'TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS AND TRANSITIONAL MARKERS IN PERSIAN'

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Abstract

Generally speaking, in telephone conversations, sight plays no part. To compensate for normal gesture reinforcements which are effective factors in providing the ease of the give and take of information, the participants in telephone conversations partly substitute and replace their habits of speech. In other words, to compensate for visible movements which are a part of the main characteristics of face-to-face conversations, the speaker or the addressee operationalize different verbal strategies in telephone conversations. Transitional markers are used in the Persian telephone conversations by participants to compensate for the lack of movements and to transmit feelings and attitudes. What these habits, strategies or markers are and how they affect telephone conversations in Persian are of primary significance and the main topics to be discussed in this paper.

As a general format, it is assumed that a telephone conversation in Persian consists of three consecutive phases, namely: Tension 1, Relaxation, Tension 2. In this paper, the characteristics of each phase, with a particular concentration on the relaxation phase, will be discussed in detail.

The following hyphotheses have been primarily devised although further analysis based on more new data is required to confirm the findings:

1) No topic change occurs during the tension phases.
2) If there is a semantic relation between the topics on either side of the transition point, there are no lexicosemantic markers of the transition point. Rather, transition is marked by a short pause, laughing, or items which are semantically null.
3) If the two topics are completely unrelated, transitional markers occur during a relaxation phase; their number of occurrences gradually increases and the linguistic forms change in regular patterns.
4) If there exists a slight relationship between the topics on either side of the transitional point, the lexical transitional markers occur compactly and are distributed closer to each other.

The implication from the findings will be that each language community has its own social interactional norms which are reciprocally used to establish settings in which conversational interactions can be carried out smoothly and without misunderstandings.

NOTATIONAL SYSTEM

(X): e.g. (3) indicates the number of seconds of a pause between the end of one speaker's monologue and the beginning of the next or a pause which occurs within the speech of one speaker.

X as in A/X/A indicates that, for instance, the 'answerer' overlaps not to interrupt but either to confirm or to signal the 'transitional markers'.

.. preceded by ah, he, ha, etc. indicates laughings which function as 'transitional markers'.

C: always stands for the 'caller'.
A: always stands for the 'answerer'.
X: a topic.
$X^{(4)}$: refers to the footnote.

O. INTRODUCTION

Conversations are a cooperative enterprise. The speakers and listeners who are involved in these conversations must adhere to conventions; otherwise the give and take

of information does not occur smoothly and effectively. The precise description of the constituents of these conventions is of primary importance.

Grice (1975) mentions the Cooperative Principle, which is manifested by four general maxims, one of which is the maxim of quantity. According to this maxim, the speaker's contribution to interaction should be no more and no less informative than what is required. Although a violation of a maxim does not necessarily lead to a violation of the Cooperative Principle, to ensure the smooth give and take of information, the speaker and the listener must both attempt not to violate the maxim. For instance, assume that 'A' asks 'B' how he feels. The normal informative answer would be "Fine, thank you (and you)" — no more or less. Now, if B, instead of following the Cooperative Principle and consequently the maxim of quantity, tries to explain how he first felt and how he gradually developed from a sense of depression to a sense of illumination, the maxim of quantity has been violated and the listener will undoubtedly attempt to, somehow, divert the topic of conversation and interaction.

Most often, the listener's non-verbal behavior, accompanied by verbal contributions, acts as a signal to indicate his reluctance to continue the current interaction. The speaker should be appropriately, but not rudely, notified that he is malfunctioning in his informative contribution and is openly violating the maxim of quantity.

Eye movements, inappropriate physical actions while one participant is violating the maxim of quantity, and physical gestures, as well as verbal confirmation or disruptions, are all possible strategies a speaker may deliberately operationalize to convey his lack of interest in the present procedure and his preference for a different topic. It may also happen that the speaker, perceiving that the hearer is not interruptive but submissive, and that his own status is one of dominance and authority (as well as rudeness), changes the topic of conversation so that the hearer (in this case, the 'answerer') can be more absorbed in the conversation and can be a more active participant.

Although 'telephone conversations' share most of the original conversational principles, they differ from visual-aural interactions in the sense that telephone conversations lack the visual messages which are partly conveyed through non-verbal signals. However, certain linguistic markers normally replace these non-verbal signals, to compensate for the specificity of speech qualifications in interactions which does not exist in telephone conversations. As Dittman (1969) states:

…it (movement) has come to be used by all people for communicative purposes. Thus if a person wishes to convey the idea that what he is expressing is important or difficult to conceptualize or exciting, he will introduce movements along with his speech to get this extra information across (p. 105).

