The realization of apology strategies among Persian males

Mohsen Shahrokhi a *, Jariah Mohd. Jan b

aEnglish Department, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shahreza, Isfahan, Iran
bEnglish Department, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

This study investigates the realization of apology speech act by Persian male native speakers to categorize and formulate the apology strategies employed in their interactions in various social contexts. It explores the effect of power, distance and severity of offense on the realization patterns of apology speech acts to highlight Persian males’ linguistic choice. The data was collected through the administration of a Discourse Completion Test and a questionnaire. The study reveals the availability of some of the universal apology strategies in Persian and a culture-specific apology strategy used by Persian men that is situation-dependent in relation to contextual variables.

Keywords: Apology speech act, politeness, social distance, social dominance, Persian male speakers

1. Introduction

As Boxer (2002) believes, different norms and rules of interaction can give rise to the escalating rate of misunderstanding and miscommunication between people coming from different speech communities. That is why, the use of apology in social interactions both within speech communities and between speech communities is so widespread so that Brook (1999, p. 3) calls our time the “Age of Apology”. Consequently, the probability of the need to apologize has made apology strategies an interesting topic among researchers of the field (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Bataineh and Bataineh, 2006; Fehr, 2007). As Wolfson (1984, p. 236) states, the study of rules and patterns of a given speech community will provide “empirical evidence of cultural norms and rules”. This study, therefore, addresses apology strategies realized among Persian male native speakers to shed light on the Persian male culture norms and rules as far as apologies are concerned. Moreover, the study seeks supporting evidence to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory in Persian.

2. Theoretical framework

Apologies fall under the expressive category of speech act, according to Searle’s (1969) taxonomy, performed to indicate the psychological emotions of the speakers. As Marquez-Reiter (2000, p. 57) states when apologies are employed, “the speaker admits that a social norm was violated and that s/he was to some extent part of its cause”. Apologies, from one hand, are face-threatening in nature because of the threat addressed to the apologizer and
damaging his/her face. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that the apologizer’s positive face – the desire to be approved and appreciated in certain respects – would be damaged by the act of apologizing. On the other hand, apologies have been considered as face-saving when it comes to the addressee’s negative face – the desire to be unimpeded and free to act. An apology is a sort of ‘support’ in Marquez Reiter’s (2000) term for the addressee’s negative face. Holmes (1995) confirms the restorative force of apologizing for the hearer as well. The attempt to satisfy the addressee’s face through apologizing is also claimed by Edmonson et al. (1984). Consequently, the linguistic politeness instantiated through apology strategies, as an attempt to fulfill the Persian males’ face need, can be explored in this study.

The way Persian male native speakers react to the variation of contextual variables can be addressed in this study as well. Contextual variables consist of social distance and social power (context-external variables) which are used to estimate the face work required in any interaction (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Goody, 1987; Brown and Levinson, 1987). The social distance between the interlocutors is an indication of how well the speaker and the hearer know one another. Social distance has a binary value of (+SD), where the interlocutors do not know one another well, and (−SD), where the interlocutors know one another well. The social power is the relative social dominance of one of the interlocutors on the other one; social dominance has a ternary value, namely (S>H) where the speaker dominates the hearer, (S=H) where the speaker and the hearer are equal, and (S<H) where the speaker is dominated by the hearer. The severity of the offence for which an apology is realized, is also used to estimate the degree of face work in a situation. The severity of the offence, as a context-internal variable, is evaluated as high or low across situations. The investigation of context-internal as well as context-external variables in this study can address Persian males’ perception of the variables.

The application of the theoretical framework explained above provides an opportunity with this study to formulate the following question for investigation: How do Persian male speakers apologize with regard to context-internal and context-external variables?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and instrument

All 62 participants of this study were chosen from among undergraduate and postgraduate Iranian male university students who were between 18 to 25 years of age.

