Investigating the Effect of Social Variables on Speech Variation: Social Class, Solidarity, and Power

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Authors' contributions

Author FN designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, managed the analyses of the study, and managed the literature searches. Author AER read and approved the final manuscript.

ABSTRACT

The study presented here was conducted first, to classify speech based on functional effects by using the theory of speech act [1] as well as Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory [2], and to see the effects of social class, power, and solidarity on variations observed within Persian speech. The data for the study constituted the entire conversations among the main characters of the movie called “A Separation”. They included Nader, Simin, Termeh, Hojat, Raziye, and the Judge. The procedures involved first, transcribing the conversations between the characters of the movie, next, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory as well as Austin’s speech act theory were applied in order to categorize the data and to examine how successfully our data could be classified based on their model. Then, the effects of social class, Power, and solidarity on speech variations were examined for discovering how social variables create variation in Persian Language. The findings revealed that first, utterances could be classified based on both Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory and Austin’s speech act theory. Second, social class, solidarity and power create variations in Persian. Social class raises the politeness degree of speech, while solidarity and power decrease the degree of politeness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mastery of formal characteristics of language can lead one to the skill of knowing the language in a static sense. In order to accomplish the communicative functions of language, one needs more knowledge than what we know as linguistic: mastery of vocabulary and grammatical rules results in developing skills required to use the language without the rich and abundant variations which are the results of several sociolinguistic factors [3].

How we speak is more revealing of us than any other non-verbal activity we may do. What we say and how we say it can reveal how polite, relevant, and mature we are; in addition, it informs the hearer more about our intelligence, personality, educational and social status compared with the way we walk, eat, dress, or make our living. Certain linguistic choices speakers make designate their social identity; it further reveals the kind of relationship which exists between them and their addressees [4]. The point is that there are always alternative ways one can articulate their point, and it is true to claim that the linguistic choices in one language may not be appropriate in another language, and this may result breakdowns in cross-cultural communication [5]. There are numerous aspects of the study of communicative competence, among which this study chooses to examine the effects of social class, power, and solidarity on speech variations.

Many researchers focus on the need for the rules of producing “communicatively appropriate performance” [6,7]. As a matter of fact, many learners may not be aware of socially and culturally appropriate forms which may lead to communication break-down or communication conflict. Therefore, according to Schmidt and Richards [6], we should try to appreciate a theory which account for language use among which speech act theory plays a crucial role.

Speech act theory is concerned with uses of language. According to Schmidt and Richards [6] speech act theory explains how speech achieves actions and how the speech acts result in both verbal and non-verbal reactions, in the realization of which face is an essential aspect. The main contribution of speech act theory is to explanation of communicative competence. Pragmatic speech acts such as invitations, refusals, suggestions, and apologies are significant components of communicative competence. Thus, the study of speech acts appears to be necessary to the understanding of intercultural studies. Many researchers [2,8,9,] have worked on speech acts to demonstrate speech act realization patterns and their characteristics in different languages [10]. There have been also research attempts focusing on the pragmatic aspects of Persian speech acts, such as: request [11,12], apology [13,14], compliment [15], refusals [16,17], complaints [18,19], griping [20], invitations [21], and requests [22].

Functions of speech are unlimited; but, researches have introduced classification of types of functions, dividing them into categories. For example, speech act theory [1] considers the illocution of the speech, the one intended by the speaker and detected by the addressee. Austin [1] defines speech acts as acts performed by utterances such as giving order, making promises, complaining, requesting, among others. When we utter a sentence or a phrase, we are performing an act to which we expect our listeners to react with verbal or nonverbal behavior.
Politeness of speech is the primary condition of a successful communication event. The pragmatic claim is that speech needs to be polite and politeness involves taking account of addressees' feeling of self-respect and freedom of imposition as much as possible. Holmes [23] proposed that the manner in which speakers apologize or make a request enables the analyst to get to an estimation of what social category or social groups they are identified with. According to Janney & Ardnt [24], "politeness is viewed as a rational, rule-governed, pragmatic aspect of speech that is rooted in the human need to maintain relationships and avoid conflicts". Speech acts are, therefore, common manifestations of politeness behavior in human interactions: the motivation which is provided for the speakers to save face.

Politeness is an integral part of everybody's verbal life in any human society. How polite we choose to be not only reflects how close we feel to a person, how powerful socially we estimate the addressee to be, how much solidarity, closeness or distance exist between the interlocutors, and how power determines who should be more polite. Goffman's [25] symbolic interactionism theory describes the many ways people use to communicate, create, and maintain social roles. In this theory, social distance is a prime characteristic of social roles, and politeness serves to regulate social distance. Different speech communities emphasize norms of politeness for different functions, and as a consequence, express particular functions differently as per their social norms imposed on them. The way people decide which form to use in a particular context depends on a few social factors such as: their social class, the social distance between participants, their relative status, and the role of social power which could all affect speech; and these and a few other factors are referred to as constituents of a speech context which is to be of a specific style representing the degree of formality of the setting.

Discussing face encompasses both face-saving and face-threatening acts. Speakers often get involved in achieving speech functions in their given contexts of use [26]. The claim is that politeness is context dependent. Brown and Levinson [2] base their theory on the concept of face which is defined as the public self image that all rational adult members have, when engaged in spoken interaction, and it must be constantly adhered to. Face consists of two related aspects: positive face and negative. Positive face is the wish all speakers have that they be respected; their face 'wants' be desirable to fellow interactants. Negative face is the 'want' all speakers have that their actions will not be impeded by others. However, it is not possible for conversation to flow without a demand or intrusion being made on another person's autonomy; the fact is that we refer to certain functions of speech potentially face threatening. A simple act such as asking someone to sit down is a potential threat to their face; and it could be a threat to both positive and negative face. Brown and Levinson define the performance of such utterances as potential face-threatening acts (FTAs).

Koutlaki [27] contends that there exist two aspects of face in Persian culture. One, shakhsiat refers to prestige, the other, ehteraam, refers to the respect of the community for a person with a good moral standard (similar to English social status). The main difference between the two is that basically, shakhsiat deals with an individual's prestige gained by achievements, influence, connections, etc, while ehteraam has to do with the community recognition for an individual's social influence (the concept could be similar to English social class), moral behavior or judgment. Nevertheless, both components involve respectable images that one can claim for oneself from the community in which one interacts or to which one belongs. Thus, to be polite in Persian discourse is to know how to attend to each other's shakhsiat and ehteraam [27].
Some speech acts are categorized as containing threat towards the negative face of the hearer: orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminding, threatening, warnings, offers, promises, expressions of envy, admiration, expression of hatred, and lust are examples. While those which are threatening to the positive face of the hearer include expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt, complaint, accusation, insult, disagreement, expressions of violent emotions, the mention of taboo topics, interruption, bringing bad news about the hearer or good news about the speaker as well as other non-cooperative acts which can be listed. The positive face is in sum every person’s wish not to be disrespected verbally. An order in Persian to a person of an older age could be threat not only to negative face, but also to the positive face [2].

It has been believed that every utterance or series of utterances producing a speech functional unit produced by individual speakers could be a display of, among other factors, the degree of social solidarity and social power existing between the interlocutors. In this case, linguistic politeness is a social construct which indicates the power relation between the interlocutors. The solidarity is by nature about the quality of the relations between the interlocutors involving in a conversation event. It can be divided into differing levels based on who is conversing with whom: how related and close they are. However, as will be demonstrated, solidarity is a relational variable which increases or decreases not just by change of the characters; rather it is a highly context related quality. Measuring solidarity is obviously different from measuring other social qualities such as class, status, or power.

Fairclough [28] puts forward that power is a hidden construct in face-to-face discourse. From the list of threatening acts, we can strongly argue that the issue of power is inherent in our communication activity and is a major variable which depends on the context of the speech; it is a basic force in social relationships, the press of situations, and the dynamics and structure of personality. It is also defined as an individual’s relative capacity to modify others’ states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments. Resources can be both material (food, money, economic opportunity) and social (knowledge, affection, friendship, decision-making opportunities), and punishments can be material (job termination, physical harm) or social (verbal abuse, ostracism).

