

## **Telephone Conversation Closing Strategies Used by Persian Speakers: Rapport Management Approach**

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### **Abstract**

The use of politeness strategies can help interlocutors promote and/or maintain social harmony in telephone interactions. Using the Rapport Management Model proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2008), this study aimed primarily to reinvestigate the closing structures of telephone conversation (hereafter abbreviated as TC) in Persian and to discover the common politeness strategies used by native Persian speakers to end their TCs considering the contextual variables of social distance and status. Moreover, this study tried to explore the effect of time availability/limitation along with those contextual variables on TC closing part. To this end, 30 Persian native speakers were selected randomly. A DCT (Discourse Completion Test) of 12 scenarios was developed by considering three criteria: status, time limitation and distance. Analyzing DCTs, many different TC closing patterns were found. The obtained findings depicted that the aforementioned variables had significant effects on the TC closing patterns and strategies taken by the participants. The findings of the present study may be beneficial for extending pragmatic knowledge through emphasizing the significance of pragmatic competence in language proficiency. Also, since the results showed some limitations in the previous politeness models, the findings of this study can guide researchers to follow more complete and perfect politeness models.

**Keywords:** Discourse Completion Test, Social harmony, Rapport management, Persian speakers, Politeness strategies

### **Introduction**

Along with the attention to pragmatic competence as the second facet of language competence, speech acts as functional subcomponent of pragmatic competence are also accented. The theory of speech acts attempts to justify the multidimensionality of an utterance (Austin, 1962). According to Austin (1962), communication is not just an event but it is a series of communication acts (speech acts) to bring about some effect on the environment of hearers and speakers. Austin is one of the pioneers who stressed the importance of consequence, the perlocutinary force, of linguistic communication.

Researchers have since been led to investigate communication in terms of effect that utterances are managed to achieve. They also have shown that there are cross-cultural differences with regards to either production or the realization of various speech acts. Gumperz (1982) notes that although speech activities are common across various cultures, but the way a particular speech activity is done and signaled is different cross-culturally.

Speech act knowledge does not only comprise a language user's sociocultural knowledge but also his sociolinguistic knowledge. Sociocultural knowledge reflects a kind of competence a speaker needs in order to apply speech act strategies properly concerning social factors such as age, gender, social class and status of interlocutors. Or to put it in other words, research done in

this field focuses on relation between forms and functions. Sociolinguistic knowledge, on the other hand, refers to context awareness ability in order to appropriately apply vocabulary, linguistic forms, register and politeness and research done in this area centers on perlocutinary acts.

One of the common causes of communication breakdown is that interlocutors from heterogeneous background do not apply speech acts contextually appropriately, even though they are familiar with the existing relation between forms and functions.

Telephone closings are one of rarely attended speech acts in terms of politeness. Using conversation analysis (CA) as its methodology, this study attempted to identify politeness strategies applied by Persian speaker to terminate a telephone conversation with respect to different contextual variables such as status, distance, and availability of time.

While inspired by politeness constructs, this study moves beyond the traditional scope of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) in two main ways. Firstly, it considers both rapport management and face-work. The former is based on the interactional use of language to develop or sustain social harmony in interaction (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The latter addresses the issue of impression management as a whole by distancing from Brown and Levinson's model (1987). Because of its drawbacks, the definition of politeness is not unified in Brown and Levinson's (1987) facework as well as subsequent literature and it is depicted as an admixture of both formal and functional features which accompany an inherently face threatening act in order to reduce its threat. However, there is no guarantee that formal features have the same value across languages (Meier, 1997).

The second problem with Brown and Levinson's (1987) model concerns the universality of positive and negative face. Although, what constitutes face wants can vary across cultures as can the way to address these wants (Gu, 1990; Matsumoto, 1988, 1989), negative face is the desire for freedom of action and freedom from imposition; positive face is to accrue others' approval.

According to Meier (1997, p. 22), the third problem of aforementioned model is their claim for "universality in the principles governing the realization of indirect speech acts, and in their claim for a linear relationship between indirectness and politeness, whereby certain formal features (e.g. imperatives) are identified as markers of directness and are thus less polite". With this consideration in mind, this study is designed based on rapport management model by Spencer-Oatey (2008).

Brown and Yule (1983) identify two functions for language: the transactional function and interactional function. According to this classification, the goal of transactional language is to transfer coherent and accurate information, whereas, the goal of interactional speech is to communicate friendliness and goodwill, and to make participants feel unthreatened (Spencer-Oatey, 2002). Spencer-Oatey (2002) affirms that the two functions are very closely interconnected, and the relational aspect of language use is of central importance in all communications. Politeness is one of the principal issues of linguistic theory that is relevant to 'relational communication'.

Politeness strategies can help interlocutors to promote or maintain social harmony in interaction. Telephone communication is one of the situations in which the importance of politeness as a kind of pragmatic knowledge is highlighted. Telephone conversation is an essential aspect of everyday life. Linguistic knowledge along with pragmatic knowledge is very crucial due to the lack of para-linguistic information in telephone communication.

In addition to face, based on RM model proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2008), many other factors influence the politeness strategies taken by the conversers. Thus, any examinations of

politeness should take into account every influential factor such as contextual variables. Therefore, this paper attempts to probe into the effect of two contextual variables, social distance and status, suggested in RM model along with the effect of time limitation on TC closing's pattern, length, and strategies used by Persian speakers.

