

A Cross-Linguistic Study of Emphasis in English and Persian

Ahmad Reza Eslami¹ & Mohammad Javad Rezai²

¹Yazd University, eslami.ahmadreza@gmail.com

²Corresponding author, Yazd University, mjrezai@yahoo.com

Received: 28/07/2013

Accepted: 25/10/2013

Abstract

Language is a system of verbal elements that makes communication of meanings possible in the manners the users intend by employing certain linguistic devices which are partly language-specific. Once communicating cross-linguistically, there is always a risk of negative transfer of techniques or processes from the first language (L1) to the foreign language (L2). The current study investigates the “emphasis” issue and how it is encoded and performed as a speech act in Persian and English. The investigation, based on a descriptive method, begins by verifying overstated and understated utterances in English and Persian individually and then proceeds to evaluate the 2 bodies of data against each other. As observed in the case of Iranian learners of English, the process of emphasizing through phonological devices is heavily transferred. English mainly applies lexicalization, whereas vocalization is the preferred process in Persian. The tenets of this study may be of insight for theories of SLA. They also promise to ease English learning tasks by reducing students' negative transfer from their mother tongue.

Keywords: Linguistic Differences; Language Transfer; Emphasis; Phonological Devices; Lexicalization

1. Introduction

Language, as a human phenomenon, is made up of phonological, semantic, and syntactic elements that get together to form a verbal system with which to communicate interpersonally in social contexts. In this regard, communication of meanings is viewed as the primary function of language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). A key point to the fabrication of language constituents is appropriacy (Ivanic, 1990) which demands everything should accord to socially accepted norms (Arndt, Harvey, & Nuttall, 2000). The accordance is not only that of cultural considerations but of the manners of expression as well. An expression may be organized or adjusted in a way as to fulfill such intended functions as contrast, emphasis, irony, and understatement. The ways of adjusting a piece of language are actually numerous but, to name a few, one may consider the following:

- Placing a heavy stress on a certain item in a sentence to make it contrastive to an implied or stated item in the same sentence (e.g., “I saw *him*” or “I saw *him* not you”)
- Using a cleft structure to highlight the significance of a certain word in a sentence (e.g., “What I need is money,” rather than simply “I need money”)
- Using an auxiliary before a main verb in an affirmative sentence (e.g., “I did see him” which is more persuasive than “I saw him”)
- Employing certain lexical items to bring about specific semantic moods (e.g., “When he died, he was just fifteen,” where *just* understates the age and views it as too young)

In the above instances, the employed linguistic processes may be taken as rhetorical processes that serve to create persuasion by stressing, highlighting, or over/understating a semantic concept. As a matter of fact, different languages have different rhetorical natures (Brown, 2007) and, hence, use different communicative mechanisms of convincing their audience. Whereas one language comes to sound emphatic by taking resort to phonology, another may employ syntactic tools or techniques for the same semantic content. For example, Persian as a language impacted by Eastern ways of thinking and philosophizing (i.e., how to view the world), rhetoricizing (i.e., how to persuade the addressee), and verbalizing (i.e., how to array linguistic elements on the surface structure) projects a somehow different profile from English as a language impacted westernize. Philosophically, whereas English speakers tend to refer to an affliction to a body part by simply blaming themselves for what has happened, Persian speakers lay the blame on the afflicted body part (English: *I burned my finger* vs. Persian: *angoshtam sookht* “My finger burned”). Rhetorically, whereas English speakers ask affirmatively about an uncertain or dubious idea, the same seems to be questioned negatively in Persian (e.g., asking about a missing key, English: *Did you put it in your pocket?* Vs. Persian: *tu jibet nagzashti?* “Didn't you put it in your pocket?”). It is believed that negative structures are marked and therefore rhetorically more persuasive than their positive counterparts (Battistella, 1990; Christensen, 2009).

Whatever mentioned above serves to provide the conviction that a difference of one type or another between two linguistic systems can potentially pose problems, sometimes seriously, to those who like to communicate across languages.

