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Cultuling Analysis of “Devaluation” in the Iranian Culture

Reza Pishghadam¹ , Ali Derakhshan² , & Shima Ebrahimi^{3*} 

Abstract

Based on multifarious levels of social status, education, and occupation, people have certain values which construct and reconstruct their identity. In the Iranian culture, “Devaluation” means blemishing these values that make people ignore individuals’ values and virtues through certain linguistic expressions. Studying these expressions, one can achieve its dominant culture in Iranian society. Therefore, the current research is an attempt to study *Devaluation Cultuling* (culture+language) in light of the conceptual model of cultuling analysis. By integrating the components of Hymes’s (1967) SPEAKING model, emotioncy model and cultural models, the conceptual model of cultuling analysis is the most comprehensive model for studying cultulings of the Persian language. Studying 712 linguistic structures and expressions containing devaluation cultuling and interviewing 140 individuals, the authors found that devaluation cultuling is commonly used in Iranian culture with high frequency, and individuals have negative feelings toward this cultuling. Iranians employ devaluation cultuling for various purposes such as destructing and belittling others’ achievements, insulting, questioning the culture of community members, flattering and hiding their weaknesses. Findings demonstrated that this cultuling could represent cultural models of indirectness, high context, low trust, and holistic thinking of Iranians. Informing people about devaluation cultuling enables us to modify and change this defective cultural gene.

Keywords: devaluation, cultuling analysis, conceptual model, emotioncy, cultural model, SPEAKING model

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1. Professor in TEFL & Educational Psychology, Department of English Language, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran; ORCID ID:<https://orcid.org/0000000168765139>
2. Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language and Literature, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran; ORCID ID:<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6639-9339>
3. Corresponding Author: Assistant Professor of Persian Language Teaching, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran; Email: shimaebrahimi@um.ac.ir; ORCID ID:<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3528-1386>

1. Introduction

In ethnography, culture is conceptualized as a collection of tradition, lifestyle, collective customs and imageries that become the means of communication among members of a community. Culture encompasses values, norms, and literature and plays an indispensable role in forming the identity and entity of a community (Thang, 1999). As such, the value system of a society can be considered as its culture's basis which affects individuals' life style and their behaviors. Based on these values, individuals can assess their status, independence, and abilities in society. Consequently, in all societies, different values such as education level, occupation, and social status can demonstrate values in society.

Devaluation is defined as belittling an individual's value and personality. When people do not feel valued, they attempt to decrease the value of others' efforts and achievements to keep their own status. In such situations, they criticize, assess, and belittle other people's social and cultural dignity, occupation, and education to prove themselves and their own opinions. In fact, internal values will be decreased in such a society. Inasmuch as the fact that culture and language are inextricably bound, it seems that the language of a society can affect individuals' mental habits, expression style, and behaviors (Richards & Schmitt, 2002). Given that, the analysis of individuals' linguistic expressions can reveal patterns of cultural behavior that are hidden in a language. Identifying the patterns of cultural behavior can pave the way for the cultural excellence of a society (Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2020).

The concept of *cultuling* (culture in language) is a combination of *language* and *culture*, conceptualized by Pishghadam (2013). *Cultuling* refers to the structures and expressions of language that represent the cultural background of a nation and includes a reciprocal relationship between language and culture. That is, "language can represent the culture of a society" (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 47). In other words, investigating the language of a society can reveal its hidden culture. In this study, devaluation *cultuling* refers to those linguistic components through which Iranians reduce others' credit and values. Given the fact that Iranians have negative emotions toward devaluation *cultuling*, it can be considered as a harmful *cultuling*. Scrutinizing this *cultuling* enables us to raise Iranians' awareness of this defective cultural gene on the one hand and to modify and replace it with a healthy cultural gene on the other hand.

Given the fact that *devaluation* is one of the most frequent *cultulings* in Iranian

society, the present study is an attempt to determine the setting and participants of this cultuling in light of the cultuling analysis conceptual model. By scrutinizing the speech of participants, the instrumentalities, key, norms and, genre of interactions can be analyzed. Additionally, by investigating the related cultural models, the frequency, and individuals' feelings and emotions toward devaluation cultuling, a comprehensive study of these linguistic components can be obtained.

2. Literature Review

Culture provides valuable information about the customs and values of a society and the collection of these features occurs through language as a communication system that is an inseparable part of that culture (Derakhshan, 2018). Inspired by the ideas of Halliday (1975, 1994), Vygotsky (1978, 1986), and Sapir and Whorf (1956), which imply the relationship among culture, thought, and language, Pishghadam (2013) postulated that one could gain knowledge of the dominant culture of society through the analysis of the linguistic components containing cultural information.

Cultuling refers to “the structures and expressions of language that represent the cultural background of a nation and includes a reciprocal relationship between language and culture” (Pishghadam, 2013, p. 47). That is, language can demonstrate the culture of a society. Analyzing cultulings, one can extract the defective cultural genes, raise people's awareness toward them, and propose some solutions for altering them if needed. In this type of analysis, words, phrases, and sentences embedded in different contexts are evaluated and explained as peoples' cultural information (Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2020).

It should be mentioned that after the introduction of cultuling by Pishghadam (2013), many cultulings such as Swearing (Pishghadam & Attaran, 2014), Praying (Pishghadam & Vahidnia, 2016), Cursing (Pishghadam et al., 2015), Haji (Pishghadam & Noruz Kermanshahi, 2016), Destiny (Pishghadam & Attaran, 2016), I don't know (Pishghadam & Firoozian Pour Esfahani, 2017), Nāz (Pishghadam et al., 2018), Death-oriented (Pishghadam, Firoozian Pour Esfahani, et al., 2020), Positive thinking (Pishghadam, Derakhshan, Ebrahimi, et al., 2020), and Patriarchy and Matriarchy (Pishghadam, Derakhshan, et al., 2020) have been analyzed. The authors of these studies have illuminated that through investigating different cultulings, thoughts and culture of community members and the dominant

patterns of cultural behavior of a society can be identified. For instance, Pishghadam and Attaran (2014) investigated the sociological and theological dimensions of the swearing cultuling in both English and Persian languages. They analyzed the conversations of 100 Persian and English films. The results of the analysis revealed that the use of this cultuling is more frequent and varied among Persian speakers indicating distrust and disbelief among community members. In some cases, this cultuling indicates a decline in Iranian religious beliefs and confirms the Iranian culture of collectivism.

In a similar vein, Pishghadam and Firoozian Pour Esfahani (2014) analyzed the cursing cultuling by analyzing 200 Persian and English films. They found that this cultuling has become a colloquial discourse among Iranians. On the other hand, the British use insults instead of the cursing cultuling, which depicts the cultural differences between the West and the East cultures. It seems that Iranians frequently use this cultuling due to their culture of expediency and empiricism. This cultuling can be considered as a reflection of the decline in Iranian religious beliefs.

By the same token, Pishghadam and Vahidnia (2016) examined the praying cultuling in 168 Persian and English films. They found that this cultuling is more common among Iranians. Praying in Persian films was used almost two times more than in English films. According to them, this cultuling originates from the Iranian culture of appreciation, their religious beliefs, and their tendency towards collectivism, which can occur in any context.

Similarly, Pishghadam and Noruz Kermanshahi (2016) examined the relationship between language, religion, and culture by analyzing the functions of the title of Haji and related terms in 300 Persian conversations. They found that the function of this title has been valuable, but nowadays, it has undergone a transformation. In fact, it has become an anti-value. It seems that the media and society are among the factors affecting the mentality of individuals towards the title of Haji. In another study, Pishghadam and Attaran (2016) introduced the cultuling of fatalism by analyzing the conversations related to the concept of "Destiny". They showed that while the cultuling of fatalism is a very common belief among middle-aged and elderly people in Iranian society, the young and educated people believe less in it.

Subsequently, Pishghadam, Derakhshan, et al. (2020) analyzed the cultuling of positive thinking in Persian proverbs. To this aim, 777 proverbs with a positive

emotional connotation were scrutinized in light of Hymes’ SPEAKING model. The results indicated that the most occurring end of using the “positive thinking” cultuling in Persian proverbs entails giving advice and the most recurrent key pertains to admonition. More recently, Mehrabi and Mahmoodi Bakhtiari (2021) examined the cultuling of insult in “My Uncle Napoleon” novel according to its English translation. They found that the aim of using the “Insult” cultuling is humiliation, sarcasm, aggression, anger, and negative wishes.

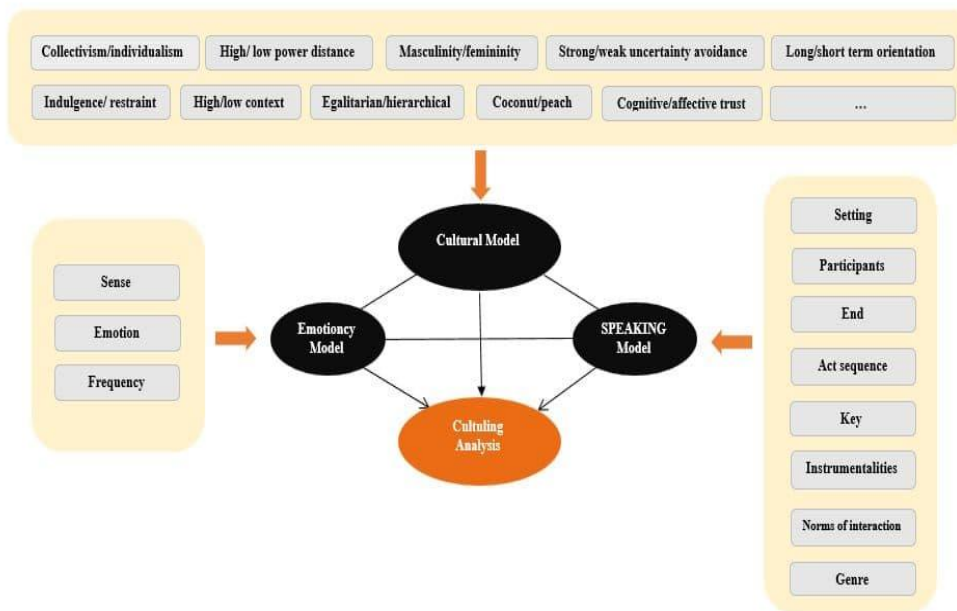
Besides the empirical studies conducted on different cultulings, Derakhshan (2020) has done a comparative review of “Cultuling” studies to scrutinize their theoretical frameworks, corpus, and findings. The results unraveled that the majority of cultuling studies have embarked on the data by reviewing the linguistic structures and expressions that occurred in natural contexts and have used Hymes’s (1967) SPEAKING model to analyze these expressions. The findings also indicated that few studies have analyzed textual cultulings, and no empirical study has been conducted to evaluate textbooks based on cultulings.

Reviewing the previous studies revealed that no comprehensive study has been conducted on the devaluation cultuling from a cultural perspective; hence, the authors of the present study have attempted to examine this cultuling in the Iranian culture. In fact, this study intends to examine how devaluation is touched and used by Iranians across different contexts.

3. Theoretical Framework

Given the importance of investigating cultulings in the Persian language, Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, et al. (2020) have proposed a comprehensive model conceptualized as “the conceptual model of cultuling analysis”. They believe that a clear picture of a nation’s culture and the linguistic expressions they use (cultuling) can be provided by considering these factors simultaneously. As shown in Figure 1, this comprehensive model encompasses three patterns of SPEAKING model, cultural model, and emotioncy model (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, et al., 2020).

Figure 1.
The conceptual model of cultuling analysis
 (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, Derakhshan, 2020, p. 31)



3.1. SPEAKING Model

Based on the ethnography of communication (EOC), which dwells on the inseparability of language and culture, Hymes (1967) stipulated that linguistic models and structures can be discovered by studying individuals' linguistic function. As such, to regulate speech events, he categorized influential and systematic factors of interpreting discourse meaning into eight components. These components were encapsulated by Hymes utilizing the mnemonic device SPEAKING. The discretion of the components follows.

Setting/Scene (S): Hymes (2003) referred to this component as 'time' and 'place' of a speech event. It explores two dimensions of context: 'the physical setting' in which it takes place, and 'the scene'. Analyzing the setting and scenic characteristics of the practice serves to place the analyses in a particular context (Pishghadam & Firoozian Pour Esfahani, 2017).

Participants (P): The identity of the participants in speech events can be assessed based on their age, gender, social status, and interpersonal relationships. The relationship of the participants of a speech event can be classified into four categories: (a) Equal and formal, (b) unequal and formal, (c) equal and intimate, and

(d) unequal and intimate (Pishghadam, Firoozian Pour Esfahani, et al., 2020).

End (E): Besides the participants’ aims in a conversation, each speech event has some certain cultural ends that can be evident or latent. These ends are complex and dynamic and can alter in various situations (Fasold, 1990).

Act sequence (A): The act sequence informs us about the sequence and order of interaction which involves both content and form. Drawing on the act sequence maxim, the participants of a speech event pave the way for the communication act during which act appears to play a crucial role in the sequence (Sarfo, 2011).

Key (K): This component is used to differentiate the tone, manner, or spirit in which an act is performed. Key can be amicable, depressing, meticulous, serious, kind, friendly, sarcastic, perfunctory, satirical, threatening, and aggressive (Wardhaugh, 2010).

Instrumentalities (I): This component refers to the type of language that a speaker employs to communicate and convey his/her message. It can be oral, written, telegraphic, and semaphore (Mehrabi & Mahmoodi Bakhtiari, 2021).

Norms of interaction and interpretation (N): As stated by Hymes (1967), this component depicts the characteristic of a discourse. It encompasses the rules of socio-cultural norms in individual and interpersonal interactions.

Genre (G): Genres are different kinds of speech acts and speech events such as poetry, proverb, riddle, conversation, prayer, lecture, imprecation, etc. (Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2020).

All in all, with respect to these components, the participants’ goals, needs, levels of satisfaction, and how language is employed in a particular context can be easily identified (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, et al., 2020).

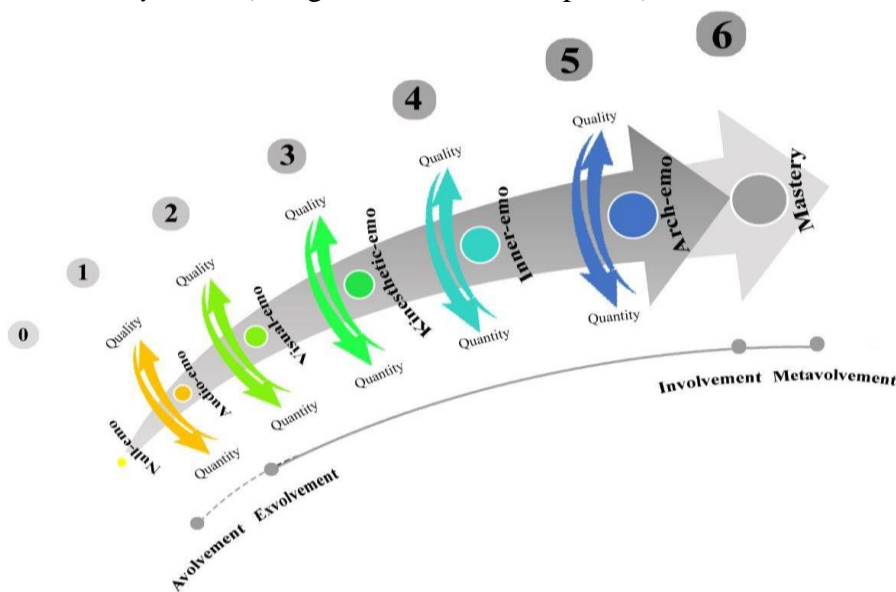
3.2. Emotioncy Model

Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, et al. (2020) believe that emotions, senses, and the degree of exposure to a phenomenon are influential in analyzing the cultulings of a society. To them, the combination of SPEAKING model and emotioncy model paves the way for a more picturesque and accurate analysis of cultulings. Pishghadam, Tabatabaian, and Navari (2013) proposed emotioncy as a combination of emotion and frequency. They opine that individuals have varying degrees of emotions

towards various items of a language which is technically called emotioncy.

As can be seen in Figure 2, different levels of emotioncy can be categorized into six stages, ranging from Null emotioncy to Arch emotioncy. In the “null emotioncy stage”, an individual’s knowledge of a concept is at avolvement level, which means that he/she has null emotioncy toward the concept. In fact, in this stage, an individual has not heard about, seen, or experienced an object or a concept. In the “auditory emotioncy stage”, an individual has only heard about a word or concept. When it comes to the “visual emotioncy level”, individuals have the experience of hearing and seeing the item. The fourth stage deals with “kinesthetic emotioncy” in which individuals have heard about, seen, and touched the real object. The next stage, “inner emotioncy”, occurs when individuals have directly experienced the word or concept. Finally, “arch emotioncy”, during which individuals are deeply involved in the process of learning, happens when they have conducted research to obtain extra information (Pishghadam et al., 2016).

Figure 2.
Emotioncy levels (Pishghadam, et al., 2019, p. 219)



It is also assumed that the greater emotioncy involvement through our senses and emotions, the more intelligible the word or concept is for individuals. Moreover, individuals will have a deeper comprehension, which contributes to the maximum utility of the word in the society (Pishghadam et al., 2018).

3.3. Cultural Models (CMs)

These models are related to the values, behaviors, norms, ideologies, and attitudes of individuals in a society, demonstrating their cultural and behavioral features. As such, cultural models are prominent examples of the organization of collectively shared knowledge closely tied with our social life (Maltseva, 2017). Accordingly, cultural differences among diverse societies can be clearly explained. For instance, dividing societies based on cultural features such as collectivism/individualism can be deemed as a value and cultural model (Hofstede, 1983).

In individualistic societies, individuality and individual decisions are highly important, and individuals have a great deal of freedom in choosing their ways and activities. In contrast, collectivist societies prioritize group decisions over individual decisions, and the concept of “self” is defined in relation to other members of the group. In such societies, people are often too concerned about other people’s opinions and often ignore or alter their wishes in favor of their own (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Accordingly, Eastern and Western societies fall into one of these two groups. Numerous classifications of these cultural models have been proposed by various researchers (D’Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Hofstede, 1983, 1991, 2011; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; Ilagan, 2009; Quinn, & Holland, 1987). Examining these patterns and values, one can achieve the cultural differences and similarities of societies and explain the differentiation of collective behavior in many aspects of life such as family, school, work, and politics (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

Employing purposive sampling, a total of 140 Iranians with different professions (i.e., student, instructor, housewife, engineer, and doctor) and different academic degrees (i.e., Diploma, BA, MA, and PhD) were selected. The sample included 87 males (62%) and 53 females (38%), ranging in age from 19 to 74 ($M = 46$). The respondents were selected based on their willingness to take part in the study. Prior to the study, all respondents completed the consent form. The end of the inquiry was also expounded to them, and they were reassured that their information would be kept confidential.

4.2. Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

4.2.1. Observation

To depict the hidden beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, and views towards devaluation cultuling, the authors examined this cultuling by considering the proposed models and a set of underlying factors. To collect the required data, 712 linguistic structures and expressions containing devaluation cultuling were collected (in 9 months) by observing the oral conversations of individuals in both public and private places.

4.2.2. Open-ended Questionnaire

To measure the cultuling of devaluation more accurately, the researchers also designed an open-ended questionnaire with 17 items based on the conceptual model of cultuling analysis. The rationale of employing the open-ended questionnaire in this study was that “they are easier to administer (notably when conducted online), provide more time for respondents to complete questionnaires, and do not need to be transcribed” (Friedman, 2012, p.190). To increase the trustworthiness of the questionnaire, five non-participants completed the first draft of the questionnaire. The essential revisions were made based on the piloting outcomes. The revised version of the questionnaire was emailed to participants.

4.3. Data Analysis

To analyze the gathered data (both visual and textual), content analysis as a common approach for analyzing various modes of data was employed. To enhance the credibility of the present inquiry, all phases of content analysis (i.e., preparation phase, organization phase, and abstraction stage) have been implemented by two researchers. At the end of this three-phase approach, the derived themes were returned to 10 participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences because member checking increases the trustworthiness of qualitative findings (Nassaji, 2020; Rolfe, 2006). Finally, employing Krippendorff's alpha (α), the inter-coder agreement was estimated as 0.95, indicating a high degree of consensus between the coders.

5. Findings

In this section, the authors examined the devaluation cultuling in Iranian culture in light of the conceptual model of cultuling analysis (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, et al., 2020) and its sub-components.

5.1. The Analysis of Devaluation Cultuling Based on Hymes’ SPEAKING Model

5.1.1. Setting: The findings indicated that devaluation cultuling is used in private and informal settings (e.g., home, party, etc.) as well as public and formal ones (e.g., universities, offices, educational institutions, etc.). Seventy-four percent of the respondents believed that the frequency of this cultuling in public and formal settings is higher than in private and informal contexts. This idea was also approved by natural observation results. For instance, two professors were talking together at university. One of them said: *“These days professors do not know anything, they are illiterate. Now consider what happens to their students! They become even more illiterate and this defective cycle continues”*.

5.1.2. Participants: The findings of natural observations indicated that individuals use this cultuling in all equal and formal (two classmates with formal relationship), equal and informal (two brothers/sisters), unequal and formal (employee and guard) and unequal and informal (uncle and nephew) situations. The frequency of this cultuling is high among all these people. For instance:

- Equal and formal situation: Some classmates were speaking about their future major. One of them said: *“Do you really think Human Science is a good major?! I do not think so. To me, money, credit, and everything are tied with Experimental Science”*.
- Equal and informal situation: A girl told her sister: *“If you study four books on psychology, you would become a psychologist. Why do you want to waste your money?”*
- Unequal and formal situation: The boss told one of his employees: *“It seems that trying to wriggle out of responsibilities has become one of the characteristics of employees. You just make a quick buck”*.
- Unequal and informal situation: A mother told her daughter: *“Dear Farzaneh, study hard to be accepted in a state university. Azad universities are money-oriented and deliver a group of illiterate individuals to the society”*.

The results of interviews represented that 42% of participants believed that devaluation cultuling is used in unequal and formal situations. The rest stated that this cultuling is used in equal and formal situations (28%), unequal and informal situations (18%), and equal and informal situations (12%).

5.1.2.1. Age and Gender: The findings of natural observations indicated that this cultuling is used by both males and females. However, men employ this cultuling more frequently than women. The results also represented that the frequency of devaluation cultuling among middle age and old age is higher than youth and adolescence. Among interviewees, 65% of the participants believed that devaluation cultuling is more common among men and the rest (35%) assumed that this cultuling is used mostly by women.

5.1.2.2. Social Class and Level of Education: Examining the discourse settings revealed that devaluation cultuling is used mostly by the upper social class and higher educated people. For instance, a professor told his/her students: *“You are not in a position to enter the classroom after me. Current generation is capable of committing any discourtesies. They get more impolite”*. Most of the interviewees (78%) also stated that this cultuling is more common among upper social classes with MA and PhD degrees.

5.1.3. End: Data analysis revealed that devaluation cultuling is used for several purposes.

- *Belittlement and destruction*: It seems that in most cases the purpose of devaluation cultuling is to humiliate the audiences with the aim of disturbing, criticizing, and undermining their self-confidence. For instance, a mother told her daughter: *“You cannot do anything. You are just a lumpish. You messed up everything I assigned you”*.

- *Showing oneself as literate*: In such cases, individuals aim to demonstrate that they have a higher level of literacy than the addressee. For example, a teacher told his/her students: *“It is impossible to make a comparison between our generation and yours. As time goes on, students become more and more illiterate!”*

- *Questioning the culture of the community members*: In some cases, individuals use devaluation cultuling to be deemed as cultured people. For instance, two friends were talking together. One of them said: *“Look at them! One is more uncultured than the other. As time goes on, they become more backward. Such people destroy the country”*.

- *Insult*: In some case, devaluation cultuling is also used to insult others. For instance, a teacher told his/her student: “*You are the most incapable person that I have ever seen. What are these ludicrous things you wrote? You will never get anywhere!*”

- *Underrating and devaluing others’ attempts*: It happens when people try to diminish others' values and achievements out of jealousy or competition. For instance, two friends who did a joint project were talking to each other. One of them said: “*You just wasted your time! It doesn't matter to the professor*”.

- *Flattery and subservience*: In some situations, people attempt to question others’ values in order to seem flattering in front of a higher authority. For instance, an employee told his/her boss: “*Please do not hold Mr. Hosseini so dear! His work is not great. His designs are usually copies of web designs*”.

- *Hiding weaknesses and shortcomings*: Sometimes people try to question the achievements of others because of their own weaknesses. For instance, a professor told his/her colleagues: “*These Lesson plans are all good-for-nothing! They always pass a mandatory law for us without any purpose. They do not know themselves and just talk about them!*”

- *Encouraging others to keep talking*: People question the values of a third person (E.g., backbiting). For instance, two sisters were talking together. One of them said: “*Mohammad is the most incapable person that I've ever seen. He fails in whatever he starts to do. How is it possible to live with such an incapable person?*”

- *Encouraging others to make some changes*: In some cases, people question others’ values to persuade them to revise their decision. This action is usually done with faithfulness and is real. However, in some cases, it is done out of jealousy. For instance, in a friendly group, a student told his/her friend: “*If you ask me, drop out the school. You were not cut out for studying! You are just wasting your time*”.

- *Complaint and moan*: People start complaining about the case because they do not see it in their favor. In such situations, they question others’ values to decrease their anger. For instance, in order to show his/her anger, a boss told the employees: “*You are less important than I get myself into trouble for you! Being consumed with rage is useless in this country*”.

5.1.4. *Act sequence*: Employing devaluation cultuling, people humiliate the audiences and question their values to justify their shortcomings. The audiences often tend to say nothing after hearing this cultuling. However, in some cases, they are likely to disagree with what the speakers say in order to defend themselves

against the devaluation phrases. For instance, a father told his son: “*Giving money to you is just waste of money. You will never get anywhere! The son responds in a complaining tone: "Your mistake is that you can never trust me!"*”

The majority of the interviewees (62%) believed that devaluation phrases are preceded by some sentences that stimulate people to start talking. However, the results revealed that 49% of individuals believed that audiences often tend to say nothing after hearing these sentences.

5.1.5. Key: Devaluation cultuling is used in a variety of tones such as offensive, derogatory, sarcastic, friendly, exaggerated, angry, compassionate, logical, questionable, surprising, grievous, critical, and humorous.

5.1.6. Instrumentality: The results of natural observations and interviews indicated that devaluation cultuling is often (90%) used orally.

5.1.7. Norms of interaction and interpretation: Devaluation cultuling can occur by interrupting others during their speech. For instance, some friends were talking about the success of their mutual friends. Suddenly, one interrupted others and said: “*Being accepted in the field of Literature is not a remarkable achievement. Generally, acceptance in Human Sciences is very easy*”.

5.1.8. Genre: Devaluation cultuling is widely used in various types of discourse such as oral conversation, prose, poetry, story and movie.

5.2. The Analysis of Devaluation Cultuling Based on the Emotioncy Model

The results of natural observations and interviews illuminated that people often hear, see, and encounter this cultuling in their daily lives. Ninety-three percent of the interviewees believed that emotioncy of this cultuling for Iranians is at the inner level, which means that they directly experience devaluation cultuling. In such cases, the linguistic expression is stored in individuals’ long-term memory; hence, the possibility of forgetting them is low (Pishghadam & Ebrahimi, 2020).

All participants believed that the frequency of devaluation cultuling in Iranian culture is very high. The majority of participants expressed highly negative (64%) and negative emotions (29%) towards this cultuling, and only 7% of participants

remained neutral. Hence, it is clear that no one has a positive feeling or emotion when hearing such expressions. Accordingly, devaluation cultuling can be considered as a defective cultural gene that should be replaced by a healthy one.

5.3. The Analysis of Devaluation Cultuling Based on Cultural Models (CMs)

Since devaluation cultuling is commonly used in Iranians’ culture with high frequency, most of the interviewees (83%) acknowledged that it could reflect Iranian culture. Additionally, since there is a high power distance in Iranian culture, they usually tend to belittle others with higher positions. Hence, devaluation cultuling is a reaction to the great power distance in this society. In some cases, individuals indirectly diminish others’ values because they are unable to express their opposition toward the given condition. Therefore, this cultuling can also represent the indirectness and high context culture which have a complex and ambiguous language for communication (Hall, 1979). In such contexts, the messages are ambiguous, and the community members are usually hypocritical.

Since it is not clear whether devaluation Cultuling is performed out of compassion or humiliation, it can also be considered as an indicator of low trust culture. In such situations, even moral values of society are criticized, and people do not trust each other. On the other hand, in some contexts, individuals generalize a subject based on a few samples and attribute it to all members of the society (e.g., “*All doctors are illiterate!*”). Therefore, this cultuling also depicts the holistic thinking of Iranians. Additionally, in some contexts, individuals exaggerate in diminishing others’ values (e.g., “*All doctors are unreliable. Most of them graduated from Azad universities*”). Hence, devaluation cultuling also reflects the Iranian culture of overstating.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

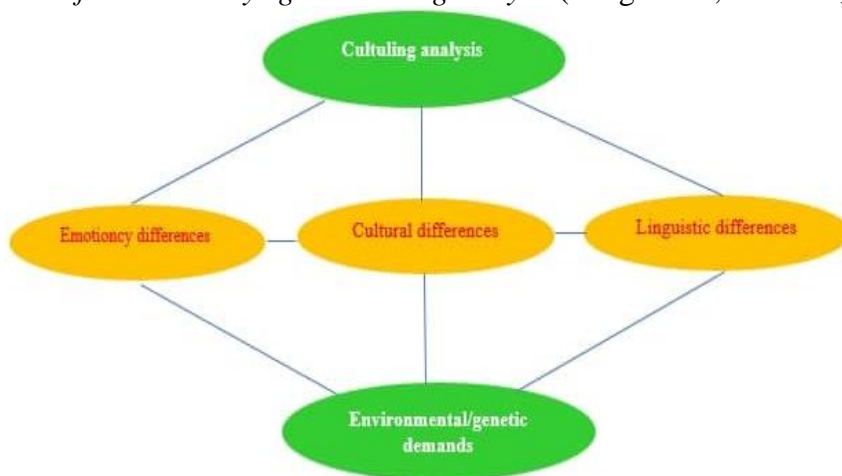
Due to the fact that one can realize the beliefs and behavioral habits of a society through examining its common linguistic expressions, the authors attempted to describe devaluation cultuling by examining it in light of the conceptual model of cultuling analysis. The findings revealed that devaluation cultuling can occur in any setting and both men and women frequently employ this cultuling for a variety of purposes, including belittling, showing oneself as literate, questioning the culture of community members, insulting, devaluing others’ attempts, hiding weaknesses, encouraging others

to keep talking, encouraging others to make some changes, and complaining. However, the findings indicated that men were more inclined to use this cultuling. In such communities, individuals' mental beliefs about men and women affect their behaviors, confirming the Iranian culture of masculinity (Hofstede, 1983). The achievements and attempts of females are generally ignored in such communities, which is an instance of devaluation in workplaces. This further confirms the existence of a sense of inequality in society in which the rights of others are not respected.

On the other hand, the results demonstrated that devaluation cultuling is more common in workplaces and universities in which people compete with each other. In such contexts, people frequently use this cultuling to humiliate and destroy their colleagues. It is worth noting that this cultuling is sometimes used indirectly, making it much more difficult to comprehend the audience's intention. In some cases, the Iranians' indirectness culture leads them to express devaluation cultuling ambiguously. It should be noted that such cultulings can have negative consequences (e.g., psychological and social tensions) for oneself and others (Lindner, 2010).

As put forward by Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, et al. (2020), environment plays an important role in the formation of cultulings. It can also affect emotioncy, linguistic, and cultural differences. It is apparent that the formation of devaluation cultuling is more probable in contexts where competition and jealousy are prevalent. As such, the role of environmental and genetic factors in the formation of cultulings cannot be neglected.

Figure 3.
The factors underlying the cultuling analysis (Pishghadam, Ebrahimi, et al., 2020, p. 30)



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Due to the extensiveness of devaluation cultuling at the level of interpersonal and organizational relationships, this cultuling and its negative consequences have received scant attention. As such, the necessity to change this cultuling as a defective gene that is able to endanger the mental and social health of individuals is highly tangible. To modify devaluation cultuling, it is essential to examine this defective cultural gene in different environments. It is clear that this cultuling will taint individuals' public image if expressed explicitly (Pishghadam, 2013).

Scrutinizing devaluation cultuling enables us to propose some solutions to protect individuals' personal and social values in one hand, and take some steps to change this defective cultural gene, on the other hand. Under such circumstances, one can experience safer and healthier relations. The dignity and value of individuals can also be preserved in such contexts. Undoubtedly, raising individuals' awareness of culture, trying to find the healthy cultural behaviors, and modifying unhealthy cultural behaviors can pave the way for the growth, excellence, and empowerment of the community members. Studying cultulings is one of the suggested solutions (Pishghadam, 2013).

The focus of this study was on devaluation, other studies can be conducted to examine other types of cultulings. This study has also examined devaluation in general, ignoring other types of contexts. Therefore, other studies can be done to examine devaluation in workplace and education to compare the results. Moreover, to have a more comprehensive picture of the Iranian context, one can use a large number of participants from different groups of individuals.

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About the Authors

Reza Pishghadam has a Ph.D. in ELT. He is currently the Vice President for Academic Affairs, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (FUM), Iran. He is now professor of language education, who teaches neuro-psychological and socio-psychological aspects of language education, and professor by courtesy of educational psychology who teaches courses on social cognition. Over the last 10 years, he has published more than 100 articles and books and has participated in more than 40 national and international conferences.

Ali Derakhshan is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the English Language and Literature Department, Golestan University, Gorgan, Iran. He has published in both accredited international journals (*Applied Linguistics, Language Teaching Research, System, ELT Journal, Current Psychology, Frontiers in Psychology, Journal of Pragmatics, International Journal of Applied Linguistics, Intercultural Pragmatics*) and various local journals. His research interests are positive psychology, interlanguage pragmatics, intercultural communication, teacher education, learner individual differences, and cross-cultural interpersonal factors in educational psychology.

Shima Ebarhimi is an Assistant Professor of Persian Language Teaching at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, who specializes in educational psychology. Her research interests are educational psychology, Persian language education, sociology of language teaching and cultural aspects of language teaching. She has published more than 50 articles in different national and international journals.

Appendix 1: Questions of Devaluation Cultuling based on Pishghadam et al.’s (2020) Model

Gender: **Age:** **Academic Degree:** **Job:**

1. Today's professors do not understand anything.
 2. Lazy persons select Human Sciences.
 3. Your homework is always full of mistakes.

Devaluation cultuling: Devaluation means belittling the importance or value of a person/ thing, decreasing dignity, and degrading value and personality of an individual.

Please answer the following questions according to the above phrases:

1- These phrases demonstrate the devaluation culture of Iranians:

Very Low Low Average High Very High

2 – What cultural features do these phrases evoke in your mind?

a) b) c) d)



3 – Nowadays, Persian speakers _____ the meaning of these phrases:

- a) do not know
- b) have heard
- c) have heard and seen
- d) have heard, seen, and encountered
- e) use
- f) are concerned about

4- How often do Iranians use these phrases in society?

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Almost Always

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5- What is the emotion and feeling of Persian speakers toward these phrases?

Neutral Very negative Negative Both Negative and Positive Positive
Very positive



6- These phrases are more common in _____.

Public/formal contexts (Office, school, street, store, etc.)
Private/informal contexts (Party, Friendly group, home, etc.)
Others: ____

7- Who uses these phrases the most?

Equal and Formal Equal and Informal Unequal and Formal Unequal and Informal

Example:

Equal and Formal: Two employers in office environment

Equal and Informal: Two sisters or two close friends

Unequal and Formal: Boss and employer

Unequal and Informal: Parents and children

8- Which age group uses these phrases the most?

Teenagers Adults Middle-aged Elderly

9- Which gender uses these phrases the most?

Male Female

10- Which social class uses these phrases the most?

Low Middle High

11- These phrases are commonly used by people with _____.

Associate degree Bachelor's degree Master's degree Doctoral degree Other:

12- What is the purpose of the speaker of using these phrases? (e.g., belittlement, admiration, advice, etc.)

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a) b)

c) d)

13- What sentences are usually used before and after these phrases/ what actions are taken before and after these phrases?

Before:

Encouraging to start conversation Encouraging to continue conversation

Encouraging to stop conversation Other

After:

Silence Approval Opposition other:

For instance: Prior to asking something, a speaker may use some sentences to say his or her request more easily and to encourage the addressee to continue the conversation. For example: "If you don't mind, please give it to Majid". After hearing this, the audience may be reluctant to do so and remain silent.

14- In what tones can these phrases be uttered by the speaker?

Friendly Aggressive humiliating sympathetic
other:

15- In what forms are these phrases mostly expressed?

Oral Written

16- What norm and value do these phrases represent in Iranian culture?

Indirectness Collectivism High context culture Low trust culture
Other:

Indirectness: Expressing statements and requests indirectly

Collectivism: Valuing collective relations, family environments, etc.

High context culture: More attention to body language (Eye, Hand, etc.)

Low trust culture: Lack of trust in the audience

17- What is the most common genre of these phrases?

Daily conversations Humor Commercial Academic Literary
Other: