CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The results obtained through the analysis of the data collected by the administration of DCT and audio-recorded Role-Play were presented in Chapters 4 and 5 to seek the answers to research questions proposed in this study. In order to answer the research questions in this chapter, first a review of research questions will be provided in the subsequent section. Then, the conclusions summarized from data analysis results and discussions will be stated. Finally, the limitations of the study are referred to and a few recommendations for further research will be provided.

6.2 Research Questions Revisited

The specific research questions for this study address request and apology speech acts among Persian male participants to see how Persian males perform request and apology speech acts with regard to social variables. As such, the study examined the influence of power and distance factors as context-external variables on the linguistic choice of Persian males when they are expected to make a request and apologize. Whether the imposition of request and severity of offence, as context-internal variables, influence the participants' requestive and apologetic verbal behaviors, were other issues explored in this study. As such, based on the results and discussions provided previously in Chapters

4 and 5, the conclusions including the answers to the above questions are presented in the subsequent sections.

6.3   Request Strategies

The analysis of the data revealed that Persian males employ most of the strategies of request speech acts which have been claimed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) to be universal. The request strategies identified in order of frequency in the data are: Mood derivable, Query Preparatory, Need Statement, Suggestory Formula, Hint, Performative, Challenging Ability, and Obligation Statement.

The direct request strategies employed by the participants of the study include Mood Derivable, Want Statement, Performative and Obligation Statement which altogether nominate the Direct category of request strategies as the most frequent request category as well. The frequency of Direct request strategies indicates that Persian males prefer to formulate their requests through the strategy Mood Derivable as the first linguistic choice among all request strategies in this study. Moreover, the power and distance relations between the interlocutors in a situation, as well as the imposition of request on the hearer, were found not to be influencing the choice of Mood Derivable as a Direct request strategy among Persian male speakers. As such, the study can consider Mood Derivable as a context-independent request strategy as far as context-internal and context-external variables are concerned.

On the contrary, Persian participants' avoidance of formulating a direct request through the universal strategy Obligation Statement, which is called Locution Derivable in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) term, indicates that in Persian culture any impression of obligation

expressed verbally is not a favorable linguistic choice, particularly when the obligation is supplemented with verbal directness. The obligation supplemented by the directness will add a sense of dictatorship to request speech acts that in Persian culture can minimize the probability to get the addressee's consent to fulfill the request.

Moreover, Need Statement as the other request strategy from among Direct category of request strategies is used by Persian male speakers particularly where the request imposition borne on the hearer is high.

The analysis of Direct request also revealed that Performative strategy is not a favorable request strategy among Persian male speakers in most situations. In other words, the use of the strategy Performative in few situations reflects that informal direct request strategies, e.g. Mood Derivable and Want Statement, are preferable to a formal direct request strategy, for instance Performative among Persian males −formality to this study means the appropriateness of the syntactic structure of request strategy in formal context.

The second frequent request strategy, namely Query Preparatory, nominates Conventional Indirect category of request strategies as the second preferred request strategy among Persian male speakers. The results also showed that Query Preparatory is situation-independent and has nothing to do with imposition, distance and power as social variables involved in the situation where the request is realized. The other strategy of Conventional Indirect category of request strategy, namely Suggestory Formula, was most often preferred by Persian male speakers in situations where neither the speaker nor the hearer dominated the other one and the request performed borne low imposition on the hearer.

As For Non-Conventional Indirect category of request strategy, Persian male speakers prefer not to use this request strategy, particularly when they have a dominant relation with the requestee. Jalilifar (2009) believes that "non-conventially indirect request requires the hearer to deduce the speaker's intention, which can be a burden to the hearer". Therefore, the use of Non-Conventional Indirect request by the speaker requires resorting to the inferential ability of the addressee, which does not encourage the use of Non-Conventional Indirect requests among Persian males.

As a result of the qualitative analysis of the data beyond the classic data analysis framework (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) which is used in most of the previous studies on request strategies, the study shows that Persian male speakers use a new strategy to realize request speech act. The *Challenging Ability* strategy is used by Persian males especially when the speaker is dominating the hearer and no indication of bullying can be observed; moreover, the interlocutors know one another well, and the imposition of the request is low. Since no traces of this strategy were found in previous studies on request (e.g., Felix-Brasdefer, 2005; Marti, 2006; Zhang et al., 2007; Jalilifar, 2009), the researcher adds this strategy to the inventory of Direct request strategies.