The communication problems observed here and there may be, in many cases, attributed to the negative transference of L1 forms and processes of thought formation and expression (e.g., James, 1998 & Romaine, 2003). L2 learners who are not given insights into the fact that certain processes operating in one language are definitely missing or at least partially present in another language may develop an

inadequate language competence. What is of importance is that linguistic inadequacies, taken for granted as a part of every learner's interlanguage (Odlin, 1989, 2003), should not be left ignored in the classroom until as late as the learner comes to improve them himself or herself through a long period of trial and error within interpersonal communicative situations. It might be too late then since the damage done is sometimes unaffordable. The concept of *awareness raising* (Rosa & Leow, 2004) is crucial to be practiced in this case. The responsibility actually addresses teachers that are deemed by O'Hara (2003) as facilitators of learning. The teaching role is facilitated, in turn, by the bulk of data already at hand or those to be furnished through careful research that sheds light on the untouched or ignored areas of difference, those that usually show themselves up by comparing and contrasting two languages systematically. In line with the research ever done and reported in the literature (e.g., Hayati, 1998; Jun, 2005; Sadat-Tehrani, 2009; Soltani, 2007), the present article undertakes a contrastive task of the type to bring into focus a very important distinction between English and Persian as how they utter expressions that encode emphasis either as overstatement or understatement.

At times, language users try to attract extra attention to what they express by emphasizing it in one way or another. Depending on the modality of language use, speaking or writing, one or more of linguistic devices (i.e., syntactic, semantic, and phonological) may be utilized. Due to their different natures, languages of the world are assumed to behave differently in this regard. The degree of difference, of course, depends on linguistic and cultural proximity (Chiswick & Miller, 2005); the closer two language communities, the less apart in the use of linguistic devices and processes. As far as 'emphasis' is concerned, one may expect there to be a noticeable difference between English and Persian. What follows is the justification and verification of the matter in hand which can have pedagogical implications for the EFL programs in schools and colleges.

2. Statement of the Problem

Due to the lack or dearth of research in the literature which, in turn, accounts for a rather good number of so-called well trained but indeed insightfully poor English teachers, great hosts of English learners at nearly all levels of language education keep making mistakes with utterances of emphasis. This problem has been noticed to be a matter of both overstatement and understatement of ideas in casual speech, attentive speech, translation, writing, and so on. The followings are samples of utterances wrongly articulated by Iranian college-level learners of English:

- *I walked to (uptoned and lengthened) the school. (as the oral translation of '*az inja ta* (lengthened) *madreseh peyadeh raftam*')
- *Don't (pronounced with a high pitch and lengthened /ou/ sound) touch my things, OK? (as the English translation of the emphatic warning '*be chizaye man dast nazania*')

- *I drink two (downtoned) cups. (in response to the question *Why do you drink so much tea?*)
- *I know everybody (pronounced with overstressed and lengthened initial sound /e/)
- **baradaram haft bacheh darad.* (every word pronounced normally) or *baradaram be andazaye haft bacheh darad.* as the translation of *My brother has as many as seven children.*

The situation motivated a systematic scrutiny in expressions of emphasis in English and Persian on the purpose of finding any distinctive features that could be possibly formulized and, hence, easily brought up and concretely taught in EFL classrooms. It was initially assumed that a distinction would be present. The assumption was made on the general justification that English and Persian as two geographically, historically, and culturally distinct systems must also be apart in terms of thinking modes and thought articulation. It was specifically assumed that the two languages would articulate emphasis differently, that is, they would differ in how to utter statements, over and under.

This cross-linguistic study which is descriptive in nature may be taken as significant because by virtue of the general belief that comparison is an effective method of gaining knowledge (Gentner & Namy, 1999; Sims & Colunga, 2010), comparisons and contrasts made on the purpose of describing two languages vs. each other prove to be a way of shedding light on those corners of linguistics that would remain in dark and, thus, unnoticed if those languages were studied in their own terms each. It goes without saying that a systematic task of comparison is possible only in case the analytic data are already obtained on the individual languages under investigation. For this reason, the research has to begin by verifying overstated and understated utterances in English and Persian individually and then proceed to evaluate the two bodies of data against each other.

