

THE USE OF “TAAROF”: THE GENERATION AND GENDER FACTORS IN IRANIAN  
POLITENESS SYSTEM

A Thesis Submitted to the  
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Art  
In the Department of Linguistics and Religious Studies  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

By

ELHAM POURMOHAMMADI

## PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of the University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purpose may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any materials in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or parts should be addressed to:

Dean

College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

University of Saskatchewan

116 Thorvaldson Building, 110 Science Place

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5C9

Canada

and

Head of the Department of Linguistics

University of Saskatchewan

Room 274, Arts Building

9 Campus Drive

Saskatoon, SK S7N 5A5

Canada

**DEDICATION**

To my lovely and patient spouse  
and my supervisor, Prof. Makarova, to whom the credit all goes

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis is due to the contribution of the people without their generous support and constant encouragement this study would have been impossible to be completed.

First, I owe God a great debt of gratitude that it was impossible to move forward even one step without his help.

I would like to offer sincere thanks to my supervisor, Professor Veronika Makarova for her interest, encouragement, and invaluable pieces of advice during the supervisory period, and for helping to shape my research idea into reality. I really appreciated her unwavering support and tolerance during the period of the investigation.

I would also like to thank all the committee members who were involved in reading this thesis for their helpful comments and note. Without their passionate participation and input, this project could not have been successfully conducted. I am gratefully indebted to their valuable comments on this thesis.

I need to express my gratitude to the participants who showed a great deal of zeal and a large amount of enthusiasm to participate in this study.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my wonderful husband for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without him.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the use of taarof expressions as well as attitudes to taarof held by Iranians. Taarof is a politeness system of Iranian (or Farsi), which is known for its high complexity (Sharifian, 2011).

The study focuses on the comparison of the use of and attitudes towards taarof across two genders (men and women) and across two age groups (20-29 and 40-59 year olds). There were 60 participants in the study: a group of 30 males and a group of 30 females. In each group 15 participants were 20-29 and 15 participants were 40-59 years old. All the participants were monolingual speakers of Iranian (Farsi) residing in Iran. The first part of the study examines the use of taarof by the participants based on their answers to a questionnaire. The second part of the study investigates the use of taarof expressions by the four participant groups in quasi-spontaneous conversations (dialogues) prompted with two different script scenarios describing in brief a situation of language use (purchase of a watch in a store and giving/receiving compliments).

Taarof expressions used by the participants in the dialogues were manually extracted from transcripts, and their frequencies were compared across the four groups of participants with T-Tests using R package. The results demonstrate that the attitudes to taarof are mixed: both positive and negative attitudes are found among participants. Attitudes to taarof significantly differ across gender and generation groups, whereby women and younger participants hold more negative attitudes to taarof. The use of taarof expressions overall does not differ by gender, however, the specific use of three expressions is gender-specific. Older participants use

significantly more taarof expression than younger ones overall. There was only one expression that was used more by the younger group of participants.

*Keywords:* taarof, Iranian, taarof expressions, politeness system, generation, gender

## Table of contents

<b>PERMISSION TO USE</b> .....	i
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	iv
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	v
<b>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1.1. The aims of the study .....	1
1.2. The objectives of the study .....	1
1.3. Politeness .....	1
1.4. Taarof .....	5
1.5. Gender and Language .....	8
1.6. Generational Differences.....	10
1.7. Theoretical framework .....	11
1.8. The significance of the study .....	13
1.9. Research questions .....	13
<b>CHAPTER 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS</b> .....	14
2.1. Instrument .....	14
2.2. Participants .....	15
2.3. Data collection procedure.....	16
2.4. Data analysis .....	17
<b>CHAPTER 3. RESULTS</b> .....	18
3.1. Statistical Results .....	18
3.1.1. Participants' Willingness to Use Taarof.....	18
3.1.2. Frequency of Taarof Use .....	20
3.1.3. Difficulties of Taarof Use .....	21
3.1.4. Attitudes to Taarof.....	25
3.2. The Use of Taarof Expressions .....	45
3.2.1. Shopping Scenario.....	45

3.2.2. Giving Compliments Scenario .....	57
<b>CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION</b> .....	66
4.1. Attitudes towards taarof .....	66
4.2. Vocabulary of Politeness .....	68
4.3. Gender differences .....	70
4.3.1. Gender difference and attitudes to politeness system.....	70
4.3.2. Gender difference and the use of politeness system.....	71
4.4. Generation and language change .....	71
4.4.1. The attitudes to taarof across generations .....	72
4.4.2. The use of taarof across generations .....	73
4.4.3. The attitudes to politeness and its use across generations in different cultures .....	74
<b>CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION</b> .....	75
Limitations of the study .....	76
References .....	78
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	90
<b>APPENDIX A. Taarof questionnaire</b> .....	90
<b>APPENDIX B. Taarof scenarios</b> .....	95
<b>APPENDIX C. Taarof expressions</b> .....	97
<b>APPENDIX D. The characteristics of participants</b> .....	99

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1. The distribution of the participants by age .....	16
---	----

## List of Tables

Table 3.1. Participants' responses to statements about willingness to use taarof.....	19
Table 3.2. Participants' responses to statements about frequency of taarof use.....	20
Table 3.3. Participants' responses to statements about difficulties of taarof use .....	23
Table 3.4. Participants' responses to statements about the values of taarof.....	30
Table 3.5. Participants' responses to statements about emotive attitudes .....	35
Table 3.6. Participants' responses to statements about preserving taarof.....	39
Table 3.7. Participants' responses to statements about the social aspects of taarof .....	42
Table 3.8. Participants' responses to statements about shortcomings of taarof.....	45
Table 3.9. The use of taarof expressions by participants in the shopping scenario .....	46
Table 3.10. The participants' use of an expression: rah miyaym ba ham [we'll agree on a price] .....	47
Table 3.11. The participants' use of an expression: ghabel nadare [it's mere nothing, have it.]	48
Table 3.12. The participants' use of an expression: dastetoon dard nakone [thank you] .....	48
Table 3.13. The participants' use of an expression: khaste nabashid [good job] .....	49
Table 3.14. The participants' use of an expression: dar khedmat hastam [I'm at your disposal] .	50
Table 3.15. The participants' use of an expression: khashesh mikonam [you're welcome] .....	50
Table 3.16. The participants' use of an expression: salamat bashid [stay well] .....	51
Table 3.17. The participants' use of an expression: khedamat shoma [here you go] .....	52
Table 3.18. The participants' use of an expression: dobare mozahem misham [I'll take your precious time later] .....	52
Table 3.19. The participants' use of an expression: ghorbane shoma [may I go all over you!] ...	53
Table 3.20. The participants' use of an expression: nazare lotfetoone [it's so kind of you] .....	54
Table 3.21. The participants' use of an expression: ekhtiyar darid [you are quite welcome] .....	54
Table 3.22. The participants' use of an expression: agar zahmati nist [if it is not too much trouble] .....	55
Table 3.23. The participants' use of an expression: maghaze khodetoone [you are always welcome to my shop] .....	56
Table 3.24. The participants' use of an expression: mehmoone ma bashid [it's my treat] .....	56

Table 3.25. The use of taarof expressions by participants in the giving compliments scenario.....	57
Table 3.26. The participants' use of an expression: lotf darid [it's so kind of you] .....	58
Table 3.27. The participants' use of an expression: kar khasi nabood [no problem] .....	58
Table 3.28. The participants' use of an expression: dar khedmat hastam [I am at your disposal] .....	59
Table 3.29. The participants' use of an expression: khaste nabashid [good job] .....	60
Table 3.30. The participants' use of an expression: khashesh mikonam [you're welcome] .....	60
Table 3.31. The participants' use of an expression: mamnoon [thank you] .....	61
Table 3.32. The participants' use of an expression: befarmaeed [here you go] .....	61
Table 3.33. The participants' use of an expression: vazife boodeh [my pleasure] .....	62
Table 3.34. The participants' use of an expression: ghorbane shome [may I go all over you] ....	63
Table 3.35. The participants' use of an expression: be ja nemiyaram [have we met?] .....	63
Table 3.36. The participants' use of an expression: salamat bashid [stay well] .....	64

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. The aims of the study**

This research study addresses the attitudes of Iranians to taarof which is the politeness system of Persian. The broader aim of this study is to investigate the role of age and gender in the use of “taarof” (linguistic expression of politeness) in Farsi (Iranian).

#### **1.2. The objectives of the study**

This study examines the effects of age and gender on Iranian attitudes toward taarof and the differences in the quantity and quality of taarof expressions that are used by people of different ages and genders. It should be mentioned that there are varieties of languages and cultures in Iran and “an eclectic cultural elasticity has been said to be one of the key defining characteristics of the Persian spirit and a clue to its historical longevity” (Milani, 2004, p.15); however, they all share most of their basic values (Afghari & Karimnia, 2007). In this research all the other languages except Persian are discarded and the focus is mainly on the participants who speak Persian as their first language since my limited sample does not allow me to consider all or even some of these language varieties.

