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**Realization of Complaint Strategies by English and Persian Native Speakers**  
by Soudabeh Tabatabaei

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### **Abstract**

The present study aims to investigate the pragmatic norms in complaint speech act by English and Persian native speakers. To this end, data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire in the form of discourse completion task (DCT) from 30 English and 30 Persian native speakers. The collected data were analyzed according to Murphy and Neu's (1996) modified taxonomy of complaint strategies. The results indicated that Persian native speakers tended to express their complaint explicitly by the use of *criticism* strategy, whereas English native speakers tended to express their dissatisfaction implicitly by the use of *compliant* strategy. Therefore, the awareness of the cultural differences between these two speech communities will help to avoid intercultural miscommunication. The findings of this study also showed that social status of interlocutor have an influence on the strategy choice of the speakers.

**Keywords:** speech act, complaint strategy, social status, discourse completion task



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**Introduction**

The world's dramatic changes over the past decades towards globalization have raised the researchers' interest to cross-cultural studies considerably. Whereas, the cultural differences of people from different speech communities directly influence their communication patterns. The cross-cultural studies show that culture and communication are not separable and they are two sides of the same coin. In other words, successful communication in language needs awareness of the target culture as cultural differences might lead to miscommunication or breakdown in communication. People often fail to achieve the communicative goals due to misunderstanding with people from other cultures. As Spencer-Oatey (2006) describes the phenomenon, "Intercultural communication is concerned with communication between people from different sociocultural groups. It focuses on the role played by culture-level factors (in contrast to individual and universal factors), and explores their influence on the communication process" (p. 2537) One of the challenges of intercultural communication is the need to create awareness about the importance of understanding speech acts cross-culturally (Palma Fathy, 2005). Therefore, research on the realization of speech acts by English native speakers in comparison with non native speakers' performance is paramount importance for making out the cross-cultural variation between speakers of different communities and employing the results of such studies in instructional settings (Boxer, 2002). There is a contradictory debate on the universality of speech acts. Some researchers have claimed that speech acts function by universal pragmatic principles (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Leech & Leech, 1983). Some other researchers like Wierzbicka (1985) have stated that the aspects of speech acts are not universal and they differ from language to language in conceptualization and verbalization.

To date, most cross-cultural studies in the use of speech acts have put more attention on apology (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Olshtain, 1989), request (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Eslamirasekh, 1993), compliment (Wolfson, 1981), refusal (Beebe, Takahashi &



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Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Al-Kahtani, 2006), and the amount of research on speech act of complaint is much more limited (DeCapua, 1998). In addition, the cross-cultural differences between English and Persian have been rarely considered. So, the present study attempts to investigate the similarities and differences in the realization pattern of complaint strategies between English native speakers and Persian native speakers. It is hoped that this study will provide useful insight of the existing discrepancies between English native speakers and Persian non-native speakers.

**Literature Review**

Speech Acts Theory

The concept of “speech act” was first introduced by the language philosopher Austin (1962). He (1962) points out that people do not produce utterances to merely communicate information but they produce utterances to do things or have others to do things for them; they apologize, promise, request, refuse, complain, etc. Utterances used to realize these functions are called speech acts. They also can be defined as a basic unit of communication which is a part of linguistic competence. In other words, according to Austin, saying something means doing an action.

Searle (1979) classifies speech acts into the following five basic categories:

A. The representative speech acts: They describe states or events in the world, such as an assertion, a claim and a report. These speech acts commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (e.g. *This is a French car.*).

B. The directive speech acts: They try to get the hearer to do an action; the speaker wants the world to change to fit his/her words. The different kinds of directive speech acts are: asking, ordering, requesting, inviting, advising, and begging (e.g. *Could you close the window?(request)*).



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C. The commissive speech acts: They commit the speaker to do something in the future. They involve the intention of the speaker to match the world to his/her words. The different kinds are: promising, planning, vowing, betting, opposing, etc. (e.g. *I'm going to London tomorrow. (planning)*)

D. The declarative speech acts: They change the state of affairs in the world (e.g. *I pronounce you man and wife.*).

E. The expressive speech acts: They express speakers' feelings and attitudes about the situation. The different kinds of this kind of speech act are: thanking, apologizing, welcoming, complaining and congratulating (e.g. *It was a wonderful party.*).