6.3.1 Internal Modifications

As for request internal modifications, the analysis of data revealed that Persian male speakers modify request strategies most frequently through modification strategies namely, Politeness Marker, Downtoner, Diminutive, Appealer, and Cajoler respectively. The results showed no relation between context-internal and context-external variables and the realization of Politeness Markers as an internal modification. That is to say,

Politeness Markers are context-independent in nature. Regarding Downtoners, the results revealed that the use of Downtoners for modification of request strategies can be found among Persian male speakers, however they prefer to use Downtoners most often in situations where the imposition of the request is low.

Concerning the internal modification of request strategies through Diminutive strategy, the results showed Diminutive strategies are used by Persian male speakers in a variety of situations in terms of context-internal and context-external, however the most suitable situation for the modification of request strategies through Diminutive strategies among Persian male speakers is where the speaker is dominating the hearer; they do not know one another well; and the imposition of the request is high. The results of the analysis of request internal modification also indicated that Appealer strategies are a choice to be employed for the modification of requests particularly in situations where Persian males find the speakers to be more dominant than the hearer. Although Cajoler strategies are not a favorable request internal modification, however, few realizations of this modification strategy can be found among Persian male speakers particularly in situations where the request bears high imposition on the hearer.

6.3.2 External Modifications

Regarding the request external modifications, the identification, classification and frequency of external modifications lead us to conclude that the most frequent request external modification among Persian males are Grounder, Imposition Minimizer, Goal Achievement, Preparator, Pre-commitment, Promise of Reward, and Disarmer respectively.

With regard to the relation between context-internal and context-external variables and modification of request strategies externally, Persian male speakers of the study were found to prefer Grounder as the most suitable modification made to a request in different situations varying in terms of social distance, social dominance and the imposition of the request. This reflects the idea that Grounder is employed regardless of the context-internal and context-external variables of the situations by Persian male speakers. In other words, Grounder staregies are situation-independent external modifications made to a request.

Imposition Minimizer strategies were employed in this study as the second most frequent external modification. The Persian male speakers used this strategy in situations where the imposition of the request was high regardless of the distance and dominance of the interlocutors in the situation.

The use of Goal Achievement was also observed among Persian male participants as external modification of requests. The Persian male participants prefer to modify their request by the strategy Goal Achievement in different situations particularly where the social dominance is equal among interlocutors, they do not know the hearer well, and the imposition of the request is low.

The realization of Preparatory as a request external modification was also observable among Persian male speakers in a variety of situations; however, Preparatory was most often used in situations where the speaker dominated the hearer, there was social distance between the interlocutors and the request borne low imposition on the hearer. The analysis of request external modifications in relation to context-internal and context-

external variables indicated that the modification strategies Pre-commitment and Promise of Reward were used among Persian male speakers particularly in situations where the domination of the speaker on the hearer and familiarity of the interlocutors in addition to low imposition of the request could be observed. The results revealed that Disarmer was not a favorable request external modification due to the infrequent use of this strategy among Persian males.

6.4 Apology Strategies

In Persian, male speakers performed their apologies most often through the strategies IFID, Taking on Responsibility, Explanation of Situation, Offer of Repair, and Underestimating the Offence by Humor. The use of IFIDs as the most frequent apology strategy was in harmony with the results of other studies (e.g., Olshtain & Cohen (1983), Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) in western societies; Eslami-Rasekh (2004), Afghari (2007), and Shariati & Chamani (2010) in Persian) investigating other languages in which IFIDs had been reported to be the most frequent apology strategy. The direct expression of an apology was frequent in different situations ranging from where the interlocutors knew one another well to situations in which there was social distance between interlocutors.

The social dominance of the interlocutors, from among all social variables, seemed not to be related to the frequency of IFIDs either, since direct expression of apologies was identified frequently in different situations in terms of social dominance. Moreover, the severity of the offence did not play any significant role in the frequency of IFID; as such, the high frequency of IFID could be seen in situations of both high and low severe

offences. The most direct apology strategies in Persian male context, thus, were realized most frequently through Expression of Regret as '...*Sharmandeam*...' (...I'm embarrassed…) followed by Offer of Apology as '*ma?zerat mixaam*' (I apologize) and the strategy Request for Forgiveness as '*bebaxshid*' (...Forgive me...) respectively.