Another social factor that is reflected and maintained through everyday social interactions with teachers, bosses, neighbors, and friends in homes, schools, workplaces, and religious spaces is social class which is connected to relative social power in general. Social class is a multi-faceted construct that is rooted in both objective features of material wealth and access to resources (income, educational facilities); on the one hand, and education, political influence, area of residence, and parenthood on the other hand [29]. These facets all reflect real, material conditions that shape the lives and identities of upper and lower-class individuals. Relative to their upper-class counterparts, lower-class individuals have fewer economic resources and fewer educational opportunities [29]. Moreover, people with lower-class backgrounds often face increased stress in their close relationships [30] and violence in their homes [31]; and they are the inferior conversation partner in most speech encounters [32].

Research findings in Western societies indicate that there is a distinction between social class and power [33, 34]. Generally there is a broad conceptual difference in social class and social power. Social class is based on material resources, rather than any valued resource and differs conceptually from power, which focuses more broadly on any valued resource.

For example, two managers may have the same educational background and salary, but one
who has longer tenure with the company may have more power, because that manager has more intimate knowledge of company procedures and more established ties with other members of the organization. Power may predict differences in the behaviors of these managers, but social class may not. By contrast, social class should have stronger effects than power when individuals have different access to material resources, but those with less material resources have access to compensating non-material resources, so that they have as much power as those with more material resources. For example, one employee may have more material resources than another, but the latter may have access to an extensive social network. The two employees have similar levels of power, but the former has higher social class. Social class may predict differences in the behaviors of the managers, but power may not. Countries such as England and India are known to form societies of social classes, unlike countries such as Iran where social class is perceived differently.

Below, we will mention the issues of research we are interested in which are the functional analysis of the speech and investigating of the effects of social power, Solidarity, and social class on the way speech is shaped by different individuals belonging to different social classes and enjoying different degrees of power in several different contextual settings created in the Oscar winning movie “A Separation” which is world-wide popular and has enjoyed praise. The movie is a representation of how conversations manifest the role of power and social class and the solidarity in the characters’ speech.

The work presented here will be of significance when it comes to investigate the differences in the relationship between speech members with different social relationships in a movie with rich conversational contexts that represents how the effect of social variables on speech can be investigated in details. Moreover Movies with plenty of conversational context between characters with different ages, genders, social power level and class are a good medium for analyzing the effects of social variables on speech in contexts involving various power degrees and across different social classes. Besides, movies are proper mediums to study speech behaviors both within and across cultures. And in our case, the movie selected is known not only to the native Persian speakers but also to English native speakers who have interest in internationally praised pieces of work.

2. BACKGROUND

The proper task of semantics is to study relation that exists between expressions in virtue of their linguistic meaning. But of course in ordinary conversations the speaker’s meaning is in general different from the sentence meaning. Often, the speaker means to perform non-literal illocutionary act, as in the case of metaphor, irony, and indirect speech acts.

A speaker who means to perform a primary non-literal speech act or to implicate conversationally something in a context of utterance intends to get the hearer to understand him by relying (1) on the hearer’s knowledge of the meaning of the sentence to understand the literal speech act; (2) on their mutual knowledge of certain facts of the conversational background; and (3) on the learner’s capacity to make inferences on the basis of the hypothesis that the speaker respects certain rules of conversation in performing the primary speech act in the context of utterance. According to this view, it is not possible to understand the primary non-literal speech act without having understood that this literal act cannot be the primary speech act in the rules of conversation in that context. Pragmatic is conceived as the theory of speaker meaning and it incorporates semantics as the theory of sentence meaning.
Austin [1] uses the term illocutionary act to refer to the ways in which language functions express speaker's intent, e.g. to express emotions, establish contacts, make proclamations, ask for things, etc. The speech act is also abounded unit whereby a particular social action is accomplished through speech. Hymes considers speech act to be a minimal unit, which "represents a level distinct from the sentence and not identifiable with any single portion of other levels of grammar or with segments of any particular size defined in terms of other levels of grammar" [35]. Thus speech act theory deals with the functions and uses of language, all acts we perform through speaking, and all the things we do when we speak.

Performing a speech act involves performing: (a) a locutionary act, the act of producing a recognizable grammatical utterance in the languages, (b) perlocutionary act, the act of producing certain intended effects upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the other person, and (c) illocutionary act, the attempt to accomplish some communicative purposes such as promising, warning, greeting, reminding, informing, and commanding all being distinct illocutionary acts [36].

Pragmatics is defined as the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context. In order to be successful speakers in actual communication events, the functional approach to the study of speech, research suggests that it is essential for speakers to know not only grammar and text organization skills but also pragmatic aspects of the target language (Bachman, 1990). Communicative action includes not only speech acts such as requesting, greeting, inviting, suggesting and so on but also the pragma-linguistic ability to use language forms in a wide range of situations characterizing the context of the speech events the speakers get involved in. According to Schmidt and Richards [37] speech act theory explains how speech achieves actions and how the speech acts result in both verbal and non-verbal reactions. The function of a given utterance or a set of utterances is its illocution and speech act theory considers the illocution of the speech, the one intended by the speaker and detected by the addressee [1].

In pragmatics, our interest lies in the fact that a sentence, pragmatically called utterance, carries a message which is intended by the speaker and understood by the addressee. The issue of speech acts has been one of the most vital issues dealing with the functions of speech. The pioneers of this line of research [1] claim that the speech acts are operated by universal pragmatic principles, and some [38, 39] claim that their realizations are language specific. The fact is that although there are universal pragmatic principles which exist in all languages, their realization becomes culture specific. In fact, universal functions become culture specific when they are to be realized in a language: for instance, being polite is universal, but how to be polite depends on the cultural norms governing the speech of a specific language.

In case of the Persian language some studies have looked at the pragmatics of Persian politeness [40,41,42,27]. According to Sahragard [43], Beemen [40] is the only authoritative and comprehensive published work done on the Persian language from a sociolinguistic point of view. Nevertheless there are many researchers who attempted in realization of politeness in Persian. Among them Zahra Akbari [44] in her article "has extracted and categorized the range of politeness strategies used by Persian mono-lingual speakers in certain situations and to compare and contrast them with those employed in English, based on the model proposed by [2].

Social factors, which are either relational and context-sensitive such as solidarity and power, or non-relational such as social class, status, gender, or age, can be regarded as the factors
which influence variations in speech, a thorough understanding of which is vital in order to follow norms of politeness in contexts of interactions. Different cultures find expressions in different systems of speech acts. Since decades ago, researchers [2,8,9] have worked on speech acts to demonstrate the realization patterns and their characteristics in different languages [10]. However, the works done on socio-pragmatics in Persian seem to be insufficient. There have been research attempts focusing on the pragmatic aspects of Persian speech acts; however, most of them have focused on one specific function with the aim of showing how pragmatic norms are realized differently across English and Persian. None, to our knowledge, has chosen the role of social class, solidarity, and social power in the sense we have chosen to research using pseudo natural data of a movie which could be claimed to be a familiar context for most of the analysts.

Discussing face encompasses both face-saving and face-threatening acts. Speakers often get involved in achieving speech functions in their given contexts of use [26]. The claim is that politeness is context dependent. Brown and Levinson [2] base their theory on the concept of face which is defined as the public self-image that all rational adult members have, when engaged in spoken interaction, and it must be constantly adhered to. Positive face is the wish to be respected; the face ‘wants’ are to be desirable to fellow interactants. Negative face is the ‘want’ all speakers have for being free from imposition and that their actions will not be impeded by others. However, it is not possible for a conversation to flow without a demand or intrusion being made on another person’s autonomy; the fact is that we refer to certain functions of speech potentially face threatening. A simple act such as asking someone to sit down is a potential threat to their face; and it could be a threat to both positive and negative face. Brown and Levinson define the performance of such utterances as potential face-threatening acts (FTAs).

Some speech acts are categorized as containing threat towards the negative face of the hearer: orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminding, threatening, warnings, offers, promises, expressions of envy, admiration, expression of hatred, and lust are examples. While those which are threatening to the positive face of the hearer include expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt, complaint, accusation, insult, disagreement, expressions of violent emotions, the mention of taboo topics, interruption, bringing bad news about the hearer or good news about the speaker as well as other non-cooperative acts which can be listed. The positive face is in sum every person’s wish not to be disrespected verbally. An order in Persian to a person of an older age could be threat not only to negative face, but also to the positive face. The basis of arguments about speech variation lies on the concept of face. The two significant social variables, power and solidarity which affect face are mentioned below.

Every utterance or series of utterances producing a speech functional unit produced by individual speakers could be a display of, among other factors, the degree of social solidarity and social power existing between the interlocutors. In this case, linguistic politeness is a social construct which indicates the power relation between the interlocutors. The solidarity is by nature about the quality of the relations between the interlocutors involving in a conversation event. It can be divided into differing levels based on who is conversing with whom: how related and close they are. However, as will be demonstrated, solidarity is a relational variable which increases or decreases not just by change of the characters; rather it is a highly context related quality. Measuring solidarity is obviously different from measuring other social qualities such as class, status, or power.
In fact Language does more than help people understand the speaker’s thoughts and feelings. By using language in a subtle way, people define their relationship to each other and identify themselves as part of a social group. “In no area of sociolinguistics is this second function of language more clearly highlighted than in address forms.” So there is an increasing emphasis on the study of the second person pronouns and address systems in different languages. One of the most influential study was conducted by Brown and Gilman in 1968, which, for the first time, brought the concept of “power and solidarity” into the field of sociolinguistics and identified their correlation and the pronominal usage.

Brown and Gilman [45] found that the use of the familiar pronoun T and the deferential pronoun V in European languages were governed by two forces: power and solidarity. If one person has power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behavior of the other, he may give T and receive V. The bases of power can be physical strength, wealth, age, sex, institutionalized role in the church, the state, the army or within the family. On the other hand, solidarity implies intimacy and “shared fate” and is reciprocal. If the interlocutors are close or intimate to each other, they will mutually exchange T or V.

Fairclough [28] puts forward that power is a hidden construct in face-to-face discourse. From the list of threatening acts, we can strongly argue that the issue of power is inherent in our communication activity and is a major variable which depends on the context of the speech; it is a basic force in social relationships, the press of situations, and the dynamics and structure of personality. It is also defined as an individual’s relative capacity to modify others’ states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments. Resources can be both material (food, money, economic opportunity) and social (knowledge, affection, friendship, decision-making opportunities), and punishments can be material (job termination, physical harm) or social (verbal abuse, ostracism).

Power is positively associated with speaking time and speaking out of turn [2,46]. Similarly, those with greater power are more likely to express their private opinions and true attitudes [47,48,49,50]. For example, high-power individuals are more likely than those without power to openly express their opinions during a group discussion [47,48], and they are unfazed by the expressed attitudes or persuasion attempts of others [49,50]. In contrast, low-power individuals’ own attitudes and opinions are shaped by their high-power counterparts. Even when subordinates try to engage in overt acts of upward influence to improve their own situation and thus reduce the gap in power, they are likely to feel that their voice has fallen on deaf ears.

In fact high-power individuals tend to be more optimistic, more confident about their choices, and more action-oriented [51,49,52]. When there are inhibiting forces in the environment, power-holders act as if those forces were invisible [50] and take more goal-directed action [52]. For example in bargaining contexts, those higher in power are also more likely to initiate a negotiation and to make the first offer [53]. Negotiating and making first offers have both been shown to lead reliably to the accumulation of more resources and thus more power [54].

High-power individuals are also more optimistic and confident than low-power individuals [51,49]. For example, the powerful feel more optimistic about possibilities for career advancement than do individuals without power [51]. These effects of power are important mechanisms of hierarchy maintenance because confidence and optimism are predictive of achievement and success across a range of tasks [55,56]. This increase in optimism also affects attraction to risk, with high-power individuals showing greater risk preferences and
making riskier choices than low-power individuals [51,57].

The third social variable which is of interest in this study is social class, which is unlike the other two variables, an attribute which does not supposedly ever change as an attribute of a person. The effect of social class is reflected and maintained through everyday social interactions with teachers, bosses, neighbors, and friends in homes, schools, workplaces, and religious spaces. Social class is connected to relative social power in general; however, it is not always in correspondence with social power. Social class is a multi-faceted construct that is rooted in both objective features of material wealth and access to resources (income, educational facilities); [29] on the one hand, and education, political influence, area of residence, and parenthood on the other. These facets all reflect real, material conditions that shape the lives and identities of upper and lower-class individuals. Relative to their upper-class counterparts, lower-class individuals have fewer economic resources and fewer educational opportunities [29]. Moreover, people with lower-class backgrounds often face increased stress in their close relationships [30] and violence in their homes [31]; and they are the inferior conversation partner in most speech encounters.

For the purpose of this study, we classified social class into six levels, starting from very low (an unemployed, uneducated, poor, from an unknown parental background in slums of a city is the very low class individual). The quality of relations in Iran is much more demonstrated in the impoliteness of speech to the extent that lots of rude words and slang expressions might be exchanged between friends; and this is true mostly about the male young generation of the current social structure of Iran. Culpeper [32] defines impoliteness as “communicative strategies designed to attack face, and thereby cause social conflict and disharmony”. He also claims that “impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates a face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)”. Power in this study is measured on a six level scale from least to most (a person in the court accused of murder without any connection represented in speech in relation to the judge who is to sentence the accused). The most powerless talks to the most powerful who enjoys the highest social power).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participant

The participants were actually fictional characters of the movie and the data presented in this work is a display of the world created by the characters of the movie A Separation. Six main characters that interact constantly throughout the movie give us a sufficient corpus of speech displaying differing effects of the social variables of the study. 3 male, 4 female characters were selected and their conversations in various contexts were recorded and transcribed. The characters include one Iranian middle-class couple (Nader & Simin) and their 11 year old daughter (Terme), and one low-class couple (Hojat & Raziye) with termé’s female teacher (Miss Ghahrayi) and the court judge.

3.2 Instruments

The Iranian movie called “A separation” was used as the instrument to be employed for collecting data. A Separation won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012. It received the Golden Bear for Best Film and the Silver Bears for Best Actress and Best Actor at the 61st Berlin International Film Festival. The film was nominated for the Best
Original Screenplay Academy Award, making it the first non-English film in five years to achieve this (Wikipedia). The world created by the movie was the context of situations with six main characters acting in various contextual situations. The materials of the study included the entire utterances produced in various situations by six movie characters of “A Separation”. Each utterance was subject to a number of examinations; hence, the functional category, directness, and the use of mitigation devices in them were among the characteristics which we dealt with in order to reach findings about the effects of social variables on speech variation.

The rich corpus which contained 329 functions for classification could be a reliable source of data for verifying the validity of the claims made by the speech act theories which were chosen to be employed and tested.

3.3 Design

The design of the study is a simple one, as the nature of it is a descriptive attempt to show the role of social variables while applying the functional classifications.

3.4 Procedures

The data for analysis constituted the conversations of the movie characters in various contextual settings. The theme of the movie has been known to a large group of individuals who pursue Oscar winning films and have some interest how cross-culturally different speakers interact. The assumption is that social class, power, and solidarity among the interlocutors vary to a considerable sense, as the story of the movie is about socially different characters who represent a different social class; and the contexts are full of the interactions of interlocutors with differing power and solidarity.

In order to examine the functional classification of speeches made by the movie characters through employing the speech act theory of Austin as well as Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, the procedures were first, transcribing the entire conversations, and classifying them into functional categories they belong to. Second, getting to an estimation of how frequent was each speech act category in the speeches of the six characters of the story. To compare the differences between the characters in various contextual settings, the speeches of every character were transcribed with information available regarding where, when, in which circumstance (agreeing, conflicting, arguing, quarrelling, requesting etc) the speech is made; and the knowledge of who made the utterances to whom could give us as analysts the ability to examine closely how the effects of social variables create speech variation. Concerning the effect of social class, solidarity and power on speech variation, the methodology which was used makes the work different from previous research and hence contributes to its originality.

3.5 Data Analysis

This study needed 2 kinds of analysis: qualitative and quantitative analysis: The data constituting speech was categorized based on different speech acts, the comparisons of which were shown by examples, different tables, and using Figures. The qualitative data will be turned into quantitative by measuring frequency and percentage of each and every speech acts that was produced by characters in contextually different situations. The use of excel was a sufficient statistical tool for us to get to what is of interest to our research.
4. RESULTS

In what follows, the quantitative data will be presented and discussed limited to the characters of the movie A Separation. The application of Brown and Levinson politeness theory as well as Austin’s speech act theory will provide results which will be introduced for analysis. The first to present is Table 1, which gives a classification of the utterances into functional units based on their illocutionary force. As is clear, one functional unit could be identical to an utterance, while some functional units have an organization which requires several utterances with one being the head act. As is clear from the table, the utterances have been turned into 408 functional units; an example will be clarifying here: Nader first gives a warning request as well as a threat to Hoja t in one unit of function. The first utterance is an imperative with a message which is intended to be a warning request and the second utterance is functionally considered to be a threat.

**English1.** N to Hoj: Be respectful! I'm not saying anything in front of your family.

**Persian1:** N to H: Moaddab bash, man jeloy-e yan o bach-at hicch-i behet ne-mig-am.

**Persian (hereafter P):** N. to H: polite be-imp, (2nd sing). I front wife and child-2nd sing nothing to you-2nd sing ne-(neg marker)-mi (present simple) say-1st sing.

Treating collections of utterances, we came up with turning 252 collections of utterances with a given function into 408 functional units with a head as well as with strategies of either politeness or such issues as compliance, etc. Table 1 is a comprehensive illustration of how syntactic units turned into functional units. The first column demonstrates the speech act kind including both face saving and face threatening ones; the subsequent columns show who interacted with whom and what was the speech act type.

Noticeable is the fact that for an English speaker, it is strange how some things are not to be mentioned in front of one’s family. The differences of this type, however, are not the issue of analysis here; the mere purpose is to examine how varying types of speech act are mentioned in such contextual situations of conflict. The difference between being moaddab (polite) and respectful is one that the translator has taken into account, in the sense that ‘be polite’ which is the literal translation has changed to ‘be respectful’.

The functional units were divided in the following categories, regardless of who says what to whom: Those functional units called the FTAs to positive face included: criticism (54), complaint (47) direct disagreement (19), insult (17), and accusation (7). The total number of tokens in five categories constituted 144 instances. In addition to the categories above; ironical expressions used for showing intimidation and resentment which were used in speech acts potentially face threatening, usually employed specifically in the expression of disagreements, complaints, criticisms, (11); obligation(4) and refusal (4). The total number of tokens in eight categories constituted 163 instances.

The functional units chosen for examination which were viewed to be FTAs toward negative face included 113 tokens in seven categories of speech act: order (27), direct Request (42), indirect Request (11), threatening (22), advice (2), suggestion (8), and promise (1). As listed below, a number of characteristics were observed worthy of mentioning. The means of conveying the functions were either strategies or devices employed in conveying emphasis, increasing the face saving degree or decreasing the threat of a speech act by showing respect through using a class raising device (19 tokens); using high tone of voice for either showing emphasis, defensiveness, or threat (18tokens); hesitation, showing lack of confidence (4tokens), swearing which indicated either distress, emphasis, or defensiveness.
apparently unique to Persian unequal power in the contexts of conflict compared with English (15 tokens).

Table 1. A comprehensive classification of the entire utterances extracted from the movie into different speech acts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Acts</th>
<th>Nader</th>
<th>Simin</th>
<th>Raziyeh</th>
<th>Hojat</th>
<th>Termeh</th>
<th>Judge</th>
<th>Ghahrayi</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Sister</th>
<th>Nader, Simin, Raziyeh, Hojat, Termeh, the Judge, Ghahrayi, the Police officer, the sister in law, mother in law, Ms. Kalani</th>
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The use of face saving politeness strategies was mostly observed in the categories of speech acts below. Here is the tokens of speech act which were classified into types which often were used in building a more complex hierarchical functional structure: apology (8), expression of distress (7), permission (7), making an excuse (4), reasoning (4), agreement (1), and inquiry (1). The total number of tokens in seven categories constituted 34 instances. In addition to the categories mentioned, their frequency of occurrence was measured based on an estimation of which characters uttered them to which addressees (Nader, Simin, Raziyeh, Hojat, Termeh, the Judge, Ghahrayi, the Police officer, the sister in law, mother in law, Ms. Kalani).

Use of address forms (46 tokens) was an additional interesting issue for examination. The situations in which characters interacted could be divided into different ones. Who is addressing whom under what contextual circumstances function as variables which could predict which type of an address term will be chosen. In many languages, including Persian, the second-person plural pronoun used to address is an honorific form being a sign of respect. In addition, the use of non-honorific address pronouns (tou 2nd sing) may be used as a sign of either solidarity between the interlocutors or high power of the speaker, compared with shoma (2nd pl) which is used for the more powerful addressee. In English there is no
difference in the form of second person address pronoun: *you*. There is only one used for an addressee without showing either solidarity or inequality of powers. The *tou* (2nd sing) pronoun is usually used by those who do not have much social distance from each other (Fazold 1990). In example 2 the honorific pronoun, in 3, the non-honorific pronoun, and in four a substitution (*darling dadi*) which indicates the greatest degree of solidarity are used displaying varying degrees of either power or solidarity.

**A: Address forms**

**English 2**: J. to Ms. Ghahrayi: You can go. Thank you.  
**Persian 2**: J to Ms. Gh: shoma tashrif be-barid, kheili mamnoon  
**P 2**: J. to Mrs Gh.: you (2nd pl) honor be- (subj marker)-take (2nd pl), very thankful.

**English 3**: T to S: If you hadn't left, Dad wouldn't have been in jail now.  
**Persian 3**: T. to S: you (sing) if now leave na(neg. marker) do(past participle) be- (past, 2nd sing)-I (condition marker) be- (subjunctive marker) go (imperative 2nd sing) dad now in prison na-(neg marker) was-0 (3rd sing).

Other address forms are used to convey such in-group membership, like generic terms and terms of address, such as:  
**English 4**: N to T: Honey (Dad `darling)! Go to your room.  
**Persian 4**: N to T: be-(imperative marker) go (imp. Verb) in-of room-at (possessive adj, 2nd, sing) dadi life (informal, extreme intimacy).

Examples are chosen from the data to show each one of the speech acts mentioned above. It is interesting to note how the two languages English and Persian compare in conveying the functional effects. The details of how the two languages are different are not the topic of discussion here; however, the translations into English could automatically reveal to the readers how relativistic the nature of speech can be.

Example 5 is representative of an instance of complaint. The style of speech could reveal to the Persian speaker how the relevant social class of the speaker may be misjudged due to the context of speech between two persons forming a couple: the indicators of inequality in the social power of one of the interlocutors could be identical to the linguistic devices which function as indicators of the degree of solidarity. And, as an additional fact revealed through the qualitative examination of the conversational data, the degree of solidarity may vary according, not only to change of addressing character, but also to the contextual circumstances; the context of conflict changes the effect of solidarity to a negotiation of power between two speakers. Examples below are revealing:

**B: Complaint:**

As 5.a shows, the fairly literal version of the Persian translation into English reads differently to the extent that some functional effect will change and the illocutionary force cannot be indicated:

**English 5**: N to S: This is what happens when you just find random people.  
**5. a.** N to S: When you find any stranger from the corner of the street and pick her up and bring into the house, this is what it becomes!
**Persian 5:** N to S: Vaghti har kasi ro az sare khyaboon peyda mi-koni var mi-dar-i mi-yar-i tooy-e khoone mi-she hamin.

**P 5:** N to S: when everyone ro-(informal direct object marker) from head-e (of) street find mi-(simple present) do(imp, 2nd, sing) pick (informal spoken) have (present form of v)-i (2nd sing) mi (present tense marker) take (present tense)-I (2nd sing) in-ye (of) home mi-(present tense) become (3rd sing) same this).

Reaction to complaint is represented in 6 in which we see the reaction is not an apology; it is rather rejecting the complaint.

**English 6:** S to N: Don't blame me. I told you even then that I only know the sister in law.

The literal translation could be:

6. a. S to N: Don't place it on my neck without any reason, etc

**Persian 6:** S to N: Bi-khod garden-e man na-ndaz, az hamoon moghe ham behet goft-am man taghat khahar shoharesh o mi-shnas-am. Khod-esh o ne-mishnas-am

**P 6:** S to N: bi (without) self neck-e (of) I na_(neg marker) throw (imp, 2nd sing), from same time also be-(to) you (sing) say (past tense)-am (1st sing) I only sister-e (of) husband-esh (3rd possesstive adj)-ou (OM) mi-(present prefix) know-am (1st sing). Self-esh (3rd sing)-ou (OM) ne-(neg marker)-mi (present tense prefix) know (present tense verb form)-am (1st sing).

**C: Criticism:**

Example 7 is what Hojat mentions to Nader as Criticism. The interesting point is that extracts such as these could reveal, in additional to the functional effect, the social class of the speaker. As one judges according to Hojat’s objection of why Nader has touched his wife, who is referred to by a euphemistic term which indicates that in Persian culture one’s wife is a sacred property for no one to touch but the husband. The address term Namous is used to refer to one’s wife; there are not any such expressions in English. The English audience will never comprehend the difference between the two. There is numerous address terms for female individuals in Persian most of which indicate how significantly the society is male oriented. In addition to the two address terms, a husband may call his wife by the term, zan (woman) which again signifies that the wife is a possession of the husband especially among members of lower social classes:

**English 7:** Hoj to N: Quiet! Who even let you touch my wife (Namous)?

**Persian 7:** H to N: to aslanbe che ejaze-yi be namos-e man dast zad-i

**p 7:** H. to N: you (sing) never with what permission-yi (indefinite marker) to wife (a substitution with especial connotations)-e (of) I hand hit (past form)-i (2nd sing).

It is interesting to know that what S tells the Judge cannot be translated at all in the same functional sense. The address term Haj Agha (Mr Haj) refers to one who has already had a pilgrimage to Mecca to do Hajj ceremonies, then after that the person will be Mr Haji. It has become a popular address term after the Islamic revolution for people to refer to the clergy, to respectful, and to the judges who are dressed like a clergy. The use of Haji signifies the less powerful Hojat’s acknowledgement of his weakness and his involvement in a conflict; using the term addressed to the Judge who is of higher power as well as class shows a good instance of the effect of social power:

**English 8:** Hoj to J: Sir, if they don’t care about honors, I care.

**Persian 8:** H to J: Haj agha age namos vase in ha moheim nist vase man moheme
Example 9 is revealing of a difference between the two characters in conflict. One tries to show that his wife is a sacred property not to be touched by anyone; the other reveals several indications of being polite which could functionally be ambiguous. Being polite in a situation of guilt is one of the reasons speakers become polite. However, analysts and native Persian speakers can draw conclusions regarding the social class of the speakers in this conversation. Example 9 shows polite speech by Nader who is involved in a situation of lack of power due to his guiltiness.

Example 10 represents S to N the husband; a distinct feature of how Persian middle class couples interact in situations of conflict. If they had belonged to lower working classes living in small towns, one would expect much less power of expression than the husband. Here, a direct suggestion is made in a fairly direct way without any mitigation to make it polite. The speech act of suggestion is made by the head act being pay the blood money, the rest is considered to be expressions of dissatisfaction and complaint in the form of asking questions challenging the husband’s refusal to pay. The head act of direct disagreement is giving money by force. The Persian native speakers can judge that a wife must be of high or middle class to be as direct as the speaker, Simin, is.

Knowledge of the larger context enables the Persian speaker judge that such a conflict uncovered in this conversation shows how the upper middle class in Iran is undergoing changes; Simin takes it her responsibility to force her husband to act through unpleasant speech that forms a unit of suggestion. In 10 Nader directly disagrees with Simin who is showing her resentment why the husband shows reluctance and does not act upon her request. This example shows that change has happened in Persian culture when one sees the style of Simin’s speech could be offensive to Nader, because she uses non-honorific address pronouns, direct complaints, and finally a suggestion. Using such terms as stubborn by a wife to a husband clearly indicates the change of power across the two genders.

English 10. S to N: Then why are you being so stubborn? Pay the blood money, so it gets over with.
Persian 10: S to N: pas chi migi, chera hey lajbazi mikoni, biya in diya ro bede tamoom she.

Most Iranian workers belonging to the traditional social class would be outraged by such a term. Additionally, the social class of the speakers is judged to be not high, especially the English performants find the social class always to be fairly lower than the Persian native speakers’ judgments. In 11, Nader disagrees with the suggestion made by Simin in an indirect way, which signifies how he is concerned about his wife’s judgment of him and his character. And this kind of concern is mostly true about the middle educated class of Persian speakers. Being indirect implies his tendency to be also acceptable in terms of saving his face in the sight of Simin, his wife.
Example 12 is a suitable representative of how social classes compare in Persian culture. The extract is an indirect request made by the house maid: The strategies employed by the speaker are all indicators of social class and level of social power of the character. The female speaker, Razieh, displays a much lower class as well as power level compared with Simin whose speech was in 10. In 12, the speaker is asking for permission, or in other words, a request for permission to act. She is asking Nader to permit her to give his phone number to her husband. She feels insecure about her giving the number to her husband; and only an Iranian native speaker of Persian would understand the reason for the concern about any possible suspicion for Hojat’s thinking why his wife has communicated with a stranger man. The issue is socially sensitive for the simple working class citizens; therefore, it is obvious that she is very concerned about how she had got acquainted with Nader.

The Persian version is made into an unconventionally indirect speech act of request, while the translation version is a conventionally indirect request. Use of mitigation, confessing to her deliberate lying to her husband and asking for cooperation (letting her husband falsely believe that there had been no personal contact between them) all indicate the social class to which she belongs and how her power compares with Simin, the other wife’s. As 12a shows, the speaker displays a much lower social power and consequently social class. She is used to talking in hesitation, hedging, and the fact is that she uses honorific terms plus mitigation. The tone of voice and the gestures are added to show how her situation is of considerable powerlessness.

D: Indirect request:

**English 12:** R to N: Sorry, I was wondering if I can give your number to my husband, telling him I found your job announcement in the newspaper. Tell him for these household chores and for your father.

**Persian 12:** R to N: Forgive me, I wanted to tell, if it were permissible, I give your (honorific 2nd Pl) number to my husband, tell him I found it in the newspaper. I tell him for the housework and nursing, etc.

Extract 13 is compliance to the request by Nader. He uses a direct speech act; and to make it more polite (gentlymanly), he confirms and says that no problem with what is asked by her. His class is revealed by the style of his speech: use of honorifics (subjunctive-be-order-2ndpluralequals English tell him), use of honorific ending in make-3rdpl a call, make an
appointment with him 3rd-pl). This style is a display of a gentlemanly way of speech representing the social class of the speaking character Nader in a context of cooperation. The politeness degree, as we compare the two versions, has not been properly transferred into English, due to use of honorifics, and plural address pronouns which show respect which could not have been transferred to English. The existence of honorific address terms and pronouns, honorific verbs substitutes for normal verbs, and third person plural pronouns and endings referring to singular referents, all indicate that Persian is comparatively more a complimentary type of language compared with English.

**English 13:** N to R: Don’t worry about that. Have him call me and I will setup to meet him.  
**Persian 13:** N to R: Na-oon masaale-i nist, pas be-farmayid ba man tamas be-gir-and. Man bahash-oon tamas mi-gir-am.  
**P 13:** N to R: no that problem-yi (indefin marker) ni- (neg marker) be (present, 3rd sing), then be-(subj marker) order (honorific verb) that with I contact be- (subj marker) take (present tense)-and (3rd pl). I with they (3rd pl) appointment mi-(future marker) put-am (first sing).  

**E. High tone of voice**

The high tone of voice in 14 is an interesting part of Persian speech. The character, Nader in the context of the Judge and the court, speaks with a high tone to show either his distress or his emphasis. In response to an accusation that he left Simin, Nader raises the tone of voice. In general, in several contexts, Persian speakers raise their tone to indicate such points as emphasis, anger, and distress.

**English 14:** N to S: WHEN DID I EVER LEAVE YOU? YOU BROUGHT ME HERE (Capital indicates loudness).  
**Persian 14:** N to S: man key to ro vel kard-am to mano keshoon d-i dadgah.  
**P 14:** N to S: I when you (sing) ro (OM) leave (adj form) did-am (first sing). you (sing) I- o (OM) pull (past tense)-I (2nd sing) court.  

The tone of voice is raised by Simin too in the context of argument. The translation to the English version is non-literal, as what Simin says starts with: then what did you do? Twice repeating the same interrogation is a means of showing anger and disagreement with resent.  

*The expression is intended to convey: if you did not, then who did.*

**English 15:** S to N: WHAT DID YOU DO? WHAT DID YOU DO?  
**Persian 15:** S to N: pas che kar kard-i, Pas che kar kard-i.  
**P 15:** S to N: then what work did-l (2nd sing), then what work did-l (2nd sing)?  

In example 16, the hot issue of accusing the one who was the responsible party for what had happened, Nader raises the tone of voice not to show his power; rather he tries to show his high degree of stress and resent. The functional message of 16 is an indirect act of placing the guilt on the addressee:

**English 16:** N to S: YOU WERE THE ONE WHO APPLIED FOR THE DIVORCE  
**Persian 16:** N to S: To baram darkhast talagh dad-i.  
**P 16:** N to S: you (sing) for-I appeal-e (of) divorce give (past tense)-I (2nd sing).
F: Obligation:

In example 17, obligation is pointed out by the judge who represents the absolute power compared with other characters. His speech is empty of signs of mitigation. The Judge mentions the solution to the conflict: does not grant permission. So the permission to divorce, the permission to have custody all is in the power of the judge. These circumstances make him the most powerful figure among others as manifested in the tone of his speech and the functions of his speech units. The issue is: could it be that his social class enhances when his power increases over the other characters, or vice versa: will his power increase when his social class increases? The permission to the custody as well as divorce is given to Nader as his right, however, the real right of granting permission not only for custody but also for divorce is in the judge’s hands; and this makes him most powerful of all in the contexts he is present. And in consequence, his speech is mostly directive.

English 17: J to S: Ma'am, he (3rd pl) also has to approve (3rd sing) of this divorce. It has to be mutual.
Persian 17: J to S: Khanoom ishoon bayad baraye talagh razi bashe, tavafogh do tarafe bayad bashe.
P 17: J to S: Madam, he (honorific, 3rd pl) must for divorce satisfied be-(subj) be-e (3rd sing).

In example 17, it becomes clear that the judge is empathetic to the husband; this is clear by using terms signaling solidarity while politeness has also been observed. Using third person singular pronoun is an indication of respect for the addressee, and using non-honorific ending in the verb shows his display of empathy. The use of utterances in the form of rules, laws and principles could reveal that the judge is to relegate the issue to the civil laws of divorce and custody. The interesting issue is that although it is the law dictating whose right is divorce and custody, the parties involved see the permission in the judge rather than the laws which are to practice the rights.

English 18: J to S: If her father doesn’t give permission, she can’t come with you, Ma’am.
Persian 18: J to S: pedar-esh age ejaze nade ne-mitoone ba shoma biyad khanoom.
P 18: J to S: father-e (of)-sh (3rd sing) if permission na- (neg) give-e (3rd sing) ne- (neg marker)-mi (declarative) can-e (3rd sing) with you (pl) be-(subj) come-0 (3rd sing) madam.

English 19: S to J: Her father doesn’t allow.
P 19: S to J: father-ash (3rd sing) permission ne-(neg)-mi- (present marker) give-eh (3rd sing).

G: Direct Request:

Examples 20 and 21 form a pair of utterances, one is a direct request supported with expression of compensation (I for sake everything mine to you instead) which could potentially guarantee compliance. To refuse indirectly, in 21, Nader makes comments accusing the mother by saying to her that the daughter is emotionally attached to him, the father. He brings another reason why he doesn't comply: that the daughter does not like to join the mother Simin. In support of the request, the mother offers another challenge/reason: that the daughter doesn't understand. So, in the conversation below, 20 was a directly made request with the head act, give me my daughter, and supportive strategy: I’ll give everything to you. It is refused indirectly by Nader, (the husband) that the daughter herself prefers the father, and the daughter is emotionally attached to her father as mentioned in 21. In 22, the
mother tries to use a supportive act for her request: she doesn’t understand. The response in 23 is made to refuse and intended to be derogatory and is used to show the wife that she is mistaken, can be viewed as criticism using irony. The same is true with 24 in which Simin responds to the derogatory comment by her husband in still the same ironic way. The utterances 20 to 24 all form a complex functional structure in which a request is refused through employing varying strategies.

English 20: I'll give up everything. Just give me my daughter.
Persian 20: Persian 20: S to N: man hame chiz-a-mo mi-bakhsh-am faghat dokhtar-am o bede be man.
p 20: S to N: I all thing-am (possessive 1st)-o (OM) mi- (present)-ba (subju) forgive-am (1st sing) only daughter-am (poss, 1st sing)-o (OM) be- (subju) give (imper mood, 2nd sing) to I.

H: The Use of Irony:

English 21: N to S. Your daughter is emotionally attached to me. She doesn't even want to come with you.
Persian 21: N to S: Dokhtar-et be lahaz-e atefi be man vabastast asan khodesh ne-mikhad ba to biyad.
P 21: N to S: daughter-et (poss, 2nd sing) with regard sentiment-I (adj marker) with I dependent is (3rd sing), at all, self-esh (3rd sing) ne_ (neg)-mi- (present)- want (3rd sing) with you (sing) bi- (subju) come-0 (3rd singl).

English 22: S to N. She doesn't understand.
Persian 22: S to N: Khodesh ne-mifahme.
P 22: S to N: self-ash (posse 3rd sing) ne- (neg) mi- (present) understand-0 (3rd sing).

English 23: N to S: No one understands but you.
Persian 23: N to S: Hich kas ne-mifahme faghat to mi-fahmi.
P 23: N to S: no one ne- (neg)-mi- (present) understand-0 (3rd sing), only you (sing) mi- (present) understand-i (2nd sing).

English 24: S to NNo, it's just you that understands everything.
Persian 24: S to N: Na toy-i ke hame chiz ro mi-fahmi.
P 24: S to N: no, you (sing)-yi (be 2nd sing) that all thing-o (OM) mi-(present) understand-i (2nd sing).

In another conflictive context, Nader argues with the maid criticizing her for leaving the father unattended. In his criticism, there is insult and the speech is quite threatening. Power unequal context is displayed and the one who is more powerful mentions insulting comments while firing the maid. The maid responds to the more powerful employer Nader by showing how she is helpless in such a situation. 25 does not show how insulting the firing of the maid is; the utterance in the English version cannot convey the same functional effect. In response, the maid responds by just following the order of going out while complaining. The use of God's name is indicative of powerlessness on the part of the maid, Razieh. In 27, Nader shows his rude and direct insulting speech which has a much stronger effect compared with the same expressions in English. The English culture is one in which under no circumstance one is permitted to be this much insulting. The use of insult is one which can never be conveyed into English in a corresponding way.
I: Insult:

**English 25.** N to R: You deserve to be kicked/thrown out of here.

**Persian 25.** N to R: haghet-e in e ke ba lagad az in ja bendazam-et biroon.

P 25: N to R: right-at (2nd sing) this-is that with kicking from here be- (subjun) throw (present, imp)-et (2nd sing) out.

**English 26.** R to N: Ok I'll get out. But this is not right (God doesn't like this).

**Persian 26.** Man mi-ram biroon vali khoda ro khosh ne-miyad.

P 26: R to N: I mi- (present) go-am (1st sing) out but God ra (OM) happy ne- (neg)-mi- (present) come (3rd sing).

**English 27.** N to R: I'm being nice to you to not just throw you out.

**Persian 27.** Daram be to lotf mi-konam ne-mindazam-et az in khoone biroon.

P 27: N to R: have-am (posse 1st) to you (sing) favor mi (present) do-am (1st sing) ne- (neg)-mi (present) throw-et (2nd sing) from this home out.

J: Swearing:

Another important speech feature in Persian is swearing to get approval or to get addressee's trust. In response to the accusation in 28, the maid rejects the accusation by mentioning the name of the infallible imams. She represents the traditional social class who believe swearing by using the Imam’s name could gain trust. The reaction to the swearing by Nader is to ask the maid to go out as she was fired by him. The use of honorifics in this context by Nader indicates the distance between them; solidarity decreases when conflict starts and increases. This conversation is not only the demonstration of class, power inequality of the context, but also how speech acts could be face threatening as a result of power of one over another.

The swearing is one of the signs that the maid speaker belongs to a class which is certainly different from the middle class Nader belongs to and is supposed to be modern. It seems that swearing, or at least religious swearing, decreases as education increases. It may be because educated people are sure about themselves and their reasoning power so that they do not employ linguistic devices to prove the truth of their speech. In the English version, a lot of cultural effects cannot be present, as the audience does not know anything about the nature of swearing in Persian.

**English 28.** N to R: What'd you need in that room over there? The room you took money from its drawer.

**Persian 28.** N to R: Too oon Otagh poshti che kar dashti, hamoon otaghi ke az too kesho-sh pool var dasht-in.

P28: N to R: inside-e (of) that room back-i (adj marker) what work had-i (2nd sing)? same room that from inside drawer-osh (3rd sing) money up-take (past)-i (1st sing).

**English 29.** R to N: I swear I did not! I swear I would never do such thing!

**Persian 29.** R to N: Be emam-e zaman agar man rafte bash-am az too kesho-ye shoma pool var dashte basham.

P 29: R. to N: (I swear) to Imam Hossein if I gone become-am (1st sing) from in drawer-e (of) you (plural) money up-taken be (subju)-am (1st sing).
Among the speech acts frequent in the movie, request was one which was found in abundance. Hojat responds to a job announcement in 31 by expressing his readiness to start the employment. His speech is full of honorifics and is fairly polite. It acknowledges the social class difference as well as lack of solidarity. In 32, the worker’s offer to start is refused indirectly by mentioning there is one who is helping today. Then, as an invitation to come for work, he uses mitigation. In Persian, one’s job is very much related to one’s respect and reputation. Being a house maid could be utterly intimidating to the man, so Nader tries to use the softest tone possible not to let the man think intimidated. The English version has omitted the mitigation as it has been intended for the English audience. The English relatively literal version is rewritten to show how the employer attends to the condition:

**K: Direct Request with Mitigation**

**English 31:** Hoj to N: If you want I could start today.

**Persian 31:** H to N: Az emrooz ham agar be-khayn mi-toonam biya

**P 31:** H to N: from today also if be- (subju pref) want (present imp mod)- ain (2nd plu) mi- (present marker) can (present)-am (1st sing) bi- (subjunc) come-m (1st sing).

**English 32:** N to Hoj: No, I have someone today. Bring an identification card and start tomorrow.

32. a. **N to Hoj:** No, today there is someone there; you (2ndpl) do favor start from tomorrow.

**Persian 32:** N to H: Na emrooz kasi hast shoma faghat mohabat kon az farad biya. Ye karte shenasayi ham ba khodet biyar.

**P 32:** N to H: no, today someone is you (plural) favor do (imperative) only from tomorrow bi- (subj) com (imperative). A card-e (of) identity also with self-at (2nd sing) bi- (subj) bring (imperative mood).

Fig. 1 is a comparison display of types of speech acts and the characteristics which could vary under the effect of social variables; and the bars show the frequency of each one of the speech acts in general, regardless of who said what to whom. Criticisms, complaints, direct request, direct order and threat were the highest frequently used speech acts. Direct disagreement, insult, swear, indirect request were second frequently used speech acts. The rest of speech acts were the least frequently used speech acts by all Characters of the movie. It is interesting to know that complaints, criticisms, order, direct request and threat were of highest frequency as the situations the characters were involved in are mostly arguments, conflicts and disagreements. Usage of address forms, frequent class raising devices, high tone of voice, and choice of an ironic speech tone were among the strategies employed to increase the functional effect of the speech acts.
Fig. 1. Functional classification of the utterances of the movie

Fig. 2 is a comparison between the main characters regarding to the frequency of each speech acts they employed in their utterances. The bars show the frequency of each speech acts for each one of the main characters separately. Nader has the highest bar in complaints (15 out of 40), criticisms (14 out of 44), direct requests (17 out of 32), accusation (3 out of 6), apology (3 out of 5) and ironical expressions (4 out of 9). Bars also show the same frequency of criticism for Simin and Hojat (10), the same frequency of accusation for Simin, Hojat and judge (1), and almost the same frequency of complaint for Simin (9) and Termeh (8), who had the highest frequency of the usage of Complaint in their speech after Nader.

In threatening (7/7), suggestion (2/2), advice (1/1) and direct disagreement (7/7), the bars for both Nader and Judge show the same frequency, and the only bar for obligation (4) and inquiry (1) belongs to the Judge. But the Judge has no bar on criticism, complaint, indirect request, insult, ironic, apology, making an excuse, giving reason and refusal; the indication is that the judge has a position whose role requires certain speech acts to occur more frequently than others. Raziye and Termeh are the only characters that have bars for making an excuse (2/1), giving reason (2/1), and refusal (3/1) showing the likelihood of their social standing in terms of power and influence. Hojat (9) and Nader (7) also have the highest bar for insult; the indication of it is they are involved in conflictive contexts of situation.
In Table 2, the frequency of occurrence of each speech act and strategies for using those speech acts were measured based on an estimation of which characters uttered them to which addressees (Nader, Simin, Raziye, Hojat, Termeh, and the Judge). The total number of functional units that were produced by main characters (Nader, Simin, Raziye, Hojat, Termeh, Judge) are 329. Criticisms (44 tokens) and complaint (40) in Nader’s utterances were mostly addressed to Simin and Raziye, reflecting his male superiority of social standing power in relation to such female addressees as Simin and Razieh. In the case of Simin and Hojat, complaints and criticisms were addressed to Nader; clearly showing their greater power in the given contexts of conflict. This kind of power is mostly context related. Termeh’s solidarity with her family Nader and Simin gave her the permission to place direct complaints. Raziye’s complaints to Nader and Simin were mostly responses to the accusations revealing the great degree of her powerlessness. Her complaints were made in a considerably different style of politeness. As the last instance of complaining speech, it is interesting to mention that the judge’s utterances were not categorized in any of the face threatening speech acts of complaint and criticism.

Insults (17), which had the highest frequency in Nader and Hojat’s utterances, were exchanged between N and H showing how social class and face could be violated under the influence of conflict in the Iranian society. Insults were also addressed by N to Raziye in a highly direct style showing that being a maid decreases one’s class; in addition, being a female addressee could make one more susceptible to direct threatening speech such as insult.
Direct disagreements (16) which were dramatically observed in Nader and Judge’s speech were in sight of and in response to Simin’s requests. Accusations (7) by Simin, Hojat and Judge were made toward Nader for telling the lie and his inconsiderateness. On the other hand, Nader accused Simin, Raziye, and Termeh for their carelessness and their irresponsibility in given situations showing how the world of the “A separation” is full of conflicts; in response to accusations directed to Raziye, what we see is her insisting by using swearing, tone of voice, gestures made, used as different strategies. In addition, Razieh persists on making excuses and giving reasons in her effort to relieve herself from the guilt she was accused with.

In addition to the categories above; Nader, Hojat, and Simin uttered ironical expressions for showing anger and intimidation while addressing each other showing disagreements, complaints and criticisms. Obligations (4) as one of the threatening speech acts were uttered toward Nader and Simin by the Judge at court; signifying that it is not the judge who disagrees; rather, it is the laws governing legal relations that are practiced. The total number of tokens in these eight categories constituted 141 instances.

The functional units which were viewed to be FT toward negative face included 76 tokens in six categories of speech act: order (15), direct Request (32), (15 out of 32 were direct request with using mitigation devices), indirect Request (6), threatening (20), advice (2), and promise (1). Nader mostly used mitigation devices (like, Mohabbat konid (compassion do-imp, 2ndpl), Lotf Konid, Tashrif Biavard) in his direct requests from Hojat and Raziye except the time while they were in conflicts. Also, in the presence of the Judge most of the direct requests by characters were with mitigation devices used to acknowledge the higher power of the judge. But, Nader requested directly from his daughter Termeh without using mitigation devices which indicated solidarity of relations between them.

It is often the case that context decides if the use of direct mitigation less speech is as a result of solidarity or in equal power between the two parties speaking. Between N and T, direct speech without mitigation could be related to the high solidarity between them. Also, Indirect requests which are often indicators of a low degree of solidarity and a low level of speaker’s which was observed mostly in Raziye’s speech in conversations with Nader. However, direct order as a face threatening act, was employed in a conflict situation by Nader, Raziye and Hojat indicating how norms of politeness are violated under the effect of contextual factors. The same is true about the conversations between Simin and Termeh; however, in the latter, the solidarity is more manifested than the role of power.

Moreover class raising devices (14 tokens) were often used to decrease the threat of a speech act by Nader in making requests and asking questions from Raziye and Hojat. Also, it was employed by Hojat in one situation while he was talking to Nader; which signaled the formality in relations and the social distance which called for being as polite as possible. Except the Judge and Termeh, the characters used a high tone of voice for showing emphasis, defense, or threat in their speech by each other (17 tokens).

It is worth mentioning that hesitations (4 tokens) in Raziye and Termeh’s utterances while talking to Nader, Simin, and Judge show their lack of confidence in what they said to their more powerful addressees. They both made an excuse and gave reasons to defend themselves. In addition, swearing (12 tokens) was observed in High frequency in Raziye’s utterances which indicated either her distress, emphasis, or a defensiveness in a conversation she had with Nader, Judge, Hojat and Simin. The majority of speeches made by R showed how her situation in various contexts was one of absolute powerlessness.
The use of face-saving strategies as well as mitigation was mostly observed in the categories of speech acts below. The tokens of speech act were classified into types which often were used in building a more complex hierarchical functional structure: apology (5), suggestion (7), and expression of distress (4), permission (4), making an excuse (3), reasoning (3), agreement (1), and inquiry (1). The total number of tokens in eight categories constituted 28 instances. In addition to the categories mentioned, their frequency of occurrence was measured based on an estimation of which characters uttered them to which addressees (Nader, Simin, Raziye, Hojat, Termeh, and the Judge).

Usage of address forms which is related to who is addressing who under what contextual circumstances was mostly employed by Nader more than other characters. He used Intimate address terms in his speech with her daughter Termeh such as (Baba jooon, Dokhtaram, Azizam) and honorific second person pronoun in front of Raziye, Hojat, Judge like (khanoom, Agha, Haj Agha, Ishoon) and Non honorific address terms directed to Simin as his wife (To). The Judge also had a high frequency of the usage of address terms most of which were honorific second Person Pronouns in reference to all characters, like (Shoma, Ishoon, Khanoom, Aghaye Mohtaram, and Agha). Termeh was also addressing her parents with a Non honorific second person pronoun (TO).

Table 2. Classification of the utterances of six main characters into different speech acts and strategies regarding who is addressing whom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech Acts</th>
<th>Nader</th>
<th>Simin</th>
<th>Raziye</th>
<th>Hojat</th>
<th>Termeh</th>
<th>Judge</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criticism (FT toward + face)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>Complaint (FT toward + face)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Order (FT toward - face)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>Direct Request (FT toward - face)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Request (FT toward - face)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warning, Threatening (FT toward face)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct disagreement (FT toward + face)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>reprimand (FT toward + face)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>make an excuse</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>refusal</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>give reason</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Advice (FT toward - face)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>promise (FT toward - face)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 3 shows the percentage of the all speech acts which were uttered by Nader in his utterances generally, regardless in what situation he was involved and to whom he conversed. Direct Request with the percentage of 19% was the most frequently used speech acts and complaint with the percentage of 17% and criticism with the percentage of 16% were the second frequently used speech acts in Nader`s utterances. Threatening, insult and direct disagreement with the percentage of 8%, also were in the third category in terms of ranking. Order with the percentage of 6% and ironic speech with 5% was in the next categories in rank. Other speech acts like apology, accusation, with the percentage of 3%, indirect request, suggestion with 2%, and permission and advice with 1% were the least frequently used speech acts in Nader`s speech.

Fig. 3. The percentage of the all speech acts in nader` s utterances
Fig. 4 shows the percentage of all speech acts which were uttered by Simin in her utterances generally, regardless in what situation and to whom she talked. Criticism with the percentage of 25% and complaint with the percentage of 23% were the most frequently used speech acts. The speech act of order and threatening with the percentage of 10%as well as ironical expressions with the percentage of 8% were the second frequently used speech acts in Simin’s utterances. Permission and direct request with the percentage of 5% also were in the third categories in rank. Other speech acts like direct disagreement; insult, indirect request, accusation, and suggestion with the percentage of 3% were the least frequently used speech acts in Simin’s utterances.

Fig. 4. The percentage of the total speech acts in simin’s utterances

Fig. 5 is a character-based comparison which shows the percentage of the all speech acts which were uttered by Raziye in her utterances, regardless of the situations of speech and the addressee she interacted with. Direct request with using mitigation devices with the percentage of 25% was the most frequently used speech acts. What makes her requests different is the semantic formula her speech acts had. The use of mitigation, swearing, and voice tone could imply that the requester represents a powerless class of society. Indirect request and Refusal with the percentage of 13% were the second frequently used speech acts in Raziye’s utterances. It is mainly with qualitative analysis that we as analysts could distinguish the effects of power and class on the speech act realization patterns.
In the structure of the requestive speech act, the effect of power makes a considerable degree of difference; this is what we should take into consideration. Reasoning, criticism, complaint, making an excuse constituted 8% of the data. They were indirect responses to seriously formulated direct face threatening speech acts such as complaint, criticism, or accusation by a speaker much more powerful than her. The percentages of each speech act being 8% of the entire speech data indicate another fact: that the most frequent speech behavior by Razieh includes those speech acts which are more expressive rather than directive which is associated with power. The speech acts by Razieh included four types and these four types were the third in terms of frequency. Other speech acts like Direct Order, Apology, and Suggestion with the percentage of 4% were the least frequently used speech acts in Raziye’s utterances.

![Fig. 5. The percentage of the total speech acts in raziye`s utterances](image)

Fig. 6 shows the percentage of speech acts by Hojat regardless of the contextual circumstances within which the SPAs were uttered. Criticism with the percentage of 27% and Insult with the percentage of 24% were the most frequently used speech acts. These two SPAs are clear indications that H belongs to a low working class of society. This is because most of his utterances include insults and criticism showing his class as manifested in his speech. Complaint with the percentage of 16% were the second frequently used speech act.
in Hojat’s utterances. Direct request with the percentage of 8%, threatening and ironically made comments functioning as SPAs with the percentage of 5%, also were in the third categories in rank. Other speech acts like accusation, apology, and direct disagreement each with a percentage of three were the least frequently used speech acts in Hojat’s speech. Again this finding shows how social class belonging can be predictive of how the speech acts are more, most, or less and least frequent. The central condition for belonging to a high-middle class is to utter messages and to sort out conflicts without resort to a violation of the norms of speech.

Fig. 6. The percentage of the total speech acts in Hojat’s utterances

Fig. 7 shows the percentage of all speech acts which were uttered by Termeh in her utterances generally, regardless of speech situation and the addressee to whom she talked. Criticism and complaint with the percentage of 38% were the most frequently used speech acts. Direct request, suggestion, making an excuse, refusal, and giving reason with the
percentage of 5% were the second frequently used speech acts in Termeh`s utterances. Reasoning was used as reaction to a complaint by the judge viewed to be indirect apology for what she had not done.

Fig. 7. The percentage of the total speech acts in termeh`s utterances

Fig. 8 shows the percentage of the speech acts which were uttered by the Judge in his utterances generally, regardless of what situation and to whom they were said. Threatening and direct disagreements with the percentage of 24% were the most frequently used speech acts and obligation with the percentage of 14% was the second frequently used speech acts in the Judge`s utterances. Order and direct request with the percentage of 10% also were in third categories in rank. Suggestion with the percentage of 7% was in the next category in rank. Other speech acts like accusation, advice and inquiry each with the percentage of 3% were the least frequently used speech acts in the Judge`s speech.
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The issue of social variables and their effect on creating variation has been a recent and important aspect of speech. In speaking, one cannot assume to learn the language unless they learn how functional variations are marked in linguistic communication. The Article started by introducing the effects of such social variables of power, class, and solidarity in relations between the speaker and the addressee within Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory and Austin’s speech acts theory. The relative nature of communication and the functional effect were elaborated on and definitions were presented for what power, class, and solidarity are and how they can cause variation in speech.

Recently in our time, the most advanced understanding of translation and TEFL places the significance of language learning on the skill of communicating appropriately rather than being good grammarians; and this work is an attempt in shedding light on the communicative
aspect of speech. The question is, rather than being what language is, how language is used in various contexts and situations. The communicative language teaching places all the emphasis on the fact that if the EFL learner is competent linguistically but incompetent communicatively, the learner could not be considered to be an appropriate user of English in real various contexts. Functional theories as mentioned above were employed as the framework of study to uncover the causes behind the functional variation. The characters with various social backgrounds actually produced the data required for the purpose of our comparisons resulting in verifying the feasibility of the speech act theory as well as politeness theory as our functional approach.

The thrust was to examine how comparable are characters with regards to the contexts of situation they were involved in and how their speech acts were made: social power, solidarity in relations, and social class were the three variables each of which could bring about variation in speech. It was shown that certain speech acts are more frequent than others and this is the result of the contextual setting of conversations. The findings of such a project indicate how context decides which functional categories have to be prioritized and which speech acts are most frequently used. We also discovered that class variation, and variations as a result of power make Persian speech considerably variable. The effect of social class was demonstrated mostly in the qualitative analysis in two ways: a) the deliberate neglect of the social norms governing speech and b) the quality of speech through using mitigation, swearing, honorific devices for class raising strategies, and choice of strategy for saving face in speech acts which are potentially face threatening. As for social solidarity, we discovered that social solidarity is variable as a result of any change in contextual factors other than change of interlocutors. It was also discovered that increase of power and solidarity lead to decrease of politeness. However, increase of class leads to increase the level of politeness in Persian.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES


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