#### **1.3. Politeness**

Traditional understandings of politeness differ, but they may include making the hearer feel good (Leech, 1983), not making the hearer feel bad (Brown & Levinson, 1987), being kind, friendly, tactful, diplomatic, civil, and socially correct (Vidal, 1998), and behaving according to special patterns when interacting with others (Strauss & Feiz, 2013). Politeness is also

considered as having “at least three standard meanings: (i) being kind or friendly (an individual’s attitude); (ii) being tactful or diplomatic (a conversational strategy); (iii) being civil or socially correct (a social code)” (Escandell-Vidal (1998) cited in Chen (2014), p. 117). Politeness systems of world languages play an important role in reflecting as well as shaping sets of social norms and relationships (Terkourafi, 2011). Using polite expressions is one of the relation-acknowledging means of indicating the interlocutors’ status (Matsumoto, 1988). For instance, Japanese conversation parties try to reduce the imbalance with thanking, apology, formulating linguistic expressions and playing down their credit for creating equality (Ohashi, 2010). The conversation parties can assess the required polite behavior depending on some factors such as the community of practice, required identity and hierarchies of the relations (Mills, 2003). In other words, social factors such as social position, power, age, and formality affect rules of politeness (Ide, 1982). With regard to these factors, three ground rules of politeness can be posited that everyone should be polite to a person of a higher social position, to a person with power, and to an older person (Ide, 1982) i.e. polite behavior is a response to one’s awareness of social expectations appropriate to his/her place in society (Ide, 1989). For example, in Japanese society, “the practice of polite behavior according to social conventions is known as *wakimae*. To behave according to *wakimae* is to show verbally and non-verbally one’s sense of place or role in a given situation according to social conventions” (Ide, 1989, p. 230). Another example is taarof as a politeness system in Iran. “Iranians often characterize each other in terms of the amount of taarof they make” (Sharifian, 2007, p. 39).

Linguistic ways of expressing politeness contribute to the expression of social meaning in interactions as they help to project one’s social self (Brown & Levinson, 1987). According to a currently widespread politeness theory, this self-projected social image is known as *face*, and it

can take the form of ‘negative face’ (when the speaker wants to render independence and does not want to conform to social norms) and ‘positive face’ (when the speaker wants to comply with social norms and project oneself as a socially desirable group member) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness is questioned when there is a face threatening speech act (FTA) to be performed (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Any act that threatens the addressee's negative-face, by indicating that the speaker intends impeding the hearer's freedom of action (e.g. directives or requests) is a negative FTA. Any act that puts some pressure on the hearer to accept or reject and possibly to incur a debt (e.g. offers and promises) is a positive FTA (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p.60)

Politeness tools also serve to establish social boundaries in communication by signalling a degree of formality and the social distance/intimacy between the speakers that fit a given speech interaction (Huang, 2008). A speaker can meet the addressee’s expectations by using special politeness tools (Grundy, 2002). “In being polite, a speaker is attempting to create an implicated context. The speaker stands in a certain relation to the addressee in respect of the required act” (Grundy, 2002, p.128). The external context determines language choice in the domain of politeness and the power relation of the interaction parties affect the extent of formal/informal expressions which the speakers use (Grundy, 2002).

Linguistic politeness is universal in the sense that it is present in all cultures, but at the same time it is also strongly language-specific, since both the understanding of what is socially acceptable or unacceptable for any specific situation as well as linguistic means of constructing compliant or rebellious behaviour differ by language (Huang, 2008). Face is referred to as a positive social value that a person claims to behave according to a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which people express their view of the situation and evaluation of the

participants and defers from its symbolic means by which presentational appreciation and avoidance rituals is regularly conveyed to a recipient (Goffman, 1955). Tools of politeness and understanding of what is situationally appropriate in language interaction differs across cultures, since they are governed by some relatively different values and norms and these are reflected by different choices of language patterns in communication (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993; Koutlaki, 2002). For instance, there is a distinction between two forms for addressing people e.g. “Latin (tu/vos), Russian (ty/vy), Italian (tu/lei), German (du/Sie), Swedish (du/ni), Greek (esi/esis), and English itself once had such a distinction the thou/you distinction” (Wardhaugh, 2010, p.251). The speaker’s pronominal choices which act as politeness markers show his/her social relationship with the listener (Wardhaugh, 2010). Some languages have very complex system of politeness such as Javanese which is one of the principle languages in Indonesia (Geertz, 1960). In Javanese, it is impossible to say something without thinking what the appropriate form to indicate the social relationship between the speaker and listener is (Geertz, 1960). Japanese also uses different linguistic ways to show extreme politeness such as honorific forms including negatives, long utterances and utterances with few Chinese loan words (Martin, 1964).

Brown and Levinson (1978) refer to the concept of face and the need to save one’s own and communication partner’s face as one of the universal features of politeness. This universality of politeness is also rooted in its definition as “a system for polite use of a particular language that will exhibit two major aspects: the necessity for speaker Discernment and the opportunity for speaker Volition” (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino, 1986, p. 349). On the other hand, every language has its own specific politeness features like *mizani* and *lian* in Chinese, *teinei* in Japanese, *taarof* in Persian and the “*unrelenting politeness*” of the Britts (Haugh, & Hinze, 2003; Murphy, 2018)

#### 1.4. Taarof

Persian has its own specific system of politeness that is known as *taarof* (Hodge 1957; Beeman 1976, 1986; Assadi 1980; Rafiee 1992; Koutelaki 1997). Taarof is defined as “compliment(s), ceremony, offer, gift, flummery, courtesy, flattery, formality, good manners, soft tongue, honeyed phrases and respect” (Aryanpour & Aryanpour, 1976, p. 306-307). “The word has an Arabic root, *arafa*, meaning to know or acquire knowledge of. But the idea of taarof—to abase oneself while exalting the other person—is Persian in origin, said William O. Beeman, a linguistic anthropologist at the University of Minnesota” (Del Giudice, 2008, p. 2) Taarof is a highly complex system of ceremonial politeness that affects multiple levels of language structure such as sounds, morpho-syntax, formulaic expressions, turn constructions and other discursual features (Sharifian, 2011). Any description or analysis of the Iranian politeness system without a reference to taarof will be deficient and incomplete (Koutelaki 1997). To non-Iranians learning Persian or hearing Iranians using taarof in English, taarof appears to be “The great national trait [of] exaggerated politeness, modesty, and self-deprecation that Iranians seem to be born with” (Majd 2008, p. 65). Taarof subsumes interactional practices such as repetitive invitations (Koutlaki, 2002), repetitive offers (Koutlaki, 2002), refusals to invitations (Sharifian & Babaie, 2013; Izadi & Zilaie, 2015), ostensible suggestions, letting a companion go ahead (e.g. at the doorstep) (Izadi, 2016), offering and refusing turns of speech (Izadi, 2016), complimenting and their responses (Izadi, 2016), showing reluctance to readily accept money (Koutlaki, 2002), and sacrificing business/professional practices at the expense of relational bonding (Izadi, 2016). There are many examples of making taarof, such as denying the host’s offer of food twice and accepting it with the third offer, inviting someone to your house when you really do not mean it, insisting on paying for what you buy although the cashier says “you are my guest”, offering

more food to the guest in spite of his/her full plate, paying for the other younger relatives' meals when eating out together, pretending you are not hungry as a guest despite the fact that you really are (Haghighat, 2016). Iranians, as members of a collectivist society, need to create close bonding with using taarof to maintain their relationships (Sharifian, 2011; Izadi, 2015) and the participants' understanding of the unspoken norms is the key to the successful performance of taarof in any given situation (Maghbouleh, 2013, p.823). To encode the meaning of taarof stances the participants need to have mutual and shared knowledge of the concepts and contexts (Haghighat, 2016). Compared to other politeness systems, taarof special characteristics are the very figurative meanings of its formulaic expressions which make the non-native Persian speakers set its use aside and prefer not to go through the difficult process of interpreting their meanings in different situations (Miller, Strong, Vinson, Brugman, 2014). In addition, its use in specific situations, the employment of more exaggerated terms and use of specific idiomatic expressions such as I will scarify me for you (Sharifian, 2008) and the lengthy exchanges of these expressions (Miller et al., 2014) add to its uniqueness.

Taarof reflects a strict social hierarchy, in which people with lower social status are expected to respect those with higher social status by multiple verbal expressions of respect (Sharifian, 2008). Verbal respect also needs to be paid to one's clients in business, seniors and women, individuals who have been recognized for some achievements, etc. (Izadi, 2016). Being polite does not depend on just the inherent language properties, but to the speaker's choice of these expressions in various social contexts (Fraser, 1990). Since an impolite utterance in a formal situation can be completely unnoticed in an informal one, the speaker has to choose terms which indicate his/her social relationship with the listener (Coulmas, 2013). Giving and receiving verbal respect constitutes to be an important part of modern politeness norms, and failure to do

so (an equivalent of being impolite) is negatively evaluated (Beeman, 2001). Here is another example of taarof from online 'Los Angeles Times' (July 6, 2015). The scenario is called "the Battle of the \$18 Ice Cream Bill" (Parvini, 2015)

The two middle-aged Iranian men strode to the register at Saffron and Rose Ice Cream with their hands on their wallets. One quickly unsheathed his credit card and gave it to owner Farbod Papen. The second man promptly put his friend in a near chokehold and snatched his credit card.

With his arm still wrapped around his friend's chest, he presented his own credit card. Take this! But the first man wouldn't yield so easily, and boxed out his rival. Then the two men crashed into the table where the cash register rested, breaking one of its legs.

Just another day of "*taarofing*" in Westeros, er, Westwood.

"This happens every Saturday," Papen said, laughing. "I swear to God. It gets pretty vicious, man. It's hard-core in Westwood." (Los Angeles Times, July 6, Parvini)

There are different Persian taarof scenarios and codes (cited in Haghghat, 2016) such as greeting (Miller et al. 2014), leave-taking (saying goodbye) (Miller et al., 2014), thanking (Miller et al., 2014), compliments (Farghal & Haggan, 2006), names and titles (O'Shea, 2003) and gift giving (Haghghat, 2016).

While there are almost no specific studies focusing on the factors that may impact taarof use in Farsi (Haghghat, 2016), it is logical to expect that some factors outlined as important for politeness expression in other languages may be relevant for taarof as well. According to earlier studies, a number of social variables influence linguistic politeness behaviors, including "power relationships, degrees of solidarity, intimacy or social distance, the level of formality of the

interaction or speech event, the gender, age, ethnicity, social class backgrounds of participants, and so on." (Holmes, 2006, p. 692). Politeness markers are different in different languages and the degree of politeness depends on the richness of the language with politeness means (Coulmas, 1992).

