

Research Article

Exploring (Im)Politeness Strategies in Indirect Reports in Persian across Genders

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Politeness and impoliteness strategies create a vital social practice in our daily and professional interactions. Being once an issue in the code of conduct protocols, (im)politeness nowadays marks an interdisciplinary scientific field. Regarding this importance, this study explored the politeness and impoliteness strategies used in changing direct speech to indirect speech among male and female Persian speakers. Eighty Iranian Persian speakers (36 males and 44 females) were given a discourse completion task. Brown and Levinson's taxonomy of politeness strategies and Culpeper's impoliteness taxonomy were used to analyze the sample. The findings revealed that the propositional content of a direct speech was maintained in the indirect speech in Persian with different attitudinal manners. The results also demonstrated a significant difference between the male and female participants in terms of impoliteness indirect strategies; however, there was no significant difference between them on the output strategies. Additionally, the results revealed that the most frequent politeness strategies used by Persian speakers included positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bold on-record, respectively. The implications of the current research may lead to a deeper and greater understanding of the role of politeness strategies applied in language learning and teaching in EFL contexts.

1. Introduction

Politeness is “the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate faces threats carried by certain face threatening act (FTA) toward another” ([1], p. 6). Brown and Levinson [2] define FTA as “those acts that by their very nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or speaker (p. 65).” FTA is a communicative behavior or action that poses a risk to someone’s positive face, their desired self-image or social identity, potentially leading to face loss or face-threatening situations [3]. Politeness techniques are ways through which interlocutors can attenuate threads carried by FTAs. Politeness, according to Yule [3], is the capacity to delight others by exterior acts. Furthermore, Al-Khatib [4] defined politeness as a set of social abilities whose objective is to make everyone feel validated in a social engagement. Politeness has been addressed by several scholars using various techniques as an important part of pragmatic competence and hence communication competence. Politeness is

the interactional balance achieved to avoid interaction imposition [5]. It is a method of chatting in which language is utilized gently to communicate substantial regard for the wishes and sentiments of one’s interlocutors [6].

To reduce the threat to the hearer’s positive face, positive politeness strategies such as showing common ground, joking, demonstrating the speaker’s concern for the hearer’s wants, offering and promising, being optimistic, telling or asking the reason, assuming reciprocity, and so on are used [2]. Negative politeness methods pertain to the avoidance of imposition on the hearer and can be thought of as the desire to maintain autonomy through distancing approaches such as utilizing modal verbs or delay, apologizing for imposition, asking inquiries, or requesting permission to pose a question. Agustina and Cahyono [7] defined negative politeness as taking into account the listener’s desire to be free to behave and pay attention.

Based on Brown and Levinson [2], being indirect is one of the negative politeness strategies. Unlike the direct report

that reports precisely what a speaker has said, prevents the reporter from altering the report substance, and prohibits annexation, the indirect report allows for less precision, literal substitution, and modification of the content [8]. The change from the direct report to the indirect report may result in the alteration not only in the linguistic structure of the original sentence but also in the pragmatic force of the original message [9]. One reason is that more cognitive effort is needed in producing direct report than indirect one, because the entire original message must be recalled approximately word by word in the direct report whereas in indirect report, the reporter is allowed to make changes in tense and lexical items in order to adjust the message to the present context [10].

Research on indirect report proves incomprehensiveness without taking care of pragmatic aspects. In spite of having basic semantic properties, indirect report is significantly influenced by the features of real-communicative contexts such as politeness and impoliteness strategies. There are a number of politeness and impoliteness strategies that the reporter can employ either to reduce or boost the face threatening force of the original message [11]. The present study aims at examining the politeness and impoliteness strategies used by Persian speakers when they change a direct report to an indirect one.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background. It is not enough to understand the linguistic aspect of the language. To establish efficient communication, it is vital to be aware of the social aspect of it. As a result, classroom engagement should not fail pragmatically. According to Amaya [12], pragmatic failure leads to message misunderstanding and, in extreme cases, communication collapse. According to Karimnia and Khodashenas [13], being linguistically correct is not enough; a speaker must also be linguistically acceptable. One important aspect of pragmatic competence is politeness which is fundamental to building rapport and relationships among or between members of a community group.

Politeness, according to Watt's [14] definition, is the capacity to win over people by one's behavior. Additionally, according to Foley [15], politeness is "a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure that everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction" (p. 270). Since politeness is a crucial component of pragmatic competence and, by extension, communication competence, it has been studied by several scholars using a variety of methodologies.

Politeness is ubiquitous, may be communicated vocally or nonverbally, is prevalent in numerous civilizations, and has sociocultural components that are perpetuated as a social standard [16]. In the context of Iran, EFL students' English verbal politeness may be impacted by the local culture relating to their mother tongue or national language. This is consistent with House's [17] finding that English nonnative speakers transmit their native communication preferences to their English language usage in large numbers. This can be an issue since failing to transmit politeness differences

between the original and learnt languages can lead to pragmatic failure [18, 19], which can result in face-loss, misunderstanding, or communication breakdown [20, 21]. Therefore, the EFL learners' (im)politeness in verbal English is important to investigate, to avoid such failures and to help them conduct successful communication in facing the increasing demand of cultural, economic, and political relations among nations.