## Review of literature

### Conversation Analysis

Although part of linguistic competence possessed by adult native speaker of a language is related to rules that govern conversations, few efforts have been made to conduct research in conversation analysis (Markee, 2005; Markee & Kasper, 2004). Conversation analysis was first developed by Garfinkel (1964, 1967, and 1988) in ethnomethodology tradition. The core focus of ethnomethodology is investigating the way individuals interpret the situations and messages they encounter in social life. In studying social interaction, ethnomethodology ignores the information conveyed during interaction, concentrating more on how the interaction was performed. In the same vein, Goffman (1963, 1967, and 1971) focuses on actual instances of social interaction in his studies. To discover the nature of human engagement in sociality, Goffman (1964) examines the everyday events and situations in ordinary instances of speaking. In contrast with quantitative approach of sociology and social psychology based on hypothesis testing, Goffman (ibid.) follows a qualitative approach concerning description and analysis of speaking instances. He rejects investigating speaking from a linguistic viewpoint since he believes linguistic description of language cannot adequately account for the nature of language in use. The work of Garfinkel (1967) and Goffman (1963) on exploring the orderliness of everyday interaction paves the way for further development of conversation analysis.

Following Garfinkel and Goffman, Sacks (1992) presented his lectures on conversation analysis in which he developed an approach to study social action in the practices of everyday talk. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, through the works of Sacks and his colleagues Schegloff and Jefferson, conversation analysis began to emerge as an independent field of inquiry from sociology oriented towards understanding the organizational structure of the talk (Lerner, 2004). Sacks defines conversation not as a set of rules and recipe but as a set of practices deployed by speakers to undertake actions in particular contexts that are recognized as appropriate action on behalf of other participants. To be brief, Sacks views talk as a strategic and orderly activity through which speakers accomplish communicative goals in their interaction.

### Telephone Conversation

The regularity which governs conversation practices is especially observable in telephone conversations (hereafter abbreviated as TC) and it is included in shared knowledge possessed by interlocutors which enable them to accomplish their communication goals appropriately. TC is examined according to its structure of opening (Schegloff, 1972, 1979; Ventola, 1979) and closing part (Liddicoat, 2007). Some researchers have investigated the general conventions of conversation parts across different languages such as Schegloff (1972, 1979) who divides the speech act of opening into four parts: 1) a summon-answer sequence, 2) an identification-recognition sequence, 3) a greeting sequence, and 4) the *how are you* sequence. He further breaks down the closing part of TC into three following sections: 1) the pre-closing sequences, 2) the closing sequence and 3) the terminal sequence (1994).

Other researchers such as Clark and French (1981) embarked on finding the cultural differences across various TCs. Taleghani-Nikazm (2002) contrasted ritual routines in TC openings in Persian and German. The sequences that she discovered in opening part of Persian

TCs were the same as those in speech act of openings in English. She particularly focused on the fourth sequence (*how are you*) in both cultures and discovered that Iranian ask about other family members after inquiring about one another's well-being.

Liddicoat (2007) also analyzed the opening and closing parts of TCs and in agreement with Schegloff's (1973) findings, he identified the same four sequences in speech act of opening. Concerning the closing, Liddicoat (2007) asserted the collaborative nature of this section of TC and broke it into three steps: 1) a closing implicative environment, 2) pre-closing tokens such as *ok* and *alright* and 3) terminal component such as *goodbye*. "The term closing implicative environment refers to sets of actions after which closing may be a relevant next activity and after which closure is a common activity, but it does not imply that closure will necessarily happen after such an action" (Liddicoat, 2007, p.259). Based on Liddicoat's (2007) findings, in closing implicative environment people use some strategies in order to make preparations for closing their calls. These strategies consist of announcing closure by referring to some external circumstances, (e.g. *I have to prepare myself for tomorrow exam*), arrangements (e.g. *See you at the party*), formulating summaries, appreciations for the call, sequence-closing sequences (e.g. *yeah, ok*), and back references; i.e., arrangements or reasons for the call and telephone conversers resort to this strategy to indicate that the mentionables have been mentioned and there is no new material to talk about. Khadem and Eslamirasekh (2012) contrasted the structure and strategies of TCs closing implicative environment across Persian and English based on Liddicoat's (2007) categorization. They concluded that Iranian native speakers like English native speakers apply some conventions to end their conversations. In addition, Persian speakers use the three steps of closing implicative environment, pre closing and terminal component in the closing part of their TCs.

Ending a conversation is an art the handling of which needs sociolinguistic knowledge including politeness strategies. Lack of this knowledge is one of the common causes of communication breakdown among native as well as nonnative speakers from heterogeneous backgrounds. The communication breakdown can mean failing to terminate the call in appropriate way, not to achieve the communication goal or to deviate the other's sociality rights and obligations (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). There is some research oriented toward investigating politeness strategies in TCs. Nearly most of the research done in this field is based on Brown and Levinson's (1978) model of politeness which was criticized by Ide (1989), Mao (1994) and Matsumoto (1988). One of the studied conducted in this field is by Coppock (2005). In her study, she investigated the closing politeness strategies and presented three kinds of strategies. According to her, ending TC can threaten the positive or negative face of the interlocutors in three ways and they can employ three kinds of closing strategies to combat these threats. These strategies are positive-face saving strategies (e.g. positive comment, excuse, and imperative to end), combined positive and negative politeness strategies (e.g. blame, summary), and solidarity strategies (e.g. plan, general wish). In the following sections, the two kinds of politeness along with a critical overview of the most influential politeness models are presented.