In this study, we decided to focus on two factors that may potentially impact taarof use: gender and generation. The reasons for choosing these factors are outlined below.

### **1.5. Gender and Language**

"Gender is socially constructed rather than natural" (Cameron, 1998, p.271). "Gender practices differ considerably from culture to culture, place to place, group to group, living at the intersection or all other aspects of social identity" (Eckert, 1998, p.66). A large set of gendered meanings has been shown to be attached to different aspects of speech (Cameron, 1998). Masculinity and femininity can be defined by performing certain acts in accordance with the cultural norms (Butler, 1990) which makes men and women aware of different gendered meanings that are affected by "particular ways of speaking and acting to produce a variety of effects" (Cameron, 1998, p.272). The way that women are socialised into making specific language choices leads them to act, and be perceived, as relatively powerless members of society (Lakoff, 1975). This is because women are more likely than men to prioritise interpersonal rather than informational goals in their speech; and that this tendency is derived from and/or has implications for power relations between men and women (Christie, 2006). In particular, women's speech is often associated with a higher degree of politeness than men's (Zimin, 1981). The linguistic features of women's English have been reported to include "super-polite' forms" (*indirect requests, euphemism*), the use of adjectives like "charming", higher vocabulary for

colours, and a higher use of tag forms and hedges (Lakoff, 1975). A higher frequency of the use of more standard language forms by women recorded for many languages has been explained by the women's needs for face-protection (Holmes, Marra, & Schnurr, 2008, p. 167). On the other hand, men use vernacular forms because they relate it to "masculinity and toughness" (Holmes, 2008, p. 167). Other characteristics of Women's language are the use of elements "hedges, tentativeness, tag questions which show indirectness, mitigation and hesitation" while male speech is characterized by "direct, forceful, confident using features such as direct, unmitigated statements and interpretation" (Lakoff, 1975, cited in Mills, 2003, p.165). For example it was found that in a Japanese context "the ratio of the occurrence of honorifics in women's speech was higher than in men's speech; Women, therefore, are expected to be more polite than men as a result of frequent use of honorifics together with other polite expressions (Ide, 1982). Moreover, in Jordanian society a woman should not use men's speech style because it is socially unacceptable and she should speak in a way that reflects her femininity (Al-Harabsheh, 2014). Since women completely enjoy a full equality in Iranian society (Ramazani, 1993), it is possible to expect that they may identify more frequently as being lower in status than men, and may wish to put more effort into projecting themselves as desirable social beings (Ramazani, 1993). At the same time, there is a counter-tendency of showing respect to women in Iranian society (Afkhami & Friedl, 1994). Gender differences in language use remain a potent concern in current research. These differences are hypothesized to be influential in taarof use. I was therefore interested to see how these tendencies would play out in actual communication, and to investigate whether men or women of similar social status and age may use taarof differently.

## 1.6. Generational differences

Age as an influential social variable can be representative of generational differences in linguistic politeness (Holmes, 2006). Some elements of politeness system development are already evident among children who are eight years old (Bates, 1976). The alterations of language forms help to adapt politeness strategies for better communication in an evolving environment (Dunn, 2011). New businessmen in Japan, for instance, strive for acquiring business manners and they are sometimes trained to reshape their language use and presentation of self in ways that are considered appropriate for the business world (Dunn, 2013). This is also true about Iranian society which is trying to develop new ways of satisfying customers in order to motivate them to shop. This trend can explain why some young sales assistants in the given scenarios used different taarof expressions than their older counterparts.

Another example of Language changes led by younger generation can be taken from Trudgill's research in Norwich, England (Trudgill, 1974). Younger speakers (under the age of 30) used the local variant of [ʌ] in the backing of (e) before /l/, as in hell or held in casual speech, whereas older speakers (aged 50 and above) used [ɛ] which was the RP variant. He assumed that younger speakers were leading a change in the Norwich speech community towards an increased use of the local variant (Trudgill, 1974).

There have been some observations that recently, young people in their twenties or thirties in Iran may not be using taarof either at all or as much as the older generation (Faika, 2016). This has been explained by globalization and the expansion of Western lifestyle and behavioural patterns in Iran (Nurullah, 2008). No earlier studies address the use of taarof in Iran across generations. The motivation for this study was therefore to investigate whether the younger (20-

30 year old) and the older (40-59 years old) generations of modern Iranians have significant differences in their use of taarof. I was therefore interested whether taarof use and attitudes to taarof differ by generations.

### **1.7. Theoretical framework**

Taarof is a highly complex system of ceremonial politeness (Sharifian, 2011), its nature and characteristics can therefore be understood with the help of the politeness theory. The most influential model of politeness up to date has been proposed by Brown and Levinson's (1987), which is employed in many contemporary studies of politeness (e.g., Ellen, 2001; Fraser, 2005; Holmes, 1990; Lane, 1990). Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is therefore also taken as the major theoretical framework in this study. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) focus on concept of *face* and state that every action may result in *saving face* or *losing face* of the speaker or listener in the conversation. They also explain that positive face wants are the desire to feel free in doing something and negative face wants are feeling the pressure of doing an action. My study is not focusing on the concept of face; however, it is focusing on how using taarof is related with the desire of its users to be liked and approved.

Discourses of all languages involve different features connected to the culture and the experiences that the speakers of the given language have in their lives (Strauss & Feiz, 2013). In Persian, culture-related concepts are known to have an impact on different linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, sounds and intonation (Sharifian, 2008). Depending on the circumstances of language use and on the social relationship between the speakers, taarof prescribes the use of specific forms of referencing, pronouns, verbal forms and turn taking.

An important part of taarof are formulaic expressions, that cannot be broken down to the individual words, are mostly idiomatic, and are interpreted as a whole unit (Van Lancker Sidtis, 2004). An example of a formulaic expression in English is *to handle somebody with kid gloves*, a phrase that has a figurative meaning that is different from its literal meaning. Taarof formulaic expressions are fixed in form and their meanings are related to the pragmatic context of communication within a particular politeness system (Leech, 1983). For instance, *khahesh mikonam* (similarly to *kid gloves*, show what it means literally, what it means as a formulaic expression, and then proceed to its functions) can be used in the following contexts “thank you” (my pleasure), for returning someone’s compliment (thank you) and for asking somebody politely to do something (please). As formulaic expressions are an important part of everyday language, some earlier studies of the frequency of formulaic expressions have been conducted (e.g., Van Lancker Sidtis, 2004; Alibabae, 2016; Sharifian, 2011).

Some researchers such as Butler (1990), Cameron (1998), Lakoff (1975), Zimin (1981) have examined how the difference in gender can change the individuals’ use of politeness system. Being feminine or masculine can affect the terms and structure that you use in your everyday speech (Butler, 1990). Age is also another influential factor in selection of polite expressions (Faika, 2016). Different generations have their special ways of showing politeness (Bates, 1976) which are affected by globalization (Nurullah, 2008). This study focuses on examining the frequency of taarof formulaic expressions to examine whether Iranians’ attitudes to taarof are related to their actual use of formulaic expressions and to see whether the use of formulaic expressions differs by the generation and gender of the speakers.

## **1.8. The significance of the study**

There are a number of studies dealing with taarof from different aspects (Dahmardeh, Parsazadeh, & Rezaie, 2016; Haghigat, 2016; Mahdavi, 2013; Moosavi, 1986; Nanbakhsh, 2009; Taleghani-Nikazm, 1999) and few studies have looked at the role of Persian politeness from the pragmatic and sociolinguistic viewpoints (Beeman1976, 1986; Assadi 1980; Jahangiri 1980; Koutelaki 1997). So far, taarof has attracted more attention from journalists, tourists, sociologists and psychologists than by linguists (Shamloo, 1991; Asdjodi, 2001). No earlier studies have compared the use of taarof across generations and genders.

The purpose of this study is to explore the use of taarof across generations in dialogical communication of Iranians in Iran. I am also interested in investigating whether Iranian women in Iran use taarof forms more often than men. Practical implications of the study include its potential use in English language classrooms in Iran and for Farsi language studies in North America.

## **1.9. Research questions**

This study aims at seeking answers to the following research question:

1. What are the effects of age on attitudes to taarof?
2. What are the effects of gender on attitudes to taarof?
3. What are the differences in quantity and quality of taarof used by people of different ages?
4. What are the differences in quantity and quality of taarof expressions used by people of either gender?

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. Materials and Methods

#### 2.1. Instrument

Two methods are employed in the study: questionnaire and prompted speech production (dialogues). In order to obtain the quantifiable data on attitudes of Iranians toward taarof and the factors that affect this attitude, a questionnaire was utilized as a data collection instrument. This technique of using a questionnaire for data collection is quick, easy to use, cost-effective and non-threatening (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). The questionnaire used in this study was based on Haghghat (2016) which focuses on taarof attitudes among Canadian Iranians and it includes emotive responses such as very strong love/hate attitudes to taarof or the concept of “taarof adding excitement to communication”. Since earlier studies (Haghghat, 2016) showed that immigrants in Canada mostly do not want to pass it over to their children, for comparative purposes a question about whether taarof should be taught to children of immigrants from Iran was included.

This questionnaire has already been tried out on a somewhat similar population (Iranian immigrants), therefore it opens possibilities to compare the results in future studies. The first section of the questionnaire is the demographics and the second section consists of 26 statements, to which participants responded on a five-point Likert-type scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree.

