POLITENESS AMONG IRANIANS: TAAROF USE IN FOCUS

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SHABNAM SHIRI

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University of Saskatchewan

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9 Campus Drive

Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5

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DEDICATION

To my supportive husband

my sister, my all-time greatest role model, Sheida

my lovely parents

and

my supervisor, Prof. Makarova, to whom the credit all goes

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the Iranian exaggerated politeness system called "taarof". It investigates Iranians' attitudes toward taarof use as well as some features of taarof perception and production which may be affected by gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic variation. To do so, I recruited a total of 96 research participants (within the age group of 30 to 40 years old) who were grouped by the above variables as follows: a) gender: 48 males and 48 females; b) two educational backgrounds: 48 secondary education and 48 post-secondary education; c) two different urban areas: 48 Isfahan residents and 48 Alborz residents; and d) two occupational categories: 48 skilled and 48 unskilled. As an initial step, a questionnaire survey was employed to obtain quantifiable data on perception of taarof characteristics and on taarof use by the participants. Second, a speech production elicitation technique was used to elicit taarof expressions in quasi-spontaneous prompted dialogues. All the 10-minute conversations were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The results of the survey part showed that attitudes toward taarof significantly differ by geographical variation and socioeconomic status, however, not by gender. In addition, the analysis of the conversation transcripts displayed significant differences in the frequency of taarof use by province and education, whereas no significant differences were observed by gender and occupation.

Keywords: Politeness system, taarof, taarof expressions, gender, geographical variation, socioeconomic status, education, occupation

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

The concept of language variation is central in sociolinguistics (Ammour, 2012; Chevrot, Drager, & Foulkes, 2018). The exact way a language is spoken by an individual or a group of individuals within one location can be affected by multiple factors including geographical region, ethnicity, gender, age, class, education, and socioeconomic status (Fasold, 1990; Labov, 1966; Sodah, 2019; Wardhaugh, 2006). All these factors are interconnected and can influence features of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and discourse patterns in language (Finegan & Rickford, 2004; Labov, 1996; Trudgill, 1995). One of the language subsystems which is strongly impacted by the above parameters is politeness. Politeness traditionally refers to being kind, friendly, tactful, civil, diplomatic, and socially accurate (Vidal, 1998), but it was radically reconsidered in the 20th and 21st centuries' pragmatics (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Watts, 2003). As will be shown in detail in the review of the literature, politeness systems strongly vary by language (Huang, 2008; Koutlaki, 2002). This research study addresses an Iranian politeness system called "taarof" and explores Iranians' attitudes toward this feature of Persian (Farsi) language. Furthermore, it investigates the frequency of taarof use among Iranians and the type of taarof expressions they use.

Attitudes to taarof as well as some features of taarof production are known to be affected by age and gender parameters (Gohardehi & Gheitury, 2014; Izadi, 2016; Makarova & Pourmohammadi, 2019, 2020a; Mohseni-Tabrizi & Homayunpoor, 2001). The current sociolinguistic investigation elaborates on the role of gender in taarof production as well as considers two factors that have not been previously described regarding taarof use, namely regional variation and socioeconomic status (education and occupation in particular). The primary objective of this study is therefore to investigate Iranians' attitudes toward taarof by addressing the differences across gender, education, province of residence, and occupation. The secondary objective is to examine the frequency of taarof use in two situations of language (complimenting and thanking) by considering the participants' gender, education, residence, and occupation. The final objective of this research is to study taarof expressions exchange among Iranians and identify the most frequent expressions across the four variables of the study.

The significance of the current study is to clarify the social use of taarof (frequency, social situations, and participants' characteristics) according to the language speakers' opinions. It also increases the range of taarof scholarship by adding two situations of taarof use not covered in earlier research (complimenting someone's possession and thanking while receiving a gift). This research project describes the roles of two socioeconomic status parameters (education and occupation), geographic variation as well as gender, in the production and attitudes to taarof.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1 Politeness

Politeness is commonly understood as good manners and "involves taking account of the feelings of others" (Holmes, 2008, p. 281). It is believed that "in the standard meaning of the word *polite* at least three dimensions can be identified: 1) *polite* as civil or socially correct; 2) *polite* as kind or friendly; and 3) *polite* as tactful or diplomatic" (Vidal, 1998, p. 46). Lakoff (2004) asserted that politeness is associated linguistically with verbal communication, and non-linguistically with other communication aspects, like body language, certain behaviors, etc.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework is one of the most widely used contemporary models of politeness. First, the focus is no longer on being "nice", but on behaving appropriately to the situation of language use. Second, they claim that they have created a universal and "profitable apparatus for sociolinguistic analysis of the phenomenon of politeness" (1987, p. 283-4). Third, this politeness model is constructed based on the notion of "face" which is defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (1987, p. 61) and that "is emotionally invested which can either be lost, maintained, or enhanced and must constantly be attended to in the interaction" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 66). The concept of "face" was taken from an earlier study by Goffman (1967, p. 5) where it was described as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact".

Face can take two values: if the speakers tend to project their self-image to be appreciated and approved by others, it is considered a "positive face", whereas "negative face" happens when the speaker prefers freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Brown and Levinson's (1978) politeness theory is constructed on the premise of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Any kind of speech acts that threaten the speakers' or listeners' face (both negative and positive) are described

as FTAs. According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 74), FTAs are categorized into four groups: a) acts that threaten the listeners' negative face: advising, ordering, threatening, warning; b) acts that threaten the listeners' positive face: complaining and criticizing; c) acts that threaten speakers' positive face: apologizing, accepting, complimenting and confessing; d) acts that threaten speakers' negative face: accepting an offer, accepting thanks, promising unwillingly. In order to avoid FTAs, one can reduce the threat by using specific strategies known as "politeness strategies" (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Politeness as a major component of every day communication is a social behavior common to all cultures. However, the idea of universal politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987) has been criticized by many researchers. For example, Eelen (2001) argued that politeness strategies differ by culture, and speech acts which reflect the cultural norms, differ by language and also from one regional and social variety to another. Watts (2003) supported the idea and stated that "in all human cultures, we will meet forms of social behavior that we can classify as culturally specific forms of consideration" (p. 30). To sum up, there may be a number of politeness strategies applicable to all cultures, but at the same time, each language and culture have their unique features.

The focus of my study is the linguistic aspect of politeness in a specific language and culture (Persian). According to Watts (2003), linguistic politeness is "an abstract term referring to a wide variety of social strategies for constructing and reproducing cooperative social interaction across cultures" (p. 47). In line with this definition, Grundy (2000) defined linguistic politeness as the extent to which linguistic actions match the addressee's expectations of how they should be demonstrated.

1.2.2. Politeness in Persian/Farsi

In the subsection we will include contemporary as well as 20th century literature on politeness, since this is an ancient phenomenon that was studied over the last hundred years. Many scholars note that the Persian politeness system has many unique features, it is very complex and multi-level (e.g., Beeman, 1986; Izadi, 2016; Saberi, 2012). The basic level of politeness is expressed through morphosyntax tools, such as the plural forms of personal pronouns for first, second, and third person singular (Tisdall, 1902; Lazard, 1957; Lambton, 1961), and vocative use (Jensen, 1931; Lambton, 1961). Vocatives or terms of address are endearment terms used to

communicate more affection or to soften the illocutionary force of a request or an apology (Saberi, 2012). The word "joon" [dear] after a name is an example of vocatives that Persian speakers use to address someone (e.g., Sarah joon). Some lexical forms of politeness include nominal forms like "bandeh" [slave] for indirect self-reference and indirect address (Tisdall, 1902; Jensen, 1931; Lazard, 1957; Lambton, 1961). As an example, "bandeh nazari nadaram" which literally means "this slave has no idea" is a self-reference indicating "I have no idea". Some specific forms of greeting and farewell are also a part of lexical tools of politeness (Lambton, 1961). Extending greetings to third parties (people who are not even present in the conversation) is yet another example. Persian speakers extend greetings to family members and mutual friends by saying "salam be NP beresoon" [say hello to NP for me] (Saberi, 2012).

Politeness in Farsi has multiple specific features at the levels of discourse and pragmatics as well. For example, it has been claimed that the Iranian cultural system is hierarchical in terms of politeness, while the American one is based on a deference system (Eslami-Rasekh, Tavkoli, and Abdolrezapour, 2010). According to the above study, Americans see interlocutors at the same social level without exerting power over the other, but Iranians are oriented towards interlocutors' power, and in case the speaker or the hearer have to encounter situations in which they experience power, they prioritize the interlocutors' power by compliance or rejection.

While discussing the concept of "face" by Brown and Levinson (1978), Sharifian (2007) refers to the word *aberu* which literally means "face water". Sharifian used the word "ru" [face] to refer to one's healthiness and freshness while "ab" [water of face/sweat] is assumed as an embarrassment or a situation when one's social image is threatened. Similarly, O'Shea (2000) introduces *aberu* as a powerful social force which not only concerns behavior and personality, but also involves family possessions and appearance. Thus, politeness is also associated with one's sense of self-identity and positioning in society.

Preserving positive face or *aberu* is a key feature of Iranians' cultural and traditional norms and an inevitable part of their social behavior and actions. One example of cultural Persian schema closely related to *aberu* is the use of *taarof* in almost all polite behaviors in Iranian society. According to O'Shea (2000), "Iranian society revolves around taarof, a formalized politeness that involves verbal and non-verbal forms and cues" (p.122).

1.2.3. Taarof

Taarof is "a polite communication style" described as "the backbone of Persian politeness system" which is "dominant in a majority of interactions between Iranians in different settings" (Izadi, 2015, p. 77). Tyler et al. (1978) found Iranian communications blunt and uncivil without using taarof for social/business interactions. Taarof in itself is a complex system and includes multiple elements as "compliment(s), ceremony, offer, gift, flummery, courtesy, flattery, formality, good manners, soft tongue, honeyed phrases and respect" (Aryanpour & Aryanpour, 1976, p. 306-307). Since taarof is the major concept of this study, a more detailed review of its descriptions, characteristics and situations of use is provided below.

Taarof (generic description)

Taarof reflects the moral order of giving consideration to others to the point of putting their feelings, needs, and desires prior to one's own (Izadi, 2015). It contains a reciprocal exchange of ritualized honorifics that expresses good intentions and at times flattery and empty formalities (Izadi, 2015; Koutlaki, 2002). Iranians who use higher degrees of taarof in their social interactions are considered very polite and are known as *taarofee* (Shafiee Nahrkhalaji, Khorasani, & Rashidi-Ashjerdi, 2013).

Koutlaki (2010) asserts that "taarof is a polite communication style" and that its practice "stems from religious teachings of generosity and hospitality" (p.44). Taarof has also been defined as "a style of polite communication, or ritual courtesy" (Koutlaki, 2010, p. 44), "an elaborate system of ceremonial politeness" (Lewis & Stevens, 1986, p. 13). In addition, it is "the active, ritualized realization of differential perceptions of superiority and inferiority in interactions" (Beeman, 1986, p. 57) and "the great national trait [of] exaggerated politeness, modesty, and self-deprecation that Iranians seem to be born with" (Majd, 2008, p. 65). Communicative use of taarof is rather complex as well, as will be shown in the next section.

Taarof (communicative use)

Historically, taarof stems from religious teachings of Zoroastrianism (Iranians' pre-Islamic religion) and its emphasis on generosity, hospitality and use of "kind words" (Beeman, 1986). Other theories of taarof origins include royal court ceremonies, the Great Silk Road trading exchanges, as well as bazaar economy (Haghighat, 2016; Koutlaki, 2010). According to the latter theory, taarof is one of the key features of commercial interactions commonly occurring in Iran when customers and sellers negotiate over prices (Haghighat, 2016). In modern days, taarof is

associated with some specific situations of language use, such as greeting (Saberi, 2012), hospitality (receiving guests) (Sahragard, 2003), leave-taking (saying goodbye) (Miller et al., 2014; Saberi, 2012), thanking (Miller et al., 2014; Saberi, 2012), compliments (Holmes, 1988), and names and titles (O'Shea, 2003).

One of the most important manifestations of taarof are its idiomatic expressions (Makarova & Pourmohammadi, 2020a) as well as with a number of ritual speech acts, that are not necessarily sincere, such as invites to visit one's home 'any time' and excessive praise of a gift as well as repetitive invitation and offers (Koutlaki, 2002). This exaggerated politeness also includes refusing an invitation (Izadi & Zilaie, 2015), ostensible suggestions (Izadi, 2016), granting turns of speech (Izadi, 2016), and refusals to accept money (Koutlaki, 2002).

Taarof incorporates other components of politeness system in Farsi, such as *adab* [politeness], *shekasteh-nafsi* [self-breaking], *ehteraam* [respect], *tavazo* [humility], and *mehman-navazi* [hospitality]. *Adab* refers to many meanings like courtesy, morals, learning, literature, etc. (Sahragard, 2003). An integral part of the concept of *adab* is the speech style and manners people acquire by good breeding, social education, and training (Sahragard, 2003). Koutlaki (1997, p. 110) explains that "An Iranian upbringing aims at producing an individual that will be a helpful family member of the social groups he will belong to. His behavior must follow the prevalent social conventions so as not to be offensive to others". Using taarof (verbally or non-verbally) to let others enter a door first or let others start eating first at the table is an indication of *adab*.

Shekasteh-nafsi requires the speakers to play down their own talents, skills, and achievements while praising and admiring their interlocutors (Sharifian, 2005, 2011). As the literal meaning suggests, *Shekasteh-nafsi* happens when someone puts oneself down to raise the status of the listener. It is manifested in taarof use when accomplished people downplay their achievements by saying "man hanooz shagerdi-e shomaro mikonam" to old or experienced relatives. This taarof expression maintains "I still know nothing" or "I still need to learn from you".

Ehteraam is translated as "deference" and reflects the person's awareness of self and other's individuality, autonomy, privacy, differentiation, independence, and the like (Izadi, 2015, p. 83). According to Iranians' traditions, *ehteraam*, which overshadows most of human relations in Iran, is an obligation or duty to consider social norms in all social involvements and situations (Sahragard, 2003). Respect of parents and readiness to provide whatever they ask for by saying

"be rooye chashm" is an example of taarof use to express *ehteraam*. "Be rooye chashm" which literally means "on my eye" is an expression Persian speakers use to say "for sure".

Tavazo is a strategy that can be translated into English as modesty and humility (Sahragard, 2003). To express *tavazo*, people must deny their abilities and possessions. Beeman (1986) believes that "the most effective and widely used strategic formula in the use of taarof is to aim for a lower relative status position and defer to another person. In doing this, one has … shown virtue by acting modestly in accordance with one's proper relative status: (p. 59). This feature has been manifested in one of the most frequent taarof expressions "ghabeli nadare" among Iranians. When a person praises somebody's possession, the owner says "ghabeli nadare" which means "it is yours" or "you can have it for free" (denial of possession). The owner, in fact, offers the object of praise to the person who praised it.

Mehman-navazi may involve using flowery language, expressing strong and repetitive insistence that a guest eats something, degrading one's own belongings and capabilities, etc. (Sahragard, 2003, p. 417). An expression of taarof use in *mehman-navazi* is when the host warmly welcomes the guests by saying "ghadam rooye cheshme ma gozashtid" which literally means "you put your steps on my eyes". Taarof use is a combination of all these concepts and notions and their specific linguistic and non-linguistic (e.g., gestures and behaviors) manifestations (Yaqubi, 2018).

1.2.4. Taarof use and related variables

In this study, I selected gender, region of residence, and socioeconomic status (education and occupation) for analysis as potential factors that may relate to taarof use. The reasons for the selection of each factor are outlined below.

Gender

The descriptions of gender-related differences in language use go back to the very beginning of sociolinguistics (Labov, 2001). Over the years, thousands of studies have revealed some differences in speech production across genders, e.g., in pronunciation of "-ing" by English speakers (Shuy, 1969), in their preference of intonation contours (Lakoff, 1975), the use of swear words, articles, and references to location (e.g., Gleser, Gottschalk, & John, 1959; Mehl & Pennebaker, 2003; Mulac & Lundell, 1986). By contrast, some other studies did not find significant differences in language use across genders. Wang's (2021) study of language use by

university lecturers in the UK concluded that gender differences in language use were negligible. Similarly, some researchers assert that the gender of a speaker/writer influences language use very little while other factors like social status or age of the speaker/hearer may have a greater effect on language use (Brouwer, 1982; Berryman-Fink & Wilcox, 1983; Ishikawa, 2011).

The relationship between gender and politeness is controversial in many languages, including Farsi. In the very beginning of language and gender studies, Lakoff (1975) indicated that women speak more politely than men and that men are taught to speak more politely while talking to women. Women's speech was described as containing some particular elements like "hedges, tentativeness, tag questions which show indirectness, mitigation, and hesitation" and men's by "direct, forceful, confident using features such as direct, unmitigated statements and interpretation" (cited in Mills, 1995, p. 165). This approach was subsequently criticized by many scholars as being "stereotypically gendered" and not based on the reality (Mills, 1995, p. 202). Some recent studies show that while there could be some differences in language elements employed by men and women, other effective elements like social contexts and conditions should not be overlooked (Wang, 2021). Gender is a dynamic social construct, not a stable factor (Coates, 2013), and therefore, this relationship must be examined locally and situationally, not based on general claims (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992).

Due to Iran's specific social and cultural traditions, politeness in Farsi is thoroughly gendered (Shafiee-Nahrkhalaji et al., 2013). Moreover, the addressee's gender has been claimed to be a key to the politeness strategies in Persian culture (Parvaresh & Eslami-Rasekh, 2009), meaning that considerations of deference will reverse when a speaker is talking to a man versus talking to a woman. The data from the above study revealed that Persian speakers employ more politeness strategies while talking to their opposite sex, and women, in particular, use conflictive impolite language with the same gender. However, in another study, gender and socioeconomic status had no impact on the type and frequency of politeness strategies (Shams, 2009).

Persian speakers' attitudes to taarof are known to be affected by gender (Pourmohammadi, 2018; Makarova & Pourmohammadi, 2020a, 2020b). Earlier studies demonstrate that Iranian men mostly enjoy using taarof, but women dislike it (Haghighat, 2016; Kazerooni & Shams, 2015). Iranian women hold more negative attitudes toward taarof use and believe more than men that taarof use makes the communication difficult; however, Iranian men find taarof beautiful and a characteristic of good manners (Pourmohammadi, 2018). Miller et al. (2014) introduces gender

inequality and oppressive social norms in Iran as a possible explanation for women's unwillingness to use exaggerated politeness. In terms of the production of taarof, the impact of gender is not quite clear. There have been observations that men are expected to use more taarof while speaking with women, but on the other side, men are more often in the positions of power, and power is one of the defining factors in taarof use (Koutlaki, 2002). There have been no significant differences in the production of taarof expressions between women and men in a study by Makarova and Pourmohammdi (2020a), but some expressions use seemed to be gender-preferential, and the overall number of taarof expressions produced by men and women seemed to fluctuate depending on the situation of language use. According to the same study, more frequent use of "ghabeli nadare" and "salamat bashid" in "shopping" scenario can be explained by the more association of the selling jobs with males. Therefore, further studies on the impact of gender on taarof production are warranted in an increased range of situations.