**Speech Act of Complaint**

Complaint is an expression of a psychological state of being dissatisfied, aggrieved or unhappy about something. According to Tanck (2002), in a complaint speech act, a speaker reacts with displeasure or annoyance to an action that has affected him/her in an undesirable manner. It is generally believed that the speech act of complaint is face-threatening to the hearer; therefore, it should be made carefully by the speaker in order not to offend the hearer's face or feelings otherwise it may harm the relationships between them (Moon, 2001). Searle (1976) put complaint in the group of expressive speech act which deals with an exhibition the psychological state of being annoyed. According to Brown and Levinson (1989), expressives threaten the hearer's positive face of being appreciated and respected as the speaker hold the hearer responsible for the offense. In addition, it may also threaten the hearer's negative face of being free from imposition which mostly occurs when a complaint is accompanied by a request for compensation.

Trosborg (1995) describes complaint as "an illocutionary act in which the speaker (the complainer) expresses his/her disapproval or other negative feelings towards the state of affairs



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described in the proposition (the complainable) and for which he or she holds the hearer (the complaine) responsible, either directly or indirectly” (pp. 311-312).

**Selected Review on Compliant Speech Act**

To date, a few studies have been conducted on the speech act of complaint. One of the most commonly quoted studies in complaint studies, is by Olshtain and Weinbach (1993). They claim that in performing the speech act of complaint, the speaker shows his/her displeasure or annoyance about something as a reaction to a past or ongoing socially unacceptable act, the consequences of which are perceived by the speaker as affecting him/her undesirably. In performing the speech act of complaint, the speaker usually considers the hearer at least partly responsible for the unpleasant action and decides to express his/her displeasure.

In a study by Murphy and Neu (1996), American native speakers and Korean non-native speakers of English were given a situation in which they had to show their disapproval about a low mark to their professor. They found that the choice of strategies is affected by the cultural values and norms of the participants. The main difference between the speech act sets produced by these two groups was in the semantic component of the sets: Koreans employed a criticism component in the speech act set, whereas Americans didn't. This result shows that in the same situation, people with different languages perform the same speech act sets differently. This difference could be attributed to the different cultural norms between American and Korean students. In other words, in American culture, students do not criticize their professor because of the difference in social status between the student and professor whereas in Korean culture, social status between student and professor is not considered and it is acceptable to criticize their professor (Murphy and Neu, 1996).

In a similar study by DeCapua (1998), the performance of Germans and Americans in complaint strategies was compared. The researcher concluded that Germans tended to use



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requests for repair, justification, and criticism more than Americans who tend to avoid these strategies.

Moon (2001) investigates the speech act of complaint as produced by native and non-native speakers of English through a DCT. Then, the data were analyzed based on the notion of the "*severity of the complaint*". The results of this study show that non-native speakers do not always make complaints in an appropriate way as native speakers do. They have a tendency to make explicit and direct complaints while native speakers prefer implicit complaints.

Eslami-Rasekh (2004) compared the use of face-keeping strategies in reaction to complaints by Persian and American native speakers. She found that Persian speakers are more sensitive to contextual factors and use different face-keeping strategies according to the situation whereas American native speakers mostly use one apology strategy and intensify it based on contextual factors.

Prykapatska (2008) conducted a study to investigate the pragmatic behavior of Americans and Ukrainians on complaining to their friends. He concluded that Ukrainian friends use the whole rank of complaint strategies ranging from the least offensive to the most severe ones, whereas American native speakers employed the most indirect and conventionally indirect strategies.

In 2010, Farnia, Buchheit and Salim conducted research to investigate the cross-cultural differences in the speech act of complaint between American English and Malaysian. Data were collected through DCT followed by a semi-structured interview. DCTs were coded according to Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) classification of complaint involving the main components of complaints, the level of directness, and the amount of mitigation. The results of the study showed that American and Malay respondents employ significantly different behavior to express their complaints in different situations.



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In another study, Eslamirasekh, Sereshti and Mehraban (2012) conducted a study in which they compared complaint realizations by Americans and Persians. Data were collected through DCT and an interview. General findings indicated that complaint strategies used by Persian speakers are significantly different from those of Americans. Furthermore, the result showed that Americans used more “indirect complaint” and “request for repair” but Persians preferred more “direct complaint” and “indirect accusation” strategies under similar situation.

**Method**

**Participants**

The present study is a contrastive study on the complaint strategies used by American English native speakers and Persian native speakers. The data for this study were gathered from two groups of respondents: 30 native speakers of Persian and 30 native speakers of American English. The respondents were both male and female. 18 of Persian native speakers were MA students and 12 were PhD students from different majors and their age ranged from 23 to 40. Of the 30 English native participants, 11 of them were holding MA degree and 19 were holding PhD degree and their age ranged from 21 to 38.

**Instrument**

The instrument used in the present study is a discourse completion test (DCT) in the form of an open-ended questionnaire. The participants were given three situations (complaining a person of higher, lower and equal social status) which were adopted from previous studies (Kim, 2008; Tanck, 2002) and asked to write what they would say in these situations. The advantages of using DCT is gathering a large amount of data in a short period of time, classifying stereotypical strategies, and acquiring insights into the social and psychological elements which may affect speech act performances (Beebe & Cummings, 1995).



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Coding Schemes of Complaint

The data were analyzed according to modified taxonomy of complaints proposed by Murphy and Neu (1996) as follows: 1) complaint, 2) justification, 3) criticism, 4) explanation of purpose and 5) candidates' solution: a) Demand b) request. Three other strategies were added to this taxonomy i.e. 6) sarcasm, 7) threat and 8) apology.

Complaint: This strategy was identified on the basis of complaint characteristics proposed by Murphy and Neu (1996) containing one of the following elements:

- (a) Use of pronoun “we” in two different ways: 1) to indicate that both parties share the blame: e.g., “*We can have disagreements*” 2) as a way of negotiating the problem “*I hope we could discuss the paper*”.
- (b) Use of questioning to ask for advice, for permission to explain oneself, or to get the listener to discuss the problem: e.g. “*Would you please give me a minute to talk about the paper?*”
- (c) Depersonalization of the problem, transferring the blame from the hearer onto the problem: e.g., “*I’m really concerned with this paper*”.
- (d) Use of mitigators (e.g., *kind of, perhaps, possibly, a little bit, somehow, I think, I’m afraid, you know, I mean, don’t you think?*) to soften the complaint: e.g. “*I think my score is a little bit low*”.

Criticism: This strategy was identified on the basis of characteristics proposed by Murphy and Neu (1996) asserting that criticism may contain the following characteristics:





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(a) Use of second person + modal 'should' that indicates that the speaker is in a position to dictate the behavior of the listener: e.g. , "*You should not have given this low grade*".

(b) Personalization of the problem, placing the blame on the hearer: e.g., "*I worked very hard but you gave me a low mark*".

(c) Refusal to accept responsibility for the problem. : e.g., "*I don't deserve this low mark*".

When a speaker uses criticism strategy, he/she tries to directly tell a person he/she is wrong and perhaps expands on the problem or gives reason for it. It usually involves accusing words (e.g. *you should...*, *you never...*) and the speaker's words are scornful and direct. It might attack personal character of the hearer.

Justification: Speaker uses justification to give a good reason for an action that leaves the speaker in a positive position (e.g. *I really need to get up early in the morning.*)

Candidate solution (demand/ request): The speaker offers a solution to resolve the problem (Murphy & Neu, 1996) and therefore asks on the grounds of authority usually demand or lack of authority usually request. Murphy and Neu (1996) expressed the linguistic feature of demand as follows:

(a) The use of first person singular + the locutionary verbs "want" and "demand" e.g. , "*I want you to read it again*", *I demand you to come on time* ".

(b) The use of second person + the modals "should" and "must" e.g. "*You should send the letter soon.*"

They states the linguistic features of the speech act of request as:



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(a) Use of the modal “would” and “could”, which indicates politeness: e.g., “*Would you please send it again?*”

(b) Use of modal “can” in their question to request a solution, which indicates politeness.  
(*Can you be a little bit quiet?*)

Explanation of purpose: Speaker explains the purpose of initiating the conversation (Murphy & Neu, 1996) (e.g. *I just wanted to make sure whether you sent the recommendation letter to the company*).

Sarcasm: Biting comments, false humor or over/under statement designed to hurt and nudge the hearer into positive action. Sarcasm is the lowest form of humor (e.g. *How kind of you to attend the class. I think your watch has stopped*).

Threat: It is used to express the negative consequence of the hearer’s unfavorable behavior resulting in offence or dissatisfaction of the hearer, therefore the speaker threatens the hearer (e.g. *If you are late again, this is going to have an effect on your grade.*)

Apology: The speaker uses apology strategy to reduce the negative effect of the complaint on the hearer. It is usually used when complaining to a person of higher social status and considered as a politeness marker (e.g. *I’m really sorry to bother you, professor*).