The realization of Taking on Responsibility in all situations indicated that Persian males would like one to apologize for an offence by taking on the responsibility and accepting the consequences resulted from this responsibility afterwards. Introducing this strategy as the most frequent apology strategy after IFIDs has also been reported in Marquez-Reiter (2000) for British English and Uruguayan Spanish, in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) for CCSARP project, in Eslami-Rasekh (2004) and in Afghari (2007) for Persian.

From among the strategies belonging to the category Taking on Responsibility, the strategy Statement of Offence was used more frequently among Persian male speakers particularly in situations where neither social dominance nor social distance existed between the interlocutors and the severity of offence is low.

The strategy Expression of Self Deficiency was not used frequently among Persian males, however the dominating relation of the speaker with the hearer and lack of distance between the interlocutors in a situation seemed to motivate Persian male speakers to use Expression of Self Deficiency for offences low in severity.

In addition to Statement of Offence, the strategy Lack of Intent was a choice for the realization of an apology among Persian male speakers in situations where there was

neither social dominance nor social distance between the interlocutors and the severity of offence was low.

The results also showed that the strategy Concern for Hearer was not a favorable apology strategy among Persian males; however, few instances of this strategy were observable among Persian males in situations where the speaker's offence would hurt the hearer physically.

Furthermore, the study indicated that the strategy Justifying the Hearer as the least frequent apology strategy of the category Taking on Responsibility was used only in situations where a high severe offence had been committed to a person who was socially distant.

The Persian males' apologetic behavior revealed that Explanation of Situation was the most used apology strategy after the categories IFID and Taking on Responsibility among Persian male speakers regardless of social distance and power relations. This strategy was most favorable among Persian males when the offence committed was considered as high in severity.

The analysis of realization of the strategy Offer of Repair among Persian males across different situations indicated that Offer of Repair was most probably provided by Persian male speakers as an apology strategy when the offence involved a financial damage to the addressee's property. In other words, the high severity of an offence could motivate Persian male speakers to express an offer to compensate for the costly offence committed.

Although previous studies of apology strategies reported the realization of Promise of Forbearance as an apology strategy, however, the data collected for this study did not elicit any instances of the strategy Promise of Forbearance from among Persian males of the study. An explanation is that Persian males prefer not to use this strategy, because of the responsibility this promise brings up. Moreover, it is not taken for granted that an offence will not happen in future for sure. Therefore, their face will not be threatened in case the offence happens again in future. Another explanation is that in Persian culture, particularly in males' communications it is a norm or an indication of masculinity for men not to show themselves in debt to others, financially or otherwise; therefore, avoiding a promise will remove any indication that the speaker is in debt.

The qualitative analysis of apology strategies among Persian male speakers showed that they use apology strategies other than apology strategies found in previous studies (e.g., Eslami-Rasekh, 2004; Afghari, 2007) in Persian. This study revealed that in Persian, male speakers used a sense of humor as an apology strategy to underestimate an offence committed. The strategy identified as *Underestimating the Offence by Humor* by the researcher, was a culture-specific apology strategy in Persian which could be added to the inventory of apology strategies introduced in previous studies. The analysis of the data also indicated that the tendency to use the strategy increased among Persian male speakers in situations where speakers were socially dominant; the Persian male participants of the study seemed to resort to humor to conceal their embarrassment brought up due to the offence committed, and consequently save their face. Moreover, Persian male speakers seemed to avoid downplay an offence by *Underestimating the*

Offence by Humor strategy where they do not know the addressee well and a friendly relation was hardly assumable.

6.4.1 Internal Intensifiers

The investigation of apology internal intensifier realizations among Persian males showed Intensifying Adverbial, Emotion, and Double Intensifier, were employed in Persian. The analysis of the realization of Intensifying Adverbial as the most frequently used internal intensifier was in harmony with what reported in Afghari (2007). The results showed that there was no relation between the realization of Intensifying Adverbial and contextual variables, namely social distance, social power, and severity of offence. In other words, Intensifying Adverbial was used by Persian males regardless of contextual variables. Emotion as the second frequent apology internal intensifier, however, seemed to be realized most often in situations where the speaker dominated the hearer in terms of social power, there was no social distance between the interlocutors and the severity of the offence committed was low. Moreover, the results indicated that the use of Double Intensifier was not a favorable linguistic choice among Persian male speakers.