The second method of data collection was audio recording the dialogs of the participants which were based on two given scenarios: shopping and giving compliments. The reasons for selecting these two situations were first, the strong probability of using taarof expressions by the speakers when shopping or giving and receiving compliments and second, the familiarity of all Iranians with these situations as they happen every day. For the first skit, the participants should

sell or buy (dependant on being sales assistant or customer) a watch and have the usual shopping behavior and for the second skit one person should try to give compliment on the other person's achievement in gardening and the first person should answer to these compliments.

## **2.2. Participants**

Sixty Iranians living in Iran participated in this study voluntarily ( $N=60$ ). The participants were recruited randomly from the people walking in the parks, shopping malls, etc. and were willing to participate. These participants, including 30 males and 30 females, were selected by considering two different age ranges: 20 to 29 and 40 to 59 years of age and speaking Persian as their first language. There was an even split between the age range of the males and females, i.e., 15 females and 15 males between 20 to 29 years old and the same number for participants between 40 to 59 years of age. 30s is a transition period from being young to being old; as a result, there are few clear differences from either the young people or the old ones, as a result the age range of 30-39 was not used. The participants were chosen from two different urban areas in Iran: Mashhad in Khorasan Razavi province (North East) and Kerman in Kerman province (South East). The reasons for selecting these areas were that firstly the researcher was living in Mashhad and she also had some relatives in Kerman who could help and secondly Mashhad is closer to the area that Kurdish is speaking while Kerman is affected mostly by Balochi due to its proximity to Sistan Balochestan province (Sims-Williams, 1996).

In the females' group of the participants there were 20 employed women, 8 students, 1 retired and 1 housewife. In the males' group there were 17 employed people, 9 students, and 4 retired. Among the younger groups of participants 12 out of 30 were employed and the rests were students. In the older groups of the participants, there were 13 employed and 17 retired people.

Figure 1 presents the distribution of the participants according to their ages. The participants were required to answer the questionnaire which asked about their attitudes to taarof. Answering the questionnaire required participants to understand and have enough knowledge about taarof. Therefore, the rationale for choosing people older than 20 was the fact that they were relatively more familiar with social and cultural factors and could describe and report their feelings more accurately than teenagers.

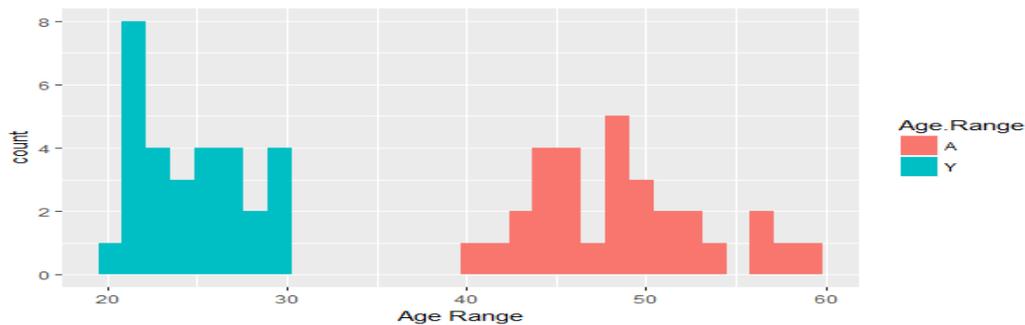


Figure 1. The distribution of the participants by age

### 2.3. Data collection procedure

The data collection of the present study was carried out in Iran in the summer of 2017. Firstly, a survey is aimed at eliciting participants' opinions about their use of taarof within different situations. The survey is conducted with the help of a questionnaire. The researcher spent about five minutes at the beginning to explain the purpose of this study. It was also mentioned to them that the results are just for conducting this special research and there was no right or wrong answers to any of the items. Therefore, they needed to select the choice that describes them best.

Secondly, the participants will be requested to produce prompted situational dialogues (skits). There are two suggested situations, which from the previous experience of researchers with taarof are likely to elicit taarof forms: shopping as well as receiving compliments. The

participants were paired according to their ages which means younger participants were paired with each other and older participants had conversations with older ones. The dialogues were recorded; transcripts were produced for further discourse analysis of taarof use.

It is worth noting that the subjects were assured about the confidentiality of the data they were providing for contributing to this study. The written consents from the participants were also obtained. The participants were compensated for their time by receiving gift cards.

#### **2.4. Data analysis**

After collecting the necessary raw data from the questionnaire, statistical computing was applied using R package. All the Likert type statements of the questionnaire and the general attitude to taarof grades were analyzed with ANOVA tests to seek any significance in gender and age range of the participants in relation to each of the statements.

The structural analysis of the data includes manually processing the transcripts of taarof use and extracting formulaic expressions typically associated with taarof (such as */Gabeli nadore/, it does not cost anything*), comparing the frequencies of taarof expressions across the two generations and genders, and investigating the use of pronouns in taarof-related sentences. In addition, a “taarof dictionary” was created to be appended.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. Results

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. Section 3.1 reports the results obtained from the surveys of the participants' attitudes to taarof and its use. Section 3.2 presents the results of the structural analysis of the dialogues including comparisons of the frequency of taarof use in general and the use of taarof formulaic expressions across the two generations and genders.

#### 3.1. Statistical Results

This section reports the results of participants' responses to 35 questions and statements in the questionnaire about willingness to use taarof, frequency and difficulties of taarof use, and attitudes to taarof.

##### 3.1.1. Participants' Willingness to Use Taarof

###### *Participants' knowledge about the use of taarof*

Data analysis in table 1 shows that in response to whether the participants know when to use and when not to use taarof, 55% of them (33 participants) were "somewhat" aware and 30% of them (18 participants) were "well" aware of the situations when they should or should not use taarof. The Majority of males (43.3% = 13 participants), 66.6% of females (20 participants), 43.3% of younger generation group (13 participants), and 66.6% of older one (20 participants) reported that they had "some" knowledge when to use and when not to use taarof.

Participants' willingness to learn taarof

According to table 1, most of the participants (40% = 24 participants) reported that they were not willing to learn taarof “at all”. However, 23.3% of them (14 participants) were “somewhat” willing to learn and 23.3% (14 participants) were “very” willing to do so. There is no difference between the two gender groups in their answers to this question. Table 1 also shows that 40% of males (24 participants) and 40% of females (24 participants) did not want to learn taarof “at all”. On the other hand, 23.3% of males (7 participants) and 23.3% of females (7 participants) were “very” eager to learn about taarof use. The responses to this question were similar for younger and older participants. The majority of them (36.6% = 11 younger and 43.3% = 13 older participants) answered “not at all” to this question while 23.3% of the participants in younger group (6 participants) were “somewhat” willing to learn taarof and 26.6% of older ones (8 participants) were “very” eager to learn it. There was no significant difference.

Table 1. Participants' responses to statements about willingness to use taarof

Questions		Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Much	t-value	p-value
<b>Do you know when to use and when not to use taarof?</b>	T	3.3% (2)	11.6% (7)	55% (33)	30% (18)		
	M	6.6% (2)	16.6% (5)	43.3% (13)	33.3%(10)	0.18	0.85
	F	0	6.6% (2)	66.6% (20)	26.6% (8)		
	Y	6.6% (2)	16.6% (5)	43.3% (13)	33.3%(10)	-0.88	0.37
	O	0	6.6% (2)	66.6% (20)	26.6% (8)		
<b>If you don't know when to use and when not to use taarof, would you like to learn it?</b>	T	40% (24)	13.3% (8)	23.3% (14)	23.3% (14)		
	M	40% (12)	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	26.6% (7)	0.02	0.98
	F	40% (12)	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	26.6% (7)		
	Y	36.6% (11)	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	26.6% (8)	0.64	0.52
	O	43.3% (13)	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	23.3% (6)		

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

### 3.1.2. Frequency of Taarof Use

According to table 2, 46.6% of the participants (28 participants) “often” used taarof and there was no one who “never” used it. Women used taarof less frequently, as half of males (15 participants) reported that they “often” used it while 66.6% of females (20 participants) claimed that they “sometimes” used it. The difference across the gender groups’ responses to this statement was significant at  $t=1.79$  and  $p=0.07$ . There was not any significant difference in the frequency of taarof use between younger people (53.3% = 16 participants) and older ones (36.6% = 11 participants), as the majority of both groups “sometimes” used it.

Table 2. Participants’ responses to statements about frequency of taarof use

Questions		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	All the time	Does not apply	t-value	p-value
<b>How often did you use taarof in your daily interactions in Iran?</b>	T	0	8.3% (5)	35% (21)	46.6% (28)	10% (6)			
	M	0	10% (3)	23.3% (7)	50% (15)	16.6% (5)		1.79	0.07**
	F	0	10% (3)	66.6% (20)	6.6% (2)	16.6% (5)			
	Y	0	13.3% (4)	53.3% (16)	30% (9)	3.3% (1)		2.88	0.003**
	O	0	6.6% (2)	36.6% (11)	26.6% (8)	30% (9)			

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

### 3.1.3. Difficulties of Tarrof Use

#### Participants' difficulties in communication with Iranians in Iran because of not using taarof

Looking at table 3, the analysis of participants' responses indicates that 26.6% of participants (16 participants) "sometimes" had difficulties in communication with Iranians in Iran because of not using taarof. In addition, 26.6% of participants (16 participants) reported that they "never" had such difficulties. Table 3 also shows that 33.3% (10 participants) of those who "sometimes" had difficulties were females and 30% (9 participants) of those who "never" had these difficulties were males. Moreover, 40% of older participants (12 participants) "never" had such difficulties and 30% of younger people (9 participants) "often" had problems however there was one participant in each group who "all the time" had difficulties because of not using taarof.

#### Participants' difficulties in communication with Iranians in Iran because of using taarof

According to the participants' responses in table 3, 36.6% of participants (22 participants) "sometimes" had problems with Iranians in Iran because of using taarof and 25% of them (15 participants) "often" had problems. There were 40% of females (12 participants) and 33.3% of males (10 participants) who "sometimes" had these difficulties. It can also be seen that 33.3% of younger participants (10 participants) reported that they "sometimes" had problems with Iranian when using taarof and 40% of older participants (12 participants) "often" had these difficulties. There was no significant difference.

