

Politeness Strategies and Politeness Markers in Email Request Sent by Iranian EFL Learners to Professors

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate politeness strategies and politeness markers in email-request sent by Iranian male and female EFL learners to professors. The comparison between strategies used by males and females in email-request were also analyzed. 52 actual emails of M.A students of TEFL studying at Azad University consisted the data in this research. To analyze the corpus, politeness strategies in each email were examined according to the four strategies adapted by Brown and Levinson's (1978) Politeness Theory. Finally, the frequency of syntactic and lexical politeness modifiers in each email-request of male and female were found and compared. The results showed that negative politeness strategy was the most frequent strategy used by males and females in email-requests. Also, *embedding* was the most frequent syntactic politeness modifier and *subjectivizers* were the most frequent lexical politeness modifiers used by both males and females in email-requests.

Keywords: Politeness Strategies, Syntactic Politeness Modifiers, Lexical Politeness Modifiers, Politeness Theory

INTRODUCTION

Email exchanges are now an effective medium among people and it is becoming increasingly an accepted means of communication in all social relationships such as those between friends and university students and their professors or academic contexts. Nowadays, applying email as a useful means of communication has many advantages for users such as high speed, availability, low cost, and etc. "In fact, e-mail constitutes a unique, hybrid type of text, and this hybridity also allows its users to display a wide range of discourse styles in e-mail when used in different contexts and for various communicative purposes" (Chen, 2001, p.1).

These features influence the structure that students apply in their emails and may lead to an inappropriate or impolite email. Some faculties complain from students' request email due to inappropriate request, salutation, abbreviation, mechanical and structural errors, and impoliteness (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). "E-mails have brought professors and students to a closer contact, removing some of the traditional boundaries between students and their professors. This has caused students to write to their supervisors using the language and style meant for their friends" (Najeeb, Maros & Nor, 2012, p.127). In many countries such as Iran where English language is a foreign language, most of the students of English are not sufficiently aware of the socio-linguistic and socio-pragmatic norms of email writing. Also, they never have been trained on email etiquette writing.

According to Chen (2006), email has both features of spoken language and features of written language. The absence of some features of real communication such as body language or non-verbal cues through email may lead to misunderstanding or miscommunication and may create difficulties for some users.

As email becomes the most convenient way for communication among people in general and in academic context in particular, it is completely necessary that EFL learners should be familiar with email writing etiquette and rules. Politeness strategies and markers are some of the essential factors that students should be familiar with them. Therefore, this study focused on politeness strategies and modifiers on students email and that whether Iranian EFL learners are familiarized with these strategies and their application sufficiently or not.

Politeness theory

Politeness theory is one of the most popular universal theories proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The universality explains politeness theory across languages and cultures around the world. "Politeness is a pervasive phenomenon in all communities" (Najeeb, Maros, & Nor, 2012, p. 129). According to Quraishi (1994, p.14), "Politeness is one characteristic of language use and is in essence consideration of others and showing concern about how to behave with others appropriately according to their social status and social norms".

Reiter (1997) stated that some acts such as requests, threats, orders, prompting and alarming are exposed to face threatening acts. Therefore, politeness strategies are used in order to decrease infliction of face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Politeness strategies

Politeness strategies that were established by Brown and Levinson (1987), present the best known framework for classification of politeness strategies and were applied to many studies around the world so far. Goffman (1967, cited in Izadi & Zilaie, 2012) ascertain that "This model revolves around the concept of face, which is defined as the public self-image that all members of the society have and seek to claim for themselves"(p. 86).

Two important classifications of face are negative face and positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Najeeb, Maros, and Nor (2012) defined as follows:

Negative face is threatened, when an individual does not intend to avoid the obstruction of his interlocutor's freedom of action. Positive politeness is used to satisfy the speaker's need for approval and belonging, while the main goal of negative politeness is to minimize the imposition of a face-threatening act (p. 130).

Figure 1 shows Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies.

