



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS BY IRANIAN SPEAKERS OF
ENGLISH***

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**PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS BY IRANIAN SPEAKERS OF
ENGLISH**

By

NARGES MASJEDI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

January 2017

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DEDICATION

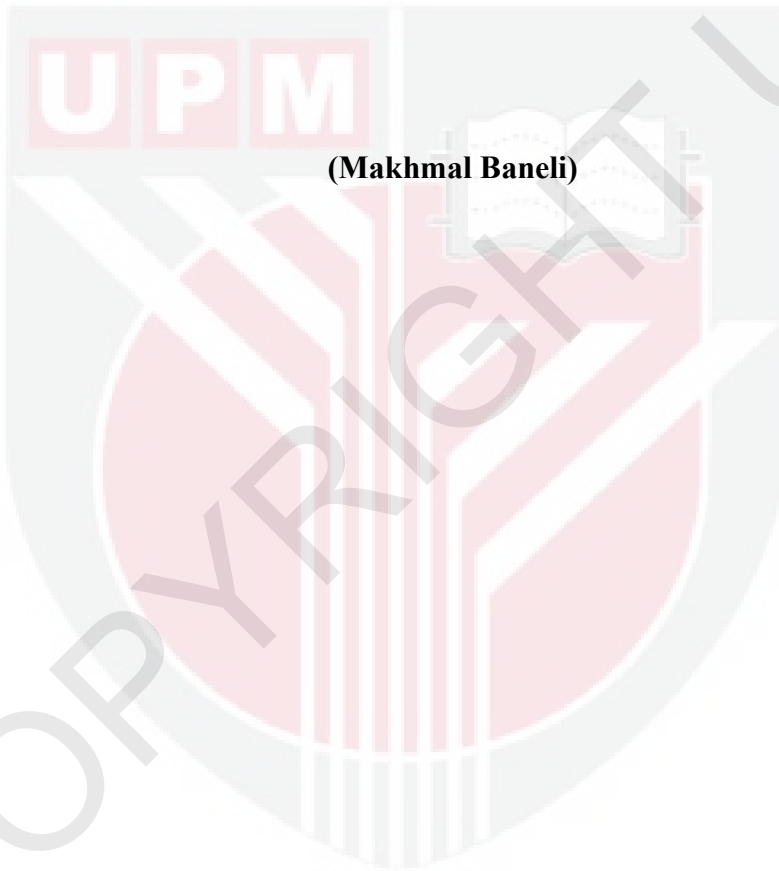
To my beloved mother and father

both of whom helped me in the way nobody could help me

To my Late brother, Nader

may you rest in peace

(Makhmal Baneli)



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts

PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS BY IRANIAN SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

By

NARGES MASJEDI

January 2017

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Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

Complaint speech act is a face threatening act and it happens when a speaker reacts with anger to things which go wrong or to a speech or an action which affected on him or her unfavorably. Therefore, complaints by its nature can engender social relationship breakdown. Despite this, a complainer can use politeness when he or she aims to maintain a good relationship with complainees or to mitigate the severity of his or her complaint and face threat.

This study aims to investigate the complaint speech act and politeness strategies of Iranian learners in communication with other nationalities in the academic context of a university. The objectives of the study are to investigate what complaint strategies are used by Iranian learners, how their complaints are structured, and how politeness is displayed in their complaint when communicating in English with other nationalities. The sample was made up of 50 Iranian postgraduate learners, 25 male and 25 female, and the data was collected by means of background questionnaire and open-ended Discourse Completion Test in the type of critical incidents. The study is qualitative and employs pragmatics as the approach to data analysis. The data were analyzed through complaint taxonomies; Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy was used to analyze complaint strategies while Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) taxonomy was used to analyze complaint structures. Politeness strategies were analyzed through Brown and Levinson's (1987) taxonomy.