Participants' difficulties in communication with foreigners in Iran because of Iranians' use of taarof

Although 35% of the participants (21 participants) “never” had difficulties in talking to foreigners because of using taarof, almost all of them (20 participants) did not have the opportunity to talk to a foreigner. As table 3 indicates, 43.3% of males (13 participants) reported that they “never” had such problems. Moreover, 26.6% of females (8 participants) did not have difficulties in using taarof with foreigners. Finally, 36.6% of younger people (11 participants) and 33.3% of older generation (10 participants) “never” experienced difficulties in communication with foreigners in using taarof.

Participants' difficulties in communication with foreigners abroad because of Iranians' use of taarof

Overall, 60% of the participants (36 participants) could not state the frequency of their communication problems because they neither went abroad nor talked to a foreigner and 26.6% of them (16 participants) “never” had such problems. Nobody reported to have problems with foreigners “all the time” because of taarof use. Table 3 shows that 33.3% of females (10 participants) and 20% of males (6 participants) reported that they never had problems with foreigners abroad because of using taarof. Moreover, between the two age groups, older generation participants communicated with foreigners abroad more and 36.6% of them (11 participants) “never” had this issue while only 16.6% of younger generation participants (5 participants) “never” had difficulties in talking with foreigners abroad because of using taarof. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=2.12$  and  $p=0.03$ .

Participants' difficulties in communication with immigrant Iranians abroad because of the participants' use of taarof

Among the 22 participants who experienced talking to immigrant Iranians, 23.3 % of them (14 participants) “never” had difficulties in communication with those immigrants because of using taarof. Table 3 shows that 30% of females (9 participants) and 16.6% of males (5 participants) “never” had issues with Iranian immigrants because of using taarof. It also shows that 30% of older participants (9 participants) and 16.6% of younger ones (5 participants) “never” had problems for talking to immigrant Iranians because of using taarof.

The pressure of using taarof in the interactions with other Iranians in Iran

Most participants felt the pressure of using taarof in their interactions. Table 3 shows that 43.3% of females (13 participants) and 33.3% of males (10 participants) “sometimes” felt this pressure. It can also be seen in table 3 that 30% (9 participants) of younger participants as well as 46.6% of older ones (14 participants) “sometimes” felt this pressure.

Table 3. Participants' responses to statements about difficulties of taarof use

Questions		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	All the time	Does not apply	t-value	p-value
Difficulties in communication with Iranians in Iran because of you not using taarof?	T	26.6% (16)	20% (12)	26.6% (16)	21.6% (13)	3.3% (2)			
	M	30% (9)	23.3% (7)	20% (6)	16.6% (5)	6.6% (2)			
	F	23.3% (7)	16.6% (5)	33.3% (10)	26.6% (8)	0		-1.11	0.26

	Y	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	26.6% (8)	30% (9)	3.3% (1)		1.62	0.10
	O	40% (12)	16.6% (5)	26.6% (8)	13.3% (4)	3.3% (1)			
<b>Difficulties in communication with Iranians in Iran because you do use taarof?</b>	T	15% (9)	16.6% (10)	36.6% (22)	25% (15)	6.6% (4)			
	M	20% (6)	23.3% (7)	33.3% (10)	13.3% (4)	10% (3)		0.32	0.74
	F	10% (3)	10% (3)	40% (12)	36.6% (11)	3.3% (1)			
	Y	20% (6)	23.3% (7)	33.3% (10)	16.6% (5)	6.6% (2)		0.25	0.79
	O	10% (3)	10% (3)	40% (12)	33.3% (10)	6.6% (2)			
<b>Difficulties in communication with foreigners in Iran because of your use of taarof?</b>	T	35% (21)	11.6% (7)	8.3% (5)	10% (6)	1.6% (1)	33.3% (20)		
	M	43.3% (13)	10% (3)	10% (3)	0	0	36.6% (11)	0.43	0.66
	F	26.6% (8)	13.3% (4)	6.6% (2)	20% (6)	3.3% (1)	30% (9)		
	Y	36.6% (11)	10% (3)	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	43.3% (13)	0.76	0.44
	O	33.3% (10)	13.3% (4)	13.3% (4)	8.3% (5)	0	23.3% (7)		
<b>Difficulties in communication with foreigners abroad because of your use of taarof?</b>	T	26.6% (16)	10% (6)	1.6% (1)	1.6% (1)	0	60% (36)		
	M	20% (6)	13.3% (4)	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	0	60% (18)	0.52	0.60
	F	33.3% (10)	6.6% (2)	0	0	0	60% (18)		
	Y	16.6% (5)	3.3% (1)	0	3.3% (1)	0	76.6% (23)	2.12	0.03 *
	O	36.6%	16.6%	3.3% (1)	0	0	43.3%		

		(11)	(5)				(13)		
<b>Difficulties in communication with immigrant Iranians abroad because of your use of taarof?</b>		23.3% (14)	11.6% (7)	1.6% (1)	0	0	63.3% (38)		
	M	16.6% (5)	13.3% (4)	3.3% (1)	0	0	66.6% (20)	0.28	0.77
	F	30% (9)	10% (3)	0	0	0	60% (18)		
	Y	16.6% (5)	6.6% (2)	0	0	0	76.6% (23)	1.31	0.18
	O	30% (9)	16.6% (5)	3.3% (1)	0	0	50% (15)		
<b>Feel the pressure of using taarof in your interactions with other Iranians in Iran?</b>	T	11.6% (7)	15% (9)	38.3% (23)	25% (15)	10% (6)			
	M	16.6% (5)	20% (6)	33.3% (10)	16.6% (5)	13.3% (4)		-1.48	0.13
	F	6.6% (2)	10% (3)	43.3% (13)	33.3% (10)	6.6% (2)			
	Y	10% (3)	20% (6)	30% (9)	23.3% (7)	16.6% (5)		0.31	0.75
	O	13.3% (4)	10% (3)	46.6% (14)	26.6% (8)	3.3% (1)			

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

### 3.1.4. Attitudes to Taarof

The third part of the questionnaire examines the attitudes of Iranians toward taarof on a Likert- type scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Ref. appendix). The questions are organized in separate sections by their subject group according to Haghghat’s (2016) classification: a. values of taarof, b. emotive attitudes, c. preserving taarof, d. factors impacting taarof and e. shortcomings of taarof.

### *a. Values of Taarof*

#### *Participants' responses to a statement "taarof is an efficient tool for communication".*

A large number of participants (40% = 24 participants) "agreed" that taarof is an efficient tool for communication. Table 4 shows that 40% (12 participants) of females and 40% (12 participants) of males also "agreed" with this sentence. Considering the age of the participants, 53.3% of the older participants (16 participants) have the tendency of "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" and 30% of younger participants (9 participants) "neither agreed nor disagreed". The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $p=0.003$  and  $t=2.88$ .

#### *Participants' responses to a statement "taarof is a characteristics of good manner."*

Equal numbers of respondents "agreed" (28.3% = 17 participants) or "disagreed" (28.3% = 17 participants) that taarof is a characteristics of good manner. Table 4 shows that 33.3% of females (10 participants) "disagreed" with this viewpoint despite 33.3% of males (10 participants) who "agreed" with it. In the younger group of participants no one "strongly agreed" while anyone in the older group "strongly disagreed" with this statement. Moreover, 46.6% of older participants (14 participants) "agreed" with this statement while 30% of younger ones (9 participants) "disagreed". The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=3.80$  and  $p=0.0001$ .

#### *Participants' responses to a statement "taarof makes communication too difficult."*

Overall, majority of the participants "either agreed or disagreed" (30% = 18 participants) or "agreed" (30% = 18 participants) that taarof makes communication too difficult. Moreover, 20% of all the participants (12 participants) "strongly agreed" with it. About 36.6% of females

(11 participants) “agreed” that taarof makes communication difficult while 26.6% of males (8 participants) “disagreed” with it and The difference across the gender groups’ responses to this statement was significant at  $t=-2.84$  and  $p=0.004$ . Younger participants showed a high tendency in “agreeing” (26.6% = 8 participants) or “strongly agreeing” (36.6% = 11 participants) with the fact that taarof causes difficulties. On the other hand, 26.6% of older generation group (8 participants) “disagreed” with this statement and the cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=3.42$  and  $p=0.0006$ .

*Participants’ responses to a statement “taarof makes the communication more exciting.”*

Generally, most of the participants (31.6% = 19 participants) “disagreed” that taarof makes the communication more exciting. Table 4 shows that 26.6% of males (8 participants) and 36.6% of females (11 participants) also “disagreed” with that and the difference between them is non-significant. Approximately half of younger participants (46.6% = 14 participants) “disagreed” that taarof adds to the excitement of communication compared to 30% of older ones (9 participants) who “agreed” with experiencing feeling of excitement while using taarof. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-3.06$  and  $p=0.002$ .

*Participants’ responses to a statement “for a person with Iranian background, it is important to be able to use taarof”*

More than half of the participants (53.3% = 32 participants) “agreed” that for a person with Iranian background, it is important to be able to use taarof. In addition 53.3% of males (16 participants) and 53.3% of females (16 participants) “agreed” with this statement. The majority of younger generation (46.6% = 14 participants) as well as older generation (60% = 18 participants) also “agreed” that it is important that a person with Iranian background can use

taarof. There is no significant difference between males vs. females' answers or younger participants vs. older ones' in response to this statement.

