Variation of Politeness Strategies among the Iranian Students

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Abstract—**The present study examined certain politeness strategies (bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record and don't do face threatening act) used by the Iranian students in their interactions with university service providers in the library, computer lab and restaurant contexts based on Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. In order to elicit the strategies, 177 students at Ilam University were exposed to five scenarios with multiple options representing different strategies of politeness. The result indicated the participants' insistence on self-serving goals. Negative and positive politeness strategies were the most frequent ones, but indirect strategy was the least favored one applied by the students and only a minor portion of students chose avoidance of face threatening act strategy. Examining the effect of gender on the politeness strategy use, the findings revealed statistically significant differences between male and female respondents in three scenarios. Further, the respondents' mother tongue was not found as a determining factor in the kind of politeness strategies the Iranian respondents would adopt.**

Index Terms—**bald on record, politeness, positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, FTA**

I. INTRODUCTION

The way a language speaker behaves in a specific situation represents, to some extent, his/her personality and the culture wherein he/she has grown up. Thus, one needs to be cautious about his/her behaviors and language use during communication. Besides, interlocutors can state their meanings in a variety of forms and through different strategies which, no doubt, leave different impressions on the addressee. Impolite or aggressive talk may lead to conflict while it is less likely that conflict happens between the interactants once one's meaning is conveyed politely. Hence, politeness is regarded as a significant strategy to be attended to in our daily conversations.

Mills (2003) defined politeness as "the expression of the speakers' intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another" (p. 6).The concept of "face" was originally derived from Goffman (1955) who defined it as "an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (p. 224). Brown & Levinson (1987) believed that certain kinds of acts such as apology, request and criticism intrinsically violate the face needs of the speaker and hearer. They called these acts face threatening acts (FTAs) and proposed two dimensions of face namely, positive face and negative face. According to Tracy (1990) "positive face concerns the desire to be appreciated and approved of by selected others and negative face concerns a person's want to be unimpeded and free from imposition" (p. 210). Following Goffman's concept of face, Brown & Levinson (1978) introduced politeness theory which focuses on five strategies that people choose in order to redress the severity of the face threatening acts (FTAs). These strategies which are shown in the chart below include bald on-record, positive and negative politeness with redressive action, off-record (indirect) and avoidance of FTA.
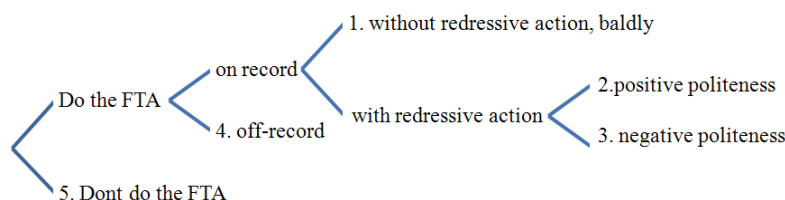

Figure 1. Five Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson 1978: 74)

By "bald on-record" which is the least polite form of committing FTA, they mean conveying the message explicitly and unambiguously. For instance, when the speaker addresses the hearer by the sentence "lend me your car" the speaker has committed a bald on-record FTA. Conversely, if the hearer responds with "Um, I don't know, let me see…" he/she has committed off-record FTA which is conveyed by hint and implicature. Meanwhile, the speakers have the possibility

to threaten their addressors' face with redressive actions through positive or negative politeness. Imagine that in the above example the speaker says "what a beautiful dress! By the way I came to borrow your car". Since the speaker initiates his/her request with complimenting the hearers' dress, the threat to the addressor's face has been mediated by positive politeness. The speaker has another option to resort to negative politeness and say "You couldn't lend me your car, could you?" The last strategy is avoidance of FTA which is the most polite form.