Age groups

Age has been proven to impact linguistic choices in multiple world languages and cultures (Holmes, 2006; Intachakra, 2001; Pan & Kadar, 2011). As an example, young Canadians adopt more American vocabulary, grammatical forms, and pronunciation features (Gold & McAlpine, 2010) which differentiates their language in comparison to the older Canadians. Age is also an important factor in politeness (Holmes, 2006). According to a study by Bella (2009), in a Greek community, politeness strategies and the format of invitations and refusals differ across age groups. The above study indicates that the younger age group treated invitations as face-enhancing acts and they preferred positive politeness strategies, while the older age group considered invitations as face-threatening acts and therefore favored more negative politeness strategies.

Taarof use is also affected by age groups and generations. Earlier studies demonstrated that the young generation (20s to 30s) in Iran, do not appear to appreciate taarof as much as the older generation (Faika, 2016). The results of more recent studies have confirmed that older participants have highly positive attitudes to taarof, believe that taarof needs to be preserved in Iranian families, and use taarof expressions frequently (Makarova & Pourmohammadi, 2020a; Pourmohammdi, 2018). In contrast, younger participants believe that taarof leads to miscommunication, are unwilling to use it and prefer to have it discontinued (Faika, 2016; Makarova & Pourmohammadi, 2020a; Pourmohammdi, 2018; Yaghmaian, 2002).

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Since the effect of age group on taarof is well established, I excluded this factor from the analysis by limiting the participants to one middle age group (30-40s) in order to focus on the factors of gender, geographical location and socio-economic status.

Regional variation

Observations of regional variation and geographical diversity have a long history and date back to the thirteenth century (Schneider & Placencia, 2017). At least five types of regional variation have been distinguished: supranational, national, subnational, local, and sub-local (Schneider & Placencia, 2017). Regional variation in language use is well described for many languages, e.g., American English on the Western and Eastern coasts (Baskaran, 2005, p. 126). In a study of the Mexican-American border, Spolsky (1998) indicates that distance from the border is one of the factors in Spanish language maintenance among people who have crossed into the United States. Regional variation may also involve the mapping of dialects within regionally identified boundaries; like the dialectal use of *y'all* instead of *you all* due to differences in geographical regions (Wardhaugh, 2010). Some significant regional variation has been observed for Persian (Farsi) as well. For example, the use of a vowel sound /æ/ differs in the speech of residents of Tehran and Qazvin (Modarresi, 1989). Studies of regional variation in Farsi have dealt mostly with variants in pronunciation, lexis and grammar, but pragmatic differences have not been fully accounted for.

Regional variation has not been previously investigated in its relationship to taarof. However, regional variation in politeness and politeness strategies have been addressed in some earlier studies in other contexts. For instance, Herbert (1989) observed a higher frequency of compliments in American English in comparison to South African English. Further, Goddard (2012) examined the initial encounter talk (Schneider, 2008) in Australian, American, and British English. He established that the expected behavior in early interactions includes projecting solidarity and equality for Australians, projecting reserve for the English, and projecting liking or approval for Americans. Another study addressing the varieties of Spanish language in Mexico and Spain suggests that while Spanish negotiators speak faster and produce more turns, Mexicans appeared to do the opposite (Fant, 1996). Moreover, overlaps in turn-exchange is higher among the Spanish participants (Fant, 1996).

Iran with a population of over 80 million people has a significant number of bi/multilinguals (61%) who speak the official language "Persian" along with their minority

languages (Hamdhaidari et al., 2008). In particular, there are 75 minority languages in Iran, the most common ones are Azeri (16%, spoken in the northwest), Kurdish (10%, west), Luri (6%, west and southwest), Baluchi (2%, east and southeast), Arabic (2%, southwest), Turkmen (2%, north and northeast) and 1% speak other languages (Haddadian-Moghaddam & Meylaerts, 2015). In terms of regional variation, this study investigates taarof use in the capital cities of Isfahan province (Isfahan) and Alborz province (Karaj) in Iran. Persian is the dominant language of the speakers in both provinces. Isfahan province is located in the center of Iran, and it is bordered by the province of Markazi, Qom, and Semnan to its north, Fars and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad to its south. Yazd is the neighbouring province to the east, whereas Lurestan and Chahar Mahal are the neighbours on the west, and Bakhtiyari – in the southwest. Isfahan city (the capital of Isfahan) is the third biggest city of Iran and second largest metropolitan area. Access to job opportunities has made Isfahan a popular destination for Afghan immigrants (EUAA, 2022) and internal migrants from the adjacent provinces. The population of this historical city speaks a variety of different local languages, of which Armenian is particularly prominent (Rezaei and Farnia, 2016). The linguistic landscape of Isfahan also has a little bit of a cosmopolitan touch, with the use of English, German, Chinese, Italian, etc. by sellers who employ signs in different foreign languages to attract tourists (Piller, 2010). By contrast, Alborz province is the smallest province of Iran in the north-central part of the country. This province is situated to the west of Tehran (the capital of Iran). Karaj city (the capital of Alborz) has a significant Azeri population as well as a high number of immigrants from northwest provinces (Rashidvash, 2012). Due to proximity to Tehran, this province is a very popular destination for internal migrants.

While there are no earlier studies related to regional variation in taarof use among Iranians, some instances of linguistic differences have been described between more formal and conversational speech (e.g., Modarresi, 1989). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that some regional differences can be found in taarof use as well, since the use of more formal language is associated with higher politeness (Ide, 1974).

Socioeconomic status

Socioeconomic variation includes multiple parameters, such as class, income, education, occupation and prestige (Entwisle & Astone, 1994; Mueller & Parcel, 1981). The close relationship between language and social class has been established in early sociolinguistic research (Labov,1966; Trudgill, 1974). In identifying most relevant socioeconomic status

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parameters, some scholars prioritize occupation (Macaulay, 1977), while others consider a combination of factors like income, educational level, and occupation (Duncan, 1961). However, due to time and sample limitations, in this study, I only consider the parameters of education and occupation.

Education as a socioeconomic parameter can change the way individuals speak. For instance, in Bangladesh, some imbalances in the education system have led to language variation where better educated people employ standard language and accents that can be easily distinguished from its non-standard variants spoken by poorly educated individuals (Rahman, 2014). Education can affect some linguistic parameters in Persian as well, for example, the pronunciation of salutations and the use of occupational titles (Saberi, 2012). Some phonological variation has also been observed across individuals with different levels of education and prestige of their occupations (Modarresi, 1989).

Regarding taarof use, Haghighat (2016) indicated that higher educated Iranians experience more pressure to use taarof and they are more open to the idea of taarof discontinuation. Koutlaki (2010) also considered education as one of the main domains of taarof use. Her study shows that educated individuals use more taarof in their communication.

The notion of occupation is also central in sociolinguistics. Labov (2001) argued that occupation was the most dominant social determinant of socioeconomic class, even greater than education and income. Forrest (2015) believed that a financial account manager, a software engineer, and a lawyer with the same years of education and economic status had different interactional network and linguistic needs. A study based on a corpus of sociolinguistic interviews observed different measurements of five front vowels in the speech of representatives of five categories of industrial/occupational sectors (Forrest & Dodsworth, 2016).

Occupation as the second socioeconomic factor has not been sufficiently explored in Persian. In a sociolinguistic study, the effect of occupation on vowel harmony in Persian has been analyzed (Bagherzadeh Kasmani, 2012). The results of this study confirmed that there is a significant difference among different occupations (sellers, university professors, university students, IRIB employees) regarding their use of vowel harmony. However, there have been no earlier studies exploring the relationship between occupation and politeness use in Farsi.

1.2.5. Speech acts and politeness in Persian/Farsi

Speaking a language means to carry out speech acts like asking questions, offering, giving commands, etc. (Searle, 1969). These actions can be modified through politeness tools to make them more or less face-threatening (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987; Leech 1983). For example, a more direct request may threaten both the speaker's and the hearer's faces if the request is denied, and using more indirect requests can mitigate an FTA.

Indirectness is considered to be a prominent feature of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1978-1987; Leech, 1983; Searle, 1976), and therefore, indirect speech acts have been closely associated with politeness in many pragmatic studies. Indirect speech acts appear when there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function (Yule, 2000). As an example, in the sentence "It is noisy here.", the speaker intends to say that the noise has interrupted him/her, wishing that the listener would turn down the radio (Li, 2016). Also, when people want to refuse something, they tend to use indirect speech acts to mitigate the refusal (Searle, 1976). Leech (1983) has made connections between indirectness and politeness while referring to the violation of Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner (Grice, 1975).

The underlying notion that clarifies the close relationship between indirect speech acts and politeness is the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1978) and the concepts of "face" and "FTAs" mentioned earlier. In fact, the production of speech acts that threat the "face". For example, a refusal, brings more challenge to the faces of both the speaker and hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In this regard, Brown and Levinson put forward two aspects of face: positive and negative. Positive face is considered as "the individual's wants of admiration and approval" and negative face is defined as the individual's "wants of freedom from imposition" (1978, p. 61). When other social factors including distance, power, and degree of imposition are evaluated by the speaker in terms of the degree of FTA, the speaker then decides to choose the best strategy to utter speech acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

To explain the connection between speech acts and taarof, research has shown that indirect speech acts associated with politeness, have consequences for face (Blum-Kulka, 1987). A direct refusal to a request is greatly assumed to be impolite (Locher & Watts, 2005), except for a response to an insincere act (Pinto, 2011). However, speech acts representing invitation-refusals and offer-refusals are part of taarof culture in Persian (Sharifian, 2007), and they are less likely to be interpreted as face-threatening acts (Koutlaki, 2002). Insistent and persuasive offers followed by

repetitive refusals are true manifestation of taarof, and the extent to which taarof is real or ostensible in offers/refusals/invitations, highly depends on the linguistic context (Izadi & Zilaie, 2015). Based on this culture-specific feature of politeness in Iran, refusals to a request are no longer face-threatening if they are responses to a taarof offer.

Speech acts in Persian

Earlier findings indicate that Persian speakers typically tend to use indirect strategies to produce speech acts (Afghari, 2007; Shariati and Chamani, 2009; Shokouhi and Khalili, 2008). Speech acts in Persian have been investigated from different angles. A few scholars addressed the linguistic politeness in the realization of speech acts (Eslami Rasekh, 2004, 1993; Koutlaki 2002; Nanbakhsh, 2009, Izadi & Zuraida, 2010), and some others studied the production and reception of speech acts by Persian EFL learners (Izadi and Zuraidah, 2011; Shokouhi and Khalili, 2008). However, the patterns of speech acts by monolingual Persian speakers have been described specifically only for requests (Eslami Rasekh, 1993), refusals (Izadi and Zuraidah, 2011; Shokouhi and Khalili, 2008), asking for a favor (Yarmohammadi, 2003), apologies (Shariati and Chamani, 2009; Afghari, 2007; Eslami Rasekh, 2004), complaints (Yarmohammadi, 2003), offers and thanking (Koutlaki, 2002). The present study intends to take a deeper look at compliments and thanking.

Compliments

The materials from my study come from a scenario involving compliments in one's possession (a new car). Compliments are a speech act within the category of positive politeness. According to Holmes (1986), compliment is "a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some 'good' (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.)" and it is "positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (Holmes, 1988, p. 486). Holmes also stated that without any knowledge of individuals' cultural norms, giving a compliment or responding to it could be very threatening (1988). While "You look lovely today" can make an English woman's day, it can make a Chinese woman uncomfortable and even irritated (Tang and Zhang, 2009).

Compliment functions in English have been categorized into 4 compliment actions including appearance, possessions, abilities/skills, and personality features as well as compliment responses (Herbert, 1986). However, according to Huth (2007), compliments are culturally shaped, not merely universal. When it comes to Persian speakers, they "make use of any compliments or

praise that they receive to enhance the *aberu* of their interlocutors, their family, or whoever might have directly or indirectly contributed to a success or achievement" (Sharifian & Palmer, 2007, p. 42). Karimnia and Afghari (2012) employed Brown and Levinson's model (1987) to investigate English and Persian compliments cross-culturally. The results revealed that the speakers use different strategies for making compliments, and consequently, culture is significantly effective on speech act performance. Sharifian (2005) studied the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* (modesty) and the way it affected Persian speakers' compliments through DCT technique. The data showed that Persian speakers were highly influenced by *shekasteh-nafsi* and they downplayed their abilities and traits for making compliments (Sharifian, 2005).

Persian speakers' strategies of responses to compliments have also been classified in earlier research. Boori (1994) found 18 Persian response types to a compliment: appreciation token, appreciation token along with a politeness formula, appreciation token along with a comment, non-verbal acceptance, comment acceptance, comment, offering, praise upgrade, comment history, reassignment, return, entreaty, scale down, question, disagreement, qualification, no-acknowledgement, and request interpretation; among which the tendency is toward return, offering, and comment. Yamini (1996) found agreement pattern of appreciation token plus politeness formula and non-agreement pattern of question favored by women more than men. According to Allami & Montazeri (2012), Persian speakers frequently employ patterns of comment, reassignment, and appreciation token. However, another study claims that Persians mostly use explicit semantic formula and non-compliment strategies to give compliments, and they are more likely to employ downgrade and return, as well as appreciation token strategies (Shahidi Pour & Zarei, 2017).

Thanking

Another of our dialogue scenarios contains thanking. According to Searle (1969), thanking illustrates illocutionary act of expressing gratitude or appreciation and these expressions may vary with respect to sociolinguistic and pragmatic values (Saberi, 2012). Cheng (2005) studied the similarities and differences in choices of thanking strategies in English and Chinese. The findings indicate that the length of speech and type of strategies in expression of gratitude differ by contextual variables, social positions, and familiarity. Interestingly, Japanese speakers do not use thanking as an expression of gratitude and appreciation, but a symbolic repayment of debt (Ohashi, 2010) by using more apologetic expressions (Nakamura, 2005).

In Persian, there are several ways to express thanking including *mamnun*, *merci*, and *sepasgozaram* (Miller et al., 2014). While *sepasgozaram* is more formal, *merci* is less formal and more favored by women (Saberi, 2012). Koutlaki (2002) investigated offers and thanks as two aspects of taarof. She observed that thanks are more commonly used to respond to an offer, but this response functions as a refusal. However, refusals in this way are not taken as a face threatening act due to its ritual politeness nature (taarof). For example, "A: Do you want me to make tea for you? B: Thanks!" The response by B can be interpreted as either a "no" (refusal), or sometimes it could also mean "yes", which could be a source of miscommunication. For the purpose of this research, expression of thanks is going to be examined through gift giving/receiving, a very prevalent habit among Iranians (Haghighat, 2016).

1.3. Research questions

Taarof has been investigated from different cultural and linguistic aspects (Haghighat, 2016; Mahdavi, 2013; Nanbakhsh, 2009). However, a few studies have addressed Persian politeness from a sociolinguistic viewpoint (Assadi, 1980; Koutlaki, 1997). Similarly, Makarova and Pourmohammadi (2020a) studied the use of taarof across genders and generations but did not include other parameters that could potentially impact taarof use. Therefore, the major goal of this study is to examine the role of gender, regional variation, and socioeconomic status in the expression of taarof, its use, and attitudes to it.

This study therefore poses the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of gender, regional variation, education, and occupation on attitudes toward taarof?

2. What are the effects of gender, regional variation, education, and occupation on the frequency of taarof use?

3. What are the effects of gender, regional variation, education, and occupation on the type of taarof expressions Iranians use?

CHAPTER 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter describes the materials and methods employed in this study. Research instruments, participants' characteristics, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques are presented in detail in the following sections.

2.1. Participants

Research participants (N=96) were recruited with purposive sampling. All the participants were speakers of Farsi/Persian residing in Iran within the age group of 30 to 40 years old (to control for age variable which is known to strongly affect attitudes to taarof (Makrova & Pourmohammadi, 2021)). To investigate the role of gender in the production of taarof, I recruited 48 males and 48 females to enable 96 conversations by two roles (complimentor/complimentee and gift-giver/gift-receiver) in M-F and F-M pairs. To check whether production and perception of taarof differed across educational backgrounds, the recruited participants were also grouped into two educational backgrounds: 48 participants with high school diploma or lower (secondary education= S) and 48 participants with university degrees or higher (post-secondary education= PS). The participants communicated only within their education group, S-S, PS-PS (due to limitations on the time and scope of the study and participants numbers). To account for possible regional variation, I recruited the participants from two different urban areas in Iran including Isfahan residents in Isfahan province (48) and Karaj residents in Alborz province (48). The regional selection was motivated by accessibility to the researcher as well as by some difference in language use that had been earlier observed for these areas. Persian/Farsi is the most frequent language in Isfahan while Karaj is affected mostly by Turkish/Azeri due to its proximity to Qazvin province and also the high number of immigrants from northwest provinces to this city (Rashidvash, 2012). Furthermore, to include the occupation factor, the participants were recruited to represent two groups: skilled (48) and unskilled (48) workers. The Canadian National Occupational Classification (NOC) was employed to describe the occupations as skilled (NOC: 0, A, B) or unskilled (NOC: C and D). The participants in province and occupation subgroups communicated within their groups as well (Isfahan-Isfahan, Alborz-Alborz, skilled-skilled, unskilled-unskilled).

2.2. Instruments

This research study employed two methods of data collection: speech production (dialogues) elicitation, and a survey. A questionnaire was used to obtain quantifiable data on the perceived taarof characteristics and taarof use by the participants. This questionnaire was designed and tried out by Haghighat (2016) who explored taarof attitudes among Canadian Iranians. Makarova & Pourmohammadi (2020a) and Pourmohammdi (2018) also used this questionnaire (with further revisions) to investigate taarof attitudes across age and gender. General and specific features of this questionnaire was revisited following the guidelines suggested in Dornyei (2003). Using this questionnaire brought a possibility to compare the results of earlier research with the current/future studies. The first section of the questionnaire included demographic data, the second section included 33 research questions presented in 5-point Likert scale formats, and the last section included 10 open-ended questions asking for short free-form answers (Appendix A).

The purpose of the speech production part was to elicit taarof expressions in quasi-spontaneous prompted dialogues. The research design involved two everyday communication scenarios (Appendix B) that were likely to elicit taarof expressions. The scenarios were based on the following speech acts: 1) complimenting on a new car with two roles of a car-owner and a car praiser, 2) thanking for a birthday gift with two roles of a gift-giver and a gift-receiver. The participants were asked to make a 10-minute online conversation employing each scenario through Skype video call. All the exchanges were recorded, and transcripts were made for further analysis.

2.3. Data collection

The data collection was conducted online in summer 2021. The BEH board ethics approval was obtained (BEH ID: 2435) and the approved protocols for data collection were followed. The consent forms were obtained from the participants before starting the procedure and the confidentiality of the data was preserved after completing the data collection.