*Participants' answers to "taarof is an important part of Iranian culture"*

Table 4 shows that majority of the participants either 'agreed' (43.3% = 26 participants) or "strongly agreed" (45% = 27 participants) that taarof is an important part of Iranian culture. There were no participants who disagreed with this sentence. Near half of males (46.6%=14 participants) and 43.3% (13 participants) of females "strongly agreed" that taarof is an important part of Iranian culture. There was no significant difference in their answers. More than half of younger generation (53.3% = 16 participants) and older generation (53.3% = 16 participants) respectively "agreed" and "strongly agreed" with this statement.

*Participants' responses to a statement "taarof is a characteristic of good education"*

The participants mostly "disagreed" (38.3% = 23 participants) that taarof is a characteristic of good education. Table 4 shows that 20% of them (12 participants) "strongly disagreed" with this statement and there were only 5% of participants (3 participants) who "strongly agreed" with it. While 50% of females (15 participants) and 26.6% of males (8 participants) "disagreed" that taarof is a characteristic of good education and the difference was not significant. There was only one younger participant (3.3%) who "agreed" while 33.3% of older ones (10 participants) "disagreed" that taarof is a characteristic of good education. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-2.19$  and  $p=0.02$ .

*Participants' responses to a statement "taarof is a characteristic of good upbringing"*

Table 4 shows that the number of the participants who “disagreed” (31.6% = 19 participants) or “strongly disagreed” (18.3% = 11 participants) that taarof is a characteristic of good upbringing is more than the number of those who “agreed” (20% = 12 participants) or “strongly agreed” (3.3% = 2 participants) with that. Only 16.6% of males (5 participants) and 20% of females (6 participants) “strongly disagreed” that taarof is a characteristic of good upbringing and just one person (3.3%) from each group “strongly agreed” with that. Many young people (43.3% = 13 participants) “disagreed” while 30% of older participants (9 participants) “agreed” that taarof is a feature of good upbringing and the cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-2.63$  and  $p=0.007$ .

*Participants’ responses to a statement “taarof is beautiful”*

Table 4 shows that 35% of participants (21 participants) “agreed” that taarof is beautiful while 15% of them (9 participants) “disagreed” with it. There were also 28.3% of participants (17 participants) who “neither agreed nor disagreed”. Most of males (53.3% = 16 participants) “agreed” that taarof is beautiful while only 16.6 % of females (5 participants) “agreed” with it and the difference across the gender groups’ responses to this statement was significant at  $t=3.26$  and  $p=0.001$ . Half of older participants vs. only 20% of younger ones (6 participants) “agreed” that taarof is beautiful. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-3.65$  and  $p=0.0002$ .

*Participants’ responses to a statement “taarof makes people feel better”*

Table 4 shows that 43.3% of participants (26 participants) “agreed” that taarof makes people feel better. There were only 3.3% of participants (2 participants) who “strongly disagreed” with that. The majority of males “(53.3% = 16 participants) agreed” that taarof makes

people feel better. In addition, 16.6% of them (5 participants) “strongly agreed” with this; whereas, just 33.3% of females (10 participants) “agreed” and none of them “strongly agreed” with the good feeling that people have after taarofing and The difference across the gender groups’ responses to this statement was significant at  $t=3.41$  and  $p=0.0006$ . More than half of older participants (56.6% = 17 participants) compared to less than one third of younger participants (30% = 9 participants) “agreed” with it. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-2.41$  and  $p=0.01$ .

All in all, the participants’ attitudes to taarof differed significantly by both gender and age. The majority of the older participants found taarof an efficient tool in communication; they agreed that it makes the communication exciting and a characteristic of good upbringing. Males mostly thought that taarof is a characteristic of good manner and it is beautiful; they also liked using taarof more as compared to females whose attitudes to taarof were less positive. Older participants also showed more positive attitudes toward these aspects of taarof as compared to their younger peers. Females and younger participants considered taarof to be more difficult than their peers did. Finally, it was seen that most participants irrespective of their group agreed that it is important for Iranians to use taarof and they counted it as a significant part of Iranian culture.

Table 4. Participants’ responses to statements about the values of taarof

Questions		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	t-value	p-value
Taarof is an efficient tool for communication.	T	13.3% (8)	15% (9)	23.3% (14)	40% (24)	8.3% (5)	0.97	0.33
	M	6.6% (2)	16.6% (5)	26.6% (8)	40% (12)	10% (3)		
	F	20% (6)	13.3% (4)	20% (6)	40% (12)	6.6% (2)		

	Y	20% (6)	20% (6)	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	3.3% (1)	2.88	0.003 **
	O	6.6% (2)	10% (3)	16.6% (5)	53.3% (16)	13.3% (4)		
<b>Taarof is a characteristic of good manners.</b>	T	11.6% (7)	28.3% (17)	25% (15)	28.3% (17)	6.6% (4)	2.21	0.02 *
	M	6.6% (2)	26.6% (8)	23.3% (7)	33.3% (10)	10% (3)		
	F	16.6% (5)	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	23.3% (7)	3.3% (1)	3.80	0.0001 ***
	Y	23.3% (7)	30% (9)	36.6% (11)	10% (3)	0		
	O	0	26.6% (8)	13.3% (4)	46.6% (14)	13.3% (4)		
<b>Taarof makes communication too difficult.</b>	T	3.3% (2)	16.6% (10)	30% (18)	30% (18)	20% (12)	-2.84	0.004 **
	M	6.6% (2)	26.6% (8)	30% (9)	23.3% (7)	13.3% (4)		
	F	0	6.6% (2)	30% (9)	36.6% (11)	26.6% (8)	3.42	0.0006 ***
	Y	0	6.6% (2)	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	36.6% (11)		
	O	6.6% (2)	26.6% (8)	30% (9)	33.3% (10)	3.3% (1)		
<b>Taarof makes communication more exciting.</b>	T	15% (9)	31.6% (19)	28.3% (17)	18.3% (11)	6.6% (4)	1.86	0.06
	M	6.6% (2)	26.6% (8)	36.6% (11)	26.6% (8)	3.3% (1)		
	F	23.3% (7)	36.6% (11)	20% (6)	10% (3)	10% (3)	-3.06	0.002 **
	Y	20% (6)	46.6% (14)	23.3% (7)	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)		
	O	10% (3)	16.6% (5)	33.3% (10)	30% (9)	10% (3)		
<b>For a person with Iranian background, it is important to be able to use taarof.</b>	T	1.6% (1)	5% (3)	11.6% (7)	53.3% (32)	28.3% (17)		
	M	0	3.3% (1)	20% (6)	53.3% (16)	23.3% (7)		

	F	3.3% (1)	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)	53.3% (16)	33.3% (10)	-1.06	0.28
	Y	0	10% (3)	16.6% (5)	46.6% (14)	26.6% (8)	-1.14	0.25
	O	3.3% (1)	0	6.6% (2)	60% (18)	30% (9)		
<b>TaaroF is an important part of Iranian culture.</b>	T	5% (3)	0	6.6% (4)	43.3% (26)	45% (27)		
	M	0	0	10% (3)	43.3% (13)	46.6% (14)	0.70	0.48
	F	10% (3)	0	3.3% (1)	43.3% (13)	43.3% (13)		
	Y	6.6% (2)	0	3.3% (1)	53.3% (16)	36.6% (11)	-1.27	0.20
	O	3.3% (1)	0	10% (3)	33.3% (10)	53.3% (16)		
<b>TaaroF is a characteristic of good education</b>	T	20% (12)	38.3% (23)	23.3% (14)	13.3% (8)	5% (3)		
	M	20% (6)	26.6% (8)	26.6% (8)	20% (6)	6.6% (2)	1.50	0.13
	F	20% (6)	50% (15)	20% (6)	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)		
	Y	26.6% (8)	43.3% (13)	23.3% (7)	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	-2.19	0.02 *
	O	13.3% (4)	33.3% (10)	23.3% (7)	23.3% (7)	6.6% (2)		
<b>TaaroF is a characteristic of good upbringing</b>	T	18.3% (11)	31.6% (19)	26.6% (16)	20% (12)	3.3% (2)		
	M	16.6% (5)	26.6% (8)	30% (9)	23.3% (7)	3.3% (1)	0.93	0.34
	F	20% (6)	36.6% (11)	23.3% (7)	16.6% (5)	3.3% (1)		
	Y	23.3% (7)	43.3% (13)	23.3% (7)	10% (3)	0	-2.68	0.007 **
	O	13.3% (4)	20% (6)	30% (9)	30% (9)	6.6% (2)		
<b>TaaroF is beautiful</b>	T	15% (9)	15% (9)	28.3% (17)	35% (21)	6.6% (4)		

	M	10% (3)	3.3% (1)	23.3% (7)	53.3% (16)	10% (3)	3.26	0.001 **
	F	20% (6)	26.6% (8)	33.3% (10)	16.6% (5)	3.3% (1)		
	Y	26.6% (8)	20% (6)	33.3% (10)	20% (6)	0	-3.65	0.0002 ***
	O	3.3% (1)	10% (3)	23.3% (7)	50% (15)	13.3% (4)		
<b>Taarof makes people feel better</b>	T	3.3% (2)	15% (9)	30% (18)	43.3% (26)	8.3% (5)		
	M	0	6.6% (2)	23.3% (7)	53.3% (16)	16.6% (5)	3.41	0.0006 ***
	F	6.6% (2)	23.3% (7)	36.6% (11)	33.3% (10)	0		
	Y	6.6% (2)	20% (6)	36.6% (11)	30% (9)	6.6% (2)	-2.41	0.01 *
	O	0	10% (3)	23.3% (7)	56.6% (17)	10% (3)		

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

### ***b. Emotive Attitudes***

#### *Participants' responses to a statement "I enjoy using taarof"*

Table 5 shows that there were more participants who “disagreed” (28.3% = 17 participants) or “strongly disagreed” (21.6% = 13 participants) that they enjoy using taarof than those who “agreed” (23.3% = 14 participants) or “strongly agreed” (3.3% = 2 participants) with it. Looking at table 5, it can also be seen that 40% of females (12 participants) “disagreed” that they enjoy using taarof and 26.6% of them (8 participants) “strongly disagreed”. On the other hand, 26.6% of males (8 participants) “agreed” with it. The difference across the gender groups’ responses to this statement was significant at  $t=1.98$  and  $p=0.04$ . In addition, 40% of younger participants (12 participants) “disagreed” and 36.6% of them (11 participants) “strongly disagreed” with enjoying using taarof while 40% of older participants (12 participants) “agreed” with this and the cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-3.92$  and  $p=-0.00008$ .