Lakoff (1975) considered politeness as a kind of behavior which has been "developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction" (p.64). Dimitrova-Galaczi (2005) believed that politeness embodies many aspects: it is a familiar expression for everyone and also the concept that has attracted a lot of researchers' attention; it has lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, socio-cultural, non-verbal and kinesthetic manifestations and may have different interpretations cross-culturally. Lakoff (1977) proposed three principles to establish politeness: "don't impose", "give option" and "make A feel good". Scollon and Scollon (2001) emphasized the fact that the level of politeness a speaker uses during interaction can be assessed by three factors, i.e. the power between the speaker and hearer, social distance between addressor and addressee and the ranking of the imposition.

In line with the above mentioned issues, the present study is intended to investigate the variety of politeness strategies among the Iranian students during their interaction with university staffs. The effects of gender and mother tongue on the choice of these strategies are also investigated.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Izadi & Zilaie (2012) attempted to reveal the most frequent positive politeness strategies in the Persian speakers' email compositions. The researchers collected 60 emails written by 25 male and female Iranian speakers whose relationship was friendly. To investigate and code these emails, Brown & Levinson's (1987) classification was employed. Analyzing the data revealed that "in group identity markers" was the most widely used strategy. Use of expressions such as *joonam* (dear) and *azizam* (dear) was one of the examples of this strategy use. The next frequent strategy was "presupposing or sharing some common ground". "Giving gift to hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation") was another favored strategy. As an instance of this strategy was frequent use of greeting in the Persians' emails.

Agis (2012) investigated the effect of gender on the use of politeness strategies in a Turkish series. The researcher's data consisted of 761 utterances by male and female subjects. Then, based on Brown & Levinson theory (1987), they were classified to strategies of positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on-record, and bald-off-record. The findings indicated that males used more negative politeness strategies in the workplace while females used more positive politeness strategies. In the case of interaction with younger people such as children and friends, females were found to use more positive politeness while males used more bald-off-record strategies. Another difference was in the case of talking to older relatives in which males employed more positive politeness strategies while females used more negative politeness strategies.

Wagner (2012) conducted a study in Cuernavaca, Mexico in order to determine common politeness strategies in the participants' apologies. A sample of 200 naturally occurring apologies was collected and encoded. The result of the positive and negative politeness strategies' frequencies revealed that negative politeness strategies were more preferable to the members of Cuernavaca speech community.

Cheung (2009) attempted to investigate the role of culture in the use of politeness strategies. The author's data were based on a movie clip directed by Wayne Wang. Since participants of the movie were from two different cultures, i.e. China and United States, politeness strategies were interpreted differently. According to the data, damaging ones' own positive face was realized as being polite in the Chinese culture though it was not recognized as a strategy by the American interlocutor. In order to demonstrate positive politeness toward his addressee, the American participant agreed with Chinese woman's comment regarding the unseasoned food. However, it was realized as on-record FTA and a threat to the positive face from the Chinese woman's point of view. Off-record strategy and remaining silent were the other strategies the Chinese woman used to protect her addressee's face.

Pariera (2006) examined the way people use politeness strategies in emails when talking about taboo topics. 29 university students were asked to write emails to their closest friend and also a stranger and describe the picture that had been shown to them. Contrary to Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory, she found that negative politeness strategies were used more frequently toward friends than strangers. Participants also employed more off-record strategies with close friends than with strangers. In line with Brown & Levinson theory, Bald on record was used more toward close friends.

Newton (2004) analyzed interactions of 22factory members. After recording and transcribing these interactions, three episodes of a complaint, a refusal and a directive were chosen for closer analysis. In contrast with politeness theory, he found that the participants in the three episodes used bald on record speech acts which typically enhance the severity of threat to face. However, he argued that such talk implies solidarity among the members.

Shigeru (2004) asked 4 graduate students to observe and record their conversations with others considering frequency of committing FTA and the type of the applied strategy in committing the FTA. Findings made it clear that negative politeness was often applied when FTAs were committed and in some cases, students kept silent without doing any FTA. Their silence was justified by the fact that gracefulness is rewarded in the Japanese culture.