The participants were recruited via flyers placed in local stores in Isfahan and Karaj. The volunteers initially contacted the researcher by email (they were advised in the recruitment flyers to use gmail or other email without personal identifiers). They could ask any questions about the research project and the tasks and informed of their rights as participants. If they agreed to participate, a consent form was provided and participants created a two-letter-two-digit code to connect their survey and dialogue data. The appointments were made by the researcher and the

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scenario-prompted conversation sessions were scheduled in pairs. As mentioned earlier, the meetings were held online through Skype video calls. However, the participants were asked to leave the cameras off, and the screen recording of researcher's laptop was used to record the conversations. The scenarios were provided to the participants before the recording session. At the beginning of each session, the researcher explained the purpose of the study as having a focus on communication in Farsi without revealing the exact research target, namely taarof. Moreover, the participants were encouraged to produce dialogues as naturally as they could while playing their roles assigned in scenarios. The researcher also checked if the procedure was clear to both participants and answered the questions if there were any. The participants had a few minutes to discuss the scenario with each other and were asked to start the conversations when they felt ready. Finally, the conversations were recorded and securely stored to be transcribed later for further analysis.

Next, participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire individually. The questionnaires were sent to each participant and received by the researcher via emails.

2.4. Data analysis

Analysis of the data from the recordings was performed manually for the most part. Conversations in Farsi were transcribed by an automatic multilingual transcription software, named Vocalmatic, which converted audio to text. The audios were uploaded into the website and the transcripts were sent to the researcher's email address after a couple of minutes. Vocalmatic included over 110 languages and variants including Iranian Persian, and all transcripts were received in Persian written language. Transcriptions were edited manually in the text editing section of this software and transferred into a Word file for further analysis. The frequency of each taarof expression was determined by pressing Ctrl+F and typing the search word in MS Word (Word for Microsoft 365 MSO (Version 2210 Build 16.0.15726.20188) 64-bit). While identifying taarof expressions, I relied on taarof expressions identified in earlier research (Pourmohammadi, 2018). Plus, some additional taarof expressions were identified in the dialogues in my study. I confirmed with 3 native speakers of Farsi whether they agreed or disagreed that these were taarof expressions, and only considered these expressions to be taarof if there was consensus on the subject. Finally, the frequency of each taarof expression was extracted and compared across genders, provinces, participants' educational background, and occupations. All extracted taarof

expressions (95) were pooled into a list (Appendix C), and 20 most frequent ones were identified and used for subsequent data analysis.

2.4.1. Statistical analysis of frequency of taarof expressions use by participants

Chi-square tests were employed to determine the significant differences in the frequency of 20 top taarof expressions across the subgroups (females vs. males, Isfahan vs. Alborz, secondary education vs. post-secondary education, skilled vs. unskilled). Chi-square tests are commonly used to determine significant association between two categorical variables. The same procedure of data analysis was used by Makarova & Pourmohammadi (2020a) to find significant differences in the frequency of taarof expressions across gender (Females-Males).

Mixed-effects model tests were also run to compare the total use of 95 taarof expressions across the subgroups of the study. In language studies, human participants' responses are considered to have random effects on the data because so many different factors can affect their language in a study. For example, if the researcher conducted the same conversation meetings in another time, there would be a possibility that the participants had a different choice of taarof expressions. Therefore, the motivation for using Mixed-effects model was to account for both fixed-effect and random-effect independent variables. Examples of earlier linguistic research employing mixed models are Tremblay et al. (2011) who worked on the frequency of lexical bundles, and Baten et al. (2011) who tested bilingual participants' lexical access to homographs.

2.4.2. Statistical analysis of questionnaire data

The data from the questionnaires were analyzed as follows. Likert-scale type questions were analyzed with Mann-Whitney U tests to seek any significant difference between the paired independent variables of the study. It is worth mentioning that the most widely used test statistic is the Mann-Whitney U-test when one variable is nominal with two categories and one is ordinal. With respect to the current data, this test was used to compare the differences between four independent groups (males-females, secondary education-post-secondary education, Isfahan-Alborz, skilled-unskilled) when the dependent variable (each question item eliciting attitudes toward taarof) was measured at the ordinal level (Likert items).

In an earlier study by Verma (2009), Mann-Whitney U-test was used to compare differences in two-category independent variables, namely gender (Females-Males) and marital

status (married-unmarried), on a questionnaire data included 5-item Likert-scale type questions. The same procedure was also used in another study (Togo & Ozturk, 2019) with respect to attitudes toward recreation areas. Mann-Whitney U-tests were used for five paired comparisons (gender, university type, marital status, city, private car) and significant differences were discussed.

Short answers were categorized by keywords/categories and summarized by their frequencies. Since open-ended questions did not have pre-coded response options, responses to each item were coded into distinct keywords/categories. Depending on the nature of questions, short answers were labeled by keywords (e.g., "gr" for "greeting") or categories (e.g., "positive", "negative", "neutral"). Each keyword/category was then numerically coded and entered into the data file to be treated as quantitative data. Finally, the frequency of each keyword/category was determined for each question and summarized for further studies. Content analysis of short answers was done according to the suggested procedures by Dornyei (2003).

CHAPTER 3. RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of the study. Section 3.1 elaborates on the results of the survey including the participants' attitudes toward taarof and its use in communications. Section 3.2 reports the results of conversation analysis with respect to the frequency of taarof expressions in both scenarios (complimenting and thanking) across the variables of the study.

3.1. Survey results

This section presents the results of participants' responses to 33 Likert-scale type questions and 10 open-ended questions in the questionnaire (Appendix A). The frequency of taarof use and attitudes to using taarof were evaluated across the participants' gender, province, education, and occupation. Additionally, the results of the participants' identification of social situations appropriate/inappropriate for taarof use and gender/age-related attitudes to taarof were compared across the same variables. The results also outline the connection between participants' social standing and region of residence and taarof use in communication.

3.1.1. Frequency of taarof use

The first two questions of the questionnaire focused on the frequency of taarof use in daily conversations. The distribution of the responses by participant groups as well as the cross-group comparisons of the responses with the help of Mann-Whitney U test (two-tailed) are presented in Table 3.1.

Q1. How often do you use taarof in your daily interactions in Iran?

As Table 3.1 illustrates, in answer to Q1, 36.5% of all the participants claimed to use taarof "sometimes", and no one claimed that they "never" used taarof in their conversations. However, the results did not show significant differences in frequency of taarof use across any of the participant groups by either genders, education, province, or occupation.

Q2. How often do you hear taarof used by others in their daily interactions in Iran?

According to Table 3.1, the majority of participants in all groups reported that they "often" heard taarof used by others. No one claimed that they "never" heard taarof among Iranians. A significant difference was observed in the responses of secondary education vs. post-secondary education participants (n1=n2=48, U=820, p=0.005), whereby the post-secondary education

participants heard taarof more often than their counterparts. However, there were no significant differences across all the other subgroups: gender, province, and occupation.

Table 3.1. Participants' responses on frequency of taarof use

Questions	Variable	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	All the time	U-Test	P-Value
Q1	Total	0	14.6% (14)	36.5% (35)	33.3% (32)	15.6% (15)		
How often	Female	0	8.3% (4)	35.4% (17)	35.4% (17)	20.8% (10)	902.5	0.05
do you use	Male	0	20.8% (10)	37.5% (18)	31.3% (15)	10.4% (5)		
taarof in	S	0	16.7% (8)	43.8% (21)	29.2% (14)	10.4% (5)	918	0.72
your daily	PS	0	12.5% (6)	29.2% (14)	37.5% (18)	20.8% (10)		
interactions	Isfahan	0	14.6% (7)	31.3% (15)	39.6% (19)	14.6% (7)	1080	0.58
in Iran?	Alborz	0	14.6% (7)	41.7% (20)	27.1% (13)	16.7% (8)		
	Unskilled	0	10.9% (5)	43.5% (20)	34.8% (16)	10.9% (5)	1089.05	0.641
	Skilled	0	18.0% (9)	30.0% (15)	32.0% (16)	20.0% (10)		
Q2	Total	0	1.0% (1)	11.5% (11)	61.5% (59)	26.0% (25)		
How often	Female	0	0	12.5% (6)	54.2% (26)	33.3% (16)	1002	0.204
do you	Male	0	2.1% (1)	10.4% (5)	68.8% (33)	18.8% (9)		
hear taarof	S	0	2.1% (1)	18.8% (9)	62.5% (30)	16.7% (8)	820	**0.005**
used by	PS	0	0	4.2% (2)	60.4% (29)	35.4% (17)		
others?	Isfahan	0	0	16.7% (8)	58.3% (28)	25.0% (12)	1064	0.456
	Alborz	0	2.1% (1)	6.3% (3)	64.6% (31)	27.1% (13)		
	Unskilled	0	2.2% (1)	13.0% (6)	58.7% (27)	26.1% (12)	1104	0.697
	Skilled	0	0	10.0% (5)	64.0% (32)	26.0% (13)		

3.1.2. Preferences in taarof use

The participants' responses expressing agreement/disagreements with the statements *"I enjoy using taarof"* and *"I hate using taarof"* are presented in Table 3.2.

Q3. I enjoy using taarof.

As can be seen in Table 3.2, the participants' responses were split between "disagree" (25.0%), "neither" (33.3%), and "agree" (27.1%). Therefore, no significant differences were observed across any subgroups by gender, education, provinces, or occupations.

Q4. I hate using taarof.

According to Table 3.2, most of the participants (40.6%) "disagreed" with this statement. Isfahan residents indicated a higher tolerance of taarof, as they responded "strongly disagree" (8.3%) and "disagree" (52.1%) more than Alborz residents (4.2% and 29.2% respectively). Moreover, 22.9% Alborz residents showed their dislike of taarof by "agreeing" that they hate taarof as compared to only 14.6% Isfahan residents who "agreed" with this statement. These differences in attitudes by the participants from the two provinces were significant (n1=n2=48, U=870, p=0.03). On the other hand, no significant differences were observed across genders, education and occupation.

Table 3.2. Participants responses on preferences in taarof use

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q3 I enjoy using taarof.	Total	12.5% (12)	25.0% (24)	33.3% (32)	27.1% (26)	2.1% (2)		
	Female	4.2% (2)	31.3% (15)	37.5% (18)	25.0% (12)	2.1% (1)	1081	0.589
	Male	20.8% (10)	18.8% (9)	29.2% (14)	29.2% (14)	2.1% (1)		
	S	12.5% (6)	25.0% (12)	35.4% (17)	25.0% (12)	2.1% (1)	1123	0.825
	PS	12.5% (6)	25.0% (12)	31.3% (15)	29.2% (14)	2.1% (1)		
	Isfahan	10.4% (5)	18.8% (9)	35.4% (17)	31.3% (15)	4.2% (2)	921	0.079
	Alborz	14.6% (7)	31.3% (15)	31.3% (15)	22.9% (11)	0		
	Unskilled	8.7% (4)	26.1% (12)	32.6% (15)	28.3% (13)	4.3% (2)	1023	0.333
	Skilled	16.0% (8)	24.0% (12)	34.0% (17)	26.0% (13)	0		
Q4 I hate using taarof.	Total	6.3% (6)	40.6% (39)	28.1% (27)	18.8% (18)	6.3% (6)		
	Female	6.3% (3)	37.5% (18)	31.3% (15)	18.8% (9)	6.3% (3)	1102.5	0.703
	Male	6.3% (3)	43.8% (21)	25.0% (12)	18.8% (9)	6.3% (3)		
	S	8.3% (4)	29.2% (14)	33.3% (16)	25.0% (12)	4.2% (2)	993	0.22
	PS	4.2% (2)	52.1% (25)	22.9% (11)	12.5% (6)	8.3% (4)		
	Isfahan	8.3% (4)	52.1% (25)	18.8% (9)	14.6% (7)	6.3% (3)	870	**0.03**
	Alborz	4.2% (2)	29.2% (14)	37.5% (18)	22.9% (11)	6.3% (3)		
	Unskilled	8.7% (4)	41.3% (19)	23.9% (11)	21.7% (10)	4.3% (2)	1078	0.579
	Skilled	4.0% (2)	40.0% (20)	32.0% (16)	16.0% (8)	8.0% (4)		

3.1.3. Appropriate and inappropriate social situations to use taarof

The participants' responses to questions about social situations of taarof use (Q5 to Q10) are summarized in Table 3.3.

Q5. I think taarof is useful in communication.

According to Table 3.3, most of the participants (39.6%) "agreed" that taarof is useful in daily communication, however, no significant difference was observed across any of the groups.

Q6. Using taarof is appropriate in some situations of language use.

Table 3.3 shows that more than half of the participants (57.3%) "agreed" that taarof is appropriate in some situations. Residents of different provinces produced significantly different responses (n1=n2=48, U=848, p=0.013) to the Q6 statement. Residents of Isfahan "agreed" (68.8%) and "strongly agreed" (18.8%) that taarof use is appropriate in some situations of language use more as compared with residents of Alborz (45.8% and 14.6% respectively). The differences across the other groups were not significant.

Q7. Using taarof is appropriate when addressing highly educated people.

Overall, the majority of the participants (38.5%) "agreed" that it was appropriate to use taarof in communication with highly educated people (Table 3.3). A comparison between the two provinces indicated a significant difference (n1=n2=48, U=846, p=0.018). While 52.1% of Isfahan residents "agreed" that it is appropriate to use taarof when addressing educated people, only 25.0% of Alborz residents "agreed" with it. No significant differences were found across the other groups under study.

Q8. Using taarof is appropriate when addressing people in positions of high social power.

According to Table 3.3, most participants (42.7%) "agreed" that it was appropriate to use taarof while addressing people in positions of high social power. Significant differences were observed in participants' responses to this statement across education levels (n1=n2=48, U=873.5, p=0.03) and provinces of residence (n1=n2=48, U=785, p=0.004). Most (52.1%) post-secondary education participants "highly agreed" that it is appropriate to use taarof when addressing people in high social power, but only 33.3% of secondary education counterparts "agreed" with the

statement. There were more Isfahan residents (52.1%) who "agreed" with this statement than Alborz residents (33.3%). No significant differences were observed across gender and occupation.

Q9. Using taarof is appropriate when addressing people who are very rich.

A high number of participants (45.8%) "disagreed" that the use of taarof is appropriate in communication with rich people. As can be seen in Table 3.3, nobody "strongly agreed" with this statement. Secondary education (56.3%) and unskilled (56.5%) participants "disagreed" (n1=n2=48, U=753, p=0.002 and n1=n2=48, U=866, p=0.027 respectively) with this statement significantly more as compared to their post-secondary education and skilled peers. However, there were no significant differences across genders and the provinces of residence.

Q10. Using taarof is appropriate when addressing highly accomplished or famous individuals.

The participants mostly "agreed" (39.6%) that taarof should be used while addressing accomplished and famous people (Table 3.3). The analysis of participants' responses to this question showed a significant difference across education (n1=n2=48, U=751, p=0.002). Although 52.1% of post-secondary education participants "agreed" to this statement, only 27.1% of secondary education participants showed their "agreement". For the other variables of the study, no significant differences were found in response to this statement.

Table 3.3. Participants' responses to questions about appropriate and inappropriate social situations to use taarof

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q5 Taarof is useful in communi-cation.	Total	5.2% (5)	28.1% (27)	21.9% (21)	39.6% (38)	5.2% (5)		
	Female	4.2% (2)	35.4% (17)	25.0% (12)	29.2% (14)	6.3% (3)	966	0.152
	Male	6.3% (3)	20.8% (10)	18.8% (9)	50.0% (24)	4.2% (2)		
	S	6.3% (3)	33.3% (16)	18.8% (9)	35.4% (17)	6.3% (3)	1038	0.382
	PS	4.2% (2)	22.9% (12)	25.0% (12)	43.8% (21)	4.2% (2)		
	Isfahan	2.1% (1)	27.1% (13)	16.7% (8)	45.8% (22)	8.3% (4)	915	0.068
	Alborz	8.3% (4)	29.2% (14)	27.1% (13)	33.3% (16)	2.1% (1)		
	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	23.9% (11)	21.7% (10)	43.5% (20)	6.5% (3)	1004	0.26
	Skilled	6.0% (3)	32.0% (16)	22.0% (11)	36.0% (18)	4.0% (2)		

Q6	Total	0	7.3% (7)	18.8% (18)	57.3% (55)	16.7% (16)		
Taarof is	Female	0	4.2% (2)	20.8% (10)	60.4% (29)	14.6% (7)	1150.5	0.99
appropriate	Male	0	10.4% (5)	16.7% (8)	54.2% (26)	18.8% (9)		
in some	S	0	8.3% (4)	18.8% (9)	62.5% (30)	10.4% (5)	1021	0.283
situations	PS	0	6.3% (3)	18.8% (9)	52.1% (25)	22.9% (11)		
of	Isfahan	0	2.1% (1)	10.4% (5)	68.8% (33)	18.8% (19)	848	**0.013**
language	Alborz	0	12.5% (6)	27.1% (13)	45.8% (22)	14.6% (7)		
use.	Unskilled	0	10.9% (5)	10.9% (5)	63.0% (29)	15.2% (7)	1122	0.818
	Skilled	0	4.0% (2)	26.0% (13)	52.0% (26)	18.0% (9)		
Q7	Total	4.2% (4)	25.0% (24)	30.2% (29)	38.5% (37)	2.1% (2)		
Taarof is	Female	2.1% (1)	29.2% (14)	35.4% (17)	31.3% (15)	2.1% (1)	1024	0.323
appropriate	Male	6.3% (3)	20.8% (10)	25.0% (12)	45.8% (22)	2.1% (1)		
when	S	4.2% (2)	33.3% (16)	29.2% (14)	29.2% (14)	4.2% (2)	950	0.119
addressing	PS	4.2% (2)	16.7% (8)	31.3% (15)	47.9% (23)	0		
educated	Isfahan	6.3% (3)	18.8% (9)	18.8% (9)	52.1% (25)	4.2% (2)	846	**0.018**
people.	Alborz	2.1% (1)	31.3% (15)	41.7% (20)	25.0% (12)	0		
	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	28.3% (13)	28.3% (13)	34.8% (16)	4.3% (2)	1104.5	0.725
	Skilled	4.0% (2)	22.0% (11)	32.0% (16)	42.0% (21)	0		
Q8	Total	3.1% (3)	27.1% (26)	24.0% (23)	42.7% (41)	3.1% (3)		
Taarof is	Female	2.1% (1)	29.2% (14)	29.2% (14)	37.5% (18)	2.1% (1)	1040	0.384
appropriate	Male	4.2% (2)	25.0% (12)	18.8% (9)	47.9% (23)	4.2% (2)		
when	S	6.3% (3)	31.3% (15)	27.1% (13)	33.3% (16)	2.1% (1)	873.5	**0.03**
addressing	PS	0	22.9% (11)	20.8% (10)	52.1% (25)	4.2% (2)		
people in	Isfahan	2.1% (1)	16.7% (8)	22.9% (11)	52.1% (25)	6.3% (3)	785	**0.004**
high social	Alborz	4.2% (2)	37.5% (18)	25.0% (12)	33.3% (16)	0		
positions.	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	30.4% (14)	23.9% (11)	39.1% (18)	2.2% (1)	1104	0.29
	Skilled	2.1% (1)	24.0% (12)	24.0% (12)	46.0% (23)	4.0% (2)		
Q9	Total	13.5% (13)	45.8% (44)	20.8% (20)	19.8% (19)	0		
Taarof is	Female	10.4% (5)	43.8% (21)	22.9% (11)	22.9% (11)	0	1000	0.236
appropriate	Male	16.7% (8)	47.9% (23)	18.8% (9)	16.7% (8)	0		

							U	p
when	S	18.8% (9)	56.3% (27)	14.6% (7)	10.4% (5)	0	753	**0.002**
addressing	PS	8.3% (4)	35.4% (17)	27.1% (13)	29.2% (14)	0		
rich	Isfahan	14.6% (7)	33.3% (16)	25.0% (12)	27.1% (13)	0	922	0.073
people.	Alborz	12.5% (6)	58.3% (28)	16.7% (8)	12.5% (6)	0		
	Unskilled	15.2% (7)	56.5% (26)	17.4% (8)	10.9% (5)	0	866	**0.027**
	Skilled	12.0% (6)	36.0% (18)	24.0% (12)	28.0% (14)	0		
Q10	Total	4.2% (4)	31.3% (30)	24.0% (23)	39.6% (38)	1.0% (1)	✕	✕
Taarof is	Female	2.1% (1)	33.3% (16)	25.0% (12)	37.5% (18)	2.1% (1)	1140.5	0.929
appropriate	Male	6.3% (3)	29.2% (14)	22.9% (11)	41.7% (20)	0		
when	S	8.3% (4)	39.6% (19)	25.0% (12)	27.1% (13)	0	751	**0.002**
addressing	PS	0	22.9% (11)	22.9% (11)	52.1% (25)	2.1% (1)		
famous	Isfahan	4.2% (2)	22.9% (11)	22.9% (11)	47.9% (23)	2.1% (1)	899	0.5
people.	Alborz	4.2% (2)	39.6% (19)	25.0% (12)	31.3% (15)	0		
	Unskilled	6.5% (3)	32.6% (15)	30.4% (14)	30.4% (14)	0	934	0.094
	Skilled	2.0% (1)	30.0% (15)	18.0% (9)	48.0% (24)	2.0% (1)		

3.1.4. Gender-related attitudes to taarof

Participants' gender-related attitudes toward the statements "*Men are expected to use taarof when talking with women*" and "*Women are expected to use taarof when talking with men*" are summarized in Table 3.4.

Q11. Men are expected to use taarof when talking with women.

Table 3.4 shows that a high number of participants (60.4%) expected men to use taarof while talking to women. The number of skilled participants (20.0%) who "disagreed" was significantly higher than the number of unskilled participants (8.7%), (n1=n2=48, U=874.5, p=0.022). However, no significant differences were identified for the other groups in the study.

Q12. Women are expected to use taarof when talking with men.

As shown in Table 3.4, 44.8% of all the participants expected women to use taarof in communication with men. There was no disagreement on this question across the genders, or other social subgroups, except for the skilled and unskilled subgroups (n1=n2=48, U=798, p=0.006).

While 56.5% of skilled participants "agreed" with this statement, only 34.0% of unskilled individuals had the same response.

Table 3.4. Participants' responses on gender-related attitudes to taarof

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q11	Total	5.2% (5)	14.6% (14)	15.6% (15)	60.4% (58)	4.2% (4)		
Men are	Female	6.3% (3)	16.7% (8)	20.8% (10)	54.2% (26)	2.1% (1)	948.5	0.09
expected	Male	4.2% (2)	12.5% (6)	10.4% (5)	66.7% (32)	6.3% (3)		
to use	S	10.4% (5)	10.4% (5)	14.6% (7)	58.3% (28)	6.3% (3)	1152	1.00
taarof	PS	0	18.8% (9)	16.7% (8)	62.5% (30)	2.1% (1)		
when talk-	Isfahan	6.3% (3)	12.5% (6)	8.3% (4)	66.7% (32)	6.3% (3)	972.5	0.135
ing with	Alborz	4.2% (2)	16.7% (8)	22.9% (11)	54.2% (26)	2.1% (1)		
women.	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	8.7% (4)	10.9% (5)	69.6% (32)	6.5% (3)	874.5	**0.022**
	Skilled	6.0% (3)	20.0% (10)	20.0% (10)	52.0% (26)	2.0% (1)		
Q12	Total	5.2% (5)	28.1% (27)	19.8% (19)	44.8% (43)	2.1% (2)		
Women	Female	6.3% (3)	22.9% (11)	27.1% (13)	43.8% (21)	0	1121	0.809
are	Male	4.2% (2)	33.3% (16)	12.5% (6)	45.8% (22)	4.2% (2)		
expected	S	10.4% (5)	20.8% (10)	20.8% (10)	43.8% (21)	4.2% (2)	1131	0.87
to use	PS	0	35.4% (17)	18.8% (9)	45.8% (22)	0		
taarof	Isfahan	6.3% (3)	27.1% (13)	12.5% (6)	52.1% (25)	2.1% (1)	1051.5	0.432
when talk-	Alborz	4.2% (2)	29.2% (14)	27.1% (13)	37.5% (18)	2.1% (1)		
ing with	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	17.4% (8)	17.4% (8)	56.5% (26)	4.3% (2)	798	**0.006**
men.	Skilled	6.0% (3)	38.0% (19)	22.0% (11)	34.0% (17)	0		

3.1.5. Age-related attitudes to taarof

Table 3.5 shows the participants' responses to Q13 and Q14 with a focus on the age-related issues while using taarof in communications.

Q13. Younger people are expected to use taarof when talking with older people.

According to Table 3.5, the majority of participants (72.9%) "agreed" that younger people should use taarof while talking with older people. There were no significant differences in participants' responses across the groups.

Q14. Older people should use taarof when talking with younger people who are highly accomplished.

Table 3.5 indicated that most participants (35.4%) "neither agreed nor disagreed" with a statement that older people should use taarof in communication with accomplished younger individuals. The p-values in Table 3.5 show no significant difference across the groups.

Table 3.5. Participants' responses on age-related attitudes to taarof

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q13	Total	1.0% (1)	8.3% (8)	6.3% (6)	72.9% (70)	11.5% (11)		
Younger	Female	2.1% (1)	6.3% (3)	4.2% (2)	75.0% (36)	12.5% (6)	1073.5	0.461
people are	Male	0	10.4% (5)	8.3% (4)	70.8% (34)	10.4% (5)		
expected	S	0	12.5% (6)	4.2% (2)	72.9% (35)	10.4% (5)	1104.5	0.656
to use	PS	2.1% (1)	4.2% (2)	8.3% (4)	72.9% (35)	12.5% (6)		
taarof	Isfahan	0	8.3% (4)	6.3% (3)	72.9% (35)	12.5% (6)	1107	0.673
with older	Alborz	2.1% (1)	8.3% (4)	6.3% (3)	72.9% (35)	10.4% (5)		
people.	Unskilled	0	8.7% (4)	4.3% (2)	71.7% (33)	15.2% (7)	1030.5	0.262
	Skilled	2.0% (1)	8.0% (4)	8.0% (4)	74.0% (37)	8.0% (4)		
Q14	Total	5.2% (5)	21.9% (21)	35.4% (34)	34.4% (33)	3.1% (3)		
Older	Female	6.3% (3)	20.8% (10)	37.5% (18)	33.3% (16)	2.1% (1)	1103	0.706
people are	Male	4.2% (2)	22.9% (11)	33.3% (16)	35.4% (17)	4.2% (2)		
expected	S	10.4% (5)	20.8% (10)	39.6% (19)	29.2% (14)	0	903.5	0.056
to use	PS	0	22.9% (11)	31.3% (15)	39.6% (19)	6.3% (3)		
taarof	Isfahan	8.3% (4)	18.8% (9)	43.8% (21)	29.2% (14)	0	971.5	0.164
with	Alborz	2.1% (1)	25.0% (12)	27.1% (13)	39.6% (19)	6.3% (3)		
younger	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	26.1% (12)	37.0% (17)	28.3% (13)	4.3% (2)	1047.5	0.429
people.	Skilled	6.0% (3)	18.0% (9)	34.0% (17)	40.0% (20)	2.0% (1)		

3.1.6. Taarof use in communication

The participants' responses regarding positive or adverse effects that taarof can have on communication (Q15 to Q18) are summarized in Table 3.6.

Q15. Taarof causes trouble in communication.

As Table 3.6 demonstrates, 40.6% of all the participants "agreed" and 31.3% "disagreed" that taarof causes difficulty in communication. As can be seen, none of the participants "strongly disagreed" with this statement. Significantly, more residents of Alborz (64.6%) found taarof troublesome in communication as compared to residents of Isfahan (16.7%), (n1=n2=48, U=718, p=0.001). No significant differences were found across the other groups.

Q16. Taarof makes communication more interesting.

Table 3.6 shows that no one "strongly agreed" that taarof could make conversations more interesting. The participants' responses were split between "disagree" (29.2%), "neither" (31.3%), and "agree" (34.4%), and no significant differences were observed across the four groups.

Q17. Taarof shows respect to others.

According to Table 3.6, half of the participants (51.0%) "agreed" that taarof showed respect to others. A higher number of Isfahan residents (58.3%) "agreed" that taarof was a way to respect others than those from Alborz (43.8%), and the differences by province were significant (n1=n2=48, U=852.5, p=0.017). No significant differences were found across the other three groups.

Q18. Taarof puts down the person who is using it.

As Table 3.6 shows, the participants were mostly split between "disagreeing" (31.3%) and "agreeing" (40.6%) with this statement. Moreover, none of the participants "strongly agreed" that using taarof could put down the speaker. Isfahan residents (43.8%) "agreed" significantly more with this statement as compared to Alborz residents (20.8%), (n1=n2=48, U=795, p=0.006). However, there were no significant differences across the other groups.

Table 3.6. Participants' responses on effects of taarof use in communication

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q15 Taarof causes trouble in commu-nication.	Total	0	31.3% (30)	17.7% (17)	40.6% (39)	10.4% (10)		
	Female	0	29.2% (14)	12.5% (6)	43.8% (21)	14.6% (7)	981.5	0.187
	Male	0	33.3% (16)	22.9% (11)	37.5% (18)	6.3% (3)		
	S	0	25.0% (12)	16.7% (8)	45.8% (22)	12.5% (6)	959	0.135
	PS	0	37.5% (18)	18.8% (9)	35.4% (17)	8.3% (4)		
	Isfahan	0	45.8% (22)	25.0% (12)	16.7% (8)	12.5% (6)	718	**0.001**
	Alborz	0	16.7% (8)	10.4% (5)	64.6% (31)	8.3% (4)		
	Unskilled	0	37.0% (17)	19.6% (9)	37.0% (17)	6.5% (3)	947	0.116
	Skilled	0	26.0% (13)	16.0% (8)	44.0% (22)	14.0% (7)		
Q16 Taarof makes communi-cation more interesting.	Total	5.2% (5)	29.2% (28)	31.3% (30)	34.4% (33)	0		
	Female	8.3% (4)	22.9% (11)	37.5% (18)	31.3% (15)	0	1123.5	0.826
	Male	2.1% (1)	35.4% (17)	25.0% (12)	37.5% (18)	0		
	S	8.3% (4)	27.1% (13)	33.3% (16)	31.3% (15)	0	1065.5	0.505
	PS	2.1% (1)	31.3% (15)	29.2% (14)	37.5% (18)	0		
	Isfahan	6.3% (3)	20.8% (10)	33.3% (16)	39.6% (19)	0	980	0.185
	Alborz	4.2% (2)	37.5% (18)	29.2% (14)	29.2% (14)	0		
	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	28.3% (13)	30.4% (14)	37.0% (17)	0	1082.5	0.603
	Skilled	6.0% (3)	30.0% (15)	32.0% (16)	32.0% (16)	0		
Q17 Taarof shows respect to others.	Total	3.1% (3)	26.0% (25)	13.5% (13)	51.0% (49)	6.3% (6)		
	Female	2.1% (1)	27.1% (13)	16.7% (8)	47.9% (23)	6.3% (3)	1112.5	0.753
	Male	4.2% (2)	25.0% (12)	10.4% (5)	54.2% (26)	6.3% (3)		
	S	2.1% (1)	33.3% (16)	16.7% (8)	39.6% (19)	8.3% (4)	990	0.197
	PS	4.2% (2)	18.8% (9)	10.4% (5)	62.5% (30)	4.2% (2)		
	Isfahan	6.3% (3)	12.5% (6)	12.5% (6)	58.3% (28)	10.4% (5)	852.5	**0.017**
	Alborz	0	39.6% (19)	14.6% (7)	43.8% (21)	2.1% (1)		
	Unskilled	2.2% (1)	28.3% (13)	13.0% (6)	45.7% (21)	10.9% (5)	1107.5	0.735
	Skilled	4.0% (2)	24.0% (12)	14.0% (7)	56.0% (28)	2.0% (1)		

Q18	Total	8.3% (8)	34.4% (33)	25.0% (24)	32.3% (31)	0	✕	✕
Taarof puts	Female	8.3% (4)	41.7% (20)	20.8% (10)	29.2% (14)	0	1011	0.279
down the	Male	8.3% (4)	27.1% (13)	29.2% (14)	35.4% (17)	0		
person	S	10.4% (5)	37.5% (18)	20.8% (10)	31.3% (15)	0	1046.5	0.418
who is	PS	6.3% (3)	31.3% (15)	29.2% (14)	33.3% (16)	0		
using it.	Isfahan	6.3% (3)	22.9% (11)	27.1% (13)	43.8% (21)	0	795	**0.006**
	Alborz	10.4% (5)	45.8% (22)	22.9% (11)	20.8% (10)	0		
	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	37.0% (17)	19.6% (9)	39.1% (18)	0	1007.5	0.273
	Skilled	12.0% (6)	32.0% (16)	30.0% (15)	26.0% (13)	0		

3.1.7. Taarof as a tradition

Table 3.7 represents the participants' attitudes toward taarof use as a tradition. In this section, participants' responses to the two statements of "*Iranians of my generation are using taarof in communication*" and "*Taarof should be preserved in Iran*" are compared and analyzed.

Q19. Iranians of my generation are using taarof in communication.

Most of the participants (63.5%) "agreed" with this statement, as Table 3.7 shows. Additionally, none of the participants "strongly disagreed" in response to this question. No significant differences in responses were observed across any social subgroups.

Q20. Taarof should be preserved in Iran.

Table 3.7 indicates that participants mostly (43.4%) "agreed" to preserve taarof in Iran. Isfahan residents (37.5%) showed more "agreement" with preserving taarof than Alborz residents (31.3%). The difference in responses was significant across the provinces (n1=n2=48, U=845, p=0.019), but there were no significant differences across the other groups.

Table 3.7. Participants' responses to questions about taarof as a tradition

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q19	Total	0	12.5% (12)	12.5% (12)	63.5% (61)	11.5% (11)	✕	✕
Iranians of	Female	0	14.6% (7)	10.4% (5)	62.5% (30)	12.5% (6)	1146	0.959

my generation are using taarof.	Male	0	10.4% (5)	14.6% (7)	64.6% (31)	10.4% (5)		
	S	0	14.6% (7)	14.6% (7)	62.5% (30)	8.3% (4)	1013	0.236
	PS	0	10.4% (5)	10.4% (5)	64.6% (31)	14.6% (7)		
	Isfahan	0	12.5% (6)	10.4% (5)	64.6% (31)	12.5% (6)	1097.5	0.642
	Alborz	0	12.5% (6)	14.6% (7)	62.5% (30)	10.4% (5)		
	Unskilled	0	8.7% (4)	13.0% (6)	67.4% (31)	10.9% (5)	1084	0.573
	Skilled	0	16.0% (8)	12.0% (6)	60.0% (30)	12.0% (6)		
Q20 Taarof should be preserved in Iran.	Total	5.2% (5)	25.0% (24)	31.3% (30)	34.4% (33)	4.2% (4)		
	Female	4.2% (2)	25.0% (12)	33.3% (16)	31.3% (15)	6.3% (3)	1128.5	0.857
	Male	6.3% (3)	25.0% (12)	29.2% (14)	37.5% (18)	2.1% (1)		
	S	10.4% (5)	22.9% (11)	37.5% (18)	25.0% (12)	4.2% (2)	933.5	0.094
	PS	0	27.1% (13)	25.0% (12)	43.8% (21)	4.2% (2)		
	Isfahan	4.2% (2)	10.4% (5)	41.7% (20)	37.5% (18)	6.3% (3)	845	**0.019**
	Alborz	6.3% (3)	39.6% (24)	20.8% (10)	31.3% (15)	2.1% (1)		
	Unskilled	2.2% (1)	28.3% (13)	37.0% (17)	28.3% (13)	4.3% (2)	1083	0.607
	Skilled	8.0% (4)	22.0% (11)	26.0% (13)	40.0% (20)	4.0% (2)		

3.1.8. Regional variation and ethnic groups in taarof use

The results of the analysis of participants' responses to questions involving the effect of regional variation and ethnic groups on taarof use (Q21 to Q25) are presented in Table 3.8.

Q21. People taarof more if they come from a small village or town.

Table 3.8 indicates that most participants "agreed" (44.8%) or "strongly agreed" (22.9%) that people use taarof more if they are from small towns. No significant differences were observed across any subgroups.

Q22. People taarof more if they come from a big city.

According to Table 3.8, the participants (41.7%) mostly "disagreed" with this statement. No significant differences were found across any social subgroups.

Q23. The amount of taarof use differs by provinces in Iran.

As Table 3.8 suggests, more than a half of the participants (63.5%) "agreed" that taarof use differs by provinces in Iran. However, no significant differences were observed across the four groups.

Q24. The amount of taarof use differs by a specific geographic location (place, town, etc.) in Iran.

Most of all the participants (60.4%) "agreed" that geographical variation could change the amount of taarof use. As the p-values in Table 3.8 shows, the differences in participants' responses to this question were not significant across any groups.

Q25. The amount of taarof use differs by ethnic groups and languages in Iran.

Table 3.8 indicates that the majority (62.5%) of total participants "agreed" with this statement, and on the contrary, that no one "strongly disagreed" with that. Most (68.8%) post-secondary education individuals "agreed" that ethnic groups and languages could make a difference in the amount of taarof use. However, only 56.3% of secondary education participants had the same opinion. There was a significant difference across the education subgroups (n1=n2=48, U=845.5, p=0.009). No significant differences were observed across the other three groups.

Table 3.8. Participants' responses on effect of regional variation and ethnic groups on taarof use

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q21	Total	3.1% (3)	19.8% (19)	9.4% (9)	44.8% (43)	22.9% (22)		
People	Female	4.2% (2)	16.7% (8)	10.4% (5)	43.8% (21)	25.0% (12)	1098	0.675
taarof	Male	2.1% (1)	22.9% (11)	8.3% (4)	45.8% (22)	20.8% (10)		
more if	S	4.2% (2)	18.8% (9)	14.6% (7)	47.9% (23)	14.6% (7)	951.5	0.119
they come	PS	2.1% (1)	20.8% (10)	4.2% (2)	41.7% (20)	31.3% (15)		
from a	Isfahan	4.2% (2)	20.8% (10)	8.3% (4)	45.8% (22)	20.8% (10)	1087	0.614
village or	Alborz	2.1% (1)	18.8% (9)	10.4% (5)	43.8% (21)	25.0% (12)		
town.	Unskilled	4.3% (2)	21.7% (10)	10.9% (5)	41.3% (19)	21.7% (10)	1050	0.437
	Skilled	2.0% (1)	18.0% (9)	8.0% (4)	48.0% (24)	24.0% (12)		
Q22	Total	10.4% (10)	41.7% (40)	24.0% (23)	21.9% (21)	2.1% (2)		

People taarof more if they come from a big city.	Female	6.3% (3)	45.8% (22)	27.1% (13)	18.8% (9)	2.1% (1)	1135	0.896
	Male	14.6% (7)	37.5% (18)	20.8% (10)	25.0% (12)	2.1% (1)		
	S	6.3% (3)	35.4% (17)	33.3% (16)	22.9% (11)	2.1% (1)	933.5	0.092
	PS	14.6% (7)	47.9% (23)	14.6% (7)	20.8% (10)	2.1% (1)		
	Isfahan	8.3% (4)	33.3% (16)	29.2% (14)	27.1% (13)	2.1% (1)	914.5	0.067
	Alborz	12.5% (6)	50.0% (24)	18.8% (9)	16.7% (8)	2.1% (1)		
	Unskilled	6.5% (3)	39.1% (18)	28.3% (13)	26.1% (12)	0	1001.5	0.252
	Skilled	14.0% (7)	44.0% (22)	20.0% (10)	18.0% (9)	4.0% (2)		
Q23 Amount of taarof use differs by provinces.	Total	0	6.3% (3)	7.3% (7)	63.5% (61)	22.9% (22)		
	Female	0	4.2% (2)	8.3% (4)	60.4% (29)	27.1% (13)	1045.5	0.361
	Male	0	8.3% (4)	6.3% (3)	66.7% (32)	18.8% (9)		
	S	0	8.3% (4)	6.3% (3)	66.7% (32)	18.8% (9)	1045.5	0.361
	PS	0	4.2% (2)	8.3% (4)	60.4% (29)	27.1% (13)		
	Isfahan	0	4.2% (2)	12.5% (6)	62.5% (30)	20.8% (10)	1066	0.461
	Alborz	0	8.3% (4)	2.1% (1)	64.6% (31)	25.0% (12)		
	Unskilled	0	8.7% (4)	4.3% (2)	67.4% (31)	19.6% (9)	1086.5	0.586
	Skilled	0	4.0% (2)	10.0% (5)	60.0% (30)	26.0% (13)		
Q24 Amount of taarof use differs by geographic location.	Total	0	5.2% (5)	12.5% (12)	60.4% (58)	21.9% (21)		
	Female	0	4.2% (2)	12.5% (6)	58.3% (28)	25.0% (12)	1071	0.498
	Male	0	6.3% (3)	12.5% (6)	62.5% (30)	18.8% (9)		
	S	0	6.3% (3)	10.4% (5)	64.6% (31)	18.8% (9)	1107	0.7
	PS	0	4.2% (2)	14.6% (7)	56.3% (27)	25.0% (12)		
	Isfahan	0	4.2% (2)	14.6% (7)	58.3% (28)	22.9% (11)	1145.5	0.957
	Alborz	0	6.3% (3)	10.4% (5)	62.5% (30)	20.8% (10)		
	Unskilled	0	6.5% (3)	6.5% (3)	67.4% (31)	19.6% (9)	1122	0.815
	Skilled	0	4.0% (2)	18.0% (9)	54.0% (27)	24.0% (12)		
Q25 Amount of taarof use differs by	Total	0	5.2% (5)	10.4% (10)	62.5% (60)	21.9% (21)		
	Female	0	0	10.4% (5)	66.7% (32)	22.9% (11)	1025.5	0.283
	Male	0	10.4% (5)	10.4% (5)	58.3% (28)	20.8% (10)		
	S	0	4.2% (2)	16.7% (8)	68.8% (33)	10.4% (5)	845.5	**0.009**

ethnic groups & languages.	PS	0	6.3% (3)	4.2% (2)	56.3% (27)	33.3% (16)		
	Isfahan	0	8.3% (4)	10.4% (5)	60.4% (29)	20.8% (10)	1068	0.476
	Alborz	0	2.2% (1)	10.4% (5)	64.6% (31)	22.9% (11)		
	Unskilled	0	6.5% (3)	6.5% (3)	69.6% (32)	17.4% (8)	1103.5	0.693
	Skilled	0	4.0% (2)	14.0% (7)	56.0% (28)	26.0% (13)		

3.1.9. Role of social standing in taarof use

Participants' responses to Q26 and Q28 that addressed the amount of taarof use among different social groups in Iran are reported in Table 3.9.

Q26. As compared to other groups, the amount of taarof use is higher among educated people talking to each other.

As presented in Table 3.9, most of the participants (39.6%) "neither agreed nor disagreed" with this statement. However, the number of participants who "disagreed" (34.4%) was higher than the people who "agreed" (21.9%). The differences across the education groups were significant (n1=n2=48, U=889, p=0.041). While 29.2% of secondary education participants "agreed" with this statement, only 14.6% of post-secondary education ones had the same response. The responses to the question were significantly different across the occupation groups as well (n1=n2=48, U=893, p=0.045). Skilled participants (44.0%) "disagreed" with the statement nearly twice as much as unskilled individuals (23.9%). There were no significant differences across the genders and provinces of residence.

Q27.   As compared to other groups, the amount of taarof use is higher among rich people talking to each other.

According to Table 3.9, most of the participants (39.6%) "neither agreed nor disagreed" with this statement. The number of participants who "disagreed" (35.4%), however, was higher than the participants who "agreed" (20.8%). While 6.3% of post-secondary education participants "strongly agreed" with this statement, none of the secondary education participants did. A significant difference was observed for education subgroups (n1=n2=48, U=819, p=0.01). Participants' responses across the other groups did not yield any significant differences.

As Table 3.9 indicates, the majority of participants (37.5%) "neither agreed nor disagreed" with this statement. A high number (35.4%) of all the participants "agreed" that powerful people use taarof more when talking to each other. However, there were no significant differences across any of the groups.

Table 3.9. Participants' responses regarding the role of social standing in taarof use

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q26	Total	2.1% (2)	34.4% (33)	39.6% (38)	21.9% (21)	2.1% (2)		
Amount of	Female	4.2% (2)	33.3% (16)	37.5% (18)	25.0% (12)	0	1120	0.803
taarof use	Male	0	35.4% (17)	41.7% (20)	18.8% (9)	4.2% (2)		
is higher	S	2.1% (1)	25.0% (12)	41.7% (20)	29.2% (14)	2.1% (1)	889	**0.041**
among	PS	2.1% (1)	43.8% (21)	37.5% (18)	14.6% (7)	2.1% (1)		
educated	Isfahan	2.1% (1)	31.3% (15)	45.8% (22)	18.8% (9)	2.1% (1)	1143	0.944
people.	Alborz	2.1% (1)	37.5% (18)	33.3% (16)	25.0% (12)	2.1% (1)		
	Unskilled	2.2% (1)	23.9% (11)	43.5% (20)	28.3% (13)	2.2% (1)	893	**0.045**
	Skilled	2.0% (1)	44.0% (22)	36.0% (18)	16.0% (8)	2.0% (1)		
Q27	Total	1.0% (1)	35.4% (34)	39.6% (38)	20.8% (20)	3.1% (3)		
Amount of	Female	2.1% (1)	35.4% (17)	43.8% (21)	14.6% (7)	4.2% (2)	1058.5	0.466
taarof use	Male	0	35.4% (17)	35.4% (17)	27.1% (13)	2.1% (1)		
is higher	S	2.1% (1)	47.9% (23)	31.3% (15)	18.8% (9)	0	819	**0.01**
among	PS	0	22.9% (11)	47.9% (23)	22.9% (11)	6.3% (3)		
rich	Isfahan	2.1% (1)	33.3% (16)	41.7% (20)	20.8% (10)	2.1% (1)	1141	0.932
people.	Alborz	0	37.5% (18)	37.5% (18)	20.8% (10)	4.2% (2)		
	Unskilled	2.2% (1)	32.6% (15)	41.3% (19)	19.6% (9)	4.3% (2)	1125.5	0.848
	Skilled	0	38.0% (19)	38.0% (19)	22.0% (11)	2.0% (1)		
Q28	Total	1.0% (1)	22.9% (22)	37.5% (36)	35.4% (34)	3.1% (3)		
Amount of	Female	2.1% (1)	18.8% (9)	33.3% (16)	43.8% (21)	2.1% (1)	1001	0.241

taarof use	Male	0	27.1% (13)	41.7% (20)	27.1% (13)	4.2% (2)		
is higher	S	2.1% (1)	20.8% (10)	31.3% (15)	43.8% (21)	2.1% (1)	1030	344
among	PS	0	25.0% (12)	43.8% (21)	27.1% (13)	4.2% (2)		
powerful	Isfahan	2.1% (1)	12.5% (6)	43.8% (21)	39.6% (19)	2.1% (1)	984	0.192
people.	Alborz	0	33.3% (16)	31.3% (15)	31.3% (15)	4.2% (2)		
	Unskilled	2.2% (1)	19.6% (9)	32.6% (15)	39.1% (18)	6.5% (3)	983	0.194
	Skilled	0	26.0% (13)	42.0% (21)	32.0% (16)	0		

3.1.10. The role of gender in taarof use

In this subsection I report participants' answers to questions Q29 to Q32 which focused on the role of gender in taarof use (Table 3.10).

Q29.   As compared to women and mixed gender groups, the amount of taarof use is the highest when men talk to each other.

As Table 3.10 shows, more than a half of the participants (56.3%) "disagreed" with this statement. Although 17.4% of unskilled participants "agreed", only 6.0% of skilled individuals had the same opinion. Significant difference was found for occupation groups (n1=n2=48, U=869, p=0.022), but none of the other groups had significantly different responses.

Q30.   As compared to men and mixed gender groups, the amount of taarof use is the highest when women talk to each other.

According to Table 3.10, most of all the participants (68.8%) "agreed" that women used taarof more when they talk to each other, and none of the participants "strongly disagreed" with this statement. While 25.0% of post-secondary education participants "strongly agreed", only 8.3% of secondary education individuals had the same opinion. A significant difference was observed across education subgroups (n1=n2=48, U=907, p=0.028). The participants' responses across the other groups did not show significant differences in response to this question.

Q31. As compared to men talking with men, the amount of taarof use is higher when a man addresses a woman.

The results in Table 3.10 show that more than a half of the participants (61.5%) "agreed" that the tendency toward using taarof is higher when a man addressed a woman while only 5.2% of the total participants "disagreed". No participant "strongly disagreed" with this statement. As compared to only 10.4% of secondary education participants, 27.1% of post-secondary education participants "strongly agreed" that men use taarof more when addressing women. Significant difference was found across the education subgroups (n1=n2=48, U=819, p=0.005), while there were no significant differences across the other groups.

Q32. As compared to women talking with women, the amount of taarof use is higher when a woman addresses a man.

According to Table 3.10, almost half of the participants (52.1%) "agreed" that women use taarof more while addressing a man. None of the participants "strongly disagreed" with this statement. There were no significant differences across the responses by any of the groups.

Table 3.10. Participants' responses regarding the role of gender in taarof use

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q29	Total	14.6% (14)	56.3% (54)	16.7% (16)	11.5% (11)	1.0% (1)		
Amount of	Female	16.7% (8)	60.4% (29)	14.6% (7)	8.3% (4)	0	983	0.17
taarof use	Male	12.5% (6)	52.1% (25)	18.8% (9)	14.6% (7)	2.1% (1)		
is higher	S	10.4% (5)	54.2% (26)	18.8% (9)	16.7% (8)	0	955	0.109
among	PS	18.8% (9)	58.3% (28)	14.6% (7)	6.3% (3)	2.1% (1)		
men	Isfahan	4.6% (7)	56.3% (27)	20.8% (10)	8.3% (4)	0	1122	0.807
talking to	Alborz	4.6% (7)	56.3% (27)	12.5% (6)	14.6% (7)	2.1% (1)		
each other.	Unskilled	10.9% (5)	47.8% (22)	23.9% (11)	17.4% (8)	0	869	**0.022**
	Skilled	18.0% (9)	64.0% (32)	10.0% (5)	6.0% (3)	2.1% (1)		
Q30	Total	0	6.3% (6)	8.3% (8)	68.8% (66)	16.7% (16)		
Amount of	Female	0	4.2% (2)	4.2% (2)	75.0% (36)	16.7% (8)	1034	0.291
taarof use	Male	0	8.3% (4)	12.5% (6)	62.5% (30)	16.7% (8)		
is higher	S	0	8.3% (4)	10.4% (5)	72.9% (35)	8.3% (4)	907	**0.028**
among	PS	0	4.2% (2)	6.3% (3)	64.6% (31)	25.0% (12)		

		0						
women	Isfahan	0	4.2% (2)	8.3% (4)	72.9% (35)	14.6% (7)	1149	0.979
talking to	Alborz	0	8.3% (4)	8.3% (4)	64.6% (31)	18.8% (9)		
each other.	Unskilled	0	4.3% (2)	8.7% (4)	71.7% (33)	15.2% (7)	1145	0.964
	Skilled	0	8.0% (4)	8.0% (4)	66.0% (33)	18.0% (9)		
Q31	Total	0	5.2% (5)	14.6% (14)	61.5% (59)	18.8% (18)	⧖	⧖
Amount of	Female	0	6.3% (3)	18.8% (9)	58.3% (28)	16.7% (8)	1017.5	0.258
taarof use	Male	0	4.2% (2)	10.4% (5)	64.6% (31)	20.8% (10)		
is higher	S	0	8.3% (4)	20.8% (10)	60.4% (29)	10.4% (5)	819	**0.005**
when a	PS	0	2.1% (1)	8.3% (4)	62.5% (30)	27.1% (13)		
man	Isfahan	0	4.2% (2)	18.8% (9)	56.3% (27)	20.8% (10)	1140.5	0.923
addresses	Alborz	0	6.3% (3)	10.4% (5)	66.7% (32)	16.7% (8)		
a woman.	Unskilled	0	6.5% (3)	10.9% (5)	67.4% (31)	15.2% (7)	1122	0.814
	Skilled	0	4.0% (2)	18.0% (9)	56.0% (28)	22.0% (11)		
Q32	Total	0	19.8% (19)	22.9% (22)	52.1% (50)	5.2% (5)	⧖	⧖
Amount of	Female	0	16.7% (18)	20.8% (10)	56.3% (27)	6.3% (3)	1017.5	0.282
taarof use	Male	0	22.9% (11)	25.0% (12)	47.9% (23)	4.2% (2)		
is higher	S	0	22.9% (11)	20.8% (10)	56.3% (27)	0	1034.5	0.347
when a	PS	0	16.7% (18)	25.0% (12)	47.9% (23)	10.4% (5)		
woman	Isfahan	0	14.6% (7)	25.0% (12)	50.0% (24)	10.4% (5)	978	0.164
addresses	Alborz	0	25.0% (12)	20.8% (10)	54.2% (26)	0		
a man.	Unskilled	0	23.9% (11)	17.4% (8)	58.7% (27)	0	1068.5	0.514
	Skilled	0	16.0% (8)	28.0% (14)	46.0% (23)	10.0% (5)		

3.1.11. Making fun of taarof

The last question of the questionnaire elicited the participants' responses to the statement "*I make fun of taarof and use it mockingly when talking with my friends*". The results are presented in Table 3.11.

Q33. I make fun of taarof and use it mockingly when talking with my friends.

Table 3.11 indicates that most of the participants (32.3%) "disagreed" that people used taarof to make fun. Isfahan residents (45.8%) "disagreed" with this statement significantly more than Alborz residents (18.8%), (n1=n2=48, U=859.5, p=0.027). No significant differences were found in participants' responses across the other groups.

Table 3.11. Participants' responses on using taarof for fun

Questions	Variable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	U-Test	P-Value
Q33	Total	19.8% (19)	32.3% (31)	21.9% (21)	17.7% (17)	8.3% (8)		
I make fun	Female	20.8% (10)	35.4% (17)	22.9% (11)	16.7% (8)	4.2% (2)	1015	0.301
of taarof	Male	18.8% (9)	29.2% (14)	20.8% (10)	18.8% (9)	12.5% (6)		
or use it	S	25.0% (12)	29.2% (14)	20.8% (10)	14.6% (7)	10.4% (5)	1066.5	0.519
mockingly	PS	14.6% (7)	35.4% (17)	22.9% (11)	20.8% (10)	6.3% (3)		
with my	Isfahan	20.8% (10)	45.8% (22)	16.7% (8)	10.4% (5)	6.3% (3)	859.5	**0.027**
friends.	Alborz	18.8% (9)	18.8% (9)	27.1% (13)	25.0% (12)	10.4% (5)		
	Unskilled	23.9% (11)	32.6% (15)	19.6% (9)	15.2% (7)	8.7% (4)	1033	0.377
	Skilled	16.0% (8)	32.0% (16)	24.0% (12)	20.0% (10)	8.0% (4)		

To sum up, it can be concluded that attitudes toward using taarof differed by participants' geographical region and their socioeconomic status (education and occupation in particular). However, participants' responses did not differ by gender.

3.2. Results of dialogues analysis

This section reports the frequency of taarof expressions used by participants in recorded conversations. At first, all 95 taarof expressions were extracted from the transcripts and collected as a taarof dictionary (Appendix C). Twenty taarof expressions with the highest frequencies (over 30 usages) were also extracted for further analysis (Ref. Tables 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, 3.15). Section 3.2.1 reports the frequency of these 20 top taarof expressions across the four sociolinguistic factors (by gender, province, education, and occupation). Chi-square tests were employed for across-the-group comparisons (females vs males, Isfahan province vs Alborz province, post-secondary

education vs secondary education, and skilled vs unskilled). Section 3.2.2 presents the comparison of a total use of all 95 taarof expressions used by a participant by gender, province, education, and occupation. Mixed-effects model tests were run in SPSS to compare the total use of taarof expressions by each participant across the four groups of the study.

3.2.1. Frequency of 20 top taarof expressions across the four groups

As mentioned earlier, 20 of most frequent taarof expressions were extracted, classified, and chi-square tests were run to identify the significant differences across the eight sub-groups. This section represents the differences in taarof expression use by gender, province, education, and occupation.

Gender

The results of the participants' use of 20 top taarof expressions by males and females are presented in Table 3.12. As can be seen from Table 3.12, significant differences were observed for the expressions "merci" [thank you] and "dar khedmatam" [I can help]. Females (54.2%) used "merci" significantly more than male participants (31.3%), ($X^2(1) = 5.151$, p= 0.023). On the other hand, males (52.1%) used "dar khedmatam" significantly more than females (14.6%), ($X^2(1) = 15.188$, p <.001). No significant differences were found for other expressions.