The data collection process was implemented through the use of Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The use of DCT in data collection is based on the assumption that the choice of a strategy for performing an apology speech act is subjected to certain variables, namely the social distance and the social dominance between the interlocutors and the severity of offences (Nureddeen, 2008). DCTs are, consequently an appropriate instrument of collecting data in different situations that can be controlled in terms of the above-mentioned variables.

In this study, the instrument for the collection of the data was the Persian translation of a written short questionnaire and the Discourse Completion Task. The DCT consisted of 12 situations which resulted in the elicitation of 12 apologies. The DCT was preceded by a short questionnaire on biography of participants which included age, educational background and field of study. The situations depicted in the DCT varied according to context-external and context-external variables (see the Appendix).

3.2. Data analysis

The coding scheme of Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) project was used with some modification in this study to analyse apology speech acts (see Blum-Kulka et al., 1989 for further information about CCSARP). In this scheme, utterances or sequences of utterances are the units to be analysed from among apology utterances elicited by each situation explained in the DCT. According to Afghari (2007, p. 178) an utterance can be broken down into three main components namely ‘(a) Alerters, (b) Head acts’ and ‘(c) Adjuncts’. An example of the components is illustrated in the following:
John, I am sorry for the delay. It took more than I thought.

(a) alerter (b) head act (c) Adjunct

Head act is the main component of the utterance realizing the speech act of apology. In this study the analysis of the data would concentrate on the way head acts are formulated for the realization of apologies with regards to context-external and context-external variables. The realization of an apology speech act has been reported (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) to be done through the strategies Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Taking on Responsibility (TOR), An Explanation of the Situation (AES), An Offer of Repair (AOR), and Promise of Forbearance (POF).

3.2.1. IFID

The first formula, IFID, is a ritualized formulaic expression where the speaker’s apology is made explicitly through a performative verb (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). Drawing upon previous studies (e.g., Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984), Afghari (2007) suggests that a direct expression of an apology can be found in any language. He further instantiates the direct expression of an apology in Persian through three apology verbs. The italics are Persian strategies whose literal translations have been provided in parentheses:

a. An Expression of Regret (EOR): Motoasefam (I am sorry)
b. An Offer of Apology (AOA): Ma?zerat mixaam (I apologize)
c. Request for Forgiveness (RFF): Bebaxshid (Forgive me)

According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) the sub-strategy ‘Expression of Embarrassment’ that is exemplified in Persian as (sharmandeam) meaning “I’m embarrassed” is classified under the second universal apology strategy – Taking on Responsibility. In Persian, however, this sub-strategy is realized as a direct expression of apology and has a function close to that of the expression “forgive me” (bebaxshid). Hence, all the apology verbs through which the direct expression of an apology is realized along with ‘Expression of Embarrassment’ were categorized as IFIDs in this study to estimate the frequency of IFIDs as a universal strategy.

3.2.2. Taking on Responsibility

The second semantic strategy, as referred to above after IFID, is Taking on Responsibility, by which the speaker expresses responsibility for having committed an offence. The CCSARP project reports on several sub-strategies under this universal strategy from among which the first two sub-strategies which suited the Persian data were adopted here. The second three strategies listed below were adopted from Afghari (2007, p. 179).

a. Lack of Intent (LOI): Qasdi nadaaashtam (I didn’t mean to)
b. Statement of the Offence (STO): Ketabetun ro nayavordam (I didn’t bring your book)
c. Justifying the Hearer (JTH): Haq ba shomaast (You are right)
d. Expression of Self-deficiency (ESD): Gij budam (I was confused)
e. Concern for the Hearer (CFH): Omidvaram be shoma sadameh nazade baasham (I hope I didn’t hurt you)

3.2.3. Explanation of Situation

The third semantic, Explanation of Situation (AES), is where the speaker gives an account of the reasons which brought about the offence. (In case the strategy is a part of a sequence of utterances it is underlined).
e.g. Motoasefam dir shod. Reis az man xast bemunam va meqdaari az kaar ro tamaam konam.
(Sorry I’m late, the boss asked me to stay behind to finish some work.)