Isik (2003) compared linguistic strategies of politeness among Turkish and English native speakers in conflict-generating service encounters. The participants were asked to read five scenarios and choose one of the politeness strategies they would adopt in the given situations. The results showed both similarities and differences between the two groups. In one scenario, Turkish speakers chose bald on record strategy to maximize the conflict while English speakers chose bald on record strategy that minimized the conflict. In another scenario, the majority of Turkish speakers chose negative politeness while a smaller number of English speakers chose negative politeness. On the contrary, some of the English speakers chose bald on record to save their addressee's face or commit no FTA. Positive politeness was the most favored strategy by both English and Turkish speakers in the third scenario. In the other two scenarios, positive and negative politeness strategies were the most selected ones by both groups of participants.

Akbari (2002) conducted a study among the mono-lingual Persian students to identify the range of politeness strategies and to compare them to those of English speakers based on Brown & Levinson (1987). Two groups of 30 university students completed an open-ended questionnaire, consisted of written situations. This questionnaire was supplemented by naturally occurring conversations among the Persians. She categorized these strategies into positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record, each one followed by several sub-categories. Though, in some cases a considerable amount of similarities was found between the two languages; an exact consistency was not demonstrated.

As can be seen, a considerable number of researchers have been interested in examining politeness strategies in different geographical contexts. However, a majority of them has examined politeness in the corpus like emails or movies and the speech acts such as apology, request and complaint. Thus, the present study intended to investigate this issue in semi-real life interactions and elicit the kind of politeness strategies the Iranians adopt during interactions with university staffs.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To maintain a smooth relationship with communicators, one needs to observe certain unwritten rules. Politeness, as one of these rules, plays a crucial role in the daily interaction. In Coulmas's (2005) terms "speakers make many choices when speaking, including the politeness level of their utterances" (p. 84). This politeness level is realized through different strategies they employ. As representatives of academic generation of the society, students are expected to be more cautious with their behaviors. Since a major part of the students' interactions within the university context is toward the university staff, they were addressed for the investigation. During in-campus interactions, the students may directly/indirectly, politely or rudely address the face of the university staff in a variety of ways in situations where their expectations are not satisfied. Since no study has been conducted on the variety of politeness strategies the Persian students employ in their interactions with university staff, this study sought answer to the following questions:

RQ1: What politeness strategies do Persian students adopt during their interaction with the university staff?

RQ2: Do male and female students adopt similar politeness strategies during their interactions with the university staff?

RQ3: Is there any difference between native and non-native Persian speakers in terms of politeness strategies they adopt during their interactions with the university staff?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

Participants of the study included 177 undergraduate university students, 97 of whom were female and 70 male. They were studying in different majors of Humanity, Science and Engineering faculties at Ilam University. Since Ilam is a city in which Persian is spoken as the second language, only 63 respondents were monolingual Persian speakers. The rest of participants were native speakers of Kurdish, Laki, Arabic and Turkish. They spoke Persian as their formal /second language.

B. Instrument

Since the present study intended to explore the linguistic reflection of politeness among the Persian students, the researchers administered Isik (2003) questionnaire. She based her thesis on five conflict-generating scenarios used in Spencer-Oatey et al. (2002) research. Isik used these scenarios and devised multiple-choice items for each one within politeness framework theory.

The participants of the study were exposed to five scenarios followed by different options representing bald on record aiming to maximize the threat to the interlocutor (bald max), bald on record aiming to minimize the threat (bald min), positive politeness aiming to maximize the threat (positive p max), positive politeness aiming to minimize the threat (positive p min), negative politeness (negative p), off record (indirect) and don't do FTA strategies. The students' interlocutors in these five scenarios were five university staffs from the library, computer lab and restaurant. The students were asked to choose one option which is approximately close to the option they would say in their real life.