Cherry, on the relevance of normal gestures as reinforcements and the strategies we apply to compensate for them in telephone conversations, states:

When we speak to a friend on the telephone, sight plays no part, and normal gesture reinforcement is lost, which we partly replace by changing our habits of speech.'(1974, p.64)

What these markers or habits are, according to Cherry, and how they affect telephone conversations, are of primary significance. We should know how the addressee (i.e. answerer) transmits his feeling and how the violator who has been actively violating the maxim of quantity gets the impression that the conversation should be invigorated by an immediate shifting and switching of the topic, and what strategies the answerer applies to save himself from the boring situation of unaltered single topic conversation.

If further studies support the hypotheses developed in this paper, we might conclude that:

1) each language community has its own social interactional norms which are recipro-cally used to establish settings in which conversational interactions can be carried out smoothly and without misunderstandings.
2) the differences in norms of two or more different communities, when the speakers of those different language communities enter into interactions, cause conflicts, misunderstandings, confusions and possibly harsh reactions, not because of causes such as hatred, racism, etc., but because of participants' ignorance of each other's social norms.

0.1. DEFINITIONS

Before examining the data, I want to discuss the terminology briefly. First, we have to define and to clarify the distinction between "overlapping", "interruption", and finally what we will call "transitional markers" (the phenomenon of "transitional phases" will be discussed in detail later). By «interruptions» we refer to any type of interferance by the addressee in the process of interaction in such a way that the speaker's dominance over the speech situation is threatened and violently intruded on, and short or long pauses occur. Thus, interruptions can be considered a strategy one applies to obtain dominance in an interaction (Cutler 1978, P7). By "overlaps" we mean reinforcements used not to interrupt conversation or to de-structuralize the texture of interaction, but to smooth out or firm up the efficacy of the interaction. By "transitional markers", we mean those signals which are particularly used by the hearer to convey the message that the topic of conversation must be changed. These signals are linguistic or non-linguistic "units". They sometimes represent their underlying denotative meanings but, in other times, they are semantically void.

1.1. SOURCE

The observational research done on telephone conversations and the implications perceived by a native speaker of persian (myself) indicated primarily that "transitional markers" have their own specific characteristics in Persian. These signals never occur initially or finally but occur in the middle of conversations where topic changes are more likely to occur. In contrast, as a non-native speaker of English, I perceive a telephone conversation between two American people as a chunk which may include one or more topics. Consider the following telephone conversation between 'C' (an Amer-

ican) and 'A' (a non-native speaker):

A - Hello.

C - Hello, Ali, this is Eileen, would you like to come on over to our house tonight?

A - I beg your pardon!

C - Some friends are here, tonight.

A - (quietly in whispering sounds) Why should I go there! Excuse me, do you want me to come on over to your house?

The conversation continues and Eileen, who finds the answerer confused, tries to expand the discourse to convince and make the answerer realize why he is being invited. This phenomenon is quite the reverse of a similar - purpose call in Persian, in which the caller is supposed to start the interaction with compliments, to continue gradually into the domain of exchanging messages and finally to lead the conversation to another predictable domain of compliments again. Therefore, as a general format, it is assumed that a telephone conversation in Persain consists of three consecutive phases, namely:

TENSION 1, RELAXATION, TENSION 2. Failure to consider subsequent conversation phases and the implicit patterns can lead an observer to see a different phenomenon than the participants do.

1. 2. PRETEST

To test the validity of the hypothesis about the occurrence of transitional markers on a larger scale, a pretest was run with two males and two females: telephone conversational interactions were organized and recorded between a female and a female, a male and a male, and a male and a female, and the data collected were analyzed. All of the cases observed tended to support the hypothesis originating from the pre-test data. The data clearly supported the primary general hypotheses that:

a) a telephone conversation in Persian necessarily includes three phases: tension; relaxation; tension.

b) no topic change occurs without a transitional phase characterized by transitional markers (linguistic word units, phrase units or non-linguistic markers such as pauses).