3. Description of Emphasis in Spoken English

Basically, emphasis may be encoded in three types: syntactic, semantic, and phonological. However, as far as language modality is concerned, this typology mostly comes to be a matter of frequency. That is, the spoken version of a language depends on phonological emphasis much more than the written version does, and spoken English is no exception. Because this study specifically focuses on emphasis devices in oral contexts, phonological considerations duly demand a preceding turn in the following analysis.

3.1 Phonological Emphasis

As various samples of English speech suggest, one can grade the importance of an idea up and down by uptoning the corresponding words. It is, of course, often single words rather than phrases that are emphasized like this. Such words can be assigned a degree of emphasis with a high pitch sometimes associated

with a slight vowel length and a sort of facial expression to indicate how important the idea is. The italic words in the following dialog are illustrative:

- (1) a: When will you get married?
- b: I *am* married.
- a: Do you have any children?
- b: *No, not* yet.
- a: What about a car? Do you have one?
- b: *Yes*, I have a *Cadillac*.

The words *am*, *no*, *not*, and *yes* are uptoned or high-pitched to inject a belief into the listener about existence or nonexistence of a situation, whereas *Cadillac* is highlighted for the sake of significance. Delving into a large bulk of data, one understands that this type of phonological emphasis is limited to certain cases like the above where an idea is capitalized on for its strong presence, magnitude, or significance. In contrast, when the lack of strength, magnitude, or significance is in focus, downtoning hardly applies to such quantitative concepts as age, length, price, and distance that are assumed insignificant by the speaker. Notice the wrongly made utterances below:

- (2) *He was *fifteen* when he died. (The emphasis is intended on youngness.)
- (3) *It is for *two* dollars. (The emphasis is intended on cheapness.)
- (4) *It is *a mile* from here. (The emphasis is intended on closeness.)

In the above examples, the downtoned items cannot be grasped and correctly interpreted by the listener as insignificant or understated ideas unless the sentences are used in adequately suggestive contexts. As isolated or even as contextualized utterances, they are usually treated as follows:

- (5) *He was as young as fifteen when he died./He was only fifteen when he died.*
- (6) *It is as cheap as two dollars./It is just for two dollars.*
- (7) *It is as near as a mile from here./It is just one mile from here.*

In these sentences, the emphasis on the insignificance of the quantities is embodied through understating words such as *only* and *just*. There does not have to be an outstanding stress or an up/downtone on the quantifiers. This is just because the words before those quantifiers (i.e., 'as + adjective + as', 'only', and 'just') serve the purpose. However, things seem to be a little different about quantities whose significance or magnitude, rather than insignificance, is emphasized. In such cases, a speaker has a choice to vocalize the intended concept by stressing or uptoning it with a high pitch or to lexicalize it as the following:

- (8) He is *ninety*./He is as old as ninety.

- (9) This car goes at *one hundred* miles./This car goes as fast as one hundred miles.
- (10) I go to bed at 2 *a.m.*/I go to bed as late as 2 a.m.

Here, a number of points are in order. First, one hears and reads lexicalized versions more frequently than vocalized ones, which means English speakers have a preference for depending on words rather than voice to utter things emphatically. Secondly, because numerical quantifiers already sound stressed (at least with a secondary stress) in normal emphasis-free sentences, any deliberately forged uptone should be along with a facial expression of some sort. Otherwise, the listener will not necessarily take it as a sign of emphasis. Thirdly, a sense of emphasis coming through a vocalized or lexicalized idea seems to be a matter of utterance duration. The duration, which is produced by a stressed and therefore slightly lengthened syllable or by a lexically extended structure, makes the audience take the utterance as an emphatic one. And finally, the vocal pressure exerted on certain words and constructions to impart surprise should not be mistaken for emphasis. For instance, all the question word *what* voiced with a rising intonation and a lengthened vowel does is to show the speaker's surprise at what he or she has heard. *Excuse me?!*, *Really?!*, *Gosh!*, *But why?*, and *Oh boy!* are just a few among numerous examples though, from a broad point of view, even these items may be considered as terms that emphasize how surprised the speaker is.