Through using politeness and impoliteness strategies, one can change the direct speech into indirect speech. Reported speech is a widely used event in the different languages [22]. People use reported speech to let the voices of others be articulated too. It is used to perform social actions through which goal-directed behaviors such as request or refusal are performed [23]. Reported speech can assist conversational participants in establishing interactional coherence by connecting previous linguistic action with their respective actors [24]. The reported speech is expressed either directly or indirectly. In direct reports, which are placed between quotation marks in writing in many languages, the same pragmatic items along with all deictic clues are repeated to duplicate the same original message [25]. In direct reports, a speaker's speech is copied verbatim. They seem to prevent the reporter from manipulating the content of the report; interpolations are banned, or so it might appear "prima facie" [8]. Indirect reports include a lower degree of accuracy than direct reports [10]. Habler [26] argued that the difference between the two modes is in terms of the speaker's perspective. In direct speech the perspective of the speaker is maintained, while in indirect speech, the perspective and deixis switch to the position of the reporter. That is why direct speech maintains the most important features of the original utterance, while indirect speech changes pronouns, tenses, deictic elements, intonation, and even referential words [27].

Capone [10] also indicated the reporter's preference in using indirect report. He argued that the reporter may not want the audience to be aware of specific details in the original message, or s/he tends to avoid annoying information, connotation, or expressions used in the main speech or maybe s/he tends to make shorter sentences than the original ones. According to Li [28], direct reported speech is used to convey the form and content of the reported utterance while in the indirect report the reporter can communicate a comment on the utterance. In describing the functions of direct and indirect reports in reporting news stories, Obiedat [29] also held that direct reports are used to "add some flavor, vividness and a sense of immediacy and authority to the news story", and "function as a distancing and disowning device" as well as showing that "what is reported is an unconvertible device" (p. 275). However, the indirect reports "show subjective perspective of the news reporter", indicate the reporter's "political bias" and are sometimes ambiguous accounts of the news ([29], p. 275).

Wieland [30] stated that the use of indirect report can indicate the reporter's ability in understanding and showing the locution, illocution, and perlocution of the original message because s/he needs to represent the message in the way in which the original utterance was performed, to think like

the original speaker as well as the audience, and to organize the discourse, interactional, social, and referential functions of the report in a narrative structure. Morady Moghaddam [11] considered indirect reporting a case of pragmatic intelligent in that the reporter has to be simultaneously loyal to the original message uttered by the speaker and economic or strategic in terms of the sociocognitive characteristics of the audience. Kertész and Rákosi [31] believed that the message in the indirect report is shaped not only by the “semantic properties” but also by the peculiarities of particular communicative situations.

The indirect report is also different from the direct report in terms of deixis [7]. In direct report, the deictic center of the utterance is the original situation and elements such as pronouns, verb tenses, and deictic references, which are true to the original situation whereas in indirect report, it is reported, and all those elements that are true to the recounting situation [32].

Morady Moghaddam [11] argued that indirect report threatens the negative face of all participants in the communicative event by imposing unsolicited responsibility on the original speaker while the reporter provides threats to his/her negative face by being responsible for the report s/he makes as well as the audience that receives the message. An indirect report can save the speaker's and hearer's face since the reporter gives credit to the original speaker as a person who can change the state of affairs, or as an authority whose words are valuable to be transferred to someone else. The hearer is also given credit by conveying that s/he is worthy as a confidant [6].

The structure and usage of the reported speech in Persian language are different from the languages like English. In English, the tense of the reported speech is changed but in Persian these syntactic transformations are not used [8]. Capone and Salmani Nodoushan [8] maintained that “the original speakers are always held responsible for foul language in Persian” (30). There are three types of report in Persian: (a) discourse direct in which the exact utterance is produced as that of the original, (b) discourse indirect which is a paraphrase of the original content, and (c) discourse indirect liber in which the original message is blended with the reporter's own addition/modification [11, 33].

Unlike English, there is no changing in tense or verb, pronominals, indexicals, and adverbs in Persian. One reason behind this issue according to Salmani Nodoushan [33] is due to the fact that Persians employ syntactic-function markers (e.g., object-marker “ra”, enclitics). He added the point that they use supportive discourse moves (such as phonological and pragmatic cues and clues like common ground, stress shifts, speaker knowledge, substituting pronominals with nominals).