6.4.2 Supportive Intensifiers

As for apology supportive intensifiers, the study indicated Offer of Repair and Statement of Offence as the most frequently used supportive intensifiers among participants of the study, although instances of other supportive intensifiers as Lack of Intent, Expression of Self Deficiency, Concern for Hearer, Justifying the Hearer, IFIDs, and Underestimating the Offence by Humor were employed by Persian males as well.

As the results showed, the most frequent realization of IFID strategies as supportive intensifier across situations was reported where the severity of offence was low. Moreover, as supportive intensifiers the strategies Statement of Offence, Lack of Intent, Concern for Hearer, and Expression of Self Deficiency registered the most frequent realizations in situations where severity of the offence committed was low. Furthermore, the equal status of interlocutors (S=H), the lack of social distance (-SD) between the interlocutors, and the low severity of the offence nominated a situation as the most suitable situation among Persian males, where an apology strategy could be intensified by *Underestimating Offence by Humor*.

Moreover, Explanation of Situation could function as a context-independent supportive intensifier, especially where there was social distance between the speaker and the hearer who was dominated by the speaker and the offence committed was not severe.

Finally, the results showed that the only common variable in situations where Offer of Repair had been employed by the participants of the study as the most frequent supportive intensifier was the high severity of the costly offences committed.

6.5 Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this study was to provide an account of the apology and request speech acts realized in Persian based on the males' assessment of the context-internal and context-external variables. The results indicated that some of the universal strategies of apology and request speech acts were used in Persian; this supported the claim that there were universal strategies for the realization of apologies (e.g., Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) and requests (e.g., Mood Derivable and Query Preparatory) speech

acts. Moreover, the results implicated that context-internal and context-external variables motivated the realization patterns of apology and request speech acts in general. As the interlocutors' assessments of the context-internal and context-external variables interacted with the strategies the interlocutors chose for the modifications of requests as well as the intensifications of apologies.

The findings also indicated the existence of culture-specific apology and request strategies, as *Underestimating the Offence by Humor* and *Challenging Ability* in Persian, which highlighted the significance of cultural norms and rules in any theory concerning with the realization of requests and apology speech acts. The communication failures and misunderstandings that may happen cross-culturally due to culture-specific strategies for the realization of speech acts can be minimized in case culture-specific strategies receive further attention and investigation. Therefore, the investigation and revelation of culture-specific strategies of speech acts, as conducted preliminarily in this study, can contribute to the formation of a more comprehensive theory of cross-cultural speech acts realizations.

6.6 Limitations and Recommendations

Although the findings of this study have brought up insights to the notion of politeness in the realization of apology and request speech acts, it still includes limitations which are open to further investigation.

The findings of this study are limited to a specific group (university male students) and are not generalizable to people of other groups. So, the need to more studies to address these limitations still stands.

This study only examined apology and request speech acts in relation to politeness strategies employed among Persian males based on their assessments of the context-internal and context-external variables. Yet, the way other speech acts, e.g., suggestions, compliments, and refusals, are realized with regard to the context-internal and context-external variables can also be investigated.

Future studies, it is maintained, should make an attempt to investigate Persian females' attributes in terms of request and apology speech act strategies, modifications made to requests, and intensification strategies of apology with regard to context-internal and context-external variables to provide a more comprehensive image of Persian culture in general and Persian language politeness strategies in particular. In this regard a qualitative study of Persian female speakers can check whether there is any culture-specific strategy in the Persian female community as far as request and apology speech acts are concerned. Moreover, the availability of new request and apology strategies introduced in this study can be examined in single-sex Persian females' request and apology speech acts as well.

Moreover, research into the expression of non-verbal politeness can provide a more holistic image of the consideration of politeness, since body contacts, gestures and facial expressions, as hand-shaking, embracing, and frowning to name a few, are associated with considerations of politeness and are probably used in different ways across cultures. Therefore, the influence of contextual variables on the performance of non-verbal politeness is an open avenue for conducting further research.

A similar study is also applicable to Persian second language learners of English to compare L1 and L2 performances of Persian native speakers in terms of requests and apology strategies as well as request modifications and apology intensifiers made to request and apology strategies for politeness purposes to explore the likely influences of L1 on L2. The implications of such studies may be beneficial to the teaching and learning of English as a second language in the Persian community.