The findings show that Iranians used a variety of strategies and structures when complaining in different situations and contexts; their most preferred complaint strategy however was Indirect Accusation and their utterances were mostly structured as Complaint followed by Request (C+R). Negative Politeness especially Be Conventionally Indirect was the most frequently used politeness strategy by the respondents. In sum, the study shows that Iranians are indirect and show negative politeness as they try to minimize the face threatening act of complaining. Iranians'

effort to be indirect can be considered as part of Iranian culture to avoid impairing their relationship with hearers.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Kesenian

ANALISIS PRAGMATIK BAGI ADUAN OLEH PENUTUR BAHASA INGGERIS DARI IRAN

Oleh

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Januari 2017

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Lakuan Bahasa untuk aduan adalah satu tindakan bentuk ancaman muka dan ia berlaku apabila penutur memberi reaksi dalam keadaan marah kepada sesuatu perkara yang sepatutnya salah atau sesuatu perbuatan salah yang menjejaskan diri penutur. Oleh itu, aduan secara asasnya boleh merosakkan perhubungan sosial. Walaubagaimanapun, penutur boleh menggunakan teknik kesantunan bahasa apabila penutur berhasrat mewujudkan satu hubungan yang baik dengan pendengar yang diadu atau bertujuan untuk memperbaiki keterukan tahap aduan dan ancaman muka.

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji lakuan bahasa dan strategi kesantunan bahasa di kalangan pelajar-pelajar dari Iran dalam berkomunikasi dengan pelajar negara lain di dalam konteks akademik. Secara spesifiknya, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji apakah strategi aduan yang digunakan oleh pelajar-pelajar dari Iran, dan bagaimanakah kesantunan diperlihatkan semasa berkomunikasi di dalam Bahasa Inggeris dengan pelajar dari negara lain. Sampel kajian adalah merangkumi 50 pelajar siswazah dari Iran di mana 25 pelajar adalah lelaki dan 25 lagi adalah perempuan. Data telah dikumpulkan melalui soalan soalselidik yang diedarkan dan juga Ujian Wacana dalam bentuk pernyataan jenis insiden kritikal. Kajian ini adalah bersifat kualitatif dan menggunakan pragmatik sebagai pendekatan dalam analisis data. Data dianalisis melalui taksonomi aduan; taksonomi Trosborg (1995) telah digunakan untuk menganalisis strategi aduan manakala taksonomi Rinnert dan Nogami (2006) digunakan untuk menganalisis struktur aduan. Manakala, strategi kesantunan bahasa dianalisis melalui taksonomi Brown dan Levinson (1987).

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar dari Iran telah menggunakan pelbagai strategi dan struktur apabila membuat aduan dalam situasi dan konteks yang berbeza; strategi aduan yang paling digemari mereka adalah Tuduhan Tidak Langsung dan ucapan mereka lebih berbentuk Aduan diikuti oleh Permintaan (C+R). Kesantunan yang negatif terutamanya *Be Conventionally Indirect* adalah strategi

kesantunan yang paling kerap digunakan oleh responden. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini menunjukkan pelajar-pelajar dari Iran gemar mengutarakan aduan mereka secara tidak langsung dan menunjukkan kesopanan negatif kerana mereka cuba untuk mengurangkan kesan ancaman muka apabila membuat aduan. Tindakan pelajar Iran dalam kajian ini boleh dianggap sebagai sebahagian daripada budaya Iran untuk mengelakkan kerosakan dalam hubungan mereka dengan pendengar.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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- the research conducted and the writing of this thesis was under our supervision;
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIs	Critical Incidents
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
EFL	English Foreign Language
FTA	Face Threatening Act
H	Hearer
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
Resp	Response
S	Speaker
Sit	Situation
TEP	Tertiary English Programme
UPM	University Putra Malaysia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background to the study, statement of problem, research objectives and questions, theoretical and conceptual framework, significance of the study as well as definition of terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language serves as a tool for exchanging ideas and experiences that we have had and facilitates interaction and communication among and between members of groups. Language can therefore be considered as an essential part of human behavior and the primer tool for interaction among people to convey feelings, thoughts and intentions to others (Bonvillain, 2010).

In the 21st century, English among all the languages worldwide has become one of the most dominant language that people use to communicate internationally (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006). English is used as a tool of communication among native and non-native speakers when interacting in online and face-to-face interactions (Jenkins, 2007; McKay & Bokhorst-Hong, 2008; Mackenzie, 2013; Jackson, 2014).

However, Crystal (2010) notes that nonnative speakers of English outnumber native speakers of English by three to one and McKay (2009) notes that over 80% of interactions and communications in English language are among nonnative speakers. So, it goes to prove that in this age of fast globalization, English has become a lingua franca in many different parts of the world in communication among people who have no first language in common (Jackson, 2014).

Although it seems interesting that people are able to communicate with each other all around the world in a common language like English, peoples' perceptive of the world around them and interpretations of the situations they encounter are linked to their social and cultural backgrounds and therefore the ability to communicate may be very different and these dissimilarities can lead to difficulties in communications (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Sifianou, 1992; Yule, 1996).