C. Procedure

Participants were asked to read five scenarios and choose the option they would say in the given situation. In the first scenario, the student who is talking to his/her friend about an important project is warned by the librarian to be silent. The respondent has the possibility to obey the rule or convince the librarian to continue his/her talking in a variety of forms represented by different strategies. In the second scenario happening in the computer lab, the student's computer does not work well and the technician refuses to help the student. The third scenario occurs in the library again. But, here, the student is accused of an overdue book and s/he is not given the book unless the fine is paid. In the restaurant scenario, the student receives a wrong dish and has the possibility to ask the original food he had ordered or eat the wrong dish. In the last scenario, the student cannot find a book s/he is looking for. Hence, s/he needs to ask the librarian to help her/him.

V. RESULT

The students were asked to read the following scenarios and choose the statement they would express in the given situation.

1. You are studying in your university library, in an area where no talking is allowed. You are talking quietly with a friend about an important piece of work you are doing together, and using the books to help you. A member of the library staff comes over to you and says politely, 'Sorry, this is a silent area. If you want to chat, you need to go out.' However, you don't think you're disturbing anyone.

As it is shown below in Table 1, the most selected strategy was positive politeness strategy aiming to minimize the conflict ("We are sorry; you're right. We didn't mean to disturb anyone."). The next selected strategy was on record strategy (*"O.K. We will try to keep quiet."* in order to minimize the conflict. Although the importance of talking about the project from the view point of the student has been emphasized in the scenario, majority of the students ignored their goal and consequently obeyed the rules by using three different strategies ("positive politeness", "bald on record" and "don't do FTA"). On the contrary, achieving ones' goal was of great importance for only 31.2% of students, no matter what language they speak. The least chosen option by the students was indirect strategy.

To answer the second question of the study, cross tabulation calculation was conducted to determine the extent to which males and females chose different strategies. As seen below in Table 1, the biggest difference in the strategy choice was in the case of bald on record (minimizing the threat) wherein females tended to use this strategy more than males. Another difference was in the case of positive politeness strategy (minimizing the threat) wherein females showed their tendency to use this strategy more than males.

With regard to the respondents' mother tongue, the major differences was associated with bald on record (minimizing the threat) wherein more percentage of non-Persian speakers inclined to use this strategy than the Persian speakers. Another major difference was in the case of positive politeness (minimizing the threat) in which non Persian speakers were more inclined to employ this strategy than the Persian speakers.

TABLE1.
FREQUENCY OF THE TYPES OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED BY THE STUDENTS IN THE FIRST SCENARIO

		Frequency of the strategies						
		Bald (max)	Bald (min)	Negative P	Positive P(min)	Positive P (max)	Off-record	Don't do FTA
Female	Percent	2.9	17.3	8.7	17.9	4.0	0.6	4.6
Male	Percent	5.8	9.2	8.7	11.6	1.2	2.3	5.2
Total	Percent	8.7	26.5	17.4	29.5	5.2	2.9	9.8
Persian	Percent	2.9	5.8	5.3	14	2.9	1.7	4.1
Non-Persian	Percent	6.4	20.3	12.2	15.8	1.8	1.2	5.9
Total	Percent	9.3	26.1	17.5	29.8	4.7	2.9	10

2. You are studying in one of the computer rooms at your university. Your computer has crashed twice, and when it crashes a third time, you go to a technician to ask for help because it is wasting you a lot of time. He simply says, 'Sorry, this happens all the time. I can't do anything.

As it is shown below in Table 2, almost half of the participants selected negative politeness strategy *("I'm sorry but I must work now. Could you possibly take another look?"), implying* that achieving ones' goal is of special importance in this situation. Overall, 77.9% of the participants, regardless of their mother tongue used three different strategies to insist on self-serving goals. Only 20.3% of them ignored their goal in this situation. This finding is in contrast with the above scenario's finding wherein the majority of Iranian students ignored their goal.

As Table 2 below indicates, females tended to employ negative politeness strategy more than males. Males, instead, adopted other strategies such as bald on record, positive politeness (minimizing), off-record and no don't do FTA more than females. On the other hand, non-Persian speakers adopted more negative politeness strategy than Persian speakers.