2. 0. METHOD

Before I discuss data relevant to my hypotheses, I wish to make two general statements:

1) Since, in collecting the data, one of the participants in conversation (the 'cailer') was aware of the fact that his/her telephone conversation was being recorded, there might have been some disruption and artificiality which could not be eliminated because of legal as well as ethical problems. However, every effort was made to provide normal settings.

2) Although the population might be extended to the Persian speaking community, the selection of subjects from the educated Iranian students at MSU puts further restrictions on the generalization of the findings to a community larger than the 'educated people' within the Persian-speaking community.

To provide more background for the formulation of

hypotheses, more telephone conversations were recorded. A primary collection of data (consisting of short and long conversations) was made. Each subject was required to call another subject (a friend of his/hers) and their coι.versations were thoroughly and completely recorded without the answerer being aware of the fact that he was being recorded. No special directional procedures and no conversational content were dictated to the subjects by the researcher. They presumably carried on their normal conversations. To eradicate the effects of the presence of the taperecorder, the 'caller' was told that the purpose of the research was to find out the phonemic system of Persian and the allophonic variations. Thus, the caller's attention was diverted from transitional markers and topic changing boundaries.

For initial purposes, twelve of these conversations were recorded, phonetically transcribed and translated into English. The parts which covered at least one topic of interaction and signified the transitional boundaries were selected as samples for further, more complete transcriptions and details.

For further testing of the validity of the findings, two males (myself and another Iranian student) called subjects (relatives friends) and carried on conversations in a way that no pause or transitional signals (markers) occurred at the boundaries of topic shiftings. The results were compared to those of "normal" telephone conversations to illuminate the significance of signals which represent and function as "transitional markers". Three categories were apparent in the basic schema of "topic 1 —— transitional markers —— topic 2".

1) where 1 and 2 are clearly related.

2) where 1 and 2 are slightly related.

3) where 1 and 2 are completely unrelated.

3. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were devised, based on the preliminary analysis of the data:

1) No topic change occurs during the tension phases.

During these phases, the maximum number of interruptions and overlaps will occur. The questions and answers are all predictable; the positive or negative overlaps do not prevent the procedures from continuing. The interaction patterns are irregular and do not follow the more expected ABAB patterns. In fact, in some cases, the questions are not heard but are so predictable and stereotyped that any reply might match and fit the context. Consider the following example:

A - helo

C - helo,

A - saelamaeleykom

C - saelamaeleykom aqa[1] A/moxlesim/ A hale / šoma četore/

A - /baba šoma koja-in/ in če vaeziye baba

A - Hello

C - Hello

A - helo (lit: peace be with you

C - peace be with you aqa A/your sincerely / A how are you?

A - where are you? (i.e. been where have you such a long time) baba[2]

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C- parsal dust. maen dae   C - A friend last year. I
bar   /umadaem   went to see you ten
daere   xunaetun/   times.

A - / hale šoma xube/ xubin   A - How are you? Are you
    fine?

C - qorbane šoma. četor   C - (lit: a sacrifice to you)
haesin a:qa   how are you á;qa

As mentioned above, all the questions and answers are predictable and, normally, all follow the same procedure except that the degree of relationship between the two participants determines the type of stimulus and response exchanges. Almost all of these sayings are exaggerations or simply 'lies'. In fact, C (the researcher) (a) had seen the answerer two days before the present conversation and (b) the researcher had not gone to visit the 'answerer' ten times but only once. The social norms and strategies require the two participants to go through this typical procedure although both know the initial compliments. The repeated linguistic forms lose their semantic significance and function as 'fillers' (i.e. forms which are devoid of situational and contextual meanings and may or may not be answered by the addressee).

In this interaction, the caller, by saying 'A friend last year' places himself in the identity arena to indicate that the following topics are all going to be about non-serious matters.

2) If there is a semantic relation between the topics on either side of the transition point, there are no lexico - semantic markers of the transition point. Rather, transition is marked by a short pause, laughing, or items which are semantically null. consider the following examples:

A - aqaye miremadi četore   A - How is Mr. Miremadi?

C - unaem xube, mersi,   C - He's fine, thank you.
maešqule   daers   He's busy studying $_A$/
xundaene$_A$/baele/$_A$voina   yes/$_A$ and things like that

A - ah (4) baečeha četoraen   A - ah (4) how are children?

C - baečeha xubaen daeste   C - Children are fine, they
šomara mibusaen.   kiss your hands.