3.2 Syntactic Emphasis

Apart from phonologically featured emphases, syntactic ones, too, may be utilized to underline an idea. The devices to serve this purpose are mainly auxiliaries, cleft structures, and expanded negative lexical items.

As for auxiliaries, a listener may be brought to believe an act once the corresponding verb is preceded by a nonmodal auxiliary that naturally associates with the verb. What is emphasized like this is in fact the occurrence of the verb, either the action or the state that it represents. Naturally, an auxiliary used as a device of emphasis is distinct from the one used as a question initiator, hence to be pronounced strongly. Notice the following:

- (11) *I did tell him.* vs. *I told him.*
- (12) *He does know that.* vs. *He knows that.*
- (13) *Do sit down.* vs. *Sit down.*

In addition to verbs, nouns can be syntactically emphasized too. The one device at hand is a cleft structure. A degree of emphasis or distinction may be imposed on a noun if it is placed in a separate clause. As illustrated below, this makes the matter more believable:

- (14) *What I need is money./Money is what I need.* vs. *I need money.*
Cleft structures may be also used to emphasize a verb:

- (15) *What I did was to see him./All I did was to see him.* vs. *I saw him.*

All that the clefting of a noun or a verb does is to give the word an independent identity and, therefore, a distinct phonological projection. In other words, the trick of this device is to make the speaker utter the target word heavily.

Another way of emphasizing an idea syntactically is to expand certain words that are actually composed of two lexical constituents. These words mainly happen to be negative ones. *No, none, never, nothing, nobody*, and the other derivatives of *no* are the words that may be expanded for an increased degree of emphasis as follows:

- (16) *no* → not ... any as in *I have no money* → I don't have any money.
- (17) *none* → no one as in *Of those books, none interested me* → ... No one interested me.
- (18) *never* → not ... ever as in *He never smokes* → He doesn't ever smoke.
- (19) *nothing* → not...anything as in *He said nothing* → He didn't say anything.

What makes the expanded versions sound more emphatic is actually the isolation of the core negative constituent *not* and the independence or saliency it is given thereby.

Saliency can be also given to the word *not* by using full-form negative auxiliaries instead of contractions. Imposing *not* in the initial position of a sentence makes the word salient and the sentence emphatic. These moves that are of syntactic nature are exemplified below:

- (20) *I don't know.* → *I do not know.*
- (21) *I can't do it.* → *I cannot do it.* → *I cannot do it.*
- (22) *I don't know about it.* → *Not that I know of.*
- (23) *Didn't I tell you.* → *Did I not tell you?*
- (24) *Aren't I? (tag question)* → *Am I not?*

Within the English syntax, there are other structures that add to the significance of their contents. The emphasis is achieved mainly through strict inclusion or strict exclusion of intended ideas. Note the following examples:

- (25) *Not only can I swim but also I can ski.* (Skiing is strictly included. This structure is more emphatic than simply *I can both swim and ski.*)
- (26) *Anybody but you.* (You are strictly excluded.)
- (27) *You cannot pass the test unless you study hard.* (The only way to pass the test is studying. The negative sentence is much more forceful than the plain affirmative *You can pass the test if you study hard.*)

3.3 Semantic Emphasis

Besides phonological and syntactic types of emphasis, one can emphasize a concept simply by means of lexical items that function to intensify the meaning. They include adverbs like *indeed*, *really*, and *absolutely* as well as intensifiers like *very*, *so*, *too*, and *more*. Along with these rather frequently used methods of emphasizing, there exists another which is employed just on occasion often in the form of clichés. This is based on the repetition of a key word. Some instances are *Enough is enough*, *if and only if*, *cheap cheap cheap*, *okdoke*, and *day in day out*.