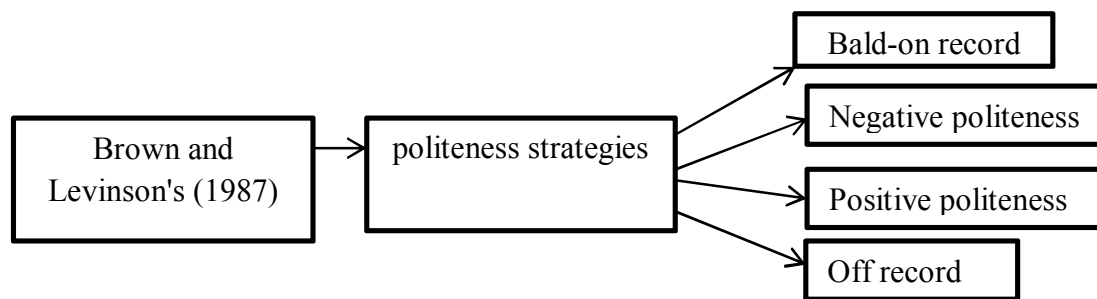


Figure 1: Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies adapted from Najeeb, Maros & Nor, 2012, p. 134)

Brown and Levinson (1987, cited in Najeeb, Maros, & Nor, 2012), formalized politeness strategies as follow:

Bald On-record

This strategy does not generally decrease the possibility of jeopardizing the hearer's face and astounds or ashames the addressee. This is often utilized when the hearer and the speaker have an intimate interaction with each other (e.g. family member, sincere friends) "instances of urgency: ‘Watch out!’ or ‘Be careful!’" (p. 131).

Positive Politeness

Threats to the hearer's positive face are reduced by applying this strategy. Also, this requires that the hearer is relaxed, and to prevent disagreement and jokes, be optimistic, use solidarity, make a promise, listen to the hearers’ needs and wants.

Negative Politeness

This strategy is commonly accommodated with the hearer's negative face. For example: being pessimistic, being indirect, decreasing the imposition, using hedges or questions, apologizing and using the plural forms of pronouns.

Indirect Strategy

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), this strategy employs implications as a substitution of direct requests. "For example, a speaker might say ‘wow, it’s cold here’, which would imply to the listener to take an action, such as increasing the temperature of the heater in the room, without directly asking him/her to do so" (p. 131).

Rafieyan (2012) notes that these strategies show the four different levels of politeness, that is, the first strategy is completely impolite, and the last one is very polite. Parviz (2012) demonstrated these levels with a good example as follows:

- (1) The student can state the request baldly on record in the imperative and most direct way (e.g., *Meet with me!*);
- (2) The student can express solidarity by phrasing the request using positive politeness (e.g., *Let's meet to discuss your ideas*);
- (3) The student may attempt to minimize the imposition by wording the request with negative politeness (e.g., *Would you be willing to meet with me for just a minute about this concept?*);
- (4) The student can make an off-record request by hinting or using ambiguous language to minimize the threat (e.g., *Usually when I talk through a concept, I can understand it better*);
- (5) Or the student may not make the request at all (p. 130).

Syntactic and lexical politeness modifiers:

Syntactic and lexical politeness modifiers are devices that are added within each request to extenuate the impact of the position of the request and lead to realize politeness (Biesenbach-lucas, 2007). Table 1 shows the category of syntactical and lexical politeness modifier used in this study adapted from Biesenbach-lucas' classification with some modification.

Table 1. syntactic and lexical politeness modifiers in this study

Syntactic	lexical
Past tense	<i>Please</i>
Present tense	Downtoners: <i>possibly, maybe, perhaps</i>
Modals: <i>could, should, would</i>	Understaters: <i>just, a little, a minute</i>
Embedding : <i>I would appreciate it if you could...</i>	Subjectivisers: <i>I was wondering, I think, I feel, I wanted to know</i>

<i>Do you think I?</i>	
Interrogative	Consultative devices: <i>do you think, is there any chance</i>
Declarative or imperative	Hedges: <i>some, any, somehow</i>

Research on request strategies and politeness in student E-mail

Bunz and compbell (2002) reported a study that investigated politeness accommodation indicators in personal electronic mails. This study was based on Buzzanell et al.'s (1996) research in which politeness accommodation within telephone messages had been surveyed. In this study one of four versions of a message was sent to subjects. The content of each version was the same but varied in politeness. Verbal politeness makers (i.e., please, thank you), or structural politeness makers (i.e., greeting, closing remark), or both, or none messages were included. Results indicated that participants accommodated to verbal politeness markers in the body of a message and to structural politeness marker of greeting. In addition, the messages including both verbal and structural politeness markers stimulated the most polite responses.