'ah' which acts as a marker when accompanied by a pause, provides the situation so that the topic change (transition) can occur smoothly. The 'children' are related to both Miremadi and the caller.

Another example:

A - ... aege beraem   A - ... by God, if I go
bexoda$^{(3)}$ xeylibehtaere.   (there) it ıs better. I
migaem behtaer zaeban   believe I learn English
yad migiraem.   better.

C - baele ras migin. ras   C - You are right. You are
migin.   adaem$^{(4)}$ right. I (lit: human).
maenaem haemintor(2)   (2) So do I (2)
aelan   maesaelaen   For instanc, now, I
miraem unja vali ba in   go (there) but I don't
kaesi haerf nemi-   talk to any one;
zaenaem unqaedra ...   much ....

The answerer makes a comparison between her school and her job situation and expresses her belief that one can learn English better at work than at school. The caller confirms and after 2 two-second pauses, changes the arena from the answerer's domain to something quite

relevant to A's situation (Church English Classes). The conversation goes on with the caller talking about her learning situation and gradually, with certain signals received from the answerer, the topic changes to other activities done in C's school (LCC).

3) To provide the situation for a transition relating two completely unrelated topics, the overlaps start during a relaxation phase; their number of occurrences gradually increases and more often the linguistic forms change in more or less regular patterns. Vowels normally get longer, and other suprasegmental features of the 'transitional markers' show deviations and clearly indicate the boring situation and the reluctance of one of the participants to further his contribution to that particular topic. Consider the following examples:

SETTING 1:

The caller has been talking about a common problem between the two participants for more than 45 seconds (studying in the United States).

C - ...... migaen berin folan ketabo maesaeläen do baexš aez in qesmaet motale?e konin $_A$/á:han /$_A$ ya maesaelaen ye enša benevisid ya ye nemidunaem laeb berid guš bedid liseningo nemidunaem $_A$/á:han /$_A$ aez in teyp mizeraeno faerz konin $_A$/á:han /$_A$ eslayd mizaraen ya aez in čiza $_A$/ bae?le / $_A$ unvaext ke daraen ina mixan ye kari bokonaen. amade bokonaen adaemo $_A$/á:han /$_A$ baera yadgiri un čiza $_A$/bae?le/ vae amade kaerdaen $_A$/bae?le/$_A$ an doreha $_A$/momkene, bae?le/$_A$ (pause 3) xob xeyli xošhal šodaem $_A$/xaheš mikonaem /$_A$ hala išala xedmaetetun beresim. taešrif biyarin inja.

C: (...... they (i.e. teachers) tell you to read two chapters of such and such a book $_A$/á:han /$_A$ or, for example, write a composition or, I don't know, go to the language lab. listen to this $_A$/á:han /$_A$ or, I don't know $_A$/á:han/$_A$ they let a tape run and, suppose, $_A$/á:han /$_A$ they show slides or things like that $_A$/bae?le/$_A$ and, then, they are, they want to do something. To prepare a person $_A$/á:han/$_A$ for learning those things $_A$/bae?le/$_A$ and preparing $_A$/bae?le/$_A$ those courses $_A$/it is possible, bae?le/$_A$ (3) O.K. I was glad to hear your voice. $_A$/please /$_A$ I hope I can see you again. Come to our house ....

Generally speaking, / ahán / with stress on the second syllable and shorter vowels are used for confirmation or positive reinforcement in normal face-to-face conversations. On the other hand, / baele / (yes) is utilized for the same purpose. When they are used as transitional markers, vowels get longer; stress shifts to the initial syllable in the case of / á:han / and a glottal stop mysteriously occurs between [ae] and [l] sounds as in the word / bae?le/. The new forms void their denotative meanings and are specifically used as 'transitional markers'. The structural and semantic patterns of the linguistic forms occurring after the fourth transitional marker show the speaker's lack of control over the domain of interaction. The speaker loses her control and dominance.

'They are, they want to do something.' It is not clear who they refers to. 'something' cataphorically replaces 'to prepare a person' while its occurrence is redundant. The last four transitional markers really put pressure on the speaker to change the topic. Other forms such as "How

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are you?", "O.K. sir (aqa)", "What else is the news?", "O.K., what do you do?" are the most common transitional markers (as, so far, the data indicate) which characterize this category.

SETTING 2

The conversation has been going on for four minutes of greetings, compliments, and several other topics.

C - naegoft	C - Didn't she say (that to you?)
A - nae naegoft be maen telefon kaerdid	A - No, she didn't tell me that you called up.
C - maen telefon kaerdaem	C - I called you up.
A - bae?le, xeyli maemnun (3) xob hale šoma xub haes	A - bae?le, thank you (3) O.K. how are you?
C - qorbune to beraem	C - Thank you (lit: a sacrifice to you)
A - če xaebaeri aqa	A - What's the news?
C - hale šoma xube, aelhaemdolela. vala...	C - How are you, thanks God .Well
C - xaebaeri ke .... šoma (pause:3) baeratuń šaehriye raesid	C - The news ...... did you receive yourstipend?

In the above conversation, the occurrence of 'bae?le' in the fourth line is not a signal for confirmation since what C (line 3) utters is not a question form but is a statement. Thus, 'bae?le' is used in the proper place to indicate that the topic is not important enough to talk about. C called A, but A was not there, therefore no interaction occurred worthy of discussion. 'xob' (line 6) which literally means 'good', 'fine' and 'nice' does not have its original meaning. It only functions as a transitional marker connotating 'O.K. let's talk about something else. 'In greetings, 'how are you?' is usually answered 'fine, thank you' As a transitional marker as in the conversation above, the answer to 'how are you?' shapes as 'sacrificed to you' which does not convey any information about the answerer's health. A says, 'What is the news?' and C answers, 'Are you fine?' and he himself immediately says, 'thanks to God'. A again insists on what the news is and C, being trapped in a transitional phase, initiates a new topic by asking a question which expands and extends the conversation to a completely unrelated topic.

4) If there exists a slight relationship (not a complete relationship) between the topics on either side of the transition point, the lexical transitional markers occur more compactly and are distributed closer to each other. Consider the following samples:

A - ... baečeha migoftaen telefon kaerdaen be sefaraet čiz nae dašte. gofte pul naedarimo ina	A- .... friends (lit: children) Said they had called the Embassy. They (the Embassy) said they don't have money and other things.
C - á:han, bae?le	C - á:han bae?le
A - á:qa, čiz, aez čiz če xaebaer? xob, xode iran vaez meseinke	A - á:qa (lit: sir), thing, what news from thing? O.K. Iran itself? The situation is as if
C - iranaem vaezeš qaraš-	C - In Iran, the situation is

miše   messy.

A informs C that the Embassy does not have money to send to the scholars. C answers 'á:han bae?le' with the same characteristics mentioned for transitional markers. There might be two reasons the caller shows his lack of interest in the topic:

a) it is not new information.

b) the caller thinks that the answerer might ask for a loan.

As noticed above 'á:han bae?le' occurs as a sign of a demand to change the topic. The answerer's contribution appears in the form of lexically meaningless transitional markers. "Thing" has no antecedent; "from thing" is untraceable to any antecedent.

"What's the news?" does not function as a question asking for information since the speaker gives no chance to the answerer to initiate an answer. Then, "Iran itself, the situation as if" determines the setting and the domain to which the answerer is expected to contribute his information. Consider another example.

SETTING:

The caller is a male. The answerer is a female but not the target of conversation. The caller tries to make the conversation shorter because he does not feel comfortable carrying on a conversation with the woman (Actually, it is not normal for a man to talk about anything serious, but only to give greetings if the woman's husband is there[3]). Thus, the caller tests strategies to change the topic and to provide the right situation so that he can set everything back on the right track.

A - ...... now he (the doctor) has said that he (her husband) should take his medicine c/á:han / c I don't know, yes, it is three or four days that he has been going (to MSU) but he is still weak.

C - bae?le bae?le, O.K., thing, that, is Mr. X at home? (less formally). Is Mr. X at home? (more formally).

A - Yes, he is here (and then, she calls him).

As in other cases, the vowels of the transitional markers get longer and the shift of stress occurs. The fist topic is about X's health and the second will be about X's presence at home.

Transitional markers occur successively and the second topic starts immediately.

Another example:

The caller is a male, the answérer is a girl of 16 (an Iranian) who is babysitting.

C - Who is there?

A - I am. I am babysitting.

C - á:han ha.. he.. he.. O.K. fine (2) how is your daddy?

A - He's fine, mersi.

When the caller asks whether anyone is there or not, the answerer replies, "I am". The caller has two choices; either to talk about her or change the topic. The next topic is slightly related to the first one; it concerns the baby sitter's father and, thus, transitional markers occur consecutively accompanied by a short pause.

5) Transitional markers as fillers of gaps between the two topics of interaction are of great significance. Without them, the situation is not that of a normal interaction; the participants lose their power and control and, in some

cases, there might be confusion and finally anger.

As was mentioned earlier, to test the validity of previous hypothesis and the significance of transitional markers, two telephone conversations were designed to be carried out with no transitional markers in between. Consider the follwoing sample: (the whole conversation will be given in Appendix 2)

C - How about your school?

A - What?

C - school.

A - What, what, school? I went (to school) and came back (home). I didn't answer (the questions) well.

C - Why?

A - It (the exam) was terrible.

C - How are children?

A - Who are children (i.e. what children are you talking about) Children haven't come (home yet). Mandana had come back home, had opened the door, and had gone in (inside of the house).

C - What do we have for lunch?

A - We?

C - han! (i.e. yes)

A - food, we have rice. I said we'll boil some eggs.

C - Did we get any money from Iran?

A - No, why?

C - just a question.

A - No.

C - Any news about Iran?

A - I didn't listen to Iran telephone.

In line 7, A's statement, "The test was terrible (i.e. hard)" determines the topic for later discussions, but C asks an unrelated question, "How are children?". A is confused and wants to know what children C is talking about. In normal conversation, with transitional markers, such a confusion will never occur. A answers that the children haven't come back from school yet whereas, actually, one of them had already returned from school. Then, A corrects herself and adds that Mandana had already come back home. C asks what they will have for dinner, and A repeats a part of C's question and says, "We?". In normal situations, the question is clear and both participants know who they are talking about. In this case, with no transitional markers, A is definitely confused. Later, C asks A if she has heard about Iran, and A answers that she didn't listen to the telephone while she means the radio.

Another example:

Both C and A are males. They are sincere friends. A is sick.

C - How about your eyes?

A - My eyes! and my health condition is terribly poor.

C - ....

A - .... (the conversation continues about the A's condition for about 25 seconds).

C - Can you hear anything on the radio?

A - They have broken our antena.

C - Children?

A - Yes

C - Are you tired? Are you tired?

A - Oh, no, not really, but ..... let me see, ... yes, ...we

can't hear the voice of Iran. It's terrible.

C - Are you really tired?

A - So many courses.

(more samples in Appendix3)

4. CONCLUSIONS

To re-state my findings based on the primary collections of data:

1) Any telephone conversation in Persin necessarily consists of 3 phases: tension - relaxation - tension. Tension phases include greetings, compliments and predictable questions and answers.

2) The occurrence of transitional markers is necessary for any topic changing; otherwise confusion, anger, bewilderment and disruptions result.

3) The type of transitional markers, their duration, their collocations with other non-lexical markers and their allocation depend on whether the two topics (i.e. l and 2) are related, slightly related or completely unrelated.

So far, the findings do not indicate that there is a difference between the transitional markers used by women and those used by men. This factor should presumably be applied to a larger range of situations.

This project is more of a preliminary survey than a complete project since many variables and factors should be controlled before a general conclusion can be drawn. A broader sample and systematic study of topic variance would be necessary to draw firm conclusions.

In this project, the factors of the first language (i.e. the subject's moher tongue) and also, the degree of relationship between the two participants were ignored. In future studies, the elements of age, sex, degree of friendship or relationship, and language should be taken into consideration (to control the subjects' dialects seems to be difficult because of the limited number of subjects).

Although the ultimate aim of this project has been and will be to deal with transitional markers, I believe that the final findings will be most relevant and could apply to situations involving interactions with participants from various cultures to identify the areas of ambiguities, misunderstanding, confusion, conflict and apparently impolite misbehavior which results from incompatible culturally determined behavior.

I personally consider this primary project an experience that can lead to further more systematic research and investigations. At present, I feel better equipped to evaluate such studies.

Footnotes

1) 'aqa' is a Persian title usually used as an equivalent to Mr———, 'sir', 'reverend' etc. in English. In communications, it is used to indicate that the hearer is a male and not a female. In this case, the stress shifts to the first syllable. Thus, 'á:qa' has stress on the first syllable and a longer vowel.

2) 'baba' literary means father whereas, in conversations, it has no denotative meaning, but only indicates that the caller/speaker has chosen the 'Identity Arena' to develop conversation in a more relaxed, informal and friendly manner.

3) A hypothesis for later investigations:

Children seem to be aware of the fact that it is not normal for a man to talk about anything serious, but only to give greetings to a woman over the telephone if the woman's husband happens to be at home. A child might say, "Daddy, for you." if the caller happens to be a man and "Mommy, for you." if the caller is a woman.

4) 'to/by God' is used as a kind of 'swearing' to make the hearer believe what one says.

5) 'adaem' (human) replaces I /anyone in conversations.

APPENDIX II
CONVERSATION IV

(Topics are changed with no transitional markers)

A - Hello

C - Forough

A - Hello (greetings)

C - Hello, how are you $_A$/how are you? Fine?/$_A$ what are you doing?

A - Nothing, I'm sitting.

C - How about your school?

A - What?

C - School.

A - What, what, school? I went (to school) and came back (home) I didn't answer (the questions) well.

C - Why?

A - It (the exam) was terrible.

C - How are children?

A - How are children? (i.e. What are you talking about?) children haven't come (home yet). Mandana had come back home, had opened the door, and had gone in (to the house).

C - What do we have for lunch?

A - We?

C - han! (i.e. yes!)

A - food, we have rice. I said we'll boil some eggs.

C - Did we get money from Iran?

A - No, Why?

C - just a question.

A - No.

C - Any news about Iran?

A - I didn't listen to Iran telephone.

C - Did anyone call up?

A - What do you mean by 'anyone'?

C - Well, anyone.

A - No, no one called you up.

C - Any letters?

A - Letters! yes, one from the bank. It was about ... I don't know. It was about what, what, ... a customer ... I don't know what.

C - O.K.

A - No more.

C - Did X call me up?

A - X?, no, what for?

C - Nothing.

A - No, baba

C - Did you say the children have come?

A - The children? (2) They came back last night. Oh, I say

last night. The children? Kamran has come but not Mandana.

C - How about your test?

A - Test? I say (said) it was terrible.

C - (i.e. I don't believe it)

A - Honestly.

C - Why?

A - I don't know. It was terrible.

C - O. K., did you say you have no news about Iran?

A - No, no news...., well, I didn't listen (to the voice of Iran) (she gets angry) well, well I ...... how about you?

C - No, no news. Did you hear anything from anyone about Iran?

A - Why did you say you had received your salary?

C - No, I didn't. Any draft from the bank?

A - No, not for us. May be you have got one?

C - No, not here.

A - Are you sure?

(The conversation continues for about 30 seconds but, unfortunately, the previous recordings have not been erased)

A - I wish you would never call me. I don't know why you called me last night.

C - Did I do anything wrong?

A - You behave like a husband who doesn't trust his wife. Your questions.

C - Well, my questions........

A - (gets angry) I don't know, really, ... what you want to do. (She hangs up)

APPENDIX III
Samples of Transitional Markers

X = a topic

1 - ah.. ha.. he.. O.K. - nice - (2) X

2 - O.K. - what are you doing - X

3 - How are you - are you fine - (Answerer) - X

4 - ah (4) - X

5 - X_1 / I know it. I know it. / X_1 / You are right. You are right. / O.K. - (2) - X_2

6 - by the way - (2) - X

7 - X_1 / a: han / X_1 / bae?le / X_1 / bae?le / (3) O.K. X_2

8 - X_1 / bae?le / X_1 / bae?le / (2) - then - X_2

9 - $_C$/ No baba, please / $_C$ (5) - $_A$/ X_2/$_A$

10 - (5) X

11 - X_1 - O.K. - What else are you doing? ' $_A$/ X_2 / $_A$

12 - X_1 - / I will come. /X_1 / With God's favour / X_1 - (2) - X_2

13 - X_1 - / a;han/ - X_1 - /a:han/-X_1-/ bae?le/ - X_1 - / a:han / - X_1 - It is possible, bae?le / - X_1 - / bae?le / - (2) - X_2

14 - a:qa - thing - O.K. - thing - What's the news? - X

15 - X_1 - (5) - O.K. - E::::h - a:qa - this - thing - X_2

16 - $_C$/ X_1 / $_C$ - $_A$/How are you? /$_A$ - $_C$/ X_1 / $_C$ - $_A$/ Are you fine / $_A$ (2) / $_C$/ X_2 / $_C$

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