Table 3.12. Frequency of taarof expression use by gender

No.	Taarof Expression	Group	Frequency of Use	X^2	df	P-value
1	mamnoon [thank you very much]	Female Male Total	45 (93.8%) 44 (91.7%) 89 (92.7%)	0.154	1	0.695
2	khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]	Female Male Total	42 (87.5%) 42 (87.5%) 84 (87.5%)	0	1	1
3	lotf darid/kardid [it's kind of you]	Female Male Total	31 (64.6%) 34 (70.8%) 65 (67.7%)	0.429	1	0.513
4	salamat bashid [stay well]	Female Male Total	25 (52.1%) 30 (62.5%) 55 (57.3%)	0.302	1	0.302
5	salam beresoonid [send my greetings]	Female Male Total	29 (60.4%) 25 (52.1%) 54 (56.3%)	0.677	1	0.411
6	motoshakeram/motochakeram [thank you]	Female Male Total	24 (50%) 25 (52.1%) 49 (51%)	0.042	1	0.838

7	ghabel nadare/ghabeldar nist [you can have it for free]	Female Male Total	26 (54.2%) 22 (45.8%) 48 (50%)	0.667	1	0.414
8	tashakor (mikonam) [thank you]	Female Male Total	22 (45.8%) 24 (50%) 46 (47.9%)	0.167	1	0.683
9	befarmaeid [what can I do for you?]	Female Male Total	22 (45.8%) 20 (41.7%) 42 (43.8%)	0.169	1	0.681
10	**merci** **[thank you]**	Female Male Total	26 (54.2%) 15 (31.3%) 41 (42.7%)	5.151	1	**0.023**
11	ghorbane shoma/ghorbanat [with all my heart]	Female Male Total	20 (41.7%) 18 (37.5%) 38 (39.6%)	0.174	1	0.676
12	zahmat keshidid [you went through so much trouble]	Female Male Total	21 (43.8%) 16 (33.3%) 37 (38.5%)	1.099	1	0.294
13	ekhtiyar darid [you are quite welcome]	Female Male Total	16 (33.3%) 20 (41.7%) 36 (37.5%)	0.711	1	0.399
14	mozahem shodam [sorry to bother you]	Female Male Total	18 (37.5%) 18 (37.5%) 36 (37.5%)	0	1	1
15	**dar khedmatam** **[I can help]**	Female Male Total	7 (14.6%) 25 (52.1%) 32 (33.3%)	15.188	1	**<.001**
16	dastetoon dard nakone [thank you]	Female Male Total	16 (33.3%) 16 (33.3%) 32 (33.3%)	0	1	1
17	Vazifast [my pleasure]	Female Male Total	14 (29.2%) 13 (27.1%) 27 (28.1%)	0.052	1	0.82
18	be salamati (estefade konid) [I hope it brings you good health]	Female Male Total	14 (29.2%) 12 (25%) 26 (27.1%)	0.211	1	0.646
19	bebakhshid (bad moghe) mozahem shodam [sorry to bother you]	Female Male Total	11 (22.9%) 15 (31.3%) 26 (27.1%)	0.844	1	0.358
20	zende bashid [stay well]	Female Male Total	8 (16.7%) 11 (22.9%) 19 (19.8%)	0.591	1	0.442

Province

Table 3.13 presents the results of taarof expressions used by residents of Isfahan and Alborz. Significant differences were found for the expressions "tashakor" [thank you] and "befarmaeid" [what can I do for you?]. "Tashakor" was used more by the participants in Alborz province (60.4%) comparing with the participants in Isfahan province (35.4%), ($X^2(1) = 6.01$, p=

0.014). Similarly, "befarmaeid" was used more frequently by Alborz residents (54.2%) than Isfahan residents (33.3%), ($X^2(1) = 4.233$, p= 0.04). No significant differences were observed for other taarof expressions.

Table 3.13. Frequency of taarof expression use by province

No.	Taarof Expression	Group	Frequency of Use	X^2	df	P-value
1	mamnoon [thank you very much]	Alborz Isfahan Total	44 (91.7%) 45 (93.8%) 89 (92.7%)	0.154	1	0.695
2	khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]	Alborz Isfahan Total	43 (89.6%) 41 (85.4%) 84 (87.5%)	0.381	1	0.537
3	lotf darid/kardid [it's kind of you]	Alborz Isfahan Total	35 (72.9%) 30 (62.5%) 65 (67.7%)	1.191	1	0.275
4	salamat bashid [stay well]	Alborz Isfahan Total	26 (54.2%) 29 (60.4%) 55 (57.3%)	0.383	1	0.538
5	salam beresoonid [send my greetings]	Alborz Isfahan Total	28 (58.3%) 26 (54.2%) 54 (56.3%)	0.169	1	0.681
6	motoshakeram/motochakeram [thank you]	Alborz Isfahan Total	23 (47.9%) 26 (54.2%) 49 (51%)	0.375	1	0.54
7	ghabel nadare/ghabeldar nist [you can have it for free]	Alborz Isfahan Total	22 (45.8%) 26 (54.2%) 48 (50%)	0.667	1	0.414
8	**tashakor (mikonam)** **[thank you]**	Alborz Isfahan Total	29 (60.4%) 17 (35.4%) 46 (47.9%)	6.01	1	**0.014**
9	**befarmaeid** **[what can I do for you?]**	Alborz Isfahan Total	26 (54.2%) 16 (33.3%) 42 (43.8%)	4.233	1	**0.04**
10	merci [thank you]	Alborz Isfahan Total	21 (43.8%) 20 (41.7%) 41 (42.7%)	0.043	1	0.837
11	ghorbane shoma/ghorbanat [with all my heart]	Alborz Isfahan Total	18 (37.5%) 20 (41.7%) 38 (39.6%)	0.174	1	0.676
12	zahmat keshidid [you went through so much trouble]	Alborz Isfahan Total	19 (39.6%) 18 (37.5%) 37 (38.5%)	0.044	1	0.834
13	ekhtiyar darid [you are quite welcome]	Alborz Isfahan Total	19 (39.6%) 17 (35.4%) 36 (37.5%)	0.178	1	0.673
14	mozahem shodam [sorry to bother you]	Alborz Isfahan Total	19 (39.6%) 17 (35.4%) 36 (37.5%)	0.178	1	0.673
15	dar khedmatam	Alborz Isfahan	17 (35.4%) 15 (31.3%)	0.188	1	0.665

	[I can help]	Total	32 (33.3%)			
16	dastetoon dard nakone [thank you]	Alborz Isfahan Total	16 (33.3%) 16 (33.3%) 32 (33.3%)	0	1	1
17	vazifast [my pleasure]	Alborz Isfahan Total	15 (31.3%) 12 (25%) 27 (28.1%)	0.464	1	0.496
18	be salamati (estefade konid) [I hope it brings you good health]	Alborz Isfahan Total	15 (31.3%) 11 (22.9%) 26 (27.1%)	0.844	1	0.358
19	bebakhshid (bad moghe) mozahem shodam [sorry to bother you]	Alborz Isfahan Total	11 (22.9%) 15 (31.3%) 26 (27.1%)	0.844	1	0.358
20	zende bashid [stay well]	Alborz Isfahan Total	11 (22.9%) 8 (16.7%) 19 (19.8%)	0.591	1	0.442

Education

Table 3.14 indicates the results of taarof expressions use by post-secondary education and secondary education participants. Significant differences were found for "salam beresoonid" [send my greetings], "mozahem shodam" [sorry to bother you], and "vazifast" [my pleasure]. Post-secondary education participants (68.8%) used "salam beresoonid" more frequently than secondary education participants (43.8%), ($X^2(1) = 6.095$, p= 0.014). Moreover, the expression "mozahem shodam" was used significantly more by post-secondary education participants (58.3%) than secondary education ones (16.7%), ($X^2(1) = 17.778$, p <.001). On the contrary, secondary-education participants (37.5%) used "vazifast" significantly more than post-secondary education participants (18.8%), ($X^2(1) = 4.174$, p= 0.041). No significant differences were observed for other taarof expressions.

Table 3.14. Frequency of taarof expression use by education

No.	Taarof Expression	Group	Frequency of Use	X^2	df	P-value
1	mamnoon [thank you very much]	PS S Total	44 (91.7%) 45 (93.8%) 89 (92.7%)	0.154	1	0.695
2	khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]	PS S Total	43 (89.6%) 41 (85.4%) 84 (87.5%)	0.381	1	0.537
3	lotf darid/kardid [it's kind of you]	PS S Total	34 (70.8%) 31 (64.6%) 65 (67.7%)	0.429	1	0.513
4	salamat bashid [stay well]	PS S Total	32 (66.7%) 23 (47.9%) 55 (57.3%)	3.448	1	0.063

5	**salam beresoonid** **[send my greetings]**	PS S Total	33 (68.8%) 21 (43.8%) 54 (56.3%)	6.095	1	**0.014**
6	motoshakeram/motochakeram [thank you]	PS S Total	27 (56.3%) 22 (45.8%) 49 (51%)	1.042	1	0.307
7	ghabel nadare/ghabeldar nist [you can have it for free]	PS S Total	21 (43.8%) 27 (56.3%) 48 (50%)	1.5	1	0.221
8	tashakor (mikonam) [thank you]	PS S Total	22 (45.8%) 24 (50%) 46 (47.9%)	0.167	1	0.683
9	befarmaeid [what can I do for you?]	PS S Total	24 (50%) 18 (37.5%) 42 (43.8%)	1.524	1	0.217
10	merci [thank you]	PS S Total	19 (39.6%) 22 (45.8%) 41 (42.7%)	0.383	1	0.536
11	ghorbane shoma/ghorbanat [with all my heart]	PS S Total	21 (43.8%) 17 (35.4%) 38 (39.6%)	0.697	1	0.404
12	zahmat keshidid [you went through so much trouble]	PS S Total	22 (45.8%) 15 (31.3%) 37 (38.5%)	2.155	1	0.142
13	ekhtiyar darid [you are quite welcome]	PS S Total	21 (43.8%) 15 (31.3%) 36 (37.5%)	1.6	1	0.206
14	**mozahem shodam** **[sorry to bother you]**	PS S Total	28 (58.3%) 8 (16.7%) 36 (37.5%)	17.778	1	**<.001**
15	dar khedmatam [I can help]	PS S Total	16 (33.3%) 16 (33.3%) 32 (33.3%)	0	1	1
16	dastetoon dard nakone [thank you]	PS S Total	18 (37.5%) 14 (29.2%) 32 (33.3%)	0.75	1	0.386
17	**vazifast** **[my pleasure]**	PS S Total	9 (18.8%) 18 (37.5%) 27 (28.1)	4.174	1	**0.041**
18	be salamati (estefade konid) [I hope it brings you good health]	PS S Total	14 (29.2%) 12 (25%) 26 (27.1%)	0.211	1	0.646
19	bebakhshid (bad moghe) mozahem shodam [sorry to bother you]	PS S Total	15 (31.3%) 11 (22.9%) 26 (27.1%)	0.844	1	0.358
20	zende bashid [stay well]	PS S Total	10 (20.8%) 9 (18.8%) 19 (19.8%)	0.066	1	0.798

Occupation

The results of the participants' use of taarof expressions by occupations are presented in Table 3.15. No significant differences were found in frequency of taarof expressions used by skilled and unskilled participants.

Table 3.15. Frequency of taarof expression use by occupation

No.	Taarof Expression	Group	Frequency of Use	X^2	df	P-value
1	mamnoon [thank you very much]	Unskilled Skilled Total	43 (93.5%) 46 (92%) 89 (92.7%)	0.077	1	0.781
2	khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]	Unskilled Skilled Total	43 (93.5%) 41 (82%) 84 (87.5%)	2.886	1	0.089
3	lotf darid/kardid [it's kind of you]	Unskilled Skilled Total	28 (60.9%) 37 (74%) 65 (67.7%)	1.889	1	0.169
4	salamat bashid [stay well]	Unskilled Skilled Total	23 (50%) 32 (64%) 55 (57.3%)	1.919	1	0.166
5	salam beresoonid [send my greetings]	Unskilled Skilled Total	23 (50%) 31 (62%) 54 (56.3%)	1.402	1	0.236
6	motoshakeram/motochakeram [thank you]	Unskilled Skilled Total	23 (50%) 26 (52%) 49 (51%)	0.038	1	0.845
7	ghabel nadare/ghabeldar nist [you can have it for free]	Unskilled Skilled Total	24 (52.2%) 24 (48%) 48 (50%)	0.167	1	0.683
8	tashakor (mikonam) [thank you]	Unskilled Skilled Total	23 (50%) 23 (46%) 46 (47.9%)	0.154	1	0.695
9	befarmaeid [what can I do for you?]	Unskilled Skilled Total	18 (39.1%) 24 (48%) 42 (43.8%)	0.766	1	0.381
10	merci [thank you]	Unskilled Skilled Total	19 (41.3%) 22 (44%) 41 (42.7%)	0.071	1	0.79
11	ghorbane shoma/ghorbanat [with all my heart]	Unskilled Skilled Total	17 (37%) 21 (42%) 38 (39.6%)	0.255	1	0.614
12	zahmat keshidid [you went through so much trouble]	Unskilled Skilled Total	14 (30.4%) 23 (46%) 37 (38.5%)	2.451	1	0.117
13	ekhtiyar darid [you are quite welcome]	Unskilled Skilled Total	14 (30.4%) 22 (44%) 36 (37.5%)	1.881	1	0.17
14	mozahem shodam [sorry to bother you]	Unskilled Skilled Total	17 (37%) 19 (38%) 36 (37.5%)	0.011	1	0.916

15	dar khedmatam [I can help]	Unskilled Skilled Total	15 (32.6%) 17 (34%) 32 (33.3%)	0.021	1	0.885
16	dastetoon dard nakone [thank you]	Unskilled Skilled Total	16 (34.8%) 16 (32%) 32 (33.3%)	0.083	1	0.773
17	vazifast [my pleasure]	Unskilled Skilled Total	12 (26.1%) 15 (30%) 27 (28.1%)	0.181	1	0.67
18	be salamati (estefade konid) [I hope it brings you good health]	Unskilled Skilled Total	12 (26.1%) 14 (28%) 26 (27.1%)	0.044	1	0.833
19	bebakhshid (bad moghe) mozahem shodam [sorry to bother you]	Unskilled Skilled Total	14 (30.4%) 12 (24%) 26 (27.1%)	0.502	1	0.478
20	zende bashid [stay well]	Unskilled Skilled Total	7 (15.2%) 12 (24%) 19 (19.8%)	1.164	1	0.281

3.2.2. Comparison of a total use of all taarof expressions by the four groups

As mentioned earlier, linear mixed-effects model tests were employed to compare the total use of all taarof expressions by each participant across the four groups of the study. Estimates of covariance parameters in Table 3.16 show that random effects were statistically significant (p= 0.001) in this study. According to Table 3.17, each participant approximately used taarof expressions 12 times (M= 11.800, SE= 0.451) in both scenarios. This section aims at reporting the pairwise comparisons of each group (gender, province, education, occupation) in detail.

Table 3.16. Estimates of covariance parameters [a]

Parameter	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald Z	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Residual	16.854	2.432	6.928	0.000	12.701	22.364
ID Variance	9.335	2.927	3.189	**0.001**	5.049	17.260

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

Table 3.17. Grand mean [a]

Mean	Std. Error	df	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
11.800	0.451	89.000	10.904	12.696

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

Gender

The estimated marginal means of gender variable indicate that there is no significant difference in total use of taarof expressions by males (M= 11.742) and females (M= 11.858), (Table 3.18).

Table 3.18. Means estimates by gender [a]

Gender	Mean	Std. Error	df	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female	11.858	0.635	89	10.596	13.120
Male	11.742	0.616	89.000	10.518	12.966

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

Therefore, pairwise comparisons measured no significant difference (p= 0.894) for this group (Table 3.19).

Table 3.19. Pairwise comparisons by gender [a]

Gender	Mean Difference	Std. Error	df	Sig.[b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female Male	0.116	0.867	89	0.894	-1.607	1.839

Based on estimated marginal means
a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Province

According to Table 3.20, the total use of taarof expressions was higher among participants living in Alborz province (M= 12.717) as compared to Isfahan province (M= 10.883).

Table 3.20. Means estimates by province [a]

Province	Mean	Std. Error	df	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Alborz	12.717	0.614	89	11.498	13.937
Isfahan	10.883	0.644	89.000	9.603	12.163

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

Pairwise comparisons indicated a significant difference in total use of taarof expressions by residents of Alborz and Isfahan at p= 0.039 (Table 3.21).

Table 3.21. Pairwise comparisons by province [a]

Province	Mean Difference	Std. Error	df	Sig.[b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound

Alborz Isfahan	1.835*	0.877	89.000	**0.039**	0.092	3.578

Based on estimated marginal means
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Education

As Table 3.22 indicates, the total use of taarof expressions was higher among post-secondary education participants (M= 12.764) in comparison with secondary education participants (M= 10.836).

Table 3.22. Means estimates by education [a]

Education	Mean	Std. Error	df	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PS	12.764	0.646	89	11.480	14.048
S	10.836	0.630	89.000	9.585	12.087

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

Pairwise comparisons showed a significant difference in total use of taarof expressions by post-secondary and secondary participants at p= 0.035 (Table 3.23).

Table 3.23. Pairwise comparisons by education [a]

Education	Mean Difference	Std. Error	df	Sig.[b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PS S	1.928*	0.902	89.000	**0.035**	0.135	3.720

Based on estimated marginal means
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Occupation

The estimated marginal means of occupation shows that there is no remarkable difference in total use of taarof expressions between skilled (M= 12.499) and unskilled (M= 11.101) participants (Table 3.24).

Table 3.14. Means estimates by occupation [a]

Occupation	Mean	Std. Error	df	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Unskilled	11.101	0.659	89	9.793	12.410
Skilled	12.499	0.631	89.000	11.246	13.752

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

As a result, pairwise comparisons measured no significant difference (p= 0.133) across occupations (Table 3.25).

Table 3.25. Pairwise comparisons by occupation [a]

Occupation	Mean Difference	Std. Error	df	Sig.[b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Unskilled Skilled	-1.397	0.922	89.000	0.133	-3.228	0.434

Based on estimated marginal means
a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

To sum up, a total use of taarof expressions by participants in both scenarios showed significant differences by the province of residence and education, however, no significant differences were observed across genders and occupations.

Interaction effects

The results of mixed-effects models also reported interaction effects between some variables of the study. The first interaction effect was formed between province and education. Tables 3.26 and 3.27 represent the estimated marginal means and pairwise comparisons of these two groups respectively.

Table 3.26. Means estimates (province and education) [a]

Province	Education	Mean	Std. Error	df	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Alborz	PS	12.685	0.876	89	10.945	14.425
	S	12.750	0.860	89	11.041	14.459
Isfahan	PS	12.843	0.902	89	11.050	14.636
	S	8.923	0.920	89.000	7.095	10.750

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

Table 3.27. Pairwise comparisons (province and education) [a]

Education	Province		Mean Difference	Std. Error	df	Sig.[b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PS	Alborz	Isfahan	-0.158	1.222	89	0.897	-2.585	2.269
S	Alborz	Isfahan	3.827*	1.259	89.000	**0.003**	1.325	6.330

Based on estimated marginal means
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

As can be seen in Tables 3.26 and 3.27, the total use of taarof expressions by post-secondary education participants was almost identical in Alborz (M= 12.685) and Isfahan (M= 12.843), and no significant difference was found in pairwise comparisons of province and education across this subgroup (p= 0.897). On the other hand, secondary education participants used taarof expressions more in Alborz province (M= 12.750) rather than in Isfahan (M= 8.923), and this difference was significant (p= 0.003). To have a better understanding of interaction effects, Figure 3.1 represents the estimated marginal means of total use of 95 taarof expressions across education and province.
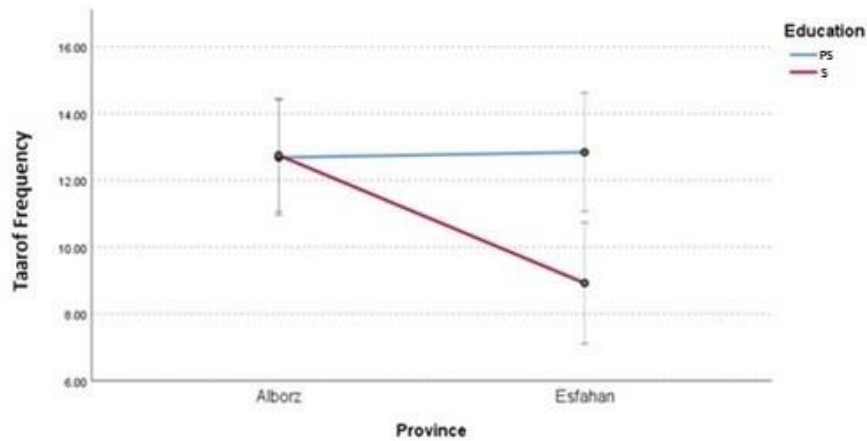

Figure 3.1. Estimated marginal means of total use of 95 taarof expressions (province and education)

The second interaction under investigation was between education and occupation groups. Tables 3.28 and 3.29 report the estimated marginal means and pairwise comparisons of these two groups respectively.

Table 3.28. Means estimates (education and occupation) [a]

Education	Occupation	Mean	Std. Error	df	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
PS	Unskilled	11.087	1.062	89	8.977	13.197
	Skilled	14.441	0.748	89	12.955	15.927
S	Unskilled	11.116	0.780	89	9.567	12.665
	Skilled	10.557	1.015	89.000	8.539	12.574

a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency

Table 3.29. Pairwise comparisons (education and occupation) [a]

Occupation	Education		Mean Difference	Std. Error	df	Sig.[b]	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Unskilled	PS	S	-0.029	1.318	89	0.982	-2.647	2.589
Skilled	PS	S	3.884*	1.261	89.000	**0.003**	1.379	6.390

Based on estimated marginal means
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.
a. Dependent variable: Taarof frequency
b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

According to the above tables, the total use of taarof expressions by unskilled participants was almost the same by both post-secondary education (M= 11.087) and secondary education (M= 11.116) participants, and no significant difference was found in pairwise comparisons of education and province by unskilled participants (p= 0.982). However, skilled participants used taarof expressions more if they had post-secondary education (M= 14.441) rather than secondary education (M= 10.557). Therefore, significant differences were observed in the total use of taarof expressions by this subgroup (p= 0.003). Figure 1 shows the estimated marginal means of total use of 95 taarof expressions across education and province.
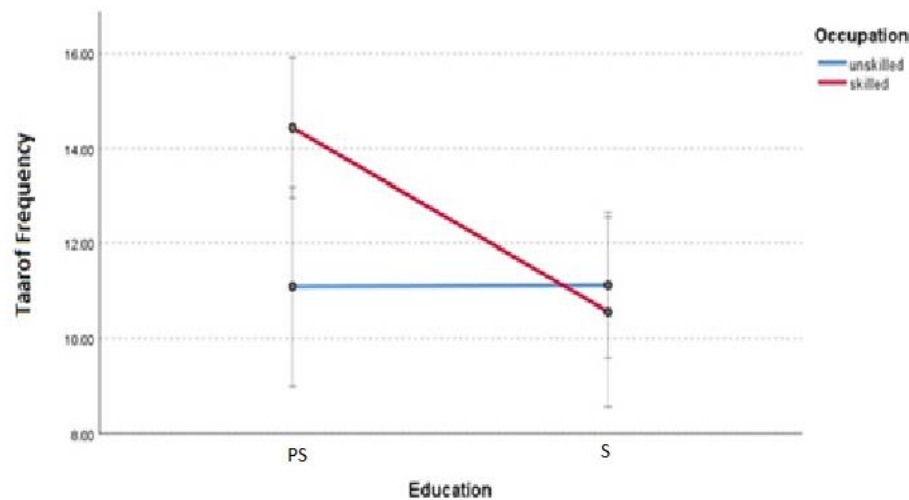

Figure 3.2. Estimated marginal means of total use of 95 taarof expressions (education and occupation)

As illustrated above in Figure 3.2, province and education as well as education and occupation formed interaction effects in use of taarof expressions. It can be concluded that the use of taarof expressions could be affected by interactions between geographical variation and socioeconomic status (education). Furthermore, interactions between socioeconomic status factors like education and occupation could be influential in use of taarof expressions.

CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

The main goal of this study was to address attitudes toward taarof and investigate the frequency of taarof use among Iranians by gender, geographical variation, and socioeconomic status. This section elaborates on the significant results of this study and compares the findings with earlier research.

4.1. Attitudes toward taarof

Most of the participants in this study claimed that they frequently use and hear taarof in their daily conversations. They also believed that it was impossible not to ever use/hear taarof among Iranians. This result is similar to Majd (2008) and Pourmohammadi (2018) studies in which participants perceived taarof as an intrinsic part of Iranian culture.

Considering the preferences toward taarof use, most participants neither enjoyed nor hated the use of taarof. These results contradict the negative attitudes toward taarof in the study by Pourmohammadi (2018) according to which Iranians dislike using and hearing taarof in their conversations. It is worth mentioning that "to hate taarof" does not necessarily mean "not to use taarof" among Iranians. This difference could also be explained by the differences in locations where our study was conducted as compared to Pourmohammadi (2018).

Most of the participants in my study believed that taarof can be useful in communication. This finding was in line with Izadi's (2016) study where taarof was found to be a requirement for Iranian social relations. On the contrary, participants in Pourmohammadi (2018) study did not consider taarof to be a prerequisite for building better communication.

The participants of my study specifically found using taarof appropriate in some social situations like addressing highly educated, ranked, or accomplished/famous people, but they were mostly reluctant to use taarof in communication with rich people. This might be the result of public opinions toward rich people who are usually targets of resentment (Piston, 2014).

Regarding age-related attitudes to taarof, a high number of participants believed that younger people should use taarof while talking to older people. This result was explained by Koutlaki (2010) who recognized youngers' respect for older ones as a central issue in taarof use.

On the other hand, the participants' responses in this study did not indicate an agreement whether older people should use taarof in communication with accomplished younger individuals. A similar finding was reported by Intachakra (2001) claiming that some forms of politeness must be used by younger people in Thailand, but not necessarily by older ones.

Most participants thought that taarof could make a conversation more interesting and respectful. Similar positive attitudes toward taarof were observed in Pourmohammadi (2018), and Afghari and Karimnia (2007) where participants found taarof beautiful and attractive. However, the participants mostly believed that taarof could cause trouble in communication, and this viewpoint was supported by Pourmohammadi (2018) as well.

With respect to the statement that taarof could put down the speaker who is using it, in my study, the respondents did not show a well-formed opinion on the subject. This result did not agree with Izadi's (2015) claim that taarof is considered a reflection of putting ones' feelings, needs, and desires prior to our own. It also disagreed with the concept of *shekasteh-nafsi* (self-breaking) which was known as a component of Iranian politeness system. As explained earlier, *shekasteh-nafsi* occurs when speakers play down their own talents and achievements to admire a similar feature in their interlocutors (Sharifian, 2005, 2011).

A large number of participants in my study claimed that they use taarof in their communications, and they believed that their generation (30s-40s) is still using this tradition. They also showed willingness to preserve this tradition in Iran. While Beeman (1986) found Iranians unwilling to preserve taarof, Sahragard (2003) and Pourmohammadi (2018) observed that Iranian parents considered it necessary to teach taarof to their children. However, Iranian immigrants neither liked to use taarof nor taught it to their children (Haghighat, 2016).

Finally, most of the participants disagreed that they mock taarof in communication. Although Afghari and Karimnia (2007) found taarof to be perceived as a fun social behavior, no study reported a situation in which Iranians use taarof for fun or to mock it.

4.2. Gender and taarof

With respect to gender-related attitudes to taarof, most of the participants agreed that people were expected to use taarof when talking to their opposite gender. A high number of

participants also agreed that the amount of taarof use was higher either when a man addresses a woman or when a woman addresses a man. Lakoff (1975) noted that men were taught to speak more politely while talking to women. On the opposite, Parvaresh and Eslami-Rasekh (2009) emphasized that Persian speakers use more politeness strategies when they talk to their opposite gender, which agrees with my study results as well.

The majority of the participants disagree that as compared to women only and mixed gender groups, the amount of taarof use is the highest when men talk to each other. On the contrary, most of the participants agree that the amount of taarof use is the highest when women talk to each other. The latter result contradicts Shams (2009) who reports that women use conflictive impolite language while talking to each other.

4.2.1. Attitudes toward taarof use across genders

No significant differences were observed in the attitudes toward taarof across males and females. In contrast, Makarova and Pourmohammadi's (2020a) findings indicated significant differences in attitudes toward taarof by genders, namely, the stronger preferences in taarof use by males. While Kazerouni and Shams (2015) found males' attitudes more positive than females' toward using taarof, my study did not show a difference in taarof preferences by genders. This is likely explained by the age group in our study (30-40), as in Makarova and Pourmohammadi (2020a) study, women in the younger group (20s) were very negative about taarof.

4.2.2. Frequency of taarof use by genders

In our study, the total use of taarof expressions in conversations by males and females was almost identical. Although politeness in Farsi was known to be gendered due to social and cultural traditions of Iran (Shafiee-Nahrkhalaji et al., 2013), this result was in line with some other linguistic research across genders which found the role of gender negligible in language use (Brouwer, 1982; Berryman-Fink & Wilcox, 1983; Ishikawa, 2011; Wang, 2021). Similarly, no gender effects were observed on the frequency and type of politeness strategies in a study by Shams (2009). This goes contrary to the findings in Makarova and Pourmohammadi (2020a) where males use taarof more frequently than females in a language situations of "shopping". This difference

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could be situationally-specific. Being a shop-owner has traditionally been a male occupation in Iran, so men could be more familiar with the use of taarof expressions to 'woo' a customer. In my study, the situations were more gender-neutral rather than gender-preferential, as both genders need to compliment and express gratitude for receiving a gift. The familiarity of both genders to "thanking" and "complimenting" can account for the similar amount of taarof use by genders.

This study found significant differences in the use of two taarof expressions "merci" [thank you] and "dar khedmatam" [I can help]. Females had more tendency to use "merci" in their conversations as compared to males. Male participants, on the other hand, used the expression "dar khedmatam" more frequently. In terms of taarof expressions, Makarova and Pourmohammadi (2020a) asserted that the frequency of taarof expressions by males and females could differ depending on the situation of language use, not their genders per se. For instance, they found "ghabeli nadare" and "salamat bashid" more frequent in males' speech in the "shopping" scenario.

4.3. Regional variation

Participants' attitudes to regional variation in taarof use indicated that people from small towns use taarof more frequently than people from big cities. This result was in contrast with Beeman (1986) who found Iranian villagers incompetent to use taarof.

The respondents strongly believed that the amount of taarof use differed by provinces, specific geographic location, ethnic groups, and languages in Iran. Possible explanation for this finding could lie in Iran's rich linguistic diversity that includes not only speakers of Persian (the national and official language) as the mother tongue but also bilingual/multilingual speakers of other languages and dialects (Rezaei & Tadayyon, 2018). Some of these languages and dialects are recognized and even have their own local newspaper and TV channels (Rezaei & Bahrami, 2016). At this point, I cannot unravel the impact of the local languages and cultures on taarof use (as all the participants claimed Farsi as their mother tongue), but this could be a productive direction for future studies of Iranian politeness system.

4.3.1. Attitudes toward taarof across provinces

Saeidfar and Tohidian (2012) claimed that linguistic differences could be found from village to village in many countries, however, the further one travels from a point, the larger these differences will be. Although Isfahan (central) and Alborz (north-central) are not considered as very distant provinces in Iran, their residents manifested significantly different attitudes to taarof in my study. Isfahan residents are more tolerant of taarof as compared to Alborz participants. Using taarof in some social situations like addressing educated people and people in high social power was considered significantly more appropriate by Isfahan residents as compared to their Alborz peers. Alborz residents find that taarof is troublesome in communication, but Isfahanians do not. On the contrary, Isfahan residents strongly believe that taarof is a means of showing respect to others, but residents of Alborz disagree with this. With respect to the idea that taarof could put down the speaker who is using it, Isfahan residents showed more agreement than their Alborz countrymen. Isfahan participants also showed a significantly greater will to preserve taarof as compared to Alborz residents. Isfahan participants object to the idea of using taarof mockingly much stronger than Alborz residents.

A possible reason for strong differences in participants' attitudes toward taarof by provinces could be explained by different linguistic communities and ethnic groups living in these two provinces. Karaj (capital city of Alborz) and Isfahan are two large urban areas in central part of Iran with Persian as the dominant language (Moradi, 2019). However, Karaj is one of the major cities inhabited by Azeri population and Kurds who have immigrated from northwest and west provinces of Iran, respectively, due to political and economical reasons. Isfahan, on the other hand, is mostly settled by Lur population (western-most parts of Isfahan), and by Arabs who immigrated from south provinces after the 8-year war against Iraq (Moradi, 2019). Each of these ethnic groups share distinct subcultures and traditions. In terms of general assumptions toward the two provinces, Alborz is highly known to have a heterogeneous immigrant-based population while Isfahan has a more traditional homogeneous population.

4.3.2. Frequency of taarof use by provinces

The frequency of taarof use was significantly higher among residents of Alborz as compared to Isfahan. In line with this finding, Modarresi (1989) addressed linguistic differences

in use of formal and informal language caused by geographical variation. Surprisingly, Alborz residents showed to be less tolerant of taarof and claimed to "hate" it in their attitudes toward taarof. This contradiction suggests that the "more use" of taarof does not equate "like it more". Alborz residents feel the strong social pressure of using taarof in their social interactions, which could make them more resentful to taarof.

Taarof expressions, "tashakor" [thank you] and "befarmaeid" [What can I do for you?] were used more frequently by Alborz residents, however, no specific taarof expression was used more frequently in Isfahan residents' conversations. A plausible explanation could be related to Isfahani dialect and its words and expressions which were lost. According to Saeidfar and Tohidian (2012), Isfahani dialect was characterized by old and religious words that no longer exist, and today, Isfahan residents tend to use Standard Persian language (except for the Isfahani accent). It is possible that frequent taarof expressions specific to this province may have been lost and are not used by the speakers.

4.4. Socioeconomic status

The participants in this study did not have a specific opinion on the role of social standing in the use of taarof. They were not sure whether the amount of taarof use is higher among educated, rich, or more socially powerful people talking to each other in their own group. According to Fishman's (1972) intra-group and inter-group multilingualism theory, when people speak in their own community (intra-group communication), their speech remains unchanged; however, when they talk with people from other groups (inter-group communication), they can accommodate and shift from one variety to another. People of high and middle social standing are more aware of this phenomenon and practice it more often, while people from lower-class society are less sensitive to accommodation (Rahman, 2014). However, the participants' responses in my study did not display this tendency. My finding also disagreed with Ishikawa (2011) who found the social status of the speaker and hearer a crucial factor in language use.

4.4.1. Attitudes toward taarof across socioeconomic status

Post-secondary education participants seemed to hear taarof more often than secondary education counterparts. They found taarof use in some social situations like addressing people in higher social positions, the rich or the famous more appropriate than their secondary education counterparts. This result was explained by Haghighat (2016) who identified the pressure of using taarof by highly educated individuals in social situations. Interestingly, even secondary education and unskilled participants in this study found taarof to be associated with education and the middle/high class of the society. The latter result disagrees with Pourmohammadi (2018) study where participants mostly disagreed that taarof was a characteristic of good education.

There were some other differences found in responses between post-secondary education and secondary education participants. Secondary education individuals agreed significantly more with the idea that taarof use differed by ethnic groups and languages. They also showed more support to the idea that the amount of taarof use was the highest when women talk to each other. Post-secondary education participants, on the other hand, believed that the amount of taarof use was higher when a man addressed a woman and when rich people talked to each other. Weinreich (1968, p. 2-3) recognized attitudes toward a particular culture a very important "extralinguistic" factor in language use. As the influence of social class on language attitudes was earlier attested by Rahman (2014), different placements in social hierarchy (educated as high/middle class vs. uneducated as low-class) could account for these significantly different attitudes toward taarof use and its situations.

Attitudes to the role of gender in taarof use were dependent on the occupation of the participants. Unskilled participants expected both men and women to use taarof when talking to their opposite gender. Skilled participants significantly disagreed that the amount of taarof use is the highest when men talk to each other. And finally, unlike their unskilled peers, skilled participants found taarof appropriate while addressing rich people. These distinctive attitudes by skilled and unskilled participants were explained by Bagherzadeh Kasmani (2012) who found occupation as a source of change in linguistic behavior.

4.4.2. Frequency of taarof use by socioeconomic status

Participants' education played a significant role in the frequency of taarof use. Post-secondary education participants of this study used taarof expressions more frequently than secondary education individuals. This finding is in line with Koutlaki (2010) who identified education as a crucial domain in taarof use, and Haghighat (2016) who claimed that educated people use taarof more frequently in their conversations in Iran.

Taarof expressions, "salam beresoonid" [send my greetings] and "mozahem shodam" [sorry to bother you] were the most frequent taarof expressions used by post-secondary education participants. Secondary education participants showed a greater tendency to use "vazifast" [my pleasure] in their conversations. The reasons for this difference could be connected to Rahman (2014) suggestion that better educated people use standard language and accents that can be distinguished from non-standard forms spoken by low educated people. However, more studies are needed in future to fully explain the observed difference.

Occupation, on the contrary, did not affect the frequency of taarof use either in general, or by a specific expression. Although the relation between taarof use and occupation was not addressed in earlier research, a study by Shams (2009) suggested that socioeconomic status had no influence on the frequency of politeness strategies. Our study confirms that it is education rather than occupation that counts in taarof production.

4.5. Interaction effects

Some variables of this study interacted in their effect on the total of use of taarof expressions by participants. The first interaction was between education and province: secondary education participants used taarof expressions much more in Alborz province than in Isfahan. The explanation can be found in Herk (2012) who noted that "social network theory is often used to investigate why people who might share the same social characteristics (such as class or region) nevertheless behave differently linguistically" (p. 8). Since the findings of the current study showed that Alborz residents use taarof significantly more than Isfahan residents, the social network and the frequency of contact with surrounding interlocutors in Alborz could have reinforced taarof use by secondary education residents in this province. Consequently, secondary education participants who were from the same social class behaved linguistically different in

different provinces. However, frequency of contact could possibly affect other parameters such as occupations in this study. According to Yazdani (2012), political situation of Iran has changed the occupational domains in this country. Not having a defined system to classify occupations, people are mostly working in any position they can find irrespective of their qualifications or skills. This can be a possible explanation that keeps the factor of occupation and its effect on participants' speech negligible.

Another interaction observed in my study was between education and occupation. Skilled participants used taarof expressions more if they had post-secondary education rather than secondary education. Rahman (2014) commented that speech variation could be greatly affected by individuals' social dimensions such as education and profession. Although Isfahan and Alborz are both known to be potential urban areas with industrial occupations, Isfahan is more associated with bazaar economy and traditional businesses (Ghazi & Goede, 2019). On the other hand, Alborz, situated in a close proximity of Tehran, is assumed to be a home for immigrant workers in diverse occupations who benefit from abundant opportunities and well-paid jobs in Tehran (the capital of Iran) while living in Alborz with lower costs. Since the current study indicated the higher frequency of taarof use by highly educated people, and due to the fact that educated and skilled people are both categorized as higher class in social hierarchy (Khondker, 2004), there was no surprise to find reinforced patterns of taarof use in highly educated and skilled participants' speech.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

My study addressed the following three questions:

1. What are the effects of gender, regional variation, education, and occupation on attitudes toward taarof?

2. What are the effects of gender, regional variation, education, and occupation on the frequency of taarof use?

3. What are the effects of gender, regional variation, education, and occupation on the type of taarof expressions Iranians use?

The findings of this study showed no effect of gender either in attitudes or in production of taarof expressions. However, regional variation affects taarof use and attitudes toward it. North-central residents of Iran hate using taarof more as compared to central residents. Residents of Isfahan province are more interested in using taarof while addressing people of higher education and social power. Although people in Alborz identify taarof troublesome in communication, Isfahan residents find it a way to respect others, insist on preserving it, and disagree to make fun of this tradition. People in Isfahan consider the belittling nature of this social behavior an important part of it.

Higher educated people in Iran seemed to hear taarof more in daily interactions, especially among rich people. They believe that using taarof is appropriate when addressing people with high social power, great accomplishments, and wealthy situations. Lower educated Iranians, on the other hand, find ethnic groups and education an important factor in the amount of taarof use. While secondary education participants think that taarof is more frequent among women, post-secondary Iranians find it more frequent when men are talking to their opposite gender. Iranians in skilled professions try to use taarof while addressing rich people. Unskilled Iranians expect males and females to use taarof while talking with their opposite gender. Like secondary education individuals, Iranians in unskilled professions find taarof more associated with education.

The geographical residence and education can significantly affect the frequency of taarof use among Iranians whereas gender has a very limited impact, and occupation – none (unless skilled workers are highly educated). For instance, women use "merci" more frequently while men favor "dar khedmatam" in their conversations. "Tashakor" and "befarmaeid" is heard more among

north-central residents of Iran as compared to central residents. Higher educated Iranians use "salam beresoonid" and "mozahem shodam" more frequently while lower educated ones use "vazifast" more often. Interestingly, occupation has no effect on specific taarof expressions by Iranians.

Additionally, the results of this study indicated that lower educated Iranians use taarof expressions much more in a north-central province like Alborz rather than a central province like Isfahan. Moreover, Iranians in skilled occupations use taarof expressions more if they have university education degrees.

5.1. Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study was using written scenarios as a method of data collection. The scenario was required for triggering taarof expressions, and for getting comparable data from dialogues. Of course, the results can only be extrapolated to natural speech with caution, but due to "observers paradox" coupled with ethics requirements, no speech samples collected in research could be truly "natural speech" samples. Second, due to the limited scope of the research and the specifics of Iranian context, gender was only defined as binary, and other gender groups were not involved in this study. Extending the research design to more regions, ethnic groups, genders and LGBTQ+ communities would also yield more comprehensive studies in future. It is worth mentioning that the researcher's familiarity with one of the provinces under study (Isfahan) could have made a possibility of a subconscious bias into the interpretation of the results. Due to the time limitations on the study, I did not examine the interactions between speech acts and politeness tools, which will be undertaken in future. Finally, a cross-linguistic comparison of speech acts and politeness factors involving other languages would make a stronger contribution to pragmatics.

5.2. Applications

This study contributes to sociolinguistics and pragmatics theory by enhancing an understanding of the role of gender, regional variation, education and occupation in Iranian politeness system. The study highlights the significance of education and regional variation in the use of and attitudes to politeness system. The materials of the study can be used in Farsi as a foreign and heritage language classes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Taarof Questionnaire

Part 1. Demographic Information

Please insert your individual code. This code should be the same as the one you used for the conversation recordings.

Your code:

1. Your age: (Please insert a number)

2. Your gender (please <u>underline</u> M or F):   M F

3. Your occupation:

4. The highest level of education you have completed:

5. What is the province of your current residence?

6. What is/are your native language(s)?

7. Please specify the level of your English language proficiency by selecting one of the following options (please underline the option you select):
    a) No proficiency
    b) elementary proficiency
    c) limited proficiency
    d) advanced proficiency
    e) near-native or bilingual proficiency
    f) native proficiency

Part 2. Taarof use and attitudes to Taarof

Part 2.1. Multiple choice answers

Please select your answer to the questions below using one of the options provided; please <u>underline</u> or highlight your choice in yellow color:

1.   How often do you use taarof in your daily interactions in Iran?
Never   Seldom   Sometimes   Often   All the time

2.   How often do you hear taarof used by others in their daily interactions in Iran?
Never   Seldom   Sometimes   Often   All the time

Please agree or disagree with the following statements as suggested by <u>underlining</u> or highlighting your choice in yellow color.

3.   I enjoy using taarof.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

4.   I hate using taarof.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

5.   I think taarof is useful in communication.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

6.   Using taarof is appropriate in some situations of language use.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

7.   Using taarof is appropriate when addressing highly educated people.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

8.   Using taarof is appropriate when addressing people in positions of high social power.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

9.   Using taarof is appropriate when addressing people who are very rich.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

10.   Using taarof is appropriate when addressing highly accomplished or famous individuals
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

11.   Men are expected to use taarof when talking with women.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

12.   Women are expected to use taarof when talking with men.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

13.   Younger people are expected to use taarof when talking with older people.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

14.   Older people should use taarof when talking with younger people who are highly accomplished.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

15.   Taarof causes trouble in communication.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

16.   Taarof makes communication more interesting.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

17.   Taarof shows respect to others.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

18.   Taarof puts down the person who is using it.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

19.   Iranians of my generation are using taarof in communication.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

20.   Taarof should be preserved in Iran.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

21.   People taarof more if they come from a small village or town.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

22.   People taarof more if they come from a big city.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

23.   The amount of taarof use differs by provinces in Iran.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

24.   The amount of taarof use differs by a specific geographic location (place, town, etc.) in Iran.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

25. The amount of taarof use differs by ethnic groups and languages in Iran.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

26.   As compared to other groups, the amount of taarof use is higher among educated people talking to each other.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

27.   As compared to other groups, the amount of taarof use is higher among rich people talking to each other.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

28.   As compared to other groups, the amount of taarof use is higher among more powerful people talking to each other.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

29.   As compared to women and mixed gender groups, the amount of taarof use is the highest when men talk to each other.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

30.   As compared to men and mixed gender groups, the amount of taarof use is the highest when women talk to each other.
Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

31.   As compared to men talking with men, the amount of taarof use is higher when a man addresses a woman.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

32. As compared to women talking with women, the amount of taarof use is higher when a woman addresses a man.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

33. I make fun of taarof and use it mockingly when talking with my friends.

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

Part 2.2. Free form answers

Please answer the following questions to the best of your understanding by providing answers in a free form.

1. What are communicative situations when you would use taarof? Please provide a few examples.

2. What characteristics of another person would require you to use of taarof? Please provide a few examples.

3. Please describe your attitudes to the use of taarof (do you like it or dislike it) and explain the reasons for your attitudes.

4. Please provide an example when you or another person you know had trouble in communication because of the use of taarof.

5. Please provide an example when you or another person you know had trouble in communication because of NOT using taarof.

6. How would you describe what taarof is?

7. What expressions or phrases would you associate with taarof use? Please provide a few examples.

8. What other language forms or non-verbal behaviour express taarof, in your opinion? Please provide a few examples.

9. How does taarof use relate to the use of politeness in Farsi?

10. How does taarof relate to other forms of politeness, to the best of your understanding?

    a) *adab* (politeness),

    b) *shekasteh-nafsi* (self-breaking),

    c) *ehteraam* (respect),

    d) *tavazo* (humility),

    e) *mehman navazi* (hospitality).

Thank you so much for your participation!

APPENDIX B. Taarof Scenarios

Before you start recording the dialogue, please record your individual code consisting of 2 digits and 2 letters of your choice in any order (e.g., 4p2r; 78mi, etc.). Please write down and remember your code, as we will ask you to use the same code with the survey.

Scenario 1: Complimenting

Background: Participants 1 and 2 know each other through work in the same company and talk with each other occasionally but are not close friends. Participant 1 is a junior colleague in a company. Participant 2 is a senior colleague.

Situation: Participant 1 (has no car) saw Participant 2 (an owner of a new car) earlier during the day parking a new car in the office building parking lot. Participant 1 is looking for a car and wants to get some tips.

Scenario:
-- P1 (who has no car, a junior employee) calls P2 (a car owner, a senior employee) on Skype and explains that he/she saw P2's new car in the office building parking lot and was impressed by it.
-- P2 responds.
-- P1 is also thinking about buying a new car and asks for some car purchase related tips (such as brand, model, dealer, good bargain, etc.).
-- P2 responds to the questions and suggests some more details about the car (such as air conditioning, safety, navigation, extra features, etc.).
-- P1 compliments P2 on his/her the car and its features and on the purchase and thanks P2 for his/her good advice and time.
-- P2 responds to the compliments and wishes P1 the best of luck with finding a good car for him/herself.

A note to participants: please notice, you can modify the suggested scenario as you consider fit to make it sound natural. You do not need to include all the car features listed, just a few, as you are comfortable with.

Scenario 2: Thanking

Background: Participant 1 is a former high school student, Participant 2 is a high school teacher; they know each other from high school classes, live in the same neighbourhood and talk with each other occasionally.

Situation: Participant 1 (a former student) helped his former teacher P2 to organize a school event (graduation). Participant 2 (teacher) sent a birthday gift (a watch) to P1 as a thank you gift, since P1 (a former student) helped to organize a school event. P1 received the gift and calls P2 by Skype to express the appreciation of the gift.

Scenario:
-- P1 (student) calls P2 (teacher) on Skype, informs that he/she received the gift of a watch and thanks P2 for the gift.
-- P2 responds and thanks P1 for the help with the school event.
-- P1 compliments some features of the watch (such as its famous brand, beautiful leather strap, kind of glass and steel, water resistance, etc.)
-- P2 responds to the compliments and expresses a wish that the gift is useful.
-- P1 responds as appropriate.

A note to participants: please notice, you can modify the suggested scenario as you consider fit to make it sound natural. You do not need to include all the watch features listed, just a few, or substitute them with others, as you are comfortable with.

APPENDIX C. Taarof Expressions

No.	A-Z	Taarof Expression	Literal Meaning	Actual Meaning
1	Aa	Amr befarmaeid	Give me commands.	What can I do for you?
2		Arzam be hozooretoon/khedmatetoon	I deliver my words to you.	I would say…
3		Arzeshe shoma bishtar az inast	You are more precious than this.	You are worth it.
4		Az khejalatetoon dar biam	I should overcome my shyness.	I owe you.
5		Az shoma be ma reside	I have received a lot from you.	I owe you.
6		Azizid	You are my dear.	Dear
7	Bb	Ba ejaze	May you give me the permission.	Would you mind?
8		Ba zahmataye ma?	How are you doing with my troubles?	Sorry to bother you.
9		Baese eftekhare	It makes me proud.	I am proud to …
10		Baratoon barekat biare	May it (the new car) bring you blessings.	I hope it (the new car) brings you luck.
11		Barazande shomast	You look good in it (the car).	You look good in it (the car).
12		Barge sabzi bood	It (the gift) was a green leaf.	It (the gift) was nothing.
13		Barge sabzist tohfeye darvish	This green leaf is dervish's gift.	It (the gift) was nothing.
14		Bayad rooye cheshm gozasht	I should put it (the gift) on my eyes.	It (the gift) means a lot to me.
15		Be bozorgie khodetoon bebakhshid	Excuse me by your greatness.	My apologies.
16		Be lotfe shoma	With your kindness.	It's kind of you.
17		Be salamati (estefade konid)	May you use it in health.	I hope it brings you good health.
18		Be shadi (estefade konid)	May you use it in happiness.	I hope it brings you happiness.
19		Bebakhshid	My apologies.	My apologies.
20		Bebakhshid age kamo kasti bood	Sorry if it (the gift) wasn't as good as it should be.	Sorry if it (the gift) wasn't good.
21		Bebakhshid (bad moghe) mozahem shodam	Sorry I am disturbing you (in a bad time).	Sorry to bother you.

22		Befarmaeid	Command.	What can I do for you?
23		Bi taarof	With no taarof.	Sincerely
24		Bish az in be gardane ma hagh darid.	You have more rights to my neck than this.	I am in your debt.
25		Bozorgitoono miresoonam Bozorgvaritoono miresoonam	I will carry your greatness/highness.	I will say hello (to them) on your behalf.
26	Cc	Charkhesh becharkhe	The wheels (of the car) spin well for you.	I hope the car works out well for you.
27		Cheshmaton ghashang mibine	Your eyes see beautiful.	You see the best in it.
28	Dd	Dar khedmatam	I am at your service.	I can help.
29		Dastetoon dard nakone	Your hand doesn't hurt.	Thank you.
30		Doshmanet sharmande	Your enemy must be ashamed.	No worries.
31	Ee	Ekhtiyar darid	You are the authority.	You're quite welcome.
32		Entezari nadashtam	I didn't expect.	I was not expecting anything.
33	Gg	Ghabel doonestid	You found me deserved.	You are too kind.
34		Ghabel nadare/Ghabeldar nist	It doesn't cost anything.	You can have it for free.
35		Gharaz az mozahemat	The reason I am disturbing you is that …	Pardon my disturbing you.
36		Ghesmate khodetoon	Wish the same be destinated for you.	Wish the same for you.
37		Ghorbane shoma/Ghorbanat	I sacrifice myself for you.	With all my heart.
38	Hh	Harchi darim az shomast	All I have is from you.	I owe everything I have to you.
39	Ii	In che harfie	What are these words?	No worries.
40	Jj	Jesaratan…?	Can I dare to ask?	Would you mind if I ask a question?
41		Jobran konam	I will compensate for you.	I am in your debt.
42	Kk	Kari nakardam (dar barabare kare shoma)	I did nothing (in return to what you did).	I did not do anything.
43		Khahesh mikonam	I beg you.	You are welcome.

44		Khaste nabashid	Don't be tired.	Good job.
45		Khedmat az mast	Giving service is my job.	I would love to help.
46		Kheiresho bebinid	I hope you see its (the car's) goodness.	I hope the car works out well for you.
47		Khejalat dadid	You made me ashamed.	Thank you, I am humbled.
48		Khodetoon ghabelid	Your existence is valuable.	You are very important to me.
49		Khoobi az khodetoone	The goodness is all yours/The goodness belongs to you.	It is so kind of you.
50		Khoshhal shodam (sedatoono shenidam)	I am happy to hear your voice.	It's so nice to hear your voice.
51	Ll	Lotf darid/Lotf kardid	You have kindness.	It's kind of you.
52	Mm	Mamnoon	Thank you.	Thank you very much.
53		Merci	Thank you.	Thank you.
54		Mohebat kardid/darid	You have kindness.	It's kind of you.
55		Morahemid	You are merciful.	Don't mention it.
56		Mosade'e oghate sharif shodam	I disturbed your precious time.	Sorry to take your time.
57		Moshtaghe didar	So eager to see you.	Long time no sees.
58		Motoalegh be shomast	It belongs to you.	It is all yours.
59		Motoshakeram/Motochakeram	Thank you.	Thank you.
60		Mozahem shodam	I disturbed you.	Sorry to bother you.
61	Nn	Naaghabele	It doesn't cost anything.	Help yourself.
62		Nafarmaeid/Nazan in harfo	Don't say these words.	Don't mention it.
63		Namak parvarde hastim	We are fed by your salt.	You did a lot for me.
64		Nazare lotfetoone	You have kindness.	It's kind of you.
65		Nemidoonam chetor (ba che zabooni) tashakor konam	I don't know how (to use my language) to thank you.	I can't thank you enough.
66	Oo	Omidvaram morede pasand/babe meil bashe	I hope it matches your taste and interest.	I hope you like it.
67		Ozr khahi mikonam	My apologies.	My apologies.
68	Pp	Payande bashid	Be everlasting.	Live a long life.
69		Pishkesh bood	It was a small gift.	Don't mention it (it was just a small thing).

70	Rr	Raazi (be zahmat) naboodam	I was not satisfied with you troubling yourself for me.	I was not expecting you doing that for me.
71	Ss	Sa'adat bashe (miresam khedmatetoon)	I will be at your service if I am lucky enough.	Hope to see you soon.
72		Sa'adat nadashtim (bebinimetoon).	I was not lucky enough (to see you).	I have not had the pleasure of your company for a long time.
73		Sa'adat nasibe ma shod	I was so lucky to see you.	It was a pleasure seeing you.
74		Salam beresonid	Send my greetings.	Send my greetings.
75		Salam daran khedmatetoon	(They) send their greetings.	(They) send their greetings.
76		Salamat bashid	Be healthy.	Stay well.
77		Sahebash zende bashe	May the owner (of the car) be alive.	Stay well.
78		Sarboland bashi	Be honorable.	Good luck.
79		Saretoono dard avordam	I made you feel headache.	I talked too much.
80		Sayatoon bala sare ma	May your shadow be above our head.	Live a long life.
81		Sepas/Sepasgozaram	Thank you.	Thank you.
82		Shagerdie shomaro mikonam	I am always your student.	I still need to learn many things from you.
83		Sharmande	I am ashamed.	My apologies.
84		Sharmande kardid	You made me ashamed.	Thank you, I am humbled.
85	Tt	Tashakor (mikonam)	Thank you.	Thank you.
86	Vv	Vaghte (sharife) toon ro nemigiram	I won't take your (honorable) time.	I won't take your time.
87		Vazifast	It is my duty.	My pleasure.
88		Vojoodetoon ghabele	Your existence costs/Your existence is valuable.	I hold you in high esteem.
89		Vojoodetoon nemate	Your existence is a blessing.	You are a blessing.
90	Yy	Yek donya tashakor	Thanks a whole world.	Thank you so much.
91		Yadegari/yadbood e koochak bood	It was a small memento.	Don't mention it, it was only a very small thing.

92	Zz	Zabane tashakor nadaram	I don't have the language to thank you.	I can't thank you enough.
93		Zahmat keshidid	You went through trouble.	You went through so much trouble.
94		Zekre kheiretoon hamishe hast	I always mention your goodness.	You are so caring.
95		Zende bashid	Be alive.	Stay well.