Bardovi-Harlig (1996) suggests that lack of pragmatic and linguistic knowledge can lead speakers of different cultures with different patterns of understanding to encounter failure in successful verbal communication. Similarly, Tanck (2002) proposes that even though some speakers are fluent in a second or foreign language they may lack pragmatic competence and therefore they are unable to produce culturally and socially appropriate language.

Many researchers (Austin, 1962; Leech, 1983; Grice, 1989; Yule, 1996; Liu, 2005) have also discussed pragmatics and its relation to politeness. For example, Yule (1996) maintains that pragmatics can be considered as the study of language usage in contexts and that is referred to in the literature by different notions such as “contextual meaning” (how contexts affect what is said and where, when and how utterances are produced), “speaker meaning” (how speakers convey their intentions and how they are comprehended by hearers), “the expression of relative distance” (how closeness, social and physical, influences speakers’ judgment of utterances), and “inferences” (how more is conveyed than what is said). In short, the norms of politeness of a language are a part of pragmatic competence of a person.

Thus, it is necessary for learners of language to know the pragmatic aspects of the target language with the aim of being able to communicate successfully (Bachman, 1990). As a result of lack of pragmatic competence, speakers may not be well aware of performance of speech acts in a foreign language (Bodman & Einsentein, 1988) and therefore this can cause foreign language learners to use the speaking values of their first language when using the foreign language (Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss–Welts, 1990; Olshtain and Weinback, 1993; Bergman and Kasper, 1993; Weizman, 1993; Al-Amar, 2000; Tanck, 2002; Umar, 2006). Blum-Kulka (1982) and Sifianou (1992) suggest that the problems which learners encounter in attaining communicative competence in a foreign or second language may originate from dissimilarities among their cultures and languages in different aspects of speech act realization. As such, when two or more cultures get together pragmatic knowledge of speech acts such as requesting, complaining, complimenting, thanking, apologizing, etc is needed for successful communication.

Complaints are one of the speech acts of everyday living. We all experience complaints either when we are angry with someone or any issue which upset us, or when someone is angry with us. We all face many actions, behaviors and matters which do not make us happy and therefore lead to complaints. In other words, a complaint can be an expression of being angry, unhappy or dissatisfied about something that needs special type of speech act strategies. Consequently, when making complaint the speaker reacts with anger to things which go wrong (Geluykens and Kraft, 2007) or to a speech or an action which affected him or her unfavorably (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1987).

Trosborg (1995) believes that the speech act of complaint belongs to the expressive category and contains moral judgments that express the complainer’s disapproval and approval of the behavior concerned and almost always has to do with the act of moral criticism of the blame involved in the act of complaining. In other words, Trosborg (1995) defines complaints as illocutionary acts wherein the complainer expresses his or her negative feelings and disapproval towards the state of affairs in the complainable and for that he or she holds the complaineer responsible, indirectly or directly. As a result, complaint by its nature can cause offence and highly threatens the relationship.

Similarly, Brown and Levinson (1987) categorized complaints as one of the face threatening acts which include the enormous potential for shutting down the relationship. While complaints can engender social relationship breakdown (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Moon, 2002), a complainer can use politeness when he or she aims to have a good relationship with complaine or to mitigate the severity of his or her complaint and face threat (Wijayanto et al., 2013).

Politeness is something we all face every day and its aim is to make people comfortable and relaxed in interaction; however, different culturally and socially defined norms may cause misunderstanding among people with different first languages. In order to define politeness, people also may use very general statements based on their backgrounds. While most people are quite sure that they know what politeness means and who is considered as a polite person, they face many problems when trying to define and describe the notion and it can be seen in many different types of definitions and huge amount of contradictions (Watts, 2003; Wang, 2008). They may characterize polite behavior as suitable behavior or politically correct or consider it as behavior of the educated people.

For second or foreign language learners showing politeness in a speech act that is inherently face-threatening can be very difficult as what is regarded as polite in their first language can be impolite in the foreign or target language context (Wijayanto et al., 2013). According to Jackson (2014), an international student may speak up in discussions and this may be expected and normal in his or her home environment, but his or her discourse might be perceived as aggressive and rude in another context. Moreover, if he or she has been socialized to believe that it is impolite to make direct eye contact during his or her speech, he or she is likely to avoid it. However, if his or her interlocutor has been socialized to believe direct eye contact shows respect and trustworthiness, the interaction may lead to misunderstanding (Jackson, 2014).