Participants' responses to a statement "I hate using taarof."

Table 5 shows that 26.6% of participants (16 participants) "disagreed" and 13.3% of participants (8 participants) "strongly disagreed" that they hate using taarof compared 21.6% (13 participants) who "agreed" and 6.6% (4 participants) who "strongly agreed". Moreover, 33.3% of males (10 participants) "disagreed" that they hate taarof compared to 26.6% of females (8 participants) who "agreed" with this statement and The difference across the gender groups' responses to this statement was significant at  $t=-1.89$  and  $p=0.05$ . Table 5 also shows that 40% of older participants (12 participants) "disagreed" t they hate taarof, but 33.3% younger people (10 participants) "agreed" with that. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=3.91$  and  $p=0.00008$ .

Participants' responses to a statement "I enjoy when people use taarof."

Table 5 shows that 28.3% of participants (17 participants) "disagreed" and 25% of them (15 participants) "strongly disagreed" that they enjoy when people use taarof. There were 30% of males (9 participants) and 26.6% of females (8 participants) who "disagreed" that they enjoy when people use taarof ( $t=-1.89$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). The data in table 5 shows that 33.3% of younger participants (10 participants) "disagreed" and 36.6% of them (11 participants) "strongly disagreed" with the statement that they enjoy when people use taarof. On the other hand, 33.3% of older group (10 participants) "neither agreed nor disagreed". The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-2.97$  and  $p= 0.002$ .

Participants' responses to a statement "I hate when people use taarof."

Overall, the number of the participants who "agreed" (26.6% = 16 participants) that they hate when people use taarof was more than those who "disagreed" (20% = 12 participants).

Table 5 shows that 26.6% of males mostly “disagreed” (8 participants) and 23.3% of them (7 participants) “strongly disagreed” while 30% of females (9 participants) “agreed” that they hate when people use taarof, and the difference across the gender groups’ responses to this statement was significant at  $t=-2.62$  and  $p=0.008$ . Moreover, 46.6% of younger generation group (14 participants) vs. only 6.6% of participants of older generation (2 participants) “agreed” with that. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=4.54$  and  $p<0.0001$ .

In sum, males and older participants enjoyed using taarof while females and younger participants hated using it. Younger participants also disagreed with enjoying taarof when others use it. In addition, females and younger participants hated when others use taarof.

Table 5. Participants’ responses to statements about emotive attitudes

Questions		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	t-value	p-value
<b>I enjoy using taarof.</b>	T	21.6% (13)	28.3% (17)	23.3% (14)	23.3% (14)	3.3% (2)		
	M	16.6% (5)	16.6% (5)	33.3% (10)	26.6% (8)	6.6% (2)	1.98	0.04 *
	F	26.6% (8)	40% (12)	13.3% (4)	20% (6)	0		
	Y	36.6% (11)	40% (12)	13.3% (4)	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)	-3.92	-8.68e-05 ***
	O	6.6% (2)	16.6% (5)	33.3% (10)	40% (12)	3.3% (1)		
<b>I hate using taarof.</b>	T	13.3% (8)	26.6% (16)	31.6% (19)	21.6% (13)	6.6% (4)		
	M	10% (3)	33.3% (10)	33.3% (10)	16.6% (5)	6.6% (2)	-1.89	0.05
	F	16.6% (5)	20% (6)	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	6.6% (2)		

	Y	10% (3)	13.3% (4)	33.3% (10)	33.3% (10)	10% (3)	3.91	8.97e-05 ***
	O	20% (6)	40% (12)	30% (9)	10% (3)	0		
<b>I enjoy when people use taarof.</b>	T	25% (15)	28.3% (17)	30% (18)	11.6% (7)	5% (3)	1.10	0.27
	M	20% (6)	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	13.3% (4)	10% (3)		
	F	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	33.3% (10)	10% (3)	0		
	Y	36.6% (11)	33.3% (10)	26.6% (8)	3.3% (1)	0	-2.97	0.002 **
	O	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	33.3% (10)	20% (6)	10% (3)		
<b>I hate when people use taarof.</b>	T	15% (9)	20% (12)	26.6% (16)	26.6% (16)	11.6% (7)	-2.62	0.008 **
	M	23.3% (7)	26.6% (8)	20% (6)	23.3% (7)	6.6% (2)		
	F	6.6% (2)	13.3% (4)	33.3% (10)	30% (9)	16.6% (5)		
	Y	3.3% (1)	10% (3)	20% (6)	46.6% (14)	20% (6)	4.54	5.61e-06 ***
	O	26.6% (8)	30% (9)	33.3% (10)	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)		

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

### ***c. Preserving Taarof***

*Participants' responses to a statement "it is important to teach taarof to children in families of immigrants from Iran living abroad"*

Table 6 show that 31.6 % of participants (19 participants) "neither agreed nor disagreed" that it is important to teach taarof to children in families of immigrants from Iran living abroad. However, 21.6% of participants (13 participants) "strongly disagreed" while only 6.6% of participants (4 participants) "strongly agreed" with this sentence. According to table 6, 23.3% of males (7 participants) and 23.3% of females (7 participants) "agreed" that it is important to teach taarof to children in families of immigrants from Iran living abroad. There were 23.3% of females (7 participants) who "disagreed" and 23.3% of males (7 participants) who "agreed" with

this. There were 6.6% of older participants (2 participants) and 6.6% of younger ones (2 participants) who “strongly agreed” with the statement that “it is important to teach taarof to children of immigrants from Iran living abroad”.

*Participants’ responses to a statement “taarof needs to be preserved in the families of people of Iranian descent living abroad”*

Generally, the number of the participants who “disagreed” (28.3% = 17 participants) or “strongly disagreed” (20% = 12 participants) that “taarof needs to be preserved in the families of people of Iranian descent living abroad” is higher than the number of those who “agreed” (21.6% = 13 participants) or “strongly agreed” (5% = 3 participants). Table 6 show that 36.6% of females (11 participants) “disagreed” with this statement and 33.3% of males (10 participants) “neither agreed nor disagreed”. In addition, 33.3% of younger participants (10 participants) “disagreed” compared to 33.3% of older participants (10 participants) who “agreed” with that. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-2.23$  and  $p=0.02$ .

*Participants’ responses to a statement “people of Iranian descent living abroad should discard taarof”*

Overall, 23.3% of participants (14 participants) “strongly agreed” that “people of Iranian descent living abroad should discard taarof”; however, 5% of participants (3 participants) “strongly disagreed” with that. The number of males who “agreed” (26.6% = 8 participants) or “strongly agreed” (20% = 6 participants) with this statement is close to the number of females who 26.6% (8 participants) “agreed” and 26.6% (8 participants) “strongly agreed”. Table 6 also shows that 33.3% of younger participants (10 participants) “agreed” and 30% of them (9 participants) “strongly agreed” whereas 23.3% of older participants (7 participants) “agreed” and 13.3% of them (4 participants) “strongly agreed” with this statement; the difference across the age groups was significant at  $t=1.97$  and  $p=0.04$ .

Participants' responses to a statement "Iranians in Iran should discard taarof"

It can be seen in table 6 that 25% of the participants (15 participants) "agreed" while 23.3% of the participants (14 participants) "disagreed" that Iranians in Iran should discard taarof. Moreover, 26.6% of males (8 participants) "strongly disagreed" and 23.3% of them (7 participants) "disagreed" with this sentence while 26.6% of females (8 participants) "agreed" and 16.6% of them (5 participants) "strongly agreed" with that. The difference across the gender groups' responses to this statement was significant at  $t=-2.24$  and  $p=0.02$ . It is shown in table 6 that 36.6% of older participants (11 participants) "disagreed" that Iranians in Iran should discard taarof and 30% of younger ones (9 participants) "agreed" with it. The difference between younger and older generations' responses is significant at  $t=3.28$  and  $p=0.001$ .

Participants' responses to a statement "it is important to teach taarof to Iranian children in Iran"

The majority of the participants (38.3% = 23 participants) "agreed" that it is important to teach taarof to Iranian children in Iran. There was not much difference between the responses of males and females to this statement, 33.3% of males (10 participants) and 43.3% of females (13 participants) "agreed" that it is important to teach taarof to Iranian children in Iran. Table 6 shows that 40% of younger participants (12 participants) "disagreed" that it is important to teach taarof to children but 56.6% of the older participants (17 participants) "agreed" with that. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-2.78$  and  $p=0.005$ .

Participants' responses to a statement "Iranians in Iran should keep using taarof"

Overall, 20% of participants (12 participants) "disagreed" and 23.3% of them (14 participants) "strongly disagreed" with the above statement. Table 6 shows that 20% of males (6 participants) and 23.3% of females (7 participants) "agreed" with this sentence. In older

participants' group, 30% (9 participants) "agreed" with continuing taarof use and 30% of younger participants (9 participants) "disagreed". The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=-2.20$  and  $p=0.02$ .