Indirect report is the speech in interaction. Surprising enough, recent research on indirect reported speech in interaction indicates that in spite of the claim that indirect report replays a former locution, reporters also convey their assessment of utterance while reporting [34]. However, such assessment is taking place in spoken speech at the phonetic level and not written form where any changes are

documented. In contrast to Salmani Nodoushan's [33] statement that Persian indirect report does not allow subjective manipulation, Morady Moghaddam [11] believed that subjective modification is practically allowed in Persian indirect reporting due to certain cultural schemas such as *shekaste nafsi* in Persian. Therefore, in the indirect report, the reporter does not feel obliged to show much fidelity to the original [13].

Brown and Levinson's [35] strategies include bold on-record politeness and impoliteness, positive and negative politeness and impoliteness, mock politeness, and withholding politeness. Bold on-record impoliteness is the use of straight, clear, and brief language when the speaker either means or does not aim to keep others' faces clean.

Everyone has a face and a public self-image, according to Brown and Levinson [2], and they wish to keep them. The term “face” is categorized into two types: negative and positive face. Positive face is the need to be accepted, even liked by others, to be treated as a member of the group, and to know that his or her wants are shared by others. Negative face is the need to be independent to have a freedom of action and not to be imposed by others [36]. Bold on-record refers to a FTA that is accomplished in a straightforward, plain, unequivocal, and to the point procedure in which the face is not taken into consideration. At a time of emergency, one may use this form of strategy [37]. The employment of methods to harm the addressee's negative face needs is known as negative impoliteness, used when talking to strangers and showing politeness or dis-imposition. The employment of tactics to harm the addressee's positive face needs is known as positive impoliteness; when communicating with family and friends, one will utilize this expression. Finally, off-the-record is defined as the lack of rudeness at work where it is presumed, used when one is saying something completely indirectly [38]. Table 1 presents Culpeper's [39] strategy categorizations.

Table 1 shows the approximate assimilation of the utilization of the negative super-strategies. The table depicts how the participants use several impoliteness techniques in various ways. They are analyzed based on the written discourse completion task (DCT). We have provided nine items for the participants, so their answers were analyzed based on the table and its items. In addition, negative impoliteness refers to on-purpose activities done to bring down others' negative faces. Culpeper's [39] output strategies are listed in Table 2.

According to Culpeper [39], his study on impoliteness is not a theory because a theory has predictive values, but his impoliteness model does not. He claimed that these super-strategies do not occur in isolation and that they are frequently combined.

2.2. Empirical Background. Adel et al. [40] sought to examine politeness strategies such as negative politeness, positive politeness, bald on-record, and bald-off record strategies in posts written by Iranian EFL learners in a class blog as a means of asynchronous interaction in response to their teachers and peers. The study included 14 Iranian EFL learners who were chosen based on their degree of language ability.

TABLE 1: Prevalent impoliteness indirect strategies (adapted from [39], p. 159).

No.	Strategy
1	Ignore other interlocutors; fail to acknowledge the presence of others
2	Exclude others from activities
3	Disassociate from others, such as denying association or common ground with them
4	Disinterested, unconcerned, and unsympathetic to others
5	Use inappropriate identity markers such as using a title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distance relationship pertains
6	Use an obscure or secretive language such as mystifying others with jargon or using a code known to members in the group, but not the target
7	Make others feel uncomfortable
8	Use taboo words, swear words, or abusive profane language
9	Call the other names: use derogatory nominations

TABLE 2: Output strategies (adapted from [39], p. 67).

No.	Strategy
1	Frighten, instill a belief that an action detrimental to others will occur
2	Scorn, ridicule by emphasizing the speaker's relative power
3	Contemptuous, not treating others seriously
4	Belittle others (e.g., using diminutives)
5	Invade others' space—literally or metaphorically
6	Explicitly associate others with a negative aspect
7	Put others' indebtedness on record

Across all postings, there were 1,520 politeness utterances, including 800 politeness utterances used when learners interacted with their teacher and 720 politeness utterances used when learners interacted with their peers. According to the findings, learners typically employed positive tactics as evidence of psychological closeness, reciprocity, and friendliness in a group.

Mulyono et al. [41] investigated the politeness methods employed by two groups of students and instructors. Its specific goal was to see if there was a substantial difference in civility tactics used by EFL professors and students while sending text messages to one other. To that purpose, the study focused on secondary EFL teacher–student WhatsApp contact and presented an analysis of civility methods from 200 WhatsApp texts. Brown and Levinson's [2] politeness framework was used to analyze the politeness tactics. According to the study's findings, pupils used more civility methods than their professors.

Grami and Chalak [42] investigated the politeness strategies and the levels of (im)politeness in requests made by Iranian EFL learners via Telegram, Email, and face-to-face interactions. Through these channels of communication, the gender differences were also examined. In order to accomplish this, 56 upper-intermediate EFL learners were chosen at random, and their requests made through various forms of communication were gathered. The requests' content was examined and classified as off-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and plain on-record tactics. Very

unfriendly to very courteous was the (im)politeness degree assigned. A χ^2 test, frequency counting, and percentage computation were all part of the data analysis process. According to the findings, Iranian EFL learners favor using the positive-politeness method over the others. The results also revealed that email requests were noticeably more polite than those made over Telegram or in-person meetings. The outcomes of the interview revealed that the learners tend to transfer Persian pragmatics in chatting via Telegram.

Latrech and Alazzawie [27] investigated the usage of civility methods in Omani schools and professional development classes. It was a qualitative research based on interactional sociolinguistic analysis. The study used Brown and Levinson's [2] paradigm to examine politeness and the concept of face in two separate scenarios. The purpose of this study was to investigate student–teacher interaction in two different groups: Omani private school and Professional Development Academy. Two classes at the school and two ones in the academy were attended. There were a mix of male and female teachers in both groups. The findings were as follows: young learners prefer to be regarded with a good face, whereas adults prefer to be perceived with a negative face. Teachers did more face-saving activities (FSAs) than FTAs. Young pupils conducted more FTAs than adult students. Female instructors did more FSAs than their male counterparts. All instructors agreed that if their face was threatened, they would save it even if it meant placing the student's face in threat.

Nursanti et al. [16] investigated multilingual EFL learners' (im)politeness in informal agreeing–disagreeing interactions among peers. Students' utterances in role plays were analyzed using an explanatory sequential-mixed method design based on politeness theory, disagreement techniques, and disagreement mitigation methods. It has been discovered that in interactions with persons of equal rank and authority, observance of politeness maxims is more visible than transgression. It suggests that keeping other people's faces is important regardless of age disparities, even in heated debates. Positive politeness tactics are used more frequently than the negative politeness strategies, indicating that they are more concerned with others than with themselves. The prevalence of mitigated disagreement and the frequent use of

an appreciation preface also show their priority in maintaining good relationships. Those findings support the view of Asians as a collectivistic group whose primary concern in communication is group membership.

After reviewing the literature in the domain of politeness strategies, it was found that the previous studies were in the domain of (im)politeness strategies in posts written by Iranian EFL learners in a class blog [40], (im)politeness strategies in requests made by Iranian EFL learners via Telegram, Email, and face-to-face interactions [42], and (im)politeness strategies in informal agreeing–disagreeing interactions [16]. In fact, there is a dearth of empirical studies on examining the politeness and impoliteness strategies used in changing the direct speech into indirect speech among male and female Persian speakers. Consequently, the present research tried to fill this gap, hoping to provide some useful findings and implications for EFL learners.

Through this study, an understanding will be gained of the different politeness strategies that may be employed by EFL teachers to promote and sustain interactive communications within the classroom. Also, the practice of using these strategies will raise awareness of them and how they can be applied in differing contexts in the teaching of EFL in Iran. As it is, awareness of these strategies will be raised about using these strategies effectively in different contexts of teaching EFL in Iran.

Drawn upon Brown and Levinson's [35] politeness model and Culpeper's [39] impoliteness taxonomy, this study aimed at exploring the politeness and impoliteness strategies used in changing direct speech to indirect speech among male and female Persian speakers. The following research question was defined and pursued:

What politeness and impoliteness strategies are used in changing the direct speech into indirect speech across English and Persian?

3. Method

3.1. Participants. The participants were 80 university students studying different fields at a university in Tehran, Iran. They included 36 male and 44 female Persian speakers whose age ranged from 18 to 23 and were selected through convenience sampling. All participants were native speakers of Persian (Persian was their first language). The sample was collected in Tehran because Tehranian Persian is regarded as the standard form and people in other areas in Iran may use their own Persian varieties, dialects, or even different languages. The reason to choose students as our target population, apart from purely practical reasons of availability, was to ensure as much homogeneity as possible with regard to educational background, social class, first language background, and age range.

3.2. Instrument. A DCT (see Appendix) was developed by the researchers to explore the participants' use of politeness and impoliteness strategies in changing direct report to indirect report. The DCT was designed based on the related literature review and the other DCTs that were used in the previous studies. The DCT consisted of nine situations. Each situation

TABLE 3: Distribution of politeness strategies used by Persian speakers ($N=120$).

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Bold on-record	26	21.6
Negative politeness	31	25.8
Positive politeness	35	29.3
Off-record	28	23.3

TABLE 4: Distribution of politeness strategies among males and females.

Strategies	Female		Male	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Bold on-record	22	26.8	27	29.6
Negative politeness	21	25.6	20	21.9
Positive politeness	23	28.0	25	27.4
Off-record	16	19.5	19	20.8
<i>N</i>	82	100	91	100

would put the participant in a condition to either keep the direct report as it was used or changed it to an indirect report. They were allowed to add anything to the initial message, or slightly modify their responses. In order to ensure the validity of DCT, it was reviewed by three language experts. In addition, it was piloted on with 10 Persian speakers with the same characteristics of the main participants of the study. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured through Cronbach's alpha ($r = .84$).

3.3. Data Collection Procedures and Analyses. To carry out this research, 36 males and 44 females Iranian university students were selected and then they were administered the DCT to see how they use politeness and impoliteness strategies. After collecting the data based on Brown and Levinson's [35] taxonomy of politeness strategies and Culpeper's [39] impoliteness taxonomy, frequency, and percentage were used to analyze them. A χ^2 test was used to indicate the distribution and any potential differences of the (im)politeness strategies used by Persian speakers.

4. Results

As stated above, to examine the politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson's [2] politeness model was utilized. Table 3 shows that the most frequent politeness strategies used by Persian speakers include positive politeness (29.1%), negative politeness (25.8%), off-record (23.3%), and bold on-record (21.6%), respectively.

Additionally, the frequency and percentage of the politeness strategies for male and female participants were calculated. The results are shown in Table 4.

As shown in Table 4, the most frequent politeness strategies used by female participants consisted of positive politeness (28.0%), bold on-record (26.8%), negative politeness (25.6%), and off-record (19.5%), respectively. Moreover, the most frequent politeness strategies used by males were bold on-record (29.6%), positive politeness (27.4%), negative

TABLE 5: χ^2 test on politeness strategies used by men and women.

	χ^2 value	df	p
Pearson χ^2	17.40	3	.00
Likelihood ratio	16.28	3	.00
Linear-by-linear association	14.58	1	.00
N of valid cases	173	—	—

TABLE 6: Distribution of impoliteness strategies used by the participants (N = 552).

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Ignore other interlocutors; ...	53	9.60
2. Exclude others from activities...	67	12.13
3. Disassociate from others,...	72	13.04
4. Disinterested, unconcerned, ...	66	11.95
5. Use inappropriate identity markers...	58	10.50
6. Use an obscure or...	61	11.05
7. Make others feel uncomfortable...	74	13.40
8. Use taboo words, swear words,...	35	6.34
9. Call the other names...	66	11.95

TABLE 7: Distribution of output strategies used by the participants (N = 306).

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Frighten, instill a belief...	48	15.68
2. Scorn, ridicule by...	39	12.74
3. Contemptuous,...	34	11.11
4. Belittle others...	41	13.39
5. Invade others' space...	44	14.37
6. Explicitly associate...	49	16.01
7. Put others' indebtedness...	51	16.66

politeness (21.9%), and off-record (20.8%). Then, to examine the differences in politeness strategies between men and women, a χ^2 was run.

There are 0 cells (0.0%) with an anticipated count of fewer than 5. The estimated minimum count is 73.22. Table 5 indicates a significant difference between men's and women's politeness strategies ($\chi^2 = 17.408$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$).

In the next step, each group's frequency was counted, and descriptive statistics of the impoliteness indirect strategies and output strategies were analyzed and reported. Table 6 illustrates the frequency and percentage of impoliteness indirect strategies used by the participants.

According to Table 6, the most frequent impoliteness indirect strategies used by the participants include strategy 7 (13.40%), strategy 3 (13.04%), strategy 2 (12.13%), strategies 4 and 9 (11.95%), strategy 6 (11.05%), strategy 5 (10.50%), strategy 1 (9.60%), and strategy 8 (6.34%), respectively. In addition, the frequency and percentage of output strategies used by the participants were examined. The findings are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 8: Distribution of impoliteness indirect strategies used by females (N = 414).

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Ignore other interlocutors; ...	52	12.56
2. Exclude others from activities...	46	11.11
3. Disassociate from others,...	42	10.14
4. Disinterested, unconcerned, ...	56	13.52
5. Use inappropriate identity markers...	38	9.17
6. Use an obscure or...	43	10.38
7. Make others feel uncomfortable...	46	11.11
8. Use taboo words, swear words,...	52	12.56
9. Call the other names...	39	9.42

TABLE 9: Distribution of impoliteness indirect strategies used by males (N = 476).

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Ignore other interlocutors; ...	61	12.81
2. Exclude others from activities...	55	11.55
3. Disassociate from others,...	48	10.08
4. Disinterested, unconcerned, ...	43	9.03
5. Use inappropriate identity markers...	53	11.13
6. Use an obscure or...	52	10.92
7. Make others feel uncomfortable...	57	11.97
8. Use taboo words, swear words,...	66	13.86
9. Call the other names...	41	8.61

As shown in Table 7, the most frequent output strategies used by Persian speakers include strategy 7 (16.66%), strategy 6 (16.01%), strategy 1 (15.68%), strategy 5 (14.37%), strategy 4 (13.39%), strategy 2 (12.74%), and strategy 3 (11.11%), respectively.

Additionally, the frequency and percentage of the impoliteness indirect strategies and output strategies for men and women were calculated. Tables 8 and 9 illustrate the analyzing results of impoliteness indirect strategies.

As shown in Table 8, the most frequent impoliteness indirect strategies used by female participants consisted of strategy 4 (13.52%), strategies 1 and 8 (12.56%), strategies 2 and 7 (11.11%), strategy 6 (10.38%), strategy 3 (10.14%), strategy 9 (9.42%), and strategy 5 (9.17%), respectively. Table 9 displays the frequency and percentage of impoliteness indirect strategies used by men.

According to Table 9, the most frequent impoliteness indirect strategies among men are strategy 8 (13.86%), strategy 1 (12.81%), strategy 7 (11.97%), strategy 2 (11.55%), strategy 5 (11.13%), strategy 6 (10.92%), strategy 3 (10.08%), strategy 4 (9.03%), and strategy 9 (8.61%), respectively. Tables 10 and 11 displays the results of using output strategies among men and women.

The most frequent output strategies used by women include strategy 7 (17.32%), strategy 1 (16.53%), strategy 6 (15.35%), strategy 2 (14.96%), strategy 3 (13.77%), strategy 4 (11.41%), and strategy 5 (10.62%), respectively.

TABLE 10: Distribution of output strategies used by women ($N=254$).

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Frighten, instill a belief...	42	16.53
2. Scorn, ridicule by...	38	14.96
3. Contemptuous,...	35	13.77
4. Belittle others...	29	11.41
5. Invade others' space...	27	10.62
6. Explicitly associate...	39	15.35
7. Put others' indebtedness...	44	17.32

TABLE 11: Distribution of output strategies used by men ($N=327$).

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Frighten, instill a belief...	52	15.90
2. Scorn, ridicule by...	48	14.67
3. Contemptuous,...	44	13.45
4. Belittle others...	39	11.92
5. Invade others' space...	47	14.37
6. Explicitly associate...	49	14.98
7. Put others' indebtedness...	48	14.67

TABLE 12: χ^2 test results on impoliteness indirect strategies among males and females.

	χ^2 value	df	p
Pearson χ^2	15.22	8	.00
Likelihood ratio	15.00	8	.00
Linear-by-linear association	12.92	1	.00
N of valid cases	890	—	—

TABLE 13: χ^2 test results on output strategies among males and females.

	χ^2 value	df	p
Pearson χ^2	15.11	6	.62
Likelihood ratio	15.00	6	.62
Linear-by-linear association	14.67	1	.00
N of valid cases	581	—	—

The most frequent output strategies used by men include strategy 1 (15.90%), strategy 6 (14.98%), strategies 2 and 7 (14.67), strategy 5 (14.37), strategy 3 (13.45), and strategy 4 (11.92), respectively. In order to compare the female and male participants' impoliteness and output strategies, two χ^2 tests were conducted. The χ^2 test results on impoliteness indirect strategies are presented in Table 12.

There are 0 cells (0.0%) with an anticipated count of fewer than 5. The estimated minimum count is 69.91. Table 12 shows that there is a significant difference in impoliteness indirect strategies between male and female participants ($\chi^2 = 15.22$, $df = 8$, $p < .05$).

There are 0 cells (0.0%) with an anticipated count of fewer than 5. The estimated minimum count is 71.91. As

Table 13 displays, there is no significant difference in output strategies between male and female participants ($\chi^2 = 15.00$, $df = 6$, $p > .05$).

5. Discussion

Politeness and impoliteness are essential components of language, and many scholars have already investigated them [39, 43, 44]. Although most studies and instructional approaches concentrated on politeness [45], impoliteness also drew researchers' attention [46] because gaining excellent competency and fluency without being familiar with the rude language is nearly difficult [47]. As a result, this research study aimed to investigate both politeness and impoliteness strategies which are used in expressing the propositional content of a direct speech maintained in the indirect speech in Persian. Additionally, it sought to find out whether gender had an effect on changing direct speech into indirect speech.

The findings revealed that the propositional content of a direct speech is maintained in the indirect speech in Persian via different politeness and impoliteness strategies such as making others feel comfortable, aggravating threatening force in the utterance or keeping impartiality. Moreover, the findings showed that there was a significant difference between male and female Persian speakers regarding the use of impoliteness indirect strategies; however, there was no significant difference between them on output strategies. According to Holmes [48], female discourse is often less combative than that of men. Additionally, Gilligan [49] claimed that in order to develop and strengthen relationships, females tend to avoid conflict and offer constructive criticism more frequently than males. According to Pettersson Granqvist [50], women tend to use more hedges, boosters, and facilitative tag questions: they might merely be evidence of a female conversational style.

As far as the politeness strategies are concerned, the results revealed that the most frequent politeness strategies by the participants included positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald on-record, respectively. Positive politeness plays an important role when forming good interpersonal relationships. As is expressed by Holtgraves [51] "The essence of positive politeness is the staking of a claim for some degree of familiarity with one's interlocutor. It is thus the language of intimacy" (p. 46). The frequent use of positive politeness and bald-on-record strategies in the class blog was in line with the results of the study conducted by Park [52] on the use of politeness strategies in CMC. According to Park [52], the commonality of bald-on-record and positive politeness strategies lies in the fact that both tactics are grounded in proximity. Accordingly, they bring forth close interpersonal relationships between participants. Employment of such politeness tactics indicates that effective interpersonal communication plays a vital role in the enhancement of group discussion.

Our findings are consistent with Li's [53] study on the use of politeness techniques in wiki-mediated communication, in which participants made use of friendly and cooperative techniques. The acquired results were consistent with

Harrison and Barlow's [54] study findings from 2009, which showed that participants in an online self-management program typically employed constructive techniques to convey their common issues and experiences.

In this study, the participants opted for more imperative forms in contexts where the speaker's position was more significant than the hearer's. FTA was expressed in the most straightforward, obvious, explicit, and concise possible manner in such situations as Brown and Levinson [2] have suggested. Although imperatives are commonly linked with orders in many languages, they may also be used to make respectful requests when softeners or modifiers are employed to reduce the illocutionary force [55]. As a result, while Persian speakers employ direct strategies more than what is typical, the extensive use of modifiers could be interpreted as a softener to decrease the illocutionary power of the demand and make it look less face-threatening to the communicators. It must be noted however that imperatives are used to pursue the purpose of an impact on the interlocutor and this will simultaneously induce the interlocutor to perform certain actions, or to refuse to carry out this act or even demonstrate reluctance in acting on the force created by the speaker.

The preference of Persian speakers for different indirect report impoliteness strategies could be influenced by contextual variables, including social distance and power relations between the interlocutors. According to Brown and Levinson [2] the social distance between the interlocutors is one of the measures that is taken into account for the politeness/impoliteness strategies. The participants in this study opted for different indirect report impoliteness strategies that best fit the social distance of the situation in which they were interacting. With this in mind, the results of this study revealed that segments under the study not only acted as the illocutionary force produced by the speaker but also unveiled the social relation between speaker and addressee. This relation could either be on equal footing (e.g., intimate friends, colleagues, and teammates) or socioculturally superior to the other (e.g., an elderly, a manager) in a wide array of socioculturally or occupationally defined settings in which the discourse took shape. The imperative function of the discourse potentially shapes and reshapes a social, hierarchical, occupational, and cultural relation between those involved in the discourse (speaker and interlocutor). In a similar vein, it was confirmed that this social status is closely intertwined with the social hierarchy of the listener or the addressee from the perspective which is defined by the setting in which the interaction is carried out. In the light of the findings of this study, perceived distance is relatively a social and psychological familiarity between the speaker/hearer and it heavily relies on the actual depth and breadth of the acquaintance (e.g., whether it is a formal occupational link, a casual or nodding acquaintance or an intimate relationship between those involved). The perceived sense of familiarity is directly stemmed in the seriousness, significance, or gravity of the situation or what is at stakes in the outcome of the interaction.

In line with Brown and Levinson [35], the element of politeness must be approached with case for it is suggestive of perceived or existing intimacy or distance between the

speaker and hearer, which calls for rhetorically mitigating the potentially intended or unintended imposition involved in speech acts. Given the significance of the distance in any form of interaction, speakers approach politeness in a largely strategic and calculating fashion while interacting with others, constantly assessing the cost of the resulting imposition in terms of social distance, identity, and power relations. For that reason, individuals are rhetorically required to defend their face. This face is a positive self-image developed within the course of the interaction through the ongoing negotiation in which parties to the interaction are engaged. Therefore, it is highly important that individuals maintain their self-image by avoiding FTAs which potentially trouble the balance of face maintenance among interactants. To redress the imbalance, speakers need to recognize the needs and wishes of the other person and prioritize the interlocutor by indicating that the other person will not be imposed upon. Along the same line, the speakers can emphasize the intimacy and closeness between themselves and the interactants by demonstrating that they both share similarities and common grounds in the interaction.

Another valuable finding of this study is that positive and negative politeness vary significantly across different individuals, but it needs to be stressed that all languages share the same structural features and system of the politeness. Equally important, it must be noted that directness is simply one component of the politeness sequences; other factors also have crucial roles [56]. Similarly, Kerkam [57] found that while indirectness is deemed polite in specific languages such as English, it might be considered impolite in others. In Arabic language, directness is seen as the most acceptable and anticipated manner of the requests and excuses. Among the structural and conceptual commonalities between individuals is the conception that indirectness is closely associated with politeness, and directness is closely associated with impoliteness. Kerkam [57] showed that in Arabic, directness is more expected or appropriate form for requests and excuses and therefore indirectness is seldom employed for the purposes of being polite. On the contrary to the traditional directness and indirectness concept, the indirectness used in such contexts is indicative of a social or affective distance between the interlocutors, and therefore could be misinterpreted as impoliteness. Criticizing and blaming rendered indirectly commonly function in Arabic as situational criticism achieved indirectly and thus recognized as a generalized and abstracted utterance functioning as blame or criticism once rendered indirectly.

Our study findings are endorsed by the theory of Brown and Levinson [2] stating that the speaker wants to maintain the hearer's face and when the speaker performs a FTA, he/she uses different negative or positive politeness strategies to tone down the request and minimize the face loss of the recipient. In addition, Culpeper's [39] theory supports our results; Culpeper says that the speaker does not always want to protect the face of the recipient but wants to attack the face.

6. Conclusion

Interlocutors would have a social or affective distance if they used indirect forms. The findings did not imply that Persian

speakers were indifferent about the burden they were putting on their counterpart; rather, their proclivity for reiterating information through indications could be interpreted as a method to mitigate the impact of an FTA. Indirectness, within various context may therefore either be directly linked with an indication of politeness or a FTA. Thus, it would be safe to observe the existing association between indirectness and politeness, for it is clear that not all languages necessarily view or employ indirectness in the same way as it is interpreted in their language.

This study has principal implications for promoting cultural and rhetorical awareness in terms of gaining familiarity with shared strategic interactional conventions which shape the meaning of the utterance. Central to that are culturally determined gender specific politeness strategies which require high degrees of awareness. This awareness of speech acts is an essential constituent in pragmatic domain of any string of utterance and for that particular reason plays a key role in the communication actions. As such, providing ample opportunities for learning culture specific or universally agreed-upon discourse strategies enables interactants in intercultural interactions to achieve an optimal pragmatic success through awareness of socioculturally defined politeness strategies in the different settings, cultures, and between genders.

This research can help EFL teachers raise students' pragmatic awareness to learn how to use it in the different contexts. Teachers also should be aware of the differences that might cause the negative transfer minimizing native cultural interference and preventing the impolite, ineffective, or inappropriate behaviors. This study has some pedagogical implications for syllabus and textbook designers, those who might use the findings of this study to provide activities related to a real life and help EFL learners to get engaged in a real world and to practice realizing offers under different contextual determinants. In other words, they should practically know the difficulties they might face in performing FTAs with native-like politeness and patterns, forcing them to pay more attention to the pragmatic aspects of L2 learning.

Understanding politeness strategies is a crucial element of the pragmatic domain and affects how people communicate. Language acquisition should include pragmatic instruction, especially for EFL students who have little chance for social engagement. As a result, giving students the chance to learn speech act routines or formulas is a way to help them internalize pragmatic knowledge for proper spontaneous production. In this line, EFL learners need to be aware of the common sociocultural techniques of the foreign language in order to attain an ideal pragmatic success [58].

One limitation of this study is that it included only 80 participants; a further study could be conducted on a larger population to gain more valid results. One more limitation is that the research was conducted on the participants whose age range was 18–23-year old. Students who are within closer age range may perform differently. The other limitation is that the participated learners in the present study were intermediate learners regarding language proficiency; other proficiency levels—preintermediate, advanced, and elementary were ignored. Finally, the time allocated to the instruction was so limited.

During conducting the present study, and regarding the mentioned limitations, some suggestions crossed the researchers' mind. The first suggestion for the next research is to include more participants to get richer results in order to increase the generalizability of the findings. The second suggestion for the upcoming studies is to work on other language proficiency levels. The third suggestion for the future research studies is to examine the politeness strategies in different written and spoken texts. The researchers are suggested to compare Iranian EFL learners' use of politeness strategies in their native language and foreign language due to the uniqueness of the language used by L2 users. Finally, next studies are suggested to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on the role of politeness and impoliteness strategies in language learning and teaching.

Appendix

Situation 1

You are a university student. You need to get a book from the library to finish your assignment on time. The library is closed and there is only one person you know who has the book you need, one of your lecturers. On the way to his office you meet him in the hallway. What do you say?

Situation 2

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 him?

Situation 3

You need to run a few errands down town which you think may take you an hour. You go to your manager's office at work with whom you get on well and ask him to cover for you. What do you say?

Situation 4

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?

Situation 5

You are a secretary of a company for some time now. You go to the desk of a new trainee and ask him to answer the telephone while you leave for a few minutes to attend to another urgent matter. What do you say to him?

Situation 6

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?

Situation 7

You are driving your car with a friend. You both must get to X street. Your friend had a map with directions which he had given to you just before leaving the house. You are now lost and do not remember where the map is. You suddenly see a pedestrian at the end of the road and suggest that your friend ask for directions from the pedestrian. What do you say to your friend?

Situation 8

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 in your pocket all the while. What do you say to him?

Situation 9

You do not have a car. You ask a neighbor whom you do not know very well to help you move some things out of your apartment with his car. You do not have anyone else to ask since everyone you know appears to be on holiday and you have no money either to hire someone who can help or to arrange transport. You see your neighbor in the lobby and go to ask him for help. What do you say to him?

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare there are no conflicts of interest.

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