4. Description of Emphasis in Persian Speech

Like in any other language, Persian speakers have at their disposal a number of ways and means of working out emphasis that are partly universal and partly language-specific. Obviously, because language is a matter of words, structures, and sounds, the devices of emphasis may be considered within semantic, syntactic, and phonological scopes. What follows is the delineation of the issue along these three lines. A thorough study of Persian offers evidence that emphasis is best manifested in the spoken Persian that rests mostly on phonological devices rather than choice of words and structures. Therefore, the section dedicated to the analysis of phonological emphasis necessarily drags longer than those given to semantic and syntactic analyses.

4.1 Phonological Emphasis

Basically, Persian speakers benefit from a set of four phonological devices with which to emphasize their ideas both ways, namely overstatement (where the importance or magnitude is spotlighted) and understatement (where the lack of importance or slightness comes into sharp focus). The devices include uptoning, vowel lengthening, vowel addition, and consonant gemination.

4.1.1 Uptoning

As a matter of fact, the main stress of a Persian sentence is normally postulated in either of two major patterns:

a. It falls on transitive verbs if direct objects are followed by *ra* (the marker for some direct objects in Persian) as in *ghaza ra khordam*. (I ate the food.) or on direct objects if there is no marker *ra* as in *ghaza khordam*. (I ate.).

b. It falls on intransitive verbs as in *an mard raft*. (The man left.) if they are without complements and on complements if there are any as in *an mard be khaneh raft*. (The man went home.).

To emphasize a concept and make it believable, it is the verbs of both types (transitive and intransitive) that take up a heavier-than-normal stress.

4.1.2 Vowel Lengthening

This is a method applied to actually very many words in Persian. There are literally thousands of words of all parts of speech and some prepositions in the

Persian lexicon that can be vocally extended and gain, depending on the duration of the vowel as well high pitch or low pitch of voice, a strengthened or weakened degree of significance or magnitude. The following sentences (28-38) are a few examples divided into overstated and understated ideas. The italic words are the ones to be pronounced with a lengthened vowel and, accordingly, attract the primary stress of the sentence. The concepts emphasized are given in parentheses:

- Vowel lengthening plus uptone or high pitch:
 - (28) *man **dahta** bacheh daram.* (multitude)
I ten child have
'I have ten children.'
 - (29) *man **ta** madreseh peyadeh raftam.* (distance)
I up to school on foot went
'I walked to school.'
 - (30) *hamegi goftand **baleh.*** (certainty)
Everybody said yes
'Everybody said yes.'
 - (31) *man **do saal** kharej budam.* (duration)
I two years abroad was
'I was abroad for two years.'
 - (32) *tuye **qhasr** zendegi mikonad.* (glory)
In palace life he does
'He lives in a palace.'
 - (33) *an mard **raise** man ast.* (rank)
That man my boss is
'That man is my boss.'
- b. Vowel lengthening plus downtone or low pitch (The italic words are pronounced as to sound like sighed out of the mouth.)
 - (34) *saate **hasht** miravam mikhabam.* (earliness)
o'clock eight I go sleep
I go to bed at eight o'clock.
 - (35) ***yeki** bacheh darad.* (low number)
one child he has
He has one child.
 - (36) *ta **park** ranandegi kardam.* (short distance)
up to park driving I did
I drove to the park.
 - (37) *baraye nahar **hamburger** khordam.* (lack of importance)
for lunch hamburger I ate
I ate a hamburger for lunch.
 - (38) ***neमितavanam** an ra anjam daham.* (lack of ability)
I cannot that do
I cannot do that.

4.1.3 Vowel Addition

It is a manner of emphasizing concepts that are uttered as a whole sentence not as an individual word. Because the propositions set in a sentence pivot around the verb, it is the verb that the emphasizing vowel is added to. The vowel is indeed an /a:/ sound added to the main verb that always appears at a sentence final position. Sentences emphasized this way are just statements, requests, and orders; questions as well as exclamations cannot be underlined in this way. Vowel addition serves to convince the addressee of the importance or truth value of a statement. It also shows the importance of taking an order or complying with a request. To Persian speakers, it sounds so forceful and hard to resist. This kind of emphasis is so commonly used in Persian informal speech but not in formal speech or writing. The following utterances speak for their force and persuasiveness:

