is equal for both of them.

As Table 3 displays, the marked appropriate behaviors in refusal situations are similar for males and females, although the frequency range differs. Indeed, regret-reason-explanation is realized as the most appropriate verbal behavior in this speech act according to its high proportion of 45% for males and 35% for females. In addition, convincing-swearing has the second rank for both genders, males (21%) and females (26%).

With congratulation speech act in mind, both males and females mostly prefer to use direct congratulation strategy (male= 40%, female=38.5%) as an appropriate behavior. Further, both genders use wishing more happiness (male= 28.5%, female= 20.5%) as a second marked appropriate behavior in this speech act, as shown in Table 3.

Analyzing the data for the last speech act, condolence, more than half of males and females employ raise hope-hearten (male= 62.5%, female= 56%), as a marked appropriate behavior in such situation. Besides, other realization types in condolence has low frequency among Persians, as illustrated in Table 3.

Generally, the appropriate verbal behavior is realized independent of gender variations for apology, refusal, congratulation, and condolence speech acts. However, gender differences influence on the type of strategies employed by Persian speakers in introduction speech act.

To discover whether there is a significant difference between social factors, Chi-square test was performed. According to Table 4, the amount of Sig. for 'job, and educational level' is less than 0.05; thus, a significant difference can be observed. On the other hand, 'gender and age' are similar to each other and they have Sig. =1, which is more than 0.05 and consequently, none of them show significant difference.

Table 4. The Chi-Square test- Gender, Age, Job, and Level of Education

	Gender	**Age**	**Job**	**Educational Level**
Chi-Square (X^2)	.000	.000	132.000	33.540
Sig. ($p < .05$)	1.000	1.000	.000	.000

As represented in Table 5, the amount of Sig. in introduction, apology, refusal, congratulation, and condolence speech acts in Persian were less than 0.05. Hence, a significant difference is observed in every realization types of all five speech acts.

Table 5. The Chi-Square Test- Strategies Used in Introduction, Apology, Refusal, Congratulation, and Condolence by Persians

Speech Act	Realization Types	Chi-Square (X^2)	Sig.($p < .05$)
1) Introduction	Approach	73.680	.003
	Disclose identity	327.000	.000
	Acknowledge predicting meeting	144.720	.011
	Express happiness	178.800	.017
	No introduction	436.380	.000
2) Apology	Explain situation. justify	74.400	.000
	Preparing for apology	62.640	.000
	Direct apology.	119.700	.029
	(request for forgiveness)	513.780	.000
	No response		
3) Refusal	Regret-reason-explanation	134.400	.000
	Convincing. swearing	89.040	.006
	No refusal	142.080	.000
	Direct refusal	168.720	.032
	No response	276.480	.000
4) Congratulation	Direct congratulation	258.600	.000
	Wishing more happiness	259.500	.001
	Surprise with congratulation	150.720	.000
	Congratulation with flattery	170.160	.029
	No response	276.480	.000
5) Condolence	Raise hope-hearten	74.220	.000
	Offer help-support	195.840	.000
	Wishing no more grief	4.320	.008
	Wishing God blessing	184.380	.012
	No response	243.000	.000

Conclusion

This study has been conducted from a variational pragmatics (VP) perspective, exploring how appropriacy/ inappropriacy is realized in Persian language regarding five speech acts of introduction, apology, refusal, congratulation, and condolence. Additionally, it was aimed to find out whether appropriacy/ inappropriacy is a function of age, gender, job, and level of education or not. Based on the obtained results, it was observed that appropriacy/ inappropriacy in Persian is realized variously in various speech acts.

For instance, the marked appropriate behaviors realized in introduction speech act were approach, disclose identity, and acknowledge predicting meeting. Further, the most frequent realization types of other four speech acts in Persian were the following: apology (explain

situation. justify, preparing for apology, and direct apology. request for forgiveness), refusal (regret. reason. explanation), congratulation (direct congratulation, and wishing more happiness), and condolence (raise hope. hearten). Furthermore, this study gave an account of and the reasons for the common verbal behaviors with regard to five speech acts through creating appropriacy taxonomies realized in Persian language (Table 1).

For the second research question, the findings obtained by running Chi-square test. It was found that appropriacy/ inappropriacy in Persian is a function of job and educational level whereas it is not a function of age and gender on the whole. To put it more clearly, it should be stated that there are two exceptions for age and gender variations. First, the appropriate verbal behavior is a function of age in refusal speech act, and it is a function of gender in introduction speech act. Second, the appropriacy/inappropriacy is not a function of job variations in refusal, congratulation, and condolence speech act and it is not a function of level of education in condolence speech act.

To conclude, the findings presented throughout this study can significantly contribute to the growing body of research in VP in one side, and it can be considered as a starting point in using VP investigating Persian language on the other side. In addition, the results of the realization of verbal appropriacy/inappropriacy in Persian considering these five speech acts can be deployed in communicative language teaching. Moreover, the findings of the study confirm the claim that language and culture are interrelated, and they should not be considered and taught separately. Thereupon, the study can highlight the significance of including variational perspective on conventions of language use for language teaching.

There are some limitations to this research that requires to be acknowledged and regarded in future research. First, a major caveat resides in the fact that the realization of appropriacy/inappropriacy is investigated in line with five speech acts in Persian, and it is needed to explore other speech acts, too. Second, as far as we know, it is the preliminary research that has been conducted using VP in realization of appropriacy/ inappropriacy with regard to five speech acts analyzing Persian language. Thus, it should be cared that the generalizability of the findings of this study to all Persian speakers is not acceptable.

More investigations is needed to develop the research with other Persian speakers from other parts of Iran and also other countries that have native Persian speakers. Third, the participants who has been investigated in this study were limited to some particular types of jobs and educational levels. Accordingly, it is suggested for further research considering other groups of jobs and also other levels of education like PhD Persian speakers. Finally,

more extensive research is needed to obtain a more precise picture about the realization of verbal appropriacy/ inappropriacy in Persian using VP.

Acknowledgments

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