Duthler (2006) conducted a study that analyzed requests made via email and voicemail from the point of view of politeness. The author predicted that email users create more polite speech voicemail. The researcher believed that due to the lack of time or not having enough time, voice mail or users have less control over planning, composing, and editing than users of email. One hundred fifty-one messages were analyzed for properties of politeness. Although there are many politeness measures, in this study the author preferred to use Hotgraves and Yang's (1992) measuring technique. Variables in this analysis were politeness super strategy for request and for reply formality of address phrase, number of words and number of adjuncts. The results of this study strongly supported Walther's (1996) hypersonal model and also showed that email users create more polite content than voicemail users.

Bisenbach–Lucas (2007) reported a study among native and nonnative speakers of English. This study focused on e-politeness in email-request of the students to faculty members. Blum-kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) speech act analysis was used by the researcher. Email-requests were analyzed from pragmatic and lexico-syntactic point of view, directness of requests, and syntactic and lexical politeness markers. The findings of this study revealed that students applied more direct strategies for the lower imposition request and more politeness devices with direct request strategies (e.g. feedback requests).

In another study, Najeeb, Maros and Nor (2012) investigated cross-cultural differences among Arab students who were studying in Malaysia as international students. In this study researchers analyzed emails that were sent by Arab students to their supervisors. The results showed that Arab students applied different politeness strategies, and were more direct in their requests. Arab students had some problems during their studies in Malaysia, one of which was lack of fluency in English and another problem was lack of knowing sociolinguistic and pragmatics norms sufficiently in email writing. "While certain ways of expressions would be acceptable in the Arabic language, they may be considered as impolite or unacceptable by their Malaysian supervisors communicating in English" (Najeeb, Maro & Nor, 2012, p.127). Thus, students should be aware of sociolinguistics and sociopragmatics norms in order to have effective and appropriate email communication in cyber space. The other important factor is that politeness strategies may vary in different cultures (Najeeb, Maros & Nor, 2012).

In a similar study, Izadi and Zilaie (2012) attempted to find out politeness strategies in email exchanges in Persian. The researchers focused on positive strategies and what positive strategies are more common

or used by Iranian speakers. In this study 60 emails exchanged between fairly intimate friends written in Persian by the authors were analyzed. The most frequent positive politeness strategies were "group identity markers", and "give gifts to H". The results could help cross cultural communication.

In another study on electronic text genre, Hayati and Shokouhi (2011) carried out a study to analyze reprint request emails sent by EFL and physics postgraduates. The researchers tried to identify their strategies, move, and most typical lexico-grammatical features. According to Hayati and Shokouhi (2011), reprint request "is a request for a copy, reprint or off print of a research article mailed by a researcher (or occasionally librarian) to the author or of that publication" (p. 25). In this study one hundred emails of requesting a reprint were selected for analysis. The authors followed the approach for analysis taken by Swales (1990). Swales (1990) reports that a request should have four stages: a) opening salutation, (b) request statement, (c) expression of thanks, and (d) closing salutation. The researchers analyzed the differences and similarities in writing styles between these two corpora of reprint request. The results showed that the move schemata of the two corpora were much alike, but there were differences at the level of strategies and microstructures, and the physics group affected by conventions of their first language or Persian and previously learned text.

Parviz (2012) designed a study to examine politeness accommodation in e-mail messages. The number of the participants of the this study was one hundred Iranian postgraduate students of EFL. They were M.A students of TEFL, Translation Studies, English Literature, and Linguistics from both state universities and Azad universities in Iran. The participants received four different types of messages, messages with verbal politeness markers, messages with structural politeness markers, messages with both verbal and structural politeness markers, and messages with neither verbal nor structural politeness markers. The messages were written by different levels of politeness but the same content. The results showed that students accommodated noticeably to verbal politeness and structural politeness markers, and the participants answered significantly more politely if they had received a message with those features.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The fact is that being polite in English is one of the most essential components of language proficiency. E-politeness might be noticeable by prevalent use of email by students and professors of the universities for pedagogical purposes. Studying writing email etiquette and style is necessary for students especially for nonnative speakers. They are likely to write emails different from native speakers. The fact is that only lexical and grammatical knowledge does not guarantee having successful email exchanges. Thus, this study will be an attempt to examine politeness strategies and syntactical and lexical politeness modifiers in different types of email-request used by male and female of Iranian EFL learners to professors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are politeness strategies differentially used by male and female Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors?
- 2) Are syntactic politeness modifiers and the lexical politeness modifiers differentially used by male and female Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors?

METHODOLOGY

The present study investigate politeness strategies and syntactical and lexical politeness modifiers that are used by males and females EFL learners in their email-request to professors. This part reports the

methodology of the research and covers a full description of the participants, materials as well as procedures.

Participants

The participants of this study were Fifty two (N=52) males and females; males=21(%40) and females=31(%60); M.A students of TEFL studying at Takestan Islamic Azad University. Their level of general English language were advanced; therefore, they had enough proficiency of general English language. They had studied English in their undergraduate studies for four years; translation, literature, and TEFL; at universities in Iran (both state and Azad). They have never had any course to learn email writing rules.

Material

Two actual email corpora consisted the data for this study which have been written by two groups of males and females of M.A students to their professors. The content of each email which students sent to their professors contained a request. Some of emails did not contain request and had to be left out. The students were not informed that their emails used as data. Without revealing personal information, email-request used as data in this study.

Procedure

Quantitative and qualitative approaches for analysis of email-request were used by the researcher. This study focused on politeness strategies and politeness markers in email-request of Iranian EFL learners to professors. In the first step, email-request of male and female were separately classified into three different groups (request for topic, request for sending files, and request for feedback) by the researcher and frequency of them sent by males and females were elicited and analyzed. In the second step, politeness strategies in each email were examined and tabulated according to the four strategies adapted by Brown and Levinson's (1978) Politeness Theory. The finding will answer the first research question: Are politeness strategies differentially used by the male and female Iranian EFL learners in their different types email-requests to professors?

In the last step, the frequency of syntactic and lexical politeness modifiers in each email-request of males and females was found and compared. The finding will answer the second research question: Are the syntactic politeness modifiers and the lexical politeness modifiers differentially used by male and female Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed at investigating email-requests written by male and female EFL learners to find out the, politeness strategies and syntactic and lexical politeness modifiers in students' email to professors. Email-requests were classified in three different groups. Data analysis were separately used to find out the probable differences and similarities among different group of email-requests and between males and females. Furthermore, tables and figures are provided to show statistical analysis.

Investigation of the first research question

The first question raised in the study was:

1) Are politeness strategies differentially used by the male and female Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors?

Politeness strategies used by males and females were bald-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies (*Table 2*). In general, negative politeness strategy was the most frequent strategy used by males (%52) and females (%39) in all types of email-requests. In requesting files and feedback requests both males and females and in topic requests females applied negative politeness strategy as the most frequent strategy. But, in email-requests for topic, the most frequent strategy used by males (%50) was positive politeness strategies. *Table 3*. shows politeness strategies and frequencies regardless of gender in emails-requests (topic, sending files, and feedback). Generally, negative politeness strategies were the most frequent strategies in all types of email-requests. In general, with regard to gender, there are insignificant differences between males and females in email-requests. For males, negative politeness strategies, followed by positive politeness strategies, off record, and finally bald record were the most frequent strategies used. For females, negative politeness strategies, followed by off record, positive politeness strategies, and finally bald record were the most frequent strategies used.

Table 2. Politeness strategies and frequencies used by males and females in email-requests (topic, requesting files, and feedback)

Politeness strategies	Frequency in email-request for topic		Frequency in email-request for sending files		Frequency in email-request for feedback		Total	
Bald-record	Male	0(%0)	Male	0(%0)	Male	5(%18)	Male	5(%10)
	Female	1(%9)	Female	5(%24)	Female	5(%11)	Female	11(%14)
Positive politeness	Male	8(%50)	Male	0(%0)	Male	2(%7)	Male	10(%21)
	Female	3(%27)	Female	1(%5)	Female	11(%25)	Female	15(%20)
Negative politeness	Male	5(%31)	Male	5(%10)	Male	15(%55)	Male	25(%52)
	Female	5(%45)	Female	10(%48)	Female	15(%34)	Female	30(%39)
Off-record	Male	3(%19)	Male	0(%0)	Male	5(%18)	Male	8(%17)
	Female	2(%18)	Female	5(%24)	Female	13(%30)	Female	20(%26)

Table 3. politeness strategies and frequencies regardless of gender in email-requests (topic, requesting files, and feedback)

Politeness strategies	Frequency in email-request for topic	Frequency in email-request for sending files	Frequency in email-request for feedback	Total Percentage
Bald-record	1(%1)	5(%4)	10(%8)	16(%13)
Positive politeness	12(%9)	1(%1)	13(%10)	26(%21)
Negative politeness	10(%8)	15(%12)	30(%24)	55(%44)
Off-record	5(%4)	5(%4)	18(%14)	28(%22)

In order to find the relationship between gender and politeness strategies in email-requests, the Chi-square test was utilized. The result present in *Table 4*.

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests for the use of Politeness strategies by males and females in email-requests

	Value	Df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.660	3	.447
Likelihood Ratio	2.704	3	.440
Linear-by-Linear Association	.023	1	.880
N of Valid Cases	124		

The relationship between using politeness strategies and gender was not significant because the Chi-Square test revealed the Sig. of .44 which is higher than 0.05, and the Chi-Square value observed was 2.66 which is less than the critical value of Chi-Square i.e. 7.82 with df of 3 (Chi-Square value = 2.66, $p = .44$). As a result the second null hypothesis which states politeness strategies are not used differentially by **male** and **female** Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors was **supported**.

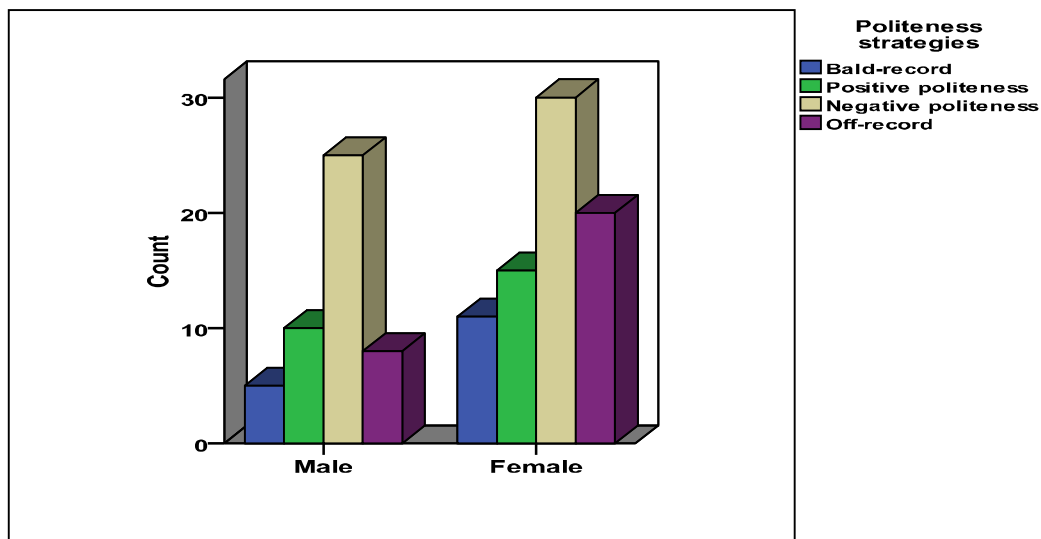


Figure 2. Politeness strategies used by males and females in email-requests

Investigation of the second research question

The second research question raised here was:

2) Are the syntactic politeness modifiers and the lexical politeness modifiers differentially used by male and female Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors?

Syntactic politeness modifiers used by males and females across requests for topic, requesting files, and feedback were analyzed. As Table 5. illustrates, in email-request for topic, the most frequent syntactic politeness modifier was *embedding* used by males (%22) and females (%29). As the percentages show there is no significant difference between males and females in applying syntactic politeness markers in email-request for topic and both of them preferred *embedding*. In email-request for requesting files, the most frequently syntactic politeness modifiers used by males and females were *embedding*, *modals*, and *interrogative*. For females *embedding* (%21) and for males *modals* (%27) and *interrogative* (%27) were equally the preferred syntactic politeness modifiers. As the results demonstrate, in request requesting files there is insignificant difference in applying syntactic politeness markers comparing to request topic. Similar to request topic, in request feedback *embedding* was the most frequently syntactic politeness marker employed by males (%22) and females (%24). Generally, *embedding* was the most preferred syntactic politeness modifiers used by males and females in all types of email-requests.

Table 5. Syntactic politeness modifiers used by males and females across requests for topic, sending files, and feedback

Request topic	Request sending Files	Request feedback	Total
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Past	Male	4(%17)	Male	2(%18)	Male	5(%14)	Male	11(%6)
	Female	2(%14)	Female	7(%18)	Female	10(%18)	Female	19(%11)
Present	Male	3(%13)	Male	1(%9)	Male	6(%17)	Male	10(%6)
	Female	2(%14)	female	5(%13)	Female	5(%9)	Female	12(%7)
Modals(could, should, would)	Male	3(%13)	Male	3(%27)		6(%17)	Male	12(%7)
	Female	2(%14)	Female	6(%16)	Female	11(%20)	Female	19(%11)
Embedding	Male	5(%22)	Male	2(%18)	Male	8(%22)	Male	15(%8)
	Female	4(%29)	Female	8(%21)	female	13(%24)	Female	25(%14)
Interrogative	Male	4(%17)	Male	3(%27)	Male	5(%14)	Male	12(%7)
	Female	1(%7)	Female	5(%13)	Female	9(%16)	Female	15(%8)
Declarative or imperative	Male	4(%17)	Male	0(%0)	Male	6(%17)	Male	10(%6)
	Female	3(%21)	Female	7(%18)	female	7(%13)	female	17(%9)

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests for the use of Syntactic Politeness modifiers by males and females in email-requests

	Value	Df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.846	5	.974
Likelihood Ratio	.840	5	.974
Linear-by-Linear Association	.000	1	.984
N of Valid Cases	177		

The relationship between using syntactic politeness modifiers and gender was not significant because the Chi-Square test result showed a Sig. of .97 which is higher than 0.05, and the Chi-Square value observed was .84 which is less than the critical value of Chi-Square i.e. 11.07 with df of 5 (Chi-Square value = .84, $p = .97$). Accordingly, the third null hypothesis which states syntactic politeness modifiers

are not used differentially by **male** and **female** Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors was **supported**.

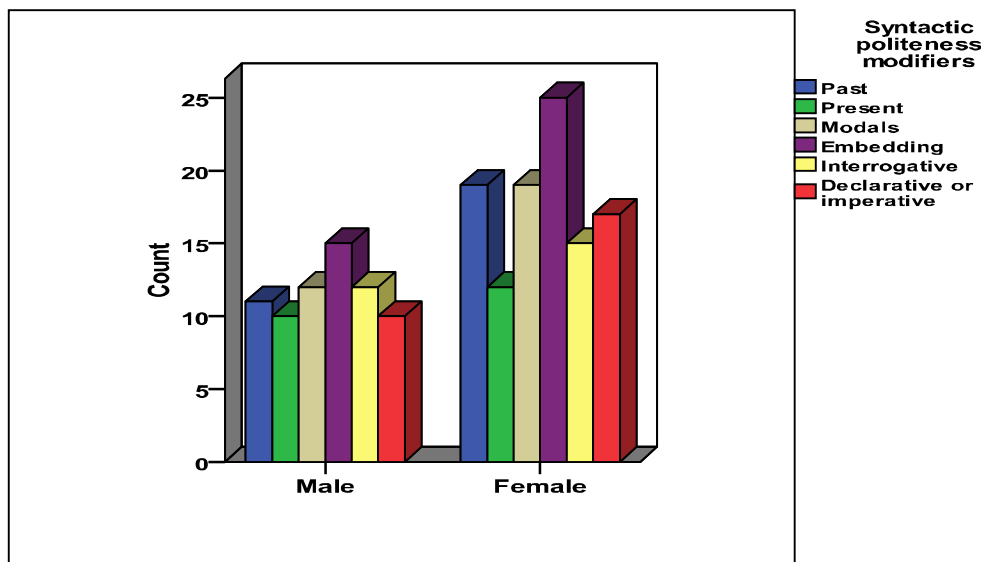


Figure 3. Syntactic Politeness modifiers used by males and females in email-requests