3.2.4. Offer of Repair

The fourth semantic formula, Offer of Repair (AOR), is utilized when the speaker compensates the addressee for any damage resulting from his/her infraction.

e.g. Kaampiyouteret shekast vali negaraan nabaash yeki dige baraat migiam
(Your computer got smashed but don’t worry I’ll get you another one.)

3.2.5. Promise of Forbearance

The last formula, Promise of Forbearance (POF), is employed when the speaker feels guilty enough to take the responsibility for the offence and promises it will not happen again.

e.g. Qol midam dobaare etefaaq nayufteh.
(I promise it won’t happen again.)

3.2.6. Underestimating the Offence by Humour

As the complementary part of the study, the data was analysed beyond the classic coding schemes (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) for the identification of any new strategy which had not been reported in the literature of the field in any other language investigated. The data revealed that in some situations explained in the DCT, Persian male speakers of the study, who were supposed to apologize for the offence committed, underestimated the offence. They resorted to using humour to reduce the intensity of the offence they were responsible for. The following example provides a better illustration of the strategy termed by the researchers as Underestimating the Offence by Humour (UOH):

e.g. Xoda ro shokr shalvaaretu xis nakardam.
(Thanks God, I did not wet your trousers.)

The above utterances were elicited in a situation where the speaker was expected to apologize for spilling a cup of tea on his manager’s trousers.

4. Results and discussions

The data elicited from among the participants of the study through the administration of DCT was analysed based on the data analysis framework illustrated previously in section 3.2. According to the analysis, Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) were found to be the most frequent explicit strategy for apologizing in Persian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IFID</th>
<th>TOR</th>
<th>AES</th>
<th>AOR</th>
<th>POF</th>
<th>UOH</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>386</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.39%</td>
<td>18.60%</td>
<td>13.31%</td>
<td>5.29%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.38%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 1, a total of 58.39% of the apology strategies performed by the Persian speakers were explicitly through the realization of IFIDs. From among 386 IFIDs, 42.22 % were Expressions of Regret while Offer of Apology made up 30 percent, and Request for Forgiveness constituted 26.94 percent.

The second frequent category of apology strategies among Persian male participants was Taking on Responsibility (TOR). As displayed in Table 1, a total of 18.60% out of the total strategies identified in the data were instances of Taking on Responsibility for the offence committed.
As illustrated in Figure 1, the strategy Statement of Offence constituted 58 apology strategies, registering the most frequent strategy (8.77%) from among Taking on Responsibility category. From this category, the strategies Expression of Self Deficiency and Lack of Intent make up 28 and 26 apology strategies respectively. The least frequent apology strategy in this category is the strategy Justifying the Hearer (3 apology strategies).

Figure 1 also shows that the third and fourth strategies are Explanation of Situation (13.31%) and Offer of Repair (5.29%) respectively as far as frequency distributions are concerned. Further, it is important to note that no instance of Promise of Forbearance was identified in the data.

As for the Underestimating the Offence by Humour strategy, a total of 29 instances of this strategy were employed by the Persian speakers of the study to downplay the offence committed. Although the strategy was not among the top strategies in terms of frequency, but the strategy distribution was significant enough to be hypothesized by the researcher as a prevalent culture-specific strategy among Persian male speakers of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy Situation</th>
<th>(IFID)</th>
<th>(TOR)</th>
<th>Other Apology Strategies</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>49.12</td>
<td>24.56</td>
<td>12.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>22.95</td>
<td>36.06</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>27.58</td>
<td>20.68</td>
<td>31.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>42.85</td>
<td>26.78</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>15.09</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>13.79</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>24.13</td>
<td>31.03</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>30.78</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>23.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>23.62</td>
<td>23.62</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In view of context-external variables, namely social distance and social dominance, and regarding context-
internal variable, that is severity of offence, the speakers opted for humour to downplay the offence resulted from
their fault in situations where there was most often no social distance (-SD) between the interlocutors. In other
words, the familiarity of the interlocutors prepares the ground for the apologizer to use humour to play down the
offence addressed to the addressee.