- (39) *farda taatileha*. (statement)
Tomorrow is a holiday.
- (40) *mizanameta*. (threatening statement)
I'll beat you. Watch out!
- (41) *dar ra bebandia*. (order)
Close the door.
- (42) *lotfan be kasi nagia*. (request)
Please don't tell anybody about it.
- (43) *migama*, (call for attention)
You know what,

4.1.4 Consonant Germination

Certain ideas, but not many, may be emphasized if one of the consonants in a key word is geminated. This is done along with the shift of the sentence primary stress onto that word. Though not many ideas are treated like this, those the doubling applies to are so frequently said and heard. Here are a number of examples (44-48):

- (44) *hammeh ra mishenasam*. vs. *hameh ra mishenasam*. (full coverage)
all I know
I know everybody.
- (45) *nabbaba!* vs. *nababa!* (extreme surprise)
no father
You don't say!
- (46) *borro bebinam*. vs. *boro bebinam*. (sharp rejection)
go I see
The hell! I won't.
- (47) *boroggom sho*. vs. *borogom sho*. (deep anger)
go lost become
Go get lost!
- (48) *khak bessaram*. vs. *khak besaram*. (deep regret)
dust on my head
Oh dear oh my!

4.2 Syntactic Emphasis

The emphasis devices within the Persian syntax are not numerous. What exists there seems to be universal, namely a feature of all or nearly all live languages of the world. The devices include cleft structures, negative expressions vs. affirmative ones (e.g., *gheire momken nist*. meaning *It is not impossible* vs. *emkan darad* meaning *It is possible.*), and inclusive/exclusive structures (e.g., *na tanha ... balkeh* meaning *not only ... but also* and *... magar inkeh ...* meaning *... unless ...*).

4.3 Semantic Emphasis

The language users can mount various degrees of significance on an idea by means of certain vocabulary items like quantifiers. The quantification is a matter of tuning the significance up and down so as for the listener or reader to take the idea seriously or not. The emphasizing words scale up seriousness along a line between two extremes, from maximum to minimum:

<u>aslan</u>	<u>yek zarreh</u>	<u>kami</u>	<u>ta haddy</u>	<u>kheyli</u>	<u>bish az had</u>	<u>kamelan</u>
not at all	just a little	a little	to some extent	very	too	quite

In addition to the above set of words, repetition of a key word can strengthen the magnitude and, thus, creditability of a concept. The semantic redundancy of this type is quite common in Persian especially in speech. The following is a short list of concepts that are emphasized through redundancy (49-56):

- (49) *khasteh-e khasteh-am*.
tired tired I am
I am so tired
- (50) *an dur durha*
that far far
in the far distance
- (51) *dar tahe tahe chah*
in depth depth of well
far deep in the well
- (52) *dar tahe tahe khyaban*
in end end of street
at the very end of the street
- (53) *dar bala balahaye asman*
in up up of sky
high up in the sky
- (54) *lab a lab*
brim to brim
full to the brim
- (55) *salian-e sal*
years of year

- for many years
- (56) *dowr ta dowre bagh*
 around to around of garden
 all around the garden

5. Discussion

From the comparison and contrast of the analytical data of the two languages, there emerge a number of findings worth considering. Generally speaking, there are major and minor similarities and differences to mention regarding the concept of emphasis in each of the three linguistic areas analyzed above.

First of all, the spoken versions of both languages can and do exploit the devices of all linguistic types (i.e., phonological, syntactic, and semantic) for overstating and understating purposes. The most similarities, however, are observed in syntax and semantics. The use of inclusive/exclusive structures, negative structures, cleft structures, and intensifying as well as highlighting lexical items by the members of both language communities may be taken as a strong piece of evidence for the availability of certain universal human thought systems that, in turn, put forth the same or similar patterns of thought and expression.