Lexical politeness modifiers used by males and females across requests for topic, requesting files, and feedback were analyzed. As Table 7. shows, in email-requests for topic, the most frequent lexical politeness markers were *subjectivizers* (%38) for males, and *subjectivizers* (%36) and *consultative devices* (%36) equally for females. In contrast, in email-request for requesting files, for females *please* (%35) and for males *hedge* (%50) were the most frequently used politeness markers. In request feedback, *subjectivizers* for males (%26) and for females (%26) was the preferred lexical politeness marker. Totally, *subjectivizers* was the preferred lexical politeness modifier in email-requests.

Table 7. Lexical politeness modifiers used by males and females across requests for topic, sending files, and feedback

	Request topic		Request requesting files		Request feedback		Total	
Please	Mal	1(8%)	Mal	1(25%)	Mal	8(23%)	Mal	10(27%)
	Fem	2(14%)	fem	8(35%)	fem	11(20%)	Fem	21(15%)
Downtoners	Mal	1(8%)	Mal	0(0%)	Mal	4(12%)	Mal	5(14%)
	Fem	0(0%)	fem	0(0%)	fem	6(11%)	Fem	6(4%)

Understanders	Male	1(8%)	Male	0(0%)	Male	0(0%)	Male	1(11%)
	Female	0(0%)	female	0(0%)	female	3(6%)	Female	3(22%)
Subjectivizers	Male	5(38%)	Male	1(25%)	Male	9(26%)	Male	15(11%)
	Female	5(36%)	female	6(26%)	female	14(26%)	Female	25(18%)
Consultative devices	Male	2(15%)	Male	0(0%)	Male	8(23%)	Male	10(7%)
	female	5(36%)	female	3(13%)	female	12(22%)	Female	20(14%)
Hedges	Male	3(23%)	Male	2(50%)	Male	5(15%)	Male	10(7%)
	Female	2(14%)	female	6(26%)	Female	8(15%)	female	16(11%)

Table 8. Chi-Square Tests for the use of Lexical politeness modifiers by males and females in email-requests

	Value	Df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.026	5	.960
Likelihood Ratio	1.027	5	.960
Linear-by-Linear Association	.050	1	.823
N of Valid Cases	142		

The relationship between using lexical politeness modifiers and gender was not significant because the Chi-Square test result showed a Sig. of .96 which is higher than 0.05, and the Chi-Square value observed was 1.02 which is less than the critical value of Chi-Square i.e. 11.07 with df of 5 (Chi-Square value = 1.02, $p = .96$). In conclusion, the fourth null hypothesis which states lexical politeness modifiers are not used differentially by **male** and **female** Iranian EFL learners in their email-requests to professors was **supported**.