### **Spencer- Oatey's View of Rapport Management**

Considering the problems with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model, Spencer-Oatey (2008) proposes a modified framework named Rapport management (hereafter abbreviated as RM) for conceptualization face and rapport. Spencer- Oatey's (2008) model oriented toward the management of harmony-disharmony among people. She draws on some views from previous politeness models, such as Goffman's (1967) notion of face, Brown and Levinson's (1987)



positive face, Leech's (1983) pragmatic scale of cost and benefit, and to some extent Fraser's (1990) notion of the conversational contract (Brasdefer, 2008).

### **Rapport Management Components**

RM comprises three interwoven components: 1) the management of face, 2) the management of sociality rights and obligations and 3) the management of interactional goals. In the following parts, these concepts will be discussed through Spencer-Oatey's vantage point on politeness.

#### **Face**

The definition of face in RM is the same as Goffman's (1967, p.5) notion of face "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during particular context". In other words, face is associated with personal/relational and social value such as honor, dignity, reputation, competence and so on (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi 1998) in RM. Spencer-Oatey rejects the concept of Brown and Levinson's negative face and tries to extend their notion of positive face. And along with other theorist (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987; Leech 1983; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi 1998), she asserts the universality of face. Spencer-Oatey (2008) further construes face in three perspectives: self as an individual (individual identity), self as a group member (collective identity) and self in relation with others (relational identity). In all three respects, people often regard themselves as having positive (e.g. being clever) and neutral (e.g. being inarticulate) attributes. The concept of these attributes is relative and cannot be defined universally across different cultures and contexts, but all individuals incline toward being appreciated by their positive attributes.

#### **Sociality rights and obligations**

In interpersonal rapport, people consider for themselves sociality rights and obligations. The bases of such considerations according to Spencer-Oatey (2008) can be: 1) contractual/legal agreements and requirements (e.g. equal opportunities of employment and avoidance of discriminatory behavior), 2) Explicit and implicit conceptualizations of roles and positions (e.g. an explicit one is, for instance, the duties specified in a job contract and the implicit one include three key elements: equality-inequality, distance-closeness and the rights and obligations of the role relationship) and 3) Behavioral conventions, style and protocols (e.g. work groups usually develop conventions for handling team meetings, such as whether there is an agenda or not). Management of sociality rights and obligations refers to the management of social expectancies in relation to people's perceived rights and obligations. Spencer-Oatey (2008, p.13) defines this sort of management as "fundamental social entitlements that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others". In other words, management of sociality rights and obligations can be construed as behavioral appropriateness and its deviation may damage interpersonal rapport. Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003) label these beliefs as sociopragmatic interactional principle (SIPs), and specify equity and association as two kinds of SIPs.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) defines equity as expecting to be treated fairly and not to be imposed upon. She further (2008) identifies two components for equity principle. The notion of cost-benefit" (the extent to which people are exploited or disadvantaged, and the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity)" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.16). According to her, association means being affectively and interactionally involved or detached in social interaction in an effective way. Being interactionally involved or detached is defined as "the extent to which we associate with people, or dissociate ourselves from

them", and affective involvement-detachment pertains to "the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interest"(Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.16). The extent of involvement and detachment varies according to the nature of relationship, sociocultural norms and personal preferences as well. Even the priority given to equity and association depends on contextual, goal-related reasons and personal values. According to Spencer-Oatey (2008), association corresponds to collectivist characteristic and equity to individualist one.

### **Interactional goals**

Brown and Yule (1983) present two functions for language, namely interactional and transactional. During interpersonal interaction, people may either want to transfer information (transactional goal) or maintain social relationship (interactional goal). According to Spencer-Oatey (2008), interlocutors may get frustrated or annoyed if they do not achieve their interactional goals.

### **Rapport Management Strategies**

Every language consists of a very wide range of linguistic options that can be used by the speakers to manage face, sociality rights and thus to manage rapport. Commonly, the number of these options and their social importance is different cross-culturally. But every level of language can be illustrated in each RM domains in all languages. For instance, within the illocutionary domain which is recently one of the dominant domain in politeness, Spencer-Oatey introduces several rapport management strategies that can influence the interpersonal relations such as choice of intonation and tone of voice, choice of lexis, choice of morphology and syntax, choice of terms of address and honorifics. Within the participation domain and stylistic domain, choice of code and/or dialect, speed of speech, choice of lexis, choice of syntax have key role in enhancing or threatening interpersonal relations.

The focus of illocutionary domain is mainly on speech acts. Contrary to Brown and Levinson (1987) who consider some of the speech acts as inherently face threatening, they are not necessarily so from a RM perspective by analyzing speech acts semantically.

### **Factors Influencing Strategy Use**

Spencer-Oatey (2008) presents three groups of factors that play a key role in people's use of RM strategies. These factors are rapport orientation, contextual variable and pragmatic principles and conventions. In the following parts, each of these factors and their subcomponents are briefly explained.