Secondly, what actually makes the results of this study noteworthy is the body of evidence referring to the differences between English and Persian with respect to the emphasis issue. These differences that are mostly of phonological type are to be discussed in terms of how language users depend on their voice to make themselves sound emphatic. Whereas the use of such voice qualities like stress, pitch, and intonation seems to be a commonality of all languages, different languages, like the ones studied in this paper, do emerge distinct in implementing those vocal techniques. In the case of English and Persian, the phonological distinctions prove to be really considerable in that the dependence of Persian speakers on vocal devices differs from that of English speakers in both frequency and variety. Whereas overstatements can be made in both languages simply with a heavy stress and a resulting lengthened vowel, which seems as a routine commonplace function of any phonological system, the Persian vocal modality allows certain other emphasizing techniques such as vowel lengthening, vowel addition, and consonant doubling. The bulk of data shows no such techniques at work in oral English. The question that remains is how then to do about a great number of English words and constructions that cannot be emphasized in these manners.

Samples of everyday English speech reveal a process other than vocalization at work. The process which is so dominant in this case is that of lexicalization. This is to say, English speakers often shift the semantic significance

of an idea up and down by adding one or more lexical items to it, thus lengthening the idea not vocally but physically. For example, rather than the vocally extended number *teen* (10) in the sentence *He has ten children.*, one usually hears *He has as many as ten children.* Similarly, rather than the vocally degraded number *two*, one hears *as few as two.* Accordingly, *I walked as far as the school* rather than *I walked tooo* (lengthened to) *the school.* At times, emphasis is achieved by adding just a single word. For instance, *if ever* but not *iiif* (pronounce like the Persian word *agar* with a stressed and lengthened initial syllable), *pretty good* vs. *good* (as the lengthened word *khub* in Persian), *just left* vs. *leeeft* (as the lengthened word *raft* in Persian), and *simply can't* vs. *cannoot* (like the Persian verb *nemitavanam* uttered with a stressed and lengthened initial syllable).

Looking further into spoken language samples, one finds that, apart from the vowel-lengthening process, the two languages bear no similarity in vowel-addition and consonant-doubling processes either. In these cases, too, whereas Persian speakers can depend on their voice to manipulate the significance degree of an utterance, English speakers have to depend on lexicon to meet the purpose. Regardless of very few cases in which an English utterance is made emphatic or stronger than normal (as in the excitedly uttered *You're lucky* where the /l/ sound is felt a little doubled), consonant-doubling process is not relevant in the English language. Addition of sentences, discussed vowels to the end of earlier as a phonological technique in Persian, is of no relevance in English either. In this case, English speakers usually add extra words to a sentence to make it sound important, believable, or persuasive. For example:

- (57) *Be sure to be on time* instead of simply *Be on time.*
- (58) *John is back, you know that?* or *Something, John is back* instead of simply *John is back.*

What is of great contrast is that vocally lengthened words are just specific to spoken Persian; it is absolutely impossible to indicate a vowel length in writing. Persian writers have to use other linguistic devices like lexicalization or roundabout explanation in order to emphasize an intended word or phrase. In contrast, English writers put down emphasized ideas just because both spoken English and written English benefit from the same major technique of emphasizing, namely lexicalization. This difference between the two languages might be a signal to another major difference which is strongly sensed around. Those who have been in a long touch with both languages have a rough inference that the spoken and written versions of Persian are farther from each other than are the spoken and written versions of English.

As mentioned earlier, distinctions among languages are due to their distinct nature. Sometimes, a distinction relates to a linguistic property that is

differentially embodied in two or more languages. In such a case, the property can be often defined and theorized and then viewed as categories in which different classes of language may fit.

With regard to whatever reported, exemplified, analyzed, and discussed so far in this article, the differences observed between English and Persian may be best accounted for by the property of 'time organization' whose differentiation across languages is to be considered within an acoustic-based approach. According to this approach, the speakers of a given language pronounce it with a certain durational pattern that quantitatively determines the rhythm of that language. It has been a long held belief since as early as 1945 when Pike identified three types of timing rhythmic patterns in the pronunciation of different languages. According to him, in some languages, like English, the temporal duration between two stressed syllables is equal; in some others, the duration of every syllable is equal, and in the rest, like Japanese, the duration of every mora is equal. From this division, there emerge three terms respectively: stress-timed, syllable-timed, and mora-timed languages. This linguistic phenomenon is what Patel and Daniele (2003) referred to as spoken prosody, or melody of speech, that is, the way languages are organized in time. Though there has been a lot of contention over the veracity of rhythmic distinctions among languages, recent phonetic work has demonstrated that there really exist such qualitative rhythmic distinctions between languages identified as stress-timed and those felt to be syllable-timed (Low, Grabe, & Nolan, 2000).