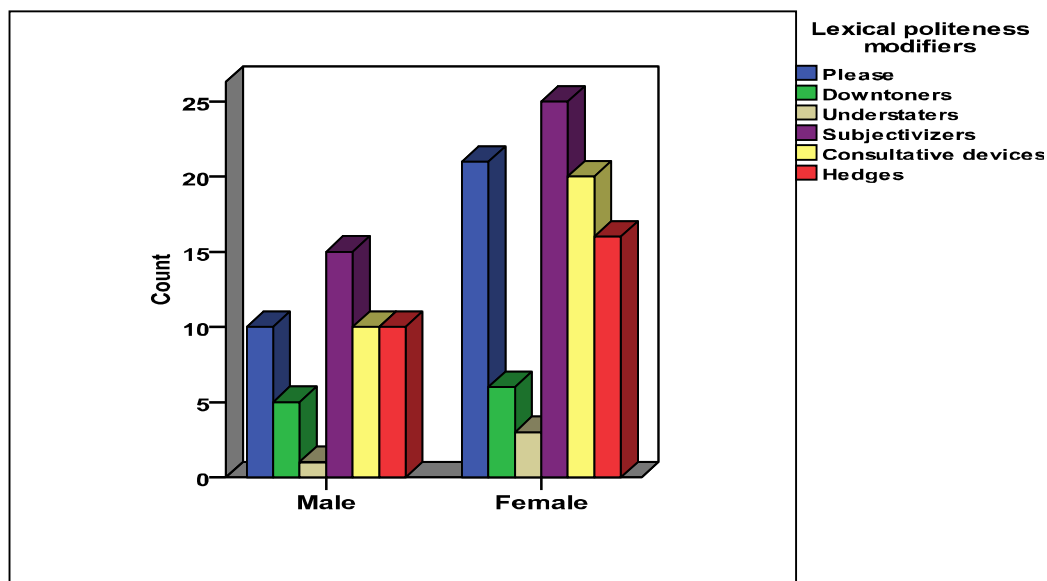


Figure 4. Lexical politeness modifiers used by males and females in email-requests

The first research question in present study focused on politeness strategies. Negative politeness strategy was the most frequent strategy used both by males and females in all types of email-requests. As the results show, there is not much difference with regard to topic request for males, and the most frequent strategy was positive politeness strategy. In this case, the finding is in accordance with Najeeb, Maros, and Nor's (2012) who reported that the majority of Arab nonnative speakers used positive politeness strategies in their request via email to their supervisors. Generally, the obtained results showed that the differences between politeness strategies used by males and females were not significant.

Regarding the second research questions, concerning in topic request and feedback, both males and females, and females in requesting files used *embedding* as the most frequent syntactic politeness modifiers in their emails. With little difference in requesting files, males used *interrogative* and modals as the most frequent syntactic politeness markers. The finding of the present study is not in line with Biesenbach-Lucas' (2007) study who reported that nonnative speakers in request appointment, request extension, and in request feedback used past tense as the most frequent syntactic politeness markers. Generally, performance of males and females with regard to applying syntactic politeness markers in email-requests was almost equal and statistically not different.

With regard to lexical politeness modifiers, in email-request for topic, the most frequent lexical politeness markers were *subjectivizers* for males and *subjectivizers* and equally *consultative devices* for females. In contrast, in email-request for requesting files, for females *please* and for males *hedging* were the most frequent politeness markers. In request feedback, *subjectivizers* for males and females was the preferred lexical politeness markers. In general, *subjectivizers* were the preferred lexical politeness modifiers in email-request. The finding of this study is in line with the result of Biesenbach-Lucas' (2007) study in that in the case of requesting files for females, *please*, was the most frequent lexical politeness marker which is in accordance in with Biesenbach-Lucas' (2007) study for nonnative speakers in request feedback. Also in requesting files for males in this study, *hedging*, was the most frequent lexical politeness marker which is in accordance with nonnative speakers in request appointment. Generally, the results showed that the performance of males and females with regard to lexical politeness strategies in email-request was almost equal and statistically not different.

CONCLUSION

The first research question aimed at investigating whether or not there are any significant difference among politeness strategies applied by males and females in email-requests. The findings of present study showed that there are no significant differences among politeness strategies used by males and females in email-requests. Besides, the second research question attempted to examine whether or not there are any significant differences among syntactical and lexical politeness modifiers used by males and females in email-requests. The obtained results demonstrated that there are no significant differences among syntactical and lexical politeness modifiers used by males and females in email-requests.

The findings of present study also showed that negative politeness strategy was the most frequent strategy used by males and females in email-requests. Moreover, syntactic politeness modifiers were analyzed in this study, the results showed that syntactic politeness modifiers were used in the same way by males as females across email-requests to professors. The most frequent syntactic politeness marker was *embedding*. With regard to lexical politeness modifiers, males and females used *subjectivizers* as the most frequent modifiers in their email-requests. The outcome of this study can be useful for instructors, professors, and supervisors for preparing and gathering teaching materials. Students might be familiar with a variety of helpful different politeness strategies, different levels of politeness in those strategies, and increasing the level of politeness with using lexical and syntactical politeness indicators and learn how they can increase the level of politeness with the use of those strategies and markers to communicate more effectively and appropriately. This study conducted in EFL context, further research can be conducted in ESL context. In addition, some variables such as age, personality, different levels of education, and different academic majors of the students can be organized in further research.

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