TABLE 2.
FREQUENCY OF THE TYPES OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED BY THE STUDENTS IN THE SECOND SCENARIO

		The strategy choice						
		Bald (min)	Positive P (max)	Bald (max)	Positive P(min)	Off-record	Negative P	Don't do FTA
Female	Percent	3.5	7	5.2	1.7	0	36	2.9
Male	Percent	4.7	5.8	6.4	4.1	1.7	17.4	3.5
Total	Percent	8.2	12.8	11.6	5.8	1.7	53.4	6.4
Persian	Percent	2.3	6.5	5.3	1.8	0	18.7	2.3
Non-Persian	Percent	5.9	6.4	6.4	3.5	1.8	34.5	4.1
Total	percent	8.2	12.9	11.7	5.3	1.8	53.2	6.4

3. You go to the library issue desk to borrow some books, but the librarian says that you need to pay a small fine for an overdue book. You know very clearly that this is wrong, because you returned the book on time the previous week.

As Table 3 indicates, Positive politeness (*"I'm sure I've returned it on time. I'd be so glad if you could take another look."*) was the most favored strategy among the respondents. Since the student is required to pay in this situation, insisting on ones' self-serving goals is of special importance again. As a result, 87.2% of male and female students refused to pay and consequently maximized the conflict with the librarian. Indirect strategy was the least chosen strategy like the previous scenarios.

Table 3 also indicates that females tended to use more positive politeness and bald on record (maximizing the threat) and also more negative politeness strategies than males. Moreover, non-Persian respondents were more tended to use these strategies than Persian ones.

TABLE 3.
FREQUENCY OF THE TYPES OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED BY MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS IN THE THIRD SCENARIO

		Frequency of the strategies						
		Positive P (min)	Negative P	Off-record	Positive P (max)	Bald (max)	Bald (min)	Don't do FTA
Female	Percent	2.3	15.8	0	27.5	9.9	0	1.2
Male	Percent	3.5	11.7	1.2	15.2	7	2.3	2.3
Total	Percent	5.8	27.5	1.2	42.7	16.9	2.3	3.5
Persian	Percent	3	9.5	0.6	15.3	7.1	0.6	1.2
Non-Persian	Percent	2.9	18.9	0.6	27.1	9.4	1.8	2.4
Total	Percent	5.9	28.4	1.2	42.4	16.5	2.4	3.6

4. You and a friend go to the university restaurant for dinner. It is extremely busy and when you eventually receive your food, it is not what you ordered. You are disappointed, although this dish looks quite appetizing. A moment later, the waiter asks you, 'Is everything all right?

In this scenario, 72.3% of the Iranian students, regardless of their mother tongue insisted on getting the food they had originally ordered and only 26.5% of them tended to eat the wrong food.

According to Table 4, more percentage of females used negative politeness strategy than males. This finding is consistent with that of the previous scenarios. A major difference between the Persian and non-Persian speakers in their strategy choice was in the case of bald (minimizing the threat) wherein more non-Persian speakers employed this strategy than their Persian counterparts.

TABLE 4.
FREQUENCY OF THE TYPES OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED BY THE STUDENTS IN THE FOURTH SCENARIO

		Frequency of the strategies						
		Off-record	Bald (min)	Positive P	Bald (max)	Negative P	Positive P (min)	Don't do FTA
Female	Percent	0	8.2	12.9	12.9	15.3	6.5	0.6
Male	Percent	1.2	8.2	15.9	10	5.3	1.2	1.8
Total	Percent	1.2	16.4	28.8	22.9	20.6	7.7	2.4
Persian	Percent	0	4.2	10.1	10.1	8.9	3	1.2
Non-Persian	Percent	1.2	12.4	19.6	12.5	11.3	4.7	1.2
Total	Percent	1.2	16.6	29.7	22.6	20.2	7.7	2.4

5. You are looking for a book that you really need for your work, and according to the computer catalogue, nobody has borrowed it. However, you cannot find it on the shelf, so you go to the information desk to ask for help.