The quantifiable rhythmic features are indeed a matter of frequency, duration, energy, as well as high and low pitches that indicate the energy contour across syllables (Mary & Yegnanarayana, 2008). These parameters can be of variable patterns within the same language. But variability often stems from phonetic manipulations in speech. In English, for example, the variability of the energy exerted on a syllable is the result of vowel reduction whereas in Persian, perceived as a syllable-timed language (Windfuhr, 1979), it seems to be the result of an opposite process, namely vowel lengthening. Also, as it occurs, consonant gemination results in the variation of pitch from normal to high and of syllable energy from normal to high and of syllable duration from normal to long, all of which account for the gravity of the uttered idea.

Due to the difference explained above, every language has its own rhythmic feel. Native speakers are accustomed to the acoustic nature, or tuned to the rhythmic pattern, of their own language, and their ears sensitively detect the vocalic or consonantal durations of speech (Patel & Daniele, 2003). This reality has a bearing on language learning. It is not an uncommon experience to see learners belonging to a syllable-timed language community, for example, Persian, trying to speak a stress-timed language, for example, English, with such a heavy accent.

Perhaps the best explanation for the phenomenon is provided by Ellis (1999) who believes that differences between two languages predispose negative transfer from L1 to L2, which results in errors. These transfer-induced errors, as Odlin (1989) states, can possibly occur in all linguistic subsystems. Of course, errors are the inevitable part of a developing interlanguage, but they can be somehow predicted and minimized in chance. The task should be taken seriously depending on the proximity or distance of L1 and L2 (Cortes, 2006). Teachers, as the frontline forces of language pedagogy, may fulfill the task at a vantage place if they know details about the similarities and differences of languages. The one efficient method by which to prepare those details and put them at teachers' disposal is contrastive Analysis. This is what the present study owes its findings to.

6. Conclusion

This study, as a contribution to the literature repertoire of English-Persian contrastive studies, sheds light on the concept of emphasis in the two languages. What motivated the study was actually the numerous unnatural and sometimes funny articulations of English words and sentences made by Iranian EFL students and even teachers as well as movie script translators. Through collecting, categorizing, and analyzing samples of emphatic speech in both languages, it has been found that, in spite of certain commonalities, there are basic differences between the two linguistic systems with regard to ways and means of emphasizing. Whereas English speakers mainly emphasize their remarks lexically, Persian speakers have a strong dependence on vocal devices. The distinction is to be generally accounted for by the distinct natures of the two languages. In specific terms, however, one can refer to stress-timed and syllable-timed categories that English and Persian belong to respectively. The finding of this study regarding the linguistic tactics and techniques of emphasis utilized by the speakers of the two languages are of two-fold benefit; they generally promote linguistic awareness and provide insight into the nature of languages, and specifically claim valuable implications for English pedagogy as well as all those tasks that involve cross-linguistic communications. It is so important to note that the data obtained from language studies of this type are essential before launching any L2 teaching program. Pedagogists should admit the fact that no precision or appropriacy would be realistically expected in the learners' L2 performance unless they are given a clear picture of how the two languages resemble or differ. As far as emphasis, as an integral part of any communication system, is concerned, the literature suffers from a dearth of cross-linguistic research. Despite the very many linguistic concepts already researched and reported in the literature, there still remain certain untouched features, especially in casual language use areas, that need to be studied systematically. Because English, more than any other language, is internationally taught and favored, research can be of utmost significance and enlightening value if

it is conducted cross-linguistically with English and not simply in terms of individual languages. Giving impetus for directing the research mainstream toward cross-linguistic studies is the important commitment of the present article.

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