### **Rapport orientation**

One of the key factors that influence interlocutors' use of RM strategies is the orientation of rapport. Fundamentally there are two types of orientation: "support of one's own face needs, sociality rights and interactional goals, and support of the other person's"(Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.31). Brown and Levinson (1987) focus on these two kinds of orientation because of the mutual vulnerability of face. In 1994, Ting-Toomey and Coroft present a third kind of orientation by considering mutual support. In the same line, Spencer-Oatey(2008) suggests the four kinds by mentioning occasions when people instead of supporting each other face, attack the other face. Turner (1996) and Culpeper (1996, 2005) both maintain that a comprehensive theory of politeness needs to incorporate all these kinds of rapport orientations. Spencer-Oatey (2008) outlines different types of rapport orientations as the following:

1. Rapport enhancement orientation: when people hold a rapport enhancement orientation, they want to bring about positive change in their relation with the other interlocutors by giving an appropriate face.

2. Rapport maintenance orientation: When people hold rapport-maintenance orientation, they tend to preserve the current quality of relationship and level of rapport. This kind of rapport also entails handling of rapport-threatening behavior appropriately. According to Spencer-Oatey's model, interlocutor's rapport can be threatened by infringing his perceived sociality rights, and by impeding his interactional goals. People can minimize such threats through choosing suitable rapport-management strategies.

3. Rapport neglect orientation: When interlocutors care more about their own face sensitivities, sociality rights and interactional goals than about maintaining interpersonal rapport, they are holding rapport-neglect orientation. This may be due to either prominence of task matters (e.g. emergency situation) or the quality of relationship between the speakers.

4. Rapport challenge orientation: This kind of orientation potentially leads to face losing since the interlocutor's aim is to impair or damage the harmony of the relationship. People's motives to carry this type of orientation can be asserting personal independence, rebuffing a romantic advance or repay a previous offence.

### **Contextual Variables**

The second set of factors that can underlie the use of RM strategies are contextual variable. Spencer-Oatey allocated five factors of participants and their relations, message content, social/interactional roles, activity type and overall assessments of context to this variable. In the following, these factors are briefly described.

### **Participants and Their Relationship**

Many classic studies have introduced power and distance as important subcomponents of participant relations. For instance, Brown and Gilman (1960) in their study about the use of pronouns in French, German and Italian, maintain that power and distance regarding participant relations influence the choice of pronoun.

Similarly, Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that participants consider two parameters of power and distance when selecting among different options for conveying a given speech act. In addition, several empirical studies have presented ample evidence for an association between language use and the variables of power and distance. For example, many linguists have found the significance of power and distance in their studies of the speech acts wording, such as requests (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1985; Holtgraves and Yanh 1990; Lim & Bowers 1991), apologies (e.g. Holmes 1990; Olshtain 1989), directives (e.g. Holtgraves et al. 1989) and disagreement (e.g. Beebe & Takahashi 1989a).

Brown and Gilman (1960, 1989) define power as "one person may be said to have power over another in the degree that he is able to control the behavior of the other. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior" (p. 225).

In pragmatic and sociolinguistic research, power is usually operationalized in terms of unequal role relations, such as employer-employee, doctor-patient. The variable of distance can be labeled as solidarity, closeness, familiarity and relational intimacy. In order to have a clear understanding of distance concept, Spencer-Oatey (1996, p.7) listed a number of its components which can be found in pragmatic studies:

1. Social similarity/difference (e.g. Brown & Gilman 1960, 1989)

2. Frequency of contact (e.g. Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988)
3. Length of acquaintance (e.g. Slugoski & Turnbull, 1988)
4. Familiarity or how well people know each other (e.g. Holmes, 1990)
5. Sense of like-mindedness (e.g. Brown & Gilman, 1960, 1989)
6. Positive/negative affects (Baxter, 1984)

### **Interrelationship Between Power and Distance**

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between power and distance in a number of cultures because in many cultures the two variables may co-occur (Thomas, 1995). However, there are studies that could maintain the distinction practically between power and distance in some cultures. For instance, Spencer-Oatey (1997) investigates the conceptions of the tutor-postgraduate student relations in British and Chinese. She found that for the British respondents the variables of power and distance were significantly negatively correlated. However, these variables were unrelated for the Chinese respondents. In other words, there was no link between the degree of power and the degree of distance in Chinese culture.

### **Social/Interactional Roles**

Social/interactional roles are the third set of contextual variables that have decisive role in selecting RM strategies. Interlocutors often take up clearly defined social roles such as teacher-student, employer-employee, friend-friend and so on in each and every communication event. These social role relationships not only define interlocutors' power and distance but also specify the rights and obligations of each role member. The legitimacy of the interlocutors' rights and obligation depends partly on the nature of the role relationship and partly on the specific content of the message.

### **Activity Type**

The type of communication activity is the fourth decisive factor affecting the use of RM strategies. Each communicative activity is associated with its own communicative genre. Gunthner (2007, p.129) defines communicative genres as "historically and culturally specific conventions and ideas according to which speakers compose talk or texts and recipients interpret it".

### **Overall Assessment of Context**

The contextual features described above are not fixed in the course of interaction. They can have standing and dynamic impact on the choice of RM strategies. They possess standing role in terms of our previous relevant preconceptions of the given situations. But, in the course of an interaction, assessment of these contextual variables alters dynamically. For example, before approaching interaction, both conversers (even more participants) have preconceptions about the degree of power and distance of given role relationships, the scope of rights and obligations, the message costs and benefits and so on but as soon as they embark on interaction, they find out the other converser is more distant and offhand than expected, or she/he has differing conceptions of the role related rights and obligations.

This veracity of context affects how the interaction will proceed. According to Spencer-Oatey (2008, p.39), "if the interaction is to be successful in terms of RM, we need to incorporate effectively these dynamic assessments of contexts in making our linguistic strategy choices and in co-constructing the interaction".



Most of the previous studies on politeness have analyzed their data with respect to the politeness model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), though several scholars have mentioned different limitations and criticisms for this model such as individualistic framework of social interaction, presenting no definition for politeness concept and so on. Therefore, to bridge the present gap, this study has used the RM Model of Spencer-Oatey (2008) which is more recent and developed. On the other hand, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no study has analyzed the strategies applied in the closing part of telephone conversations based on Spencer-Oatey's (2008) model. In this study the effects of two contextual variables i.e. social distance and status along with time variable on the TC closing pattern, length, and strategy had been considered. Thus, this study attempts to map the traces of politeness in the telephone communications among Persian speakers.

### **Methodology**

Ending telephone calls is one of the phenomena the mishandling of which may cause speakers to lose their face and fail to maintain or promote social harmony. Due to lack of paralinguistic knowledge, the telephone conversers rely on their sociolinguistic knowledge in order to progress their calls politely. As Spencer-Oatey (2008) rightly mentions, there are some factors such as rapport orientation, contextual variables, and pragmatic principles and conventions which affect the use of RM strategies. In this study the effect of two contextual variables namely social status and distance, as mentioned by Spencer-Oatey (2008), as well as time availability/limitation on presence or absence of closing parts of telephone conversation closing, i.e. closing implicative environment, pre-closing and closing marks were explored. In order to capture the research aim, a DCT which involving 12 telephone scenarios were developed and distributed among the participants.

### **Participants**

The data analyzed for this study came from a total of 30 participants. The participants involved 30 Persian native speakers including 13 females and 17 males who were students of Shahid Sadoughi University. The participants averaged about 19-25 years of age.

### **Instrumentation**

A 12-item DCT was developed for the present study. Even though DCTs may not represent the natural speech, they are useful for assessing social and psychological factors affecting speech and performance (Beeb & Cummings, 1996). In addition they help the researchers devote less time and budget for evaluating the performance of the participants. Moreover, they can provide the researcher with the opportunity of having a larger sample under investigation. The last but not least advantage of DCTs is their potency in controlling the number and type of the variables a researcher tries to measure.

For the current study a DCT was developed. For verifying the authenticity of DCT, 2 Persian native speakers were asked to revise all the 12 telephone conversation scenarios. The ideas which could help to enhance the naturalness of the scenarios were implemented. Moreover, the revised tasks were piloted in order to find out the potential problems which could raise detrimental shortcomings. Three test takers were selected in order to take the test as a pilot.

The demographic information involving age and gender (male/female) were sought at the outset of DCTs. Twelve telephone conversation scenarios were provided based on 3 criteria of the social distance, status, and availability of time. The characters used for high status were boss and professor. For equal status, a classmate and a friend were used. For lower status, an employee

and a student were included. In terms of distance, the relation between for instance, friend and friend is considered close, professor and student as far. The situations were developed so that the participants were approaching the closing part of their telephone conversation and the last sentence in each scenario clarified whether they had enough time (you want to end the call) or lack of time (you need to end the call). For example, in the first scenario, an employee was reporting to his/her boss. She/ he had done the report and the participant as boss should end the call. In the first scenario, the participant was in a higher status, her/his distance is far, and he/she had enough time to initiate the closing part.

In each scenario, the status of the participants (higher, equal, and lower) and the social distance (far and close) in relation to the other conversers were clarified. In addition, the participants were notified about the availability of the time. Half of the scenarios were designed based on the shortage of time in the telephone conversations. Shortage of time means the lack of enough time which results in inability in achieving the communication goals. The other half of the scenarios was considered in a way that the interlocutors could obtain their goals in the conversation, and now they have sufficient time for ending the current call. Table 1 represents the details about the variables which have been considered in each and every scenario.

**Table 1.** Classification of DCT Items Based on Social Distance, Relative Power, and Time Availability/Limitation

Scenario	Contextual Variables						
	Status			Distance		Time limitation	
	High	Equal	Low	Far	Close	Yes	No
1	✓			✓			✓
2	✓				✓	✓	
3	✓			✓			✓
4	✓				✓	✓	
5		✓		✓		✓	
6		✓			✓		✓
7		✓			✓	✓	
8		✓		✓			✓
9			✓	✓		✓	
10			✓		✓		✓
11			✓		✓	✓	
12			✓	✓			✓

### Procedures

The Persian DCT was distributed to 50 native Persian speakers from different gender, ages, and educational backgrounds. Out of the gathered DCTs, 30 DCTs were sorted out which were completely answered. The participants had got the concept of these scenarios thoroughly. The unanswered DCTs were due to the ethical treatment of some participants, i.e. they left some scenarios unanswered because they could not imagine that specific situation correctly. For example, some of the participants did not answer scenario 9 by saying "I never talk on the phone while driving" while the researcher meant to depict the emergency situation in which one of the telephone conversers had time limitation. So, the researcher tried to overcome this problem by maximizing the number of participants and adding a notice at the top of the paper that "we are

interested in how you terminate your phone calls in each situation”; moreover, the term terminate was underlined.

### Data analysis

All data were coded according to the classification of TC closing part developed by Liddicaot (2007). Responses of all the participants were reviewed in order to parse them into three parts of closing implicative environment (C), pre-closing (P), and terminal component (T). In closing implicative environment, each strategy was considered as C. Those closing implicative environments with more than two Cs were considered as MC. Based on this categorization, 11 TC closing patterns were found among the investigated DCTs. Momentously, during the coding of the collected responses with regard to aforementioned variables, each DCT was separately examined by another rater to achieve inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability for the raters was found to be Kappa= 0.8 ( $p < .001$ ). This result showed almost perfect agreement between the two raters.

As the investigated variables in this study (social distance, status, and time) were categorized, Chi-Square test for independence was run to examine the effectiveness of the two independent contextual variables, namely social status and distance, as well as time availability/limitation on presence or absence of closing parts of telephone conversation closing.

### Results

Following the analysis of the DCTs, it was noticed that there were TC closing patterns not to be placed in the model suggested by Liddicoat (2007). In some scenarios, the number of Cs and Ps were multiplied or even there were situations in which C, P or both of them were omitted. Therefore, to account for the variability of the data, the researchers proposed nine main categories. The following paragraphs deal with these patterns.

#### **PT (pre closing + terminal component)**

*e.g. Kaaari nadaari khodaahaafez (Well. Bye)*

#### **CPT (closing implicative environment + pre closing + terminal component)**

*e.g. Fardaa ye sar behetoon mizanam. sallam beresoonid. Khodaahaafez (See you tomorrow. Say regards. Bye)*

#### **PCPT (pre closing + closing implicative environment + pre closing + terminal component)**

*e.g. Khob. khoshhaal shodam sedaatoon raa shenidam. kaari nadaarid dige. Khodaahaafez (Well. I am happy to talk to you. Nothing to mention. Bye).*

#### **PCT (pre closing + closing implicative environment + terminal component)**

*e.g. Khob fardaa baahaat tamaas migiram. Khodaahaafez (Ok. I call you back tomorrow. Bye)*

#### **PCC (C) T (pre closing + 3closing implicative environment + terminal component)**

*e.g. Khob. dastet dard nakone yadi az maa kardi.alaan kaar daaram dige baayad beram. Ishaalaa behet zang mizanam.khodaahaafez (Well. Thanks for calling me. I should go now. I will call you.Bye).*

#### **CT (closing implicative environment + terminal component)**

*e.g. Ostaa polis!khodaahaafez (Police!Bye).*

**CCT (2closing implicative environment + terminal component)**

e.g. *Baraam kaari pish oomada. dar avalin forsath baahaat tamaas migiram. Khodaahaafez I should go. I will call back you as soon as possible. Bye).*

**MCT (Multiple closing implicative environment + terminal component)**

e.g. *Nasim joon bebakhshid maamaanam dare sedaam mikone.baayad beram.fardaa too madrese mibinamet dar moredeh bishtar sohbat mikonim.fealan khodahafez (Excuse me! But my mom is calling me. I should go. I will see you tomorrow in school. Bye for now).*

**MCPT (Multiple closing implicative environment + pre closing + terminal component)**

e.g. *Azizam emrooz miam khoonatoon hamasho baraam taerif kon.alaan zoodi baayad beram kar daaram. bashe golam. Khodaahaafez ( I will come your house and you can talk about it more. Now, I should go, ok?Bye).*

**Frequency of Telephone Closing Patterns across native Persian Participants**

The frequency of the sequences used by the Persian speakers is shown in the following Table.

**Table 2.** *Frequency of Telephone Closing Patterns Used by Persian Native Speakers*

pattern / Scenario	(P)T	CPT	PCPT	PCT	PC(C)T	CT	CCT	MCT	MCPT
Sc1	3	13	0	7	0	3	3	0	0
Sc2	0	0	0	0	1	13	15	0	1
Sc3	2	0	0	0	0	7	19	0	1
Sc4	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	19	5
Sc5	0	1	0	0	0	8	17	2	2
Sc6	6	3	1	18	2	0	0	0	0
Sc7	1	0	0	0	0	4	18	2	1
Sc8	3	2	2	19	3	0	0	0	1
Sc9	1	1	0	0	0	10	15	1	0
Sc10	9	1	1	11	0	0	1	0	8
Sc11	2	2	0	10	0	1	14	0	0
Sc12	2	3	0	0	0	19	6	0	0
Total	29	26	4	65	6	66	112	24	19

As it can be seen, in addition to CPT sequence suggested by Liddicoat (2007), the other orders are followed by the native Persian speakers to terminate their TCs. The frequency of CPT is 26, while CCT attains the highest frequency (112). The next frequent sequences are related to CT (66) and PCT (65). PT (29) stands in the third place. In the following, distribution of different strategies is summarized.



### Scenario 1

Scenario 1: *You are talking to one of your employees. She/he is reporting what she/he has done in last week. Now her/ his reporting is done and you want to end the call.*

In the first scenario, the status of the participant is high. There is a far distance between the two interlocutors and there is no time limitation. Table 3 manifests different strategies employed in the first scenario by Persian speakers.

**Table 3.** *Frequency of different manifestations of C in scenario 1*

C Language	C	Ap	ar	E	ap ar	ap ap	e ar	NO C
Persian	Persian speakers	76.7	3.3	0	3.3	6.7	0	10.0

This table shows that Persian speakers used *ap* strategy (e.g. *dastetoon dardnakone*) with the most frequency to end this scenario. Similar to Persian group, EFL participants also resorted to *ap* strategy (e.g. *thank you for your report*) more than others. Whereas appreciation accompanied with arrangement strategy (e.g. *thank you for your report. I call you later*) has the highest frequency among the English participants. As it is clear, Persian speakers omitted C about 10 percent.

### Scenario 2

Scenario 2: *You are talking to your employee who is your friend, too. He/ She is asking for his/her delayed wage. You prefer not to answer him/her. How do you attempt to terminate your call?*

In this scenario, the status of the participant is high. In addition, there is a close distance between the two conversers. Also, time is limited. Table 4 shows different strategies employed in the second scenario.

**Table 4.** *Manifestation of C in scenario 2*

C Language	ar	E	ap ar	ar ar	e ar	e ap	MCT	NO C	Total
Persian	6.7	36.7	0	0	53.3	3.3	0	0	100

As Table 4 demonstrates Persian speakers employed *e ar* (e.g. *maamaanam sedaam mizane. Badan behet zang mizanam*) and *excuse* strategies more frequently in this situation. It was clearly observed that *e ar* strategy was frequently used by Persian native speakers. Persian native speakers tended to use C in the closing part of this scenario.

### Scenario 3

Scenario 3: *You are talking to one of your students. She/he is complaining about one of her/his classmates. After 10 minutes talking, you want to end the conversation.*

In case of the third scenario, the status of the participant is high; there is a far distance between the interlocutors and there is no time limitation. Table 5 shows different strategies employed in the third scenario.



Language												
Persian	10.0	0	59.9	3.3	3.3	0	0	6.6	0	0	16.6	100

The above table demonstrates that the most frequent strategy used by Persian speakers is *ap* (e.g. *khoshhaal shodam sedaato shenidam*).

### Scenario 7

Scenario 7: *One of your close friends calls you. She/he starts talking about her/his lover energetically. Although you are interested in her/his talk, you need to end your call.*

In this scenario, the conversers' status is equal. There is a close distance between them and there is time limitation. Table 9 shows different strategies employed in the seventh scenario.

**Table 9. Manifestation of C in scenario 7**

C	Ap	ar	E	ap ar	ap e	ar ar	e ar	CTT	MCT	No C	Total
Persian	3.3	3.3	6.7	6.7	3.3	0	53.3	0	6.7	3.3	86.7

As it can be drawn from Table 4.21, *e ar* (53.3%), *MCT* (76.7%), and *e ar* (51.9%) were most frequently used by native Persian.

### Scenario 8

Scenario 8: *You are on the phone with one of your new friend. This is the first time you are talking together. After 5 minutes talking; you have nothing more to say. How do you end your call?*

In the eighth scenario, the status is equal. Their distance is far and there is no time limitation.

**Table 10. Manifestation of C in scenario 8**

C	ap	Ar	e	ap ar	ap e	e ar	CTT	MCT	No C	Total
Persian	43.4	26.7	6.7	10.0	0	0	0	3.3	10.0	100

Table 10 shows different strategies employed in scenario 8. *AP* (43.4%) and *ar* (26.7%) are the two more frequently used combinations of C by Persian participants in scenario 8 (e.g. *az harf zadan baahaatoon khoshhaal shodam*).

### Scenario 9

Scenario 9: *You are driving and talking to one of your professors. You see a police officer on the street. You need to end your call.*

In this scenario, the status of the participant is low, there is a far distance between the interlocutors and the existing time is limited. Table 11 shows different strategies employed in scenario 9.

**Table 11. Manifestation of C in scenario 9**

C	ar	e	S	ap ar	e ar	MCT	No C	Total
Persian	10.0	26.7	0	0	50.0	3.3	3.3	93.3

In the ninth scenario, the results show that *e ar* (e.g. *I am really going to have to go now as I am driving. I will call you back in about 20 minutes*) has the first rank.

### Scenario 10

Scenario 10: *You are talking to your mother/father on the phone. It is about 45 minutes that you are talking. You want to end your call.*

In the tenth scenario, the status is low. The conversors' distance is close and there is no time limitation. Table 12 shows different strategies employed in the tenth scenario.

**Table 12. Manifestation of C in scenario 10**

C Language	ap	Ar	E	ap ar	ap e	e ar	e p e ap	MCT	No C	Total
Persian	6.7	16.7	13.3	23.3	3.3	6.6	0	0	30.0	100

As Table 13 exhibits, the first rank is devoted to *ap ar* (e.g. *dastetoon dardnakone. Dobare vaghtkardam zangetoon mizanam*). But 30% of Persian speakers did not use C to terminate scenario 10.

### Scenario 11

Scenario 11: *Your grandfather/grandmother is sick. You call him to seek how he is feeling today. After 10 minutes you feel that he cannot talk anymore. How do you end your call?*

In scenario 11, the status of the participant is low, there is a close distance between the interlocutors and time is limited. Table 13 shows different strategies employed in scenario 11.

**Table 13. Manifestation of C in scenario 11**

C Language	Ap	ar	E	R	ap ar	ap e	ar ar	e ar	CTT	MCT	No C	Total
Persian	3.3	33.3	3.3	6.7	0	20.0	0	26.7	0	0	6.7	100

The results of the present study showed that in this scenario, Persian speakers employed *ar* (e.g. *badan dobaare behetoon zangmizanam*) more frequently (33.3%).

### Scenario 12

Scenario 12: *You call one your professors to ask some questions. Now you have asked all your questions. How do you end your call?*

In this final scenario, the status is low. The conversers' distance is far. In addition, there is no time limitation. Table 14 exhibits different strategies employed in the twelfth scenario. Participants of this study resorted to less various combinations of C in their TC closing parts in this scenario.

**Table 14. Manifestation of C in scenario 12**

C Language	Ap	ap ar	ap ap	CTT	MCT	No C	Total
Persian	73.3	0	20.0	0	0	6.7	100



According to the above table, native Persian employed *ap* (e.g. *dastetoon dardnakone*) strategy more than the other strategies with the frequencies of (73.3%).

### Discussion

Researchers have shown that different cultures have different ways in realizing speech acts, and these variations may easily end in misunderstanding and or pragmatic failure. To have a good command of speech act knowledge, language users need sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge. In another words, they should know how to use speech act strategies properly, and to apply vocabulary, linguistic forms, register, and politeness appropriately.

Research on sociolinguistic knowledge investigated politeness as one of the perlocutionary forces. In real-life communication, politeness strategies can help language users to maintain or develop social harmony in interaction. Telephone communication is one of the situations where the complementary relationship between linguistic knowledge and pragmatic knowledge, especially politeness is evident. Telephone closing part is a rarely attended speech activity. Even though, the social harmony can be easily destroyed, if the telephone conversers do not handle this part appropriately.

To the knowledge of the researcher, no other study has been done to investigate the TC closing patterns employed in Persian under different conditions. There are few studies in English context (Button, 1991; Liddicoat, 2007; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) and one in Persian context (Khadem & EslamiRasekh, 2012) which systematically examined TC closing pattern in natural condition but without considering the variables that may affect the employed pattern. The only pattern found in such studies was CPT (closing implicative environment + pre closing + terminal component) sequence. Therefore, little comparison can be done between the results of the present study and past studies.

### Triple Effect of Time Limitation, Close Distance, and High Status on TC Closing Part

In the second and fourth scenarios, there is lack of time. It was found that the dominant or the most frequent TC pattern in scenario 2 is CCT while in scenario 4 it is MCT. In addition, they mostly used *e ar* strategy in both scenarios. About 10% of participants preferred not to use C at all. It can be inferred that the bilateral effect of high status and close distance made the Persian speakers to extend the TC closing part by using both kinds of positive face-saving strategy and solidarity strategy.

### Prominence of Distance over Time Limitation

Scenario 5 is another situation in which the participants were faced with lack of time. The participants were in equal status and in far distance. Considering these conditions, we supposed that our participants used minimum steps to end their call. Far distance dominated over time limitation and made Persian natives extend the TC closing part by applying CCT pattern in order to maintain their rapport. The most frequent strategies employed by this group is *e ar*, which is the same as the second and fourth scenarios. The *e* strategy is a kind of positive face-saving strategy and *ar* strategy is a kind of solidarity strategy. Based on Button (1987), one of the motivations for applying this strategy is the non-achievement of the interactional goal and postponing it to the other time.

There is shortage of time, the participants are in equal status, and they are in close distance in the 7<sup>th</sup> scenario. Persian participants largely used double C to terminate the call in a polite way. The CCT sequence was predominantly used in the 7<sup>th</sup> scenario. In Persian context

time variable is the determining factor when the distance is close and the participants are in equal status. The most common strategy used in this scenario is *e ar*.

### Close Distance vs. Far Distance

In the ninth scenario, the participants also had time limitation; however, the effect of the other two variables, namely far distance and low status are dominant in the sequences Persian speakers took. In the eleventh scenario, we observed mostly the same condition; however, the relationship between the participant and the interlocutor was close. Analyzing the DCTs, we came across CCT pattern for both scenarios. The most frequent strategy was *e ar*, the same as other scenarios in which there is lack of time. Persian speakers used positive face-saving and solidarity strategies to compensate for earlier initiation of closing part. In other words, they employed these strategies to manage their face as well as the goal of interaction by postponing their call, and to observe the rights of the other interactor.

### Conclusion

In a nutshell, time variable appeared to be a decisive factor in determining the sequences followed by Persian speakers concerning P omission and the length of closing part. Another reason found for P deletion was canceling any opportunity for relaunching the conversation when Persian participants preferred to terminate their TC, even though they had enough time (3<sup>rd</sup> scenario).

In supporting Spencer-Oatey's (2008) model, when any researcher aims to consider any interaction from politeness vantage point, there are a number of variables that can influence the way interlocutors follow in any conversations. Two of contextual variables suggested by Spencer-Oatey's (2008) were investigated in this study and the result can lead to a better understanding of the process involved.

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