It has been the center of interest and concentration of many studies to study how politeness is expressed in speech acts among different cultures when communicating in their L1, L2 or foreign language. This study adds to this literature in its investigation of the complaint speech act and politeness strategies of Iranian learners when communicating in English in the academic context of a university. It should be noted that the words “speaker” and “learners” are used interchangeably in this thesis. This is because the subjects of this study are Iranian speakers of English all of who are postgraduate learners from various faculties of a university.

1.2 Problem Statement

In the study of language, Blum-Kulka (1982) and Sifianou (1992) suggest that communication difficulties are mostly expected to happen among people from dissimilar social and cultural backgrounds because they have to communicate and express themselves in a different language from their own mother tongue and therefore face many problems due to lack of agreement between their first language and the foreign language and dissimilarities in showing politeness.

According to Jackson (2014), problems when communicating in a second or foreign language may be as a result of several reasons such as limitation of second language proficiency, difference in socialization in different linguistic and cultural environments and so forth. In communication among people of different cultures, L2 speakers may use their first language patterns when they communicate in the target language (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss–Welts, 1990; Tanck, 2002), or they might interpret messages in the foreign language depending on the attitudes, expectations, beliefs and values of their first language.

In addition, although international students may sometimes be proficient in the foreign language, they may be confused by informal forms and idiomatic expressions and social discourses which require background knowledge when they communicate in real-life situations in the foreign language. This is because they learned the foreign language formally in school or classrooms in their home country (Gebhard, 2010).

So, due to inadequate knowledge of socio-pragmatic norms of the second or foreign language, face-threatening acts such as complaining can be very complicated for second language or nonnative speakers of English. In the study of speech act of complaint, Yamagashira (2001) postulates that misunderstandings can occur if nonnative or second language speakers use language strategies of their L1 and do not know how to complain in a target language.

In sum, the lack of familiarity of English in general and dissimilar understanding of politeness and speech acts in particular, combined with the inability to manage these dissimilarities in real-life situations, are seen as negative effects in interactions among people who use English as a second or foreign language.

With regard to using English as a second or foreign language, there has been an increasing number of students who are living and studying abroad in order to get education outside their home country (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011; in Jackson, 2014). Among all, there are many Iranians who attend different universities abroad like Malaysia for higher education. In University Putra Malaysia (UPM), for example, many Iranians are enrolled in different fields of study. During their studies, they are in contact with other nationalities in the classrooms and campus, in living accommodations, colleges, international transient houses and sharing homes or rooms with other nationalities around the world.

Therefore, international students can face many problems that can result in misunderstandings in their communication in classrooms and outside of classrooms when interacting with other nationalities. In sharing homes, for example, they may face problems such as going to sleep late (having light on and being noisy), getting up very early in the morning (preparing to go out), or have smelly breakfast, inviting and chatting with friends (making noise or keeping home untidy), talking on the phones loudly early in the morning or late at night, and so many other things that may not be pleasant for their classmates, roommates and friends. Therefore, whether Iranians can

perform the complaint aspects in English when communicating with other cultures in such difficult situations and how they manage the complaint is scarcely researched.

Although there are many studies that have been done in different contexts and fields to investigate speech acts and politeness of different cultures in cross-cultural communication (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1987; Trosborg, 1995; Murphy and Neu, 1996; Moon, 2001; Tanck, 2002; Chen et al., 2011), there are very few studies in the Iranian context and none have focused on Iranians complaining in English when faced with difficult situations that involve contact with other nationalities or other speakers of English.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research purposes of this study are:

- 1) To investigate complaint strategies used by Iranian learners when communicating with other nationalities.
- 2) To investigate how Iranian learners structure their complaints when communicating with other nationalities.
- 3) To find out the politeness strategies employed by Iranian learners when performing complaints with other nationalities.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

- 1) What complaint strategies are used by Iranian learners when they complain in English?
- 2) How are their complaints structured?
- 3) How is politeness exercised in their complaints?

1.5 Theoretical Discussion

The theories that support this study are Trosborg (1995), Rinnert and Nogami (2006), and Brown and Levinson (1987). The theories are elaborated in this section.

1.5.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics has its origins in language philosophy according to speech act theory that was originally postulated by Austin (1962), and then further expanded by Searle (1969). Searle (1969) stated that all verbal speaking is made up of speech acts that are actions in language and this goes to prove that all verbal speaking is performative.

According to Austin (1962), each performative speech act such as a promise or a threat, forms an occurrence, deed, or event that creates a new reality or state that is very dissimilar from what existed previous to the speech act. Austin (1962) therefore used the term performative to emphasize that speech acts can produce changed realities and do not merely represent or report about something which is already there. Therefore, speech acts can produce change, even though on a small scale. Extending Austin's work, Searle (1969) categorized all speech acts into five categories: 1) assertives, 2) directives, 3) commissives, 4) expressives, and 5) declaratives. These categories form the five ways to take action in communication. Speech acts as noted earlier usually include acts such as apologizing, requesting, inviting, greeting, complimenting, complaining and so forth.

1.5.2 Complaint as Speech Act

As it is mentioned above, complaints by its nature threaten the face and impair the relationship. Therefore, when doing this act complainers need to be cautious in their choice of words in order to be polite and mitigate threat towards complainees' face. In this section complaint strategy and complaint structure are discussed.

1.5.2.1 Complaint Strategy

Complaint is one of the speech acts that can easily threaten face and consists of utterances that function in two parts: firstly, as head acts which are the main strategies that express complaints and secondly, as supporting moves which are sub-strategies that contain additional information that initiate and follow the head acts. Trosborg (1995) classified head acts into four main strategies: I) no explicit reproach, II) disapproval, III) accusation, and IV) blame, and proposed eight sub-strategies: 1) hints, 2) annoyances, 3) ill consequences, 4) indirect accusations, 5) direct accusations, 6) modified blame, 7) explicit blame (behavior), and 8) explicit blame (person). The strategies, sub-strategies, and descriptors are shown in the table below.

Table 1.1 : Complaint Strategies

No explicit reproach 1 Hints	complainer does not mention the complaint in the complainable and does not directly state something is offensive.
Disapproval 2 Annoyance 3 Ill consequences	complainer expresses dislike, disapproval, and annoyance in connection with a certain state of affairs that he or she considers bad for him or her.
Accusation 4 Indirect 5 Direct	complainer establishes the complaine as the agent of the complainable and directly or indirectly accuses the complaine for committing the problem.
Blame 6 Modified blame 7 Explicit blame (behavior) 8 Explicit blame (person)	complainer assumes that the complaine is guilty of the offence and states modified blame of complaine's action or directly blames the complaine or his or her action.

Source: Trosborg (1995, pp.338)

According to Trosborg (1995), strategies subsume head acts and supporting moves. A strategy has to do with the way agents go about reaching a goal while remaining within the socio-cultural norms of appropriateness (Van Dijk, 1983). According to Van Dijk (1983), a strategy involves actions and inter-actions in order to reach a social and communicative goal and involves what we say and how we say it.

In using the No explicit reproach strategy, the complainer does not mention the complaint in the complainable and does not directly and explicitly state something is bad, unpleasant or offensive. However, when the complainer uses Disapproval strategy his or her statement involves the expression of dislike, disapproval, and annoyance in connection with a certain state of affairs that he or she considers bad for him or her. The complainer may also state bad or ill consequences which are resulting from a problem or offence that the complaine is held indirectly responsible for. Accusation strategy is used by complainers when they try to establish an agent of the complainable. By using this strategy, the complainer asserts that he or she is in some way connected with the problem and asks the complaine questions about the situation. Thus, the complainer indirectly establishes the complaine as the agent of the complainable or directly accuses the complaine for committing the problem which is a direct accusation. Among all, Blame strategy is considered as most severe strategy. By using this strategy, complainer assumes that the complaine is guilty of the offence and therefore states modified blame of complaine's action or directly blames the complaine for his or her action.

Suffice to say that there were many complaint strategies which can be used in the study of speech act of complaint. However, Trosborg's (1995) strategies are comprehensive in which they consist of four strategies and eight sub-strategies for analyzing the

complaint speech act. In addition, Trosborg's framework is reliable as other scholars have used it for analyzing complaint speech act such as Kraft et al., (2002); Yian, (2008); Hong et al., (2009); Delen et al., (2010); Ayu T. et al., (2011); Lee, (2012); Pratiwi, (2013); Wijianto et al., (2013); Fatmasari, (2015); and Yang, (2016).

1.5.2.2 Complaint Structure

Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) complaint taxonomy creates an effective combination with Trosborg's (1995) complaint strategies in order to examine how complaints are structured. While Trosborg's (ibid.) taxonomy contains complaint head acts and supporting moves, Rinnert and Nogami's (ibid.) taxonomy shows how strategies are used in complaints. They divided complaints into three main aspects: 1) main component, 2) level of directness, and 3) amount of mitigation (see table 1.2).

Table 1.2 : Complaint Structures

1. Main component a. Initiator b. Complaint c. Request	a. beginning formula b. expression of negative evaluation c. direct or indirect attempts to get H to redress the situation
2. Level of directness a. Indirect b. Somewhat direct c. Very direct	a. no explicit mention of offense and implied offense only b. mention of offense, but no mention of the hearer's responsibility c. explicit mention of offense and hearer's responsibility for it
3. Amount of mitigation	softening expressions

Source: Rinnert and Nogami (2006, pp.33)

Main component contains: a) initiator (such as greetings, address terms, and other opening formulas), b) complaints (that is expression of negative evaluation, including justification), and c) request (which is direct or indirect attempts to get the hearer to redress the situation).

Level of directness is also divided into three levels: a) indirect strategy (which is no explicit mention of offense and implied offense only), b) somewhat direct (that is mention of offense, but no mention of the hearer's responsibility), and c) very direct (that is explicit mention of offense and hearer's responsibility for it). Amount of mitigation contains softening expressions such as "sort of, a little, you know, could, would, I wonder, I think, etc."

The initiator, level of directness and mitigator also display politeness. A complainer may use initiators such as hi, hello, good morning, etc prior to his or her complaint, or try to be indirect, or use mitigators to soften his or her statement to show politeness. Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) complaint taxonomy therefore complements Brown and Levinson's taxonomy in order to help show how speakers do politeness when complaining.

Needless to say, Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) taxonomy may not be useful to analyze specific complaint strategies; however, the taxonomy is beneficial to show structural patterns of a complaint. There are other scholars who have used Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) taxonomy in the study of complaint such as Itomitsu, (2009); Ladegaard, (2009); Schauer, (2009); Farnia et al., (2010); Ayu et al., (2011); Sukyadi, (2011); Timpe, (2012); Bikmen, (2013); and Da Silva, (2014).

1.5.3 Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson (1987) postulated theory of face which is considered as the most effectual theory that plays a significant role in the study of speech acts. Their theory includes three main notions: 1) notion of face, 2) notion of face threatening act (FTA), and 3) notion of politeness strategies.

The notion of face refers to the public self-image which all adults try and want to protect. It contains two parts: negative face: that is one's want not to be impeded and positive face: that is one's want to be accepted and appreciated. The notion of face threatening act (FTA) contains acts that intrinsically damage one's face by saying or doing in opposition to what the others want or desire. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four types of face threatening act: 1) acts that threaten the negative face of hearers, 2) acts that threaten the positive face of hearers, 3) acts that offend or threaten the negative face of speakers, and 4) acts that damage the positive face of speakers.

Brown and Levinson (1987) divided politeness strategies into five main types: 1) bald on record which is most direct strategy and usually used in relation with close people such as friends, 2) negative politeness that happens while an individual intends to avoid the obstruction of the freedom of action of the hearers, 3) positive politeness which occurs while an individual takes into account and protects the hearers' wants and feelings, 4) Off-record that is indirect language and minimizes the speaker's potential to be imposing, and 5) not doing FTA that occurs when the speaker does not want to say or do anything to harm or affect the hearer's face. The strategies are shown in the Figure below (refer to section 2.3.1.3 for further elaboration of the theory).

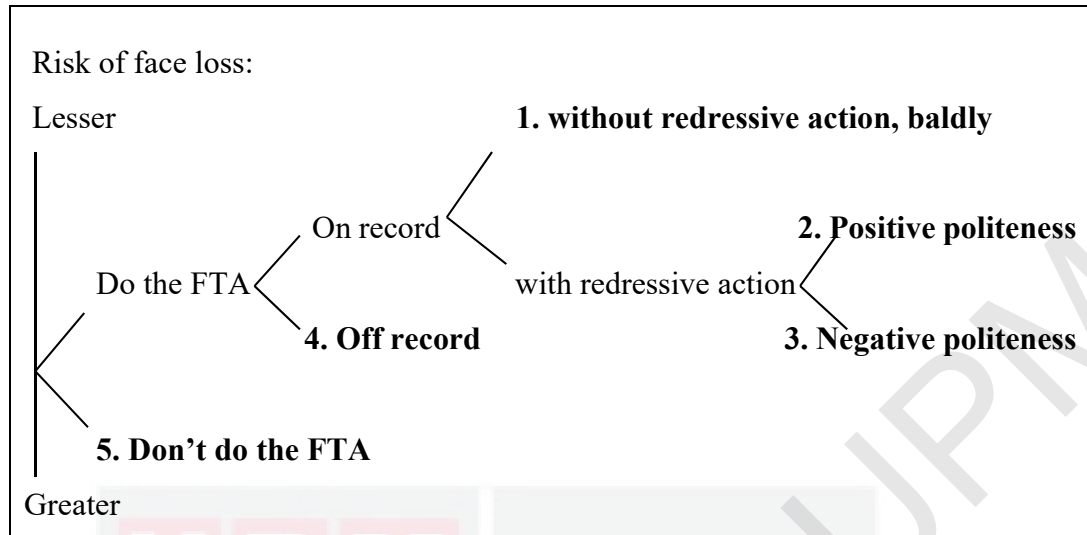


Figure 1.1 : Brown & Levinson's (1987) Choice of Politeness Strategy

Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested strategies for achieving negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record as follows.

Table 1.3 : Realization of Politeness Strategies

Positive politeness theories	Negative politeness theories	Off-record theories
1. Notice/attend to H 2. Exaggerate 3. Intensify interest to H 4. Use in-group identity marker 5. Seek agreement 6. Avoid disagreement 7. Presuppose/assert common ground 8. Joke 9. Show concern for H's wants 10. Offer, promise 11. Be optimistic 12. Include both S and H in the activity 13. Give reasons 14. Assume/assert reciprocity 15. Give gift to H (e.g. goods, sympathy, understanding)	1. Be conventionally indirect 2. Question, hedge 3. Be pessimistic 4. Minimize imposition 5. Give deference 6. Apologize 7. Impersonalize 8. State the imposition as a general rule 9. Nominalize 10. Go on record as incurring a debt	1. Give hints/clues 2. Give association clues 3. Presuppose 4. Understate 5. Overstate 6. Use tautologies 7. Use contradiction 8. Be ironic 9. Use metaphors 10. Use rhetorical questions 11. Be ambiguous 12. Be vague 13. Over-generalize 14. Displace hearer 15. Be incomplete, use ellipsis

Source: Brown and Levinson (1987, 101-227)

1.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is shown in Figure 1.2. As noted earlier (see Table 1.1) Trosborg (1995) divides complaints into four main strategies and eight sub-strategies. The strategies include: 1) no explicit reproach, 2) disapproval, 3) accusation, and 4) blame. Whereas, Rinnert and Nogami (2006) divide complaint into three aspects: 1) main component, 2) level of directness, and 3) mitigation. Trosborg's (1995) and Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) complaint taxonomies are used for analyze of complaints in this study. While Trosborg's (ibid.) taxonomy can show specific strategies such as hints, annoyance, accusation, etc, Rinnert and Nogami's (ibid.) taxonomy can show an overall picture of how complaints are organized.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies are used to show how politeness is displayed in complaints. They include five strategies: 1) bald on record, 2) positive politeness, 3) negative politeness, 4) off-record, and 5) not doing face threatening acts. In addition, Rinnert and Nogami's (2006) complaint taxonomy components as initiator, level of directness, and mitigator also help to show the politeness strategies used.

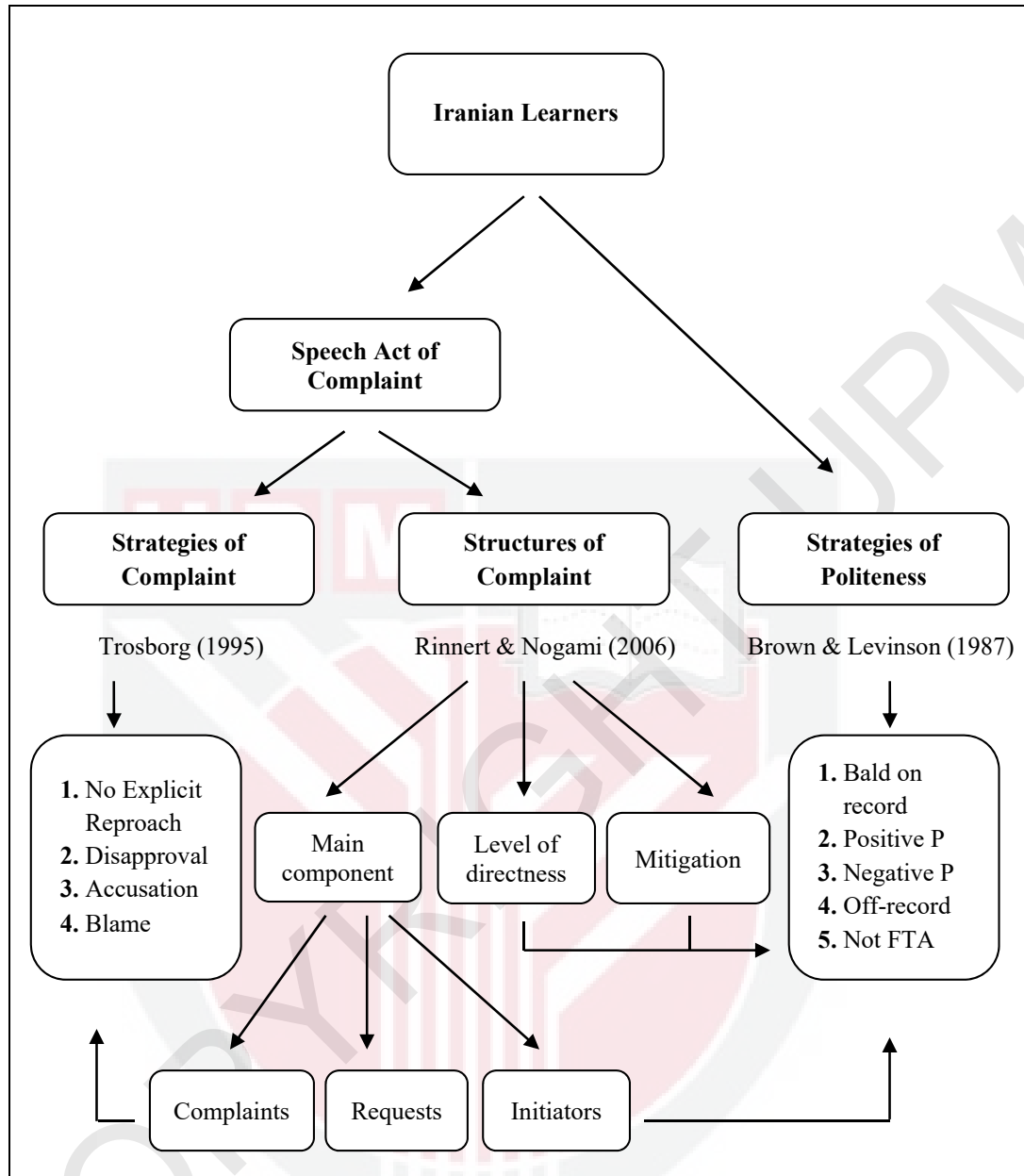


Figure 1.2 : Conceptual Framework

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research is significant in many ways. First, the findings of this study can add useful data to the pragmatic literature and has significance for understanding pragmatic competence of Iranians when communicating in English. The results of this study can also be useful for intercultural communication teachers and trainers in their teaching programs.

This study intends to give some insights into understanding how Iranians in difficult situations complaint when they communicate with other nationalities. So, the study provides a wider understanding of the nature of complaints by Iranians and how

politeness is exercised by them in establishing good relationships to cooperate and avoid misunderstanding.

Moreover, the findings is significant for language learning programs in Iran considering whether these programs are able to providing learners with pragmatic competence in foreign languages and equipping them with communicative competence proficiency in target languages.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Complaint: Complaint is the speaker's expression of negative feelings and disapproval towards a state of affairs which the hearer is held directly or indirectly responsible. So, complaint is a reaction to a socially unsuitable or unacceptable act and threatens the positive face of hearers as well as speakers.

Complaint strategy: Complaint strategy pertains to the strategies that complainers use in order to make a complaint.

Complaint structure: The manner in which the components or parts of a complaint are organized.

Politeness strategy: Strategies for mitigating and softening face threats for speaker and hearer when performing a face threatening act.

1.9 Summary

This chapter presented the basic parts of the study and its aim was to decide the fundamental zone of the study and, the following chapter discusses review of literature.

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