The most selected strategy was negative politeness ("*Sorry, I couldn't find the book on the shelf. Could you possibly help me find it?*") (Table 5).The next selected strategy was positive politeness ("*Excuse me, I tried hard but couldn't find this book. I'd be so glad if you could help me.*"). A very small percentage of the participants selected off record strategy ("*Excuse me; this book isn't on the shelf.*"). Although off record strategy was the least selected strategy in the previous scenarios, in this situation "don't do FTA" was the least.

As shown in Table 5, negative and positive politeness, and off-record strategies have been chosen by more females than males. Bald on record, positive politeness and negative politeness were the strategies which non-Persian speakers used more than Persian speakers.

TABLE 5.
FREQUENCY OF THE TYPES OF POLITENESS STRATEGIES USED BY THE STUDENTS IN THE FIFTH SCENARIO

		Frequency of the strategies					
		Bald on record	Positive P	Negative P	Off-record	Don't do FTA	
Female	Percent	4.1	19.9	24.6	7	0.6	
Male	Percent	7	11.7	17	5.8	1.8	
Total	Percent	11.1	31.6	41.6	12.8	2.4	
Persian	Percent	1.2	12.9	15.3	5.3	1.8	
Non-Persian	Percent	10	19.5	25.3	7.7	0.6	
Total	Percent	11.2	32.4	40.6	13	2.4	

Table 6 below represents Chi-Square test results for the given scenarios. With regard to the first and fifth scenario, it can be claimed that the relationship between gender and the participants' selection of the politeness strategies is not statistically significant. However, for the second, third and fourth scenario, gender appears determining in the kind of politeness strategies the respondents apply.

TABLE 6.
CHI-SQUARE TEST RESULTS OF THE FIVE SCENARIOS WITH REGARD TO GENDER

		Female	Male	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Gender	First scenario	56%	44%	10.543	6	0.104
	Second scenario	56.3%	43.6%	13.902	6	0.031
	Third scenario	56.7%	43.2%	12.138	6	0.059
	Forth scenario	56.4%	43.6%	16.061	6	0.013
	Fifth scenario	56.2%	43.3%	7.035	5	0.218

Table 7 shows that in all the five scenarios a statistically significant difference was not found between the respondents whose mother tongue was Persian or other languages speaker in Iran. In other words, the students' mother tongue was not a determining factor in the kind of politeness strategies they would employ.

TABLE7.
CHI-SQUARE TEST RESULTS OF THE FIVE SCENARIOS WITH REGARD TO MOTHER TONGUE

		Persian	Non-Persian	Chi-Square	df	Sig
Mother tongue	First scenario	36.7%	63.6%	32.167	30	0.360
	Second scenario	36.9%	62.6%	27.638	30	0.590
	Third scenario	37.3%	63.1%	21.303	30	0.878
	Forth scenario	37.5%	62.9%	19.499	30	0.929
	Fifth scenario	36.5%	63.1%	28.974	25	0.265

VI. DISCUSSION

As can be seen in the result section, it was found that the students did not respond consistently in all the scenarios. In the first scenario, more than half of the participants used the strategies to redress the threat to the librarian's face. These findings were against the findings from Isik's (2003) study who concluded that the majority of Turkish participants maximized the conflict and attempted to achieve their goal. The potential reason for this contrast can be the fact that being silent in the library is an accepted rule for everybody in Iran. The "observing silence signifies your personality" note in a number of libraries implies this unwritten rule. All the Iranian students have been grown up in a culture wherein behaving deferentially is encouraged, specifically in interaction with the people in power. The librarian in this scenario can be perceived as the one in power because s/he has the authority to reject the student or even invalidate the student's library card. Besides, the student him/herself is absolutely aware of the inappropriate behavior and thus, s/he does not insist on the goal. Hence, the students do their best not to maximize the conflict with the librarian. However, the participants are not unanimous on choosing a specific strategy. In other words, their selection of the alternatives has been distributed among the five strategies.