Therefore, to perform complaint speech act, the speaker might use a combination of different strategies. For example;

*I’m sorry to bother you professor. I just wanted to know what happened to my letter of recommendation. The interview committee has not received the letter yet. Would you please send it again?*



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In the above example, the speech act set involves apology, explanation of purpose, complaint and candidate's solution: request.

#### **Data Analyses**

In this part, the responses of Persian native speakers in DCT were coded by the researcher and the responses of English native speakers were analyzed by the researcher and then confirmed by an English native speaker according to modified version of Murphy and Neu's (1996) classification of complaint strategies. Data entered into SPSS software for descriptive statistics and the most frequent complaint strategies employed by two groups were identified. Then the chi-square tests were performed. The situations which need complaints are as follows:

1. Complaining a professor for not sending the recommendation letter to the company.
2. Complaining a university student for coming late to the class.
3. Complaining a roommate for making a lot of noise at midnight.

#### Situation 1:

As seen from Table 1, *explanation of purpose* and *complaint* were the first and second most frequently used strategies by English native speakers, whereas Persian native speakers employed *justification* and *explanation of purpose* as the first and second most frequently used strategies in complaining the professor. The findings also indicated that *apology* and *candidate's solution: request* were the third and fourth frequently used strategies by English native speakers. The results also showed that *criticism* and *candidate's solution: request* were the third and fourth frequently used strategy by Persian native speakers. Moreover, there was no elicitation of *criticism* by English native speakers in complaining the professor, whereas this strategy was the third frequently used one by Persian native speakers. Examples of native speakers' responses in complaining the professor are given:

#### English native speaker



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Hello professor. I wanted to talk to you about my recommendation letter (*explanation of purpose*). The interview committee has not received the letter yet (*complaint*). Could you please send the letter at your earliest convenience (*candidate's solution: request*)?

Sir. I'm so sorry to bother you (*apology*). A few weeks ago, I asked if you could write me a letter of recommendation and you agreed (*justification*) but the company has not receive the letter yet, maybe it got lost in the emails (*complaint*). Would you please send it again? (*candidate's solution: request*)

Persian native speaker

Ostad behetoon gofte boodam ke in tosie name baram kheili moheme. Chera oono hanooz nafrestadid? Lotfan age momkne har chi saritar befrestid (Persian).

Professor, I had told you about the importance of this recommendation letter (*justification*). Why haven't you sent it yet (*criticism*)? Would you please send it as soon as possible (*candidate's solution: request*)? (English translation)

Ostad gharar bood ke name ro befrestid. chera nafrestadid? (Persian)

Professor, you were supposed to send the letter (*justification*). Why didn't you send it? (*criticism*) (English translation)



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Table 1. Result of responses for situation 1 (Complaining a higher status: complaining a Professor)

Strategies	ENS		PNS	
	(f)	(percent)	(f)	(percent)
Explanation of purpose	22	28.55%	15	22.30%
Justification	7	9.10%	16	23.90%
Complaint	18	23.40%	5	7.50%
Criticism	0	0%	13	19.40%
Candidate's solution: request	14	18.20%	12	17.90%
Candidate's solution: demand	0	0%	0	0%
Apology	16	20.75%	6	0%
Sarcasm	0	0%	0	0%
Threat	0	0%	0	0%
Total	77	100%	67	100%

Note: ENS=English Native Speakers, PNS=Persian Native Speakers, f=Frequency of Strategy

#### Situation 2

Table 2 indicates that *candidate's solution: demand* was the most frequently used strategies by both English and Persian native speakers. *Justification* and *threat* strategies were the second and third frequently used strategies by English native speakers, while *threat* and *justification* strategies were the third and fourth frequently used strategies by Persian native speakers. The findings also showed that the fourth frequently used strategy by English native speakers was *explanation of purpose* and by Persian native speakers was *criticism*. Furthermore, as seen from



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the table, Persian native speakers did not use *complaint* in their responses, while this strategy was used by their English counterparts. Some examples were:

English native speaker

If you are late again you have to quit this class (*threat*). It's not fair on the others (*complaint*).

I remarked your tardiness last session and gave you due warning (justification). Therefore, I have to send you out, leave the class (candidate's solution: demand).

Persian native speaker

Boro biroon. Age ye bare dige dir biai darso hazf kon (Persian).

Go out (*candidate's solution: demand*). If you come late next time, drop the course (*threat*) (English translation).