All in all, more participants from the older group thought that taarof should be preserved in Iranian families living abroad as compared to the younger group. Older participants also agreed more often than their younger peers that Iranians should keep using taarof and teach it to their children. The younger participants think that both Iranians in Iran and Iranians living abroad should discard using taarof. There are more females than males who also believe that Iranians should stop using taarof.

Table 6. Participants' responses to statements about preserving taarof

Questions		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	t-value	p-value
<b>It is important to teach taarof to children in families of immigrants from Iran living abroad.</b>	T	21.6% (13)	16.6% (10)	31.6% (19)	23.3% (14)	6.6% (4)		
	M	20% (6)	10% (3)	36.6% (11)	23.3% (7)	10% (3)	1.24	0.21
	F	23.3% (7)	23.3% (7)	26.6% (8)	23.3% (7)	3.3% (1)		
	Y	26.6% (8)	20% (6)	40% (12)	6.6% (2)	6.6% (2)	-1.78	0.07
	O	16.6% (5)	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	40% (12)	6.6% (2)		
<b>Taarof needs to be preserved in the families of people of Iranian descent living abroad.</b>	T	20% (12)	28.3% (17)	25% (15)	21.6% (13)	5% (3)		
	M	16.6% (5)	20% (6)	33.3% (10)	23.3% (7)	6.6% (2)	1.37	0.16
	F	23.3% (7)	36.6% (11)	16.6% (5)	20% (6)	3.3% (1)		

	Y	26.6% (8)	33.3% (10)	26.6% (8)	10% (3)	3.3% (1)	-2.23	0.02 *
	O	13.3% (4)	23.3% (7)	23.3% (7)	33.3% (10)	6.6% (2)		
<b>People of Iranian descent living abroad should discard taarof.</b>	T	5% (3)	26.6% (16)	18.3% (11)	26.6% (16)	23.3% (14)		
	M	10% (3)	23.3% (7)	20% (6)	26.6% (8)	20% (6)	-0.85	0.39
	F	0	30% (9)	16.6% (5)	26.6% (8)	26.6% (8)		
	Y	3.3% (1)	20% (6)	13.3% (4)	30% (9)	33.3% (10)	1.97	0.04 *
	O	6.6% (2)	33.3% (10)	23.3% (7)	23.3% (7)	13.3% (4)		
<b>Iranians in Iran should discard taarof.</b>	T	15% (9)	23.3% (14)	25% (15)	25% (15)	11.6% (7)		
	M	26.6% (8)	23.3% (7)	20% (6)	23.3% (7)	6.6% (2)	-2.24	0.02 *
	F	3.3% (1)	23.3% (7)	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	16.6% (5)		
	Y	10% (3)	10% (3)	26.6% (8)	30% (9)	23.3% (7)	3.28	0.001* *
	O	20% (6)	36.6% (11)	23.3% (7)	20% (6)	0		
<b>It is important to teach taarof to Iranian children in Iran.</b>	T	11.6% (7)	21.6% (13)	31.6% (19)	38.3% (23)	6.6% (4)		
	M	10% (3)	16.6% (5)	33.3% (10)	33.3% (10)	6.6% (2)	-0.68	0.49
	F	13.3% (4)	26.6% (8)	30% (9)	43.3% (13)	6.6% (2)		
	Y	16.6% (5)	40% (12)	36.6% (11)	20% (6)	6.6% (2)	-2.78	0.005 **
	O	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)	26.6% (8)	56.6% (17)	6.6% (2)		
<b>Iranians in Iran should keep using</b>	T	20% (12)	23.3% (14)	26.6% (16)	21.6% (13)	8.33% (5)		

<b>Taarof</b>	M	13.3% (4)	20% (6)	33.3% (10)	20% (6)	13.3% (4)	1.61	0.10
	F	26.6% (8)	26.6% (8)	20% (6)	23.3% (7)	3.3% (1)		
	Y	30% (9)	30% (9)	16.6% (5)	13.3% (4)	10% (3)	-2.20	0.02 *
	O	10% (3)	16.6% (5)	36.6% (11)	30% (9)	6.6% (2)		

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

#### ***d. Participants responses to social aspects of taarof***

##### *Participants' responses to a statement that "taarof use is influenced by social distance"*

Table 7 summarizes the participants' responses to the above statement. As can be seen from table 7, 65% of participants (39 participants) "agreed" that taarof is influenced by social distance. Moreover, 63.3% of males (19 participants) and 66.6% of females (20 participants) "agreed" with this statement. In addition, 70% of younger (21 participants) and 60% of older generation (18 participants) also agreed that taarof is influenced with distance. The differences across the groups are not significant.

##### *Participants' responses to a statement "taarof use is influenced by age difference"*

Table 7 shows that 60% of participants (36 participants) "agreed" that taarof use is influenced by age difference. It can be seen in table 7 that 60% of males (18 participants) and 60% of females (18 participants) "agreed" with it. In addition, 56.6% of younger participants (17 participants) and 63.3% of older participants (19 participants) "agreed" with this statement. Therefore, there was no significant difference between the responses of these groups.

Participants' responses to a statement "taarof use is influenced by gender"

According to table 7, 66.6% of the participants (40 participants) "agreed" that taarof use is influenced by gender. The majority of the males (60% = 18 participants), females (73.3% = 22 participants), young people (73.3% = 22 participants) and adults (60% = 18 participants) "agreed" with this statement. There was no significant difference across the groups.

Participants' responses to a statement "taarof use is influenced by nearness in relationship and proximity"

It can be seen in table7 that 58.3% of the participants (35 participants) "agreed" that taarof use is influenced by nearness in relationship and proximity. More than half of males (56.6% = 17 participants), females (60% = 18 participants), younger people (53.3% = 16 participants) and older participants (63.3% = 19 participants) "agreed" with this statement. As a result there was no significant difference across the groups.

All in all, the differences in responses to statements about the social aspects of taarof for males vs. females and younger people vs. older ones were non-significant and the majority of the participants "agreed" that taarof is affected by social distance, age difference, gender and nearness in relationship.

Table 7. Participants' responses to statements about the social aspects of taarof

Questions		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	t-value	p-value
Taarof use is influenced by social distance.	T	1.6% (1)	3.3% (2)	10% (6)	65% (39)	20% (12)		
	M	0	3.3% (1)	13.3% (4)	63.3% (19)	20% (6)	-0.15	0.87
	F	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	6.6% (2)	66.6% (20)	20% (6)		

	Y	0	3.3% (1)	10% (3)	70% (21)	16.6% (5)	-0.20	0.834
	O	3.3% (1)	3.3% (1)	10% (3)	60% (18)	23.3% (7)		
<b>Taarof use is influenced by age difference.</b>	T	0	6.6% (4)	8.3% (5)	60% (36)	20% (12)		
	M	0	6.6% (2)	13.3% (4)	60% (18)	20% (6)	-1.16	0.24
	F	0	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)	60% (18)	20% (6)		
	Y	0	6.6% (2)	13.3% (4)	56.6% (17)	23.3% (7)	-0.72	0.47
	O	0	6.6% (2)	3.3% (1)	63.3% (19)	8		
<b>Taarof use is influenced by gender.</b>	T	1.6% (1)	10% (6)	6.6% (4)	66.6% (40)	15% (9)		
	M	0	13.3% (4)	13.3% (4)	60% (18)	13.3% (4)	-1.22	0.22
	F	3.3% (1)	6.6% (2)	0	73.3% (22)	16.6% (5)		
	Y	3.3% (1)	6.6% (2)	6.6% (2)	73.3% (22)	10% (3)	-0.49	0.62
	O	0	13.3% (4)	6.6% (2)	60% (18)	20% (6)		
<b>Taarof use is influenced by nearness in relationship/proximity</b>	T	1.6% (1)	5% (3)	3.3% (2)	58.3% (35)	31.6% (19)		
	M	3.3% (1)	10% (3)	3.3% (1)	56.6% (17)	26.6% (8)	-1.39	0.16
	F	0	0	3.3% (1)	60% (18)	36.6% (11)		
	Y	0	10% (3)	0	53.3% (16)	36.6% (11)	0.62	0.53
	O	3.3% (1)	0	6.6% (2)	63.3% (19)	26.6% (8)		

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

*e. Shortcomings of Taarof*

*Participants' responses to a statement "taarof is deceitfull"*

Table 8 shows that 35% of participants (21 participants) "agreed" that taarof are deceitful. One third of males (33.3% = 10 participants) and almost one third of females (36.6% = 11 participants) also "agreed" with it. In addition, 40% of younger participants (12 participants) "agreed" while 33.3% of older participants (10 participants) "neither agreed nor disagreed" with this sentence. The difference in the responses of the two generation groups was significant at  $t=2.78$  and  $p=0.005$ .

*Participants' responses to a statement "taarof is too hard to use, and is not worth the trouble"*

As table 8 shows 31.6% of the participants (19 participants) "disagreed" that taarof is too hard to use and is not worth the trouble. Moreover, 33.3% of males (10 participants) and 30% of females (9 participants) "disagreed" with it. It can be seen in table 8 that 40% of younger people (12 participants) "agreed" while 43.3% of older ones (13 participants) "disagreed" that taarof is too hard to use and it is not worth the trouble. The cross-generation groups difference was significant at  $t=2.01$  and  $p=0.04$ .

To summarize, younger participants had more negative attitudes toward taarof, they considered it dishonest and difficult unlike older participants who thought "it was not that hard" or if it was, "it was worth the trouble".

Table 8. Participants' responses to statements about shortcomings of taarof

Questions		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	t-value	p-value
<b>Taarof is deceitful</b>	T	3.3% (2)	16.6% (10)	28.3% (17)	35% (21)	16.6% (10)		
	M	6.6% (2)	16.6% (5)	30% (9)	33.3% (10)	13.3% (4)	-1.10	0.27
	F	0	16.6% (5)	26.6% (8)	36.6% (11)	20% (6)		
	