The findings in the second scenario are undoubtedly reasonable, because the major responsibility of the computer rooms' service provider is providing the best service to their customers and thus, the student's needs must be satisfied anyhow. As a result, no withdrawal is done on the part of the student. Accordingly, contrary to the previous scenario, majority of the students attempted to achieve their goals. The contrast can be justified with regard to the fact that talking in the library is not considered an appropriate behavior and therefore, no persistence can be seen on the part of the participants.

In the third scenario, the student is required to pay for the excuse s/he does not agree with. Thus, the participant sees him/herself self-righteous and does his/her best to defend his/her stance and not to give up. As a result, achieving one's

goal is highly significant for him/her. In other words, Iranians are rarely willing to keep a smooth relationship with their interlocutors when they have the right side and when a significant issue such as paying is involved.

Although a specific politeness strategy was not observed among the majority of the participants in the fourth scenario, a large number of the students insisted on accomplishing their purpose, i.e. getting the food they had originally ordered. Again, this finding was inconsistent with Isik's finding (2003), wherein the majority of English native speakers did not have any problem to eat the wrong dish. In this scenario, the students perceived the restaurant as the service provider to whom they paid for the service. Thus, similar to the second scenario, due to high expectations, the students were not willing to ignore their goals.

In the fifth scenario, the student is required to make a request to accomplish his/her goal. All the students are attentive to the significant role of politeness in their life. They have been taught from childhood to utilize polite markers such as "please" during their interactions in order to guarantee meeting their needs. Accordingly, they attempt to approach their goal in the most polite form.

Regarding the gender effect on the choice of politeness strategies, a statistically significant relationship was found between gender and the strategy choice in the second, third, and fourth scenarios. In these three scenarios, negative politeness was more favored by females than males. Furthermore, some percentage of males used indirect strategies, while none of the females used indirect strategy. As for the second and third scenario, females employed more positive politeness strategies to maximize the conflict than males who employed positive politeness to minimize the conflict. In other words, females insisted more on their goal attainment than males. In contrast, in the fourth scenario, males more favored positive politeness to increase the conflict than females who were more likely to use positive politeness to reduce the conflict. Quite conversely, the relationship between the students' strategy choice and their mother tongue was not found significant. Stated otherwise, the politeness strategies the Iranian students use is not affected by their mother tongue. Perhaps because they all interacted in Persian, the official language of the country which is often used in formal contexts similar to those of scenarios in questionnaire.

VII. CONCLUSION

This article investigated politeness strategies used by the Iranian students. Since the participants insisted on self-serving goals in four scenarios, it can be concluded that accomplishing one's goal is of high importance for the Iranian students. Negative and positive politeness strategies were the most selected ones aiming to redress the FTA to the interlocutor in all the scenarios. However, bald on record was one of the most popular strategies in the first and forth scenarios. Although according to Brown & Levinson's politeness theory "don't do the FTA" and off-record (indirect) strategies are the most polite forms the speakers can apply, they were selected by a minor portion of the participants in these five scenarios. However, this finding does not suggest impolite or less polite reactions on the part of the Persians, because negative and positive politeness strategies as the most selected options appear absolutely polite in the Persian interactions. Use of the statements such as "could you…" and "I'd be so glad…" is one of the politeness indications in the Iranian context. In addition, lack of the most polite forms of politeness among the respondents may imply that the Iranians tend to communicate unequivocally instead of conveying their meaning indirectly or preferring not to talk. On the other hand, being self-righteous is a determining factor in the way the Persians react to their interlocutors and probably that is why they preferred to use the less polite forms of strategies. In other words, when they have incontrovertibly right side, they persist on accomplishing their goal and accordingly threaten their interlocutors' face.

Further research seems to be necessary for establishing the ways in which the Iranians employ politeness strategies. More scenarios are required to construct a more comprehensive measure of politeness, including the perceived power between the interactants. Since this study has been conducted among Iranian students at Ilam University, further investigations could examine this concept among other universities and populations in Iran to estimate a national norm. Additionally, to obtain a more precise estimate of the Persians' use of politeness strategies, future studies might combine self-reporting techniques with other technique such as interviews and observations.

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