As explained earlier, since the situations in data collection instruments were different in terms of severity of
offence as context-internal variable and in terms of social distance and social dominance as context-external
variables, the frequency distributions of each situation was reported in Table 2 along with percentages. The
frequencies and percentages marked in bold indicate the most frequent strategy in a situation, while the frequencies
and percentages highlighted in gray indicate the highest frequency of a given strategy across all situations.

Expression of Regret was identified as the most frequent apology strategy from among all apology strategies in
A1, A5, A11, and A12. The most frequent realization of Expression of Regret across situations, registers in A1
where the speaker is dominated by the hearer (S<H), there is social distance between them (+SD) and the offence
committed is low in severity.

The other IFID strategy, that is Offer of Apology, has been used in all situations, registering the most frequent
realization in A2 where the speaker is dominated by the hearer (S<H). In this instance, there is no social distance
between them (-SD), and the offence is not severe.

The strategy Request for Forgiveness is also realized in all situations, registering the most frequent realization in
A10 where the interlocutors are equal in terms of dominance (S=H) and the severity of offence is high; however,
there is social distance between the interlocutors (+SD).

The strategies classified as IFID, namely Expression of Regret, Offer of Apology, and Request for Forgiveness
all together make up the most frequent apology strategies in situations A1, A2, A3, A5, A8, A10, A11, and A12.
Since all possible statuses of context-internal and context-external variables are available in these situations, the
IFID strategies seem to be context-independent. That is to say, the dominance and social relation between the
interlocutors as well as the severity of offence do not seem to play any significant role in Persian male participants’
linguistic choice as far as IFID apology strategies are concerned.

Explanation of Self Deficiency is realized most frequently in A8 where due to the speaker’s negligence, the
hearer has wasted his time typing the wrong letters. In A8 the speaker dominates the hearer (S>H), they know one
another well (+SD), and the severity of offence is low. Realizing an apology through the strategy Expression of Self
Deficiency in A8 can redress, to some extent, the offence committed, meanwhile the speaker’s dominating relation
with the hearer does not threaten the speaker’s face seriously as he apologizes, as depicted in the following example.

(1) Gij-shodam naamehaa ru esthebah behet daadam.
(I mixed-up and gave you the wrong letters.)

Lack of Intent is used most frequently in situation A4 (Forget Map) where there is neither social dominance
(S=H) nor social distance between the interlocutors (-SD) and the severity of offence is low. In other words, the lack
of social distance and social dominance as well as the low severity of offence in A4 nominates it as the most suitable
situation for the realization of Lack of Intent strategy. Example (2) includes an instance of Lack of Intent strategy in
A4.

(2) Nemixaastam baa aadres porsidan be zahmat bendaazamet.
(I didn’t mean to put you in trouble by asking for the address.)

The strategy Justifying the Hearer is realized only in A11 and A12. The offence committed in A11 and A12 is
low in severity and there is social distance (+SD) between the speaker and the hearer in both situations. As such,
social distance and high severity of the offence could be among common contributive variables of situations where
Justifying the Hearer is used as an apology strategy.
Although the strategy Concern for Hearer is not used in most of the situations; however, it is realized in A2, A5, A7, and A10. The most frequent realization of the strategy Concern for Hearer registers for A10 where the speaker steps on the hearer’s toe in the bus while changing seats.

The last strategy in the category Taking on Responsibility is Statement of Offence which was realized in all situations except for A10. The most frequent realization of Statement of Offence strategy makes up 24.6 percent of apology strategies in A4. Hence, the most suitable situation for the realization of Statement of Offence, according to Persian males’ linguistic choice is where neither social dominance (S=H) nor social distance (-SD) exists between the interlocutors and the severity of offence is low, as depicted in example (3).

(3) **Naghshe tu jibam bud laazem nabud aadres ru beporsi.**
(The map was in my pocket, we didn’t need to ask for the address.)

As indicated in Table 2, Explanation of Situation was identified most frequently in A7, A6, and A9 respectively. With regard to the variable social distance in A7, A6, and A9, the strategy Explanation of Situation seems to be the most appropriate one in situations where interlocutors know one another very well (−SD). The strategy Explanation of Situation is not dependent on the variable social dominance. Concerning all possible social dominance statuses (S<H, S>H, S=H) in A7, A6, and A9, one can conclude that Explanation of Situation is an apology strategy among Persian males regardless of their social dominance. However, the high severity of the offence committed in A7, A6, and A9, as a common variable, reflects the idea that an explanation is a favorable apology strategy among Persian males especially when the offence committed is considered as high in severity.

Offer of Repair is most probably provided by Persian male speakers when the offence involves a financial damage to the hearer’s property. The highest frequencies of the strategy Offer of Repair were identified respectively in A12, A9, and A6, as indicated in Table 2. The idea that Persian male speakers favor an offer of repair to compensate for the financial damage made to the addresses’ properties is supported, considering A12, A9, and A6 in which the addresses’ laptop, carpet, and car respectively, were damaged due to the speakers’ carelessness and the highest frequencies of Offer of Repair strategy were realized, as depicted in example (4).

(4) **Natars man bejaash ye laptop no baraat mixaram.**
(Don’t panic, I’ll buy a new laptop for you instead.)

The data collected through the research instruments did not elicit any instances of the strategy Promise of Forbearance from among Persian males of the study. Accordingly, Persian males would rather not use this strategy because avoiding committing an offence in the future cannot be taken for granted.

This study identified a new strategy, namely **Underestimating the Offence by Humour** (UOH) realized among Persian male speakers. Regarding the social distance of the interlocutors, the familiarity of participants (−SD) gave rise to the most frequent realization of UOH respectively in A4 registering 20 percent and in A7 registering 17.24 percent. Moreover, the social dominant status of the speakers (S>H) in A3, A7, A8, and A12 lead us to think that the tendency increases among Persian male speakers to use humour as an apology strategy in situations where the speakers are socially dominant (S>H). Although the distributions of UOH strategy are not remarkable in A2 and A6; however, traces of this strategy can be found even in situations where the hearer is socially dominant.

Considering the use of **Underestimating the Offence by Humour** strategy in the above-mentioned situations, it is reflected that this strategy is situation dependent. In other words, the lack of social distance between the interlocutors provides the best situation for Persian males to opt for the use of this strategy. Furthermore, there is a tendency among Persian males to use UOH strategy where they have a dominant relation with the addressee.

The situation dependency of UOH strategy is further supported in A1, A5, A10, and A11 where no instances of UOH strategy were registered. These situations share a social variable in common, namely the social distance between the interlocutors (+SD). Therefore, Persian speakers seem to avoid employing **Underestimating the Offence by Humour** strategy where they do not know the addressee well and a friendly relation is hardly assumable.
5. Conclusion

Although the results reported from the analysis of the data of this study may not be generalizable to all Persian males community; however, it can provide some insights on the apology strategy patterns in the Persian male context and some the implications on cultural norms and rules in the Persian society.

With regard to the Persian context of the study that provided the opportunity to test universal aspects of politeness theory in a nonwestern culture, the results revealed that Persian provides substantive evidence for universal apology strategies introduced in western languages. In Persian, male speakers perform their apologies most often in a direct way (IFID) which is in harmony with other languages in which IFIDs had been reported (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984) to be the most frequent apology strategy. Moreover, Taking on Responsibility, as the second most frequent strategy used by interlocutors after IFIDs, has also been reported to have similar results in other languages investigated by Marquez-Reiter (2000) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989).

Lovenzo-Dus (2001, p. 108) suggests that the members of any society favor either a “positive or a negative politeness orientation”. This idea is also supported by Nureddeen (2008) in a study in which she finds an orientation toward positive politeness among Sudanese Arabic speakers. Persian speakers of this study, however, seem to be concerned about the negative face of the hearer before taking anything else into consideration. The high frequency of IFID as the most frequent and direct way of apologizing reflects Persian orientation toward the negative politeness. Taking on Responsibility as the second frequently used strategy provides further evidence for the idea that Persian speakers of the study care for the addressee’s negative face. By Taking on Responsibility, apologizers attend the addressee’s negative face at the expense of the threat to their positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Marquez-Reiter, 2000) and show their sympathy for the addressee’s impinging negative face. However, the acceptance of this orientation as a general characteristic of the Persian culture still needs further investigation.

As for positive politeness, Persian language provides apology strategies which support the positive face of the speaker when apologizing. Humour, among positive politeness strategies, is used to support the positive face of the apologizer as such the speaker’s desire to be liked is satisfied consequently. The use of humour, thus, provides supporting evidence for positive politeness as part of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory of politeness in Persian.

References

Appendix

(The Questionnaire and DCT whose Persian translation was used to collect the data.)

a. Age: ...........  b. Field of Study: .........  c. Level of Education:  
   a) AD  
   b) BA  
   BS  
   c) MA  
   MS  
   d) PHD  

Please read the description of different situations in which you are supposed to be interacting, and then write your utterances as you would act in an actual situation. Do not think too much and try to be as spontaneous as possible (Adopted from Marquez-Reiter, 2000).

A1. You are a university student. You have borrowed a book from your lecturer which you have promised to return today. When meeting your lecturer in the hallway you realize that you forgot to bring it along. What do you say to him? (S<H; +SD; Low)

A2. After work, you and your manager from work, meet to chat over a coffee together. In the middle of the conversation you accidentally spill coffee on his trousers. What do you say to him? (S<H; -SD; Low)

A3. Your manager’s office at work with whom you get on well accepted to cover for you while you are out to run a few errands down town which you expected may take you an hour. After attending to the urgent matter you return and realize that you had been gone for more than an hour and a half later. What do you say to him? (S>H; +SD; Low)

A4. After you had asked your friend to ask the pedestrian for directions of how to get to X street, you realized that there was actually no need to do so since you had the map your friend had given to you in your pocket all the while. What do you say to him? (S>H; -SD; Low)

A5. Your neighbor whom you do not know well has agreed to help you move some things out of your apartment with his car. Once in his car you notice how clean and spotless the car is. While turning round a bend a bottle of oil which was amongst your belongings falls onto the back seat and its contents are spilt all over the seat. You both notice it. What do you say to him? (S=H; +SD; High)

A6. You borrow your manager’s car to pick up your spouse from the airport. Having picked up your spouse from the airport with, you meet with an accident on the way back to office which resulted in a broken headlight and a bent bumper. Once back at the office, you return the keys. What do you say to him? (S<H; -SD; High)

A7. According to your request, your colleague accepts to cancel his ticket. He stays to help you with the important project at work. Afterwards, the manager of the company asks you to stop a part of the project on which your colleague is working due to lack of fund. What do you tell your colleague? (S>H; -SD; High)

A8. Your colleague comes to your office with a few typed letters you asked him to type. When he gives them to you, you realize you have given him the wrong letter. What do you say to him? (S>H; -SD; Low)

A9. During your stay in your friend’s house in the countryside, you dropped black ink on a very expensive carpet and you could not get rid of it. At the end of the week, you go to his house to return the house keys. What do you say to him? (S>H; +SD; High)

A10. A passenger has agreed to change seats with you so that you are able to sit next to your child on the bus. While changing seats you accidentally tread on the passenger’s toe. What do you say to him? (S>H; +SD; Low)

A11. Your recently appointed manager at work has lent you some money that would enable you to settle your bills. You had promised to return the money in a week. After three weeks, you go to his office to return the money. What do you say to him? (S>H; +SD; High)

A12. The new trainee has lent you his brand new laptop for you to use for a while. Trying to answer the phone, you accidentally drop it on the floor and smash part of the screen. What do you say to him? (S>H; +SD; High)