Cheghad lotf mikoni too class sherkat mikoni. Fekr mikonam saatet khab rafte. Dige sare in class naya. (Persian)

How kind of you to attend the class. I think your watch has stopped (*sarcasm*). Don't come to this class anymore (*candidate's solution: demand*) (English translation)

Table 2. Result of responses for situation 2 (Complaining a lower status: complaining a roommate)

Strategies	ENS		PNS	
	(f)	(percent)	(f)	(percent)
Explanation of purpose	7	10.90	1	2%
Justification	19	29.70	10	19.60%
Complaint	6	9.40	0	0%



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Criticism	2	3.15	6	11.75
Candidate's solution: request	0	0	0	0
Candidate's solution: demand	20	31.25	20	39.20
Apology	0	0	0	0%
Sarcasm	1	1.55	3	5.90%
Threat	9	14.05	11	21.55%
Total	64	100%	51	100%

Note: ENS=English Native Speakers, PNS=Persian Native Speakers, f=Frequency of Strategy

### Situation 3

As seen from the table 3, *candidate's solution: request* was the most used strategy by English native speakers, whereas *justification* was the most frequently used strategy by Persian native speakers. The second frequently used strategy by English native speakers was *justification* and by Persian native speakers was *candidate's solution: request*. The findings also indicated that Persian native speakers used *candidate's solution: demand* and *criticism* as the third and fourth frequently used strategies. English native speakers used other strategies by low frequencies (e.g. complaint, criticism, apology, etc.). Examples of participants' responses are given:

#### English native speaker

I'm sorry to be such a party-pooper (*apology*), but I have to wake up really early tomorrow (*justification*). Would you please keep the noise down a little just for tonight (*candidate's solution: request*)?

Please just for tonight, let me sleep in peace (*candidate's solution: request*). I've got a long day tomorrow (*justification*).

#### Persian native speaker



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Chera enghad sar seda mikoni. Farda sobhe zood bayad bidar sham. saket bash (Persian)

Why are you making so much noise (*criticism*)? I have to wake up early tomorrow (*justification*). Be quiet (*candidate's solution: demand*) (English translation).

Mishe ye zarre seda ro kam koni. Farad sobhe zood bayad bidar sham (Persian).

Would you please keep the noise down a little? I have to get up early in the morning (*candidate's solution: request*) (English translation).

Table 3. Result of response for situation 3 (Complaining an equal status: complaining a student)

Strategies	ENS		PNS	
	(f)	(percent)	(f)	(percent)
Explanation of purpose	0	0	1	1.60
Justification	20	33.90	19	30.15
Complaint	2	3.40	3	4.75
Criticism	2	3.40	9	14.30
Candidate's solution: request	27	45.75	12	19.05
Candidate's solution: demand	2	3.40	11	17.45
Apology	3	5.05	0	0
Sarcasm	2	3.40	4	6.35
Threat	1	1.70	4	6.35
Total	59	100%	63	100%

Note: ENS=English Native Speakers, PNS=Persian Native Speakers, f=Frequency of Strategy

#### Overall use of complaint strategies

In this part, the frequency pattern of complaint strategies used by both English and Persian native speakers across all three situations A presented. As table 4 indicates English native speakers used





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more strategies (200) than Persian native speakers (180) in complaint situations. As the above table demonstrates, *justification* was the most frequently used strategy for both English and Persian native speakers. This strategy was used by English and Persian native speakers in 23% and 25% of situations respectively. *Candidate's solution: request* with 20.50% was the second most frequently used strategy by English native speakers whereas *candidate's solution: demand* with 17.20% was the second most frequent one by Persian native speakers. The third most frequent strategy for English native speakers was *explanation of purpose* (14.50%) and for Persian native speakers was *criticism* (15.55%).

Table 4. Overall use of Complaint Strategies by English and Persian Native Speakers

Strategies	ENS		PNS	
	(f)	(percent)	(f)	(percent)
Explanation of purpose	29	14.50%	17	9.45%
Justification	46	23%	45	25%
Complaint	26	13%	8	4.45%
Criticism	4	2%	28	15.55%
Candidate's solution: request	41	20.50%	24	13.30%
Candidate's solution: demand	22	11%	31	17.20%
Apology	19	9.50%	6	2.80%
Sarcasm	3	1.50%	7	3.90%
Threat	10	5%	15	8.30%
Total	200	100%	181	100%

Note: ENS=English Native Speakers, PNS=Persian Native Speakers, f=Frequency of Strategy

The other frequently used strategies for English native speakers after *explanation of purpose* in sequence were *complaint* (13%), *candidate's solution: demand* (11%), *apology* (9.50%), *threat* (5%) and *criticism* (2%) and *sarcasm* (1.50%), whereas the frequency pattern of



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strategy use for Persian native speakers after the third frequently used strategy was *candidate's solution: request* (13.30%), *explanation of purpose* (9.45%), *threat* (8.30%), *complaint* (4.45%), *sarcasm* (3.90%) and *apology* (2.80%). The findings showed that *sarcasm* was the least frequently used strategy for English native speakers (1.50%) and *apology* was the least frequently used strategy by Persian native speakers (2.80%). To see whether the differences between English and Persian native speakers in frequency of complaint strategies are significant, the chi-square test was performed (Table 5).

Table 5. Chi-square test for complaint strategies between English and Persian native speakers

Strategy	Chi-square	Df	Asymp.Sig.
Explanation of purpose	3.13	1	.07
Justification	.01	1	.91
Complaint	9.52	1	.00*
Criticism	18	1	.00*
Candidate's solution: request	4.44	1	.03*
Candidate's solution: demand	1.52	1	.21
Apology	8.16	1	.00*
Sarcasm	1.60	1	.20
Threat	1	1	.31

Note: asterisk \* shows significance at  $p \leq .05$

As the results of table 5 shows there was a significant difference in the use of *apology*, *candidate's solution: request*, *complaint* and *criticism* between English and Persian native speakers in complaint situations. English native speakers used significantly more *apology*, *candidate's solution: requests* and *complaint strategies* than Persian native speakers in complaint situations, whereas Persian native speakers used significantly more *criticism* than English native speakers in their responses.



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**Conclusions and Discussions**

A summary of the statistical analyses showed that there were significant differences between English and Persian native speakers in complaint situations. English native speakers used significantly more *apology*, *candidate's solution: requests* and *complaint strategies* than Persian native speakers did in complaint situations, whereas Persian EFL learners used significantly more *criticism* than English native speakers did in their responses. In sum, regarding the above-mentioned findings and the existence of significant difference between two speech communities, it is crystal clear that the cross-cultural differences between English and Persian in terms of using complaint strategies become problematic when people from these two communities interact together and they might encounter a great chance of miscommunication.

The findings of this study also showed that social status of interlocutor have an influence on the strategy choice of the speaker. For example, English and Persian native speakers used *threat* and *sarcasm* strategies when the interlocutor had equal or lower social status. Moreover, *candidate's solution: demand* was not used by both English and Persian native speakers when the interlocutor had higher social status and *candidate' solution: request* was not employed by these two groups when the interlocutor had lower social status. Almost all participants used either *justification* or *explanation of purposes* when complaining a person of higher social status to reduce the negative effect of complaining on the complainer. Moreover, the results indicated that Persian native speakers have more inclination towards expressing their dissatisfaction more explicitly (putting the blame on the hearer); whereas English native speakers have more inclination towards expressing their dissatisfaction implicitly (not blaming the hearer). In other words, it is seen that Persian native speakers employed *criticism* strategy, which is considered as the explicit way of expressing dissatisfaction, more than English native speakers, but English native speakers employed *complaint* strategy, which is the implicit way of expressing dissatisfaction, more than Persian native speakers did. It is worthy to mention that in most of the



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situations, Persian native speakers used *criticism* accompanying *justification* or *explanation of purpose* to mitigate to some extent the negative effect of the direct complaint on the complainer.

The results of this study is similar to Eslamirasekh et al.'s (2012) study that found the realization of complaint are significantly different between Persian and American communities and Americans use more indirect complaint and request for repair compared to their Persian counterparts, whereas Persians tend to use more direct complaint, indirect accusation and threat strategies compared to English native speakers. They mentioned that Persians employed direct complaint strategy (similar to criticism) when the complainer wants to express the dissatisfaction explicitly. The results also are in line with DeCapua's (1998) study in which Americans employed less criticism than Germans.

In general, different researchers examined the cross-cultural differences between native and non-native speakers in realization of complaint speech act (e.g. Chen et al., 2011; Kwon, 2004; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Prykapatska, 2008) concluded that there are differences between native and non-native speakers in realization of complaint speech act. Hence, these differences can be attributed to different cultural conventions of languages since some aspects of speech acts are culture-specific and vary from culture to culture. It is hoped that the findings of this study will add to the body of literature in contrastive study of complaint speech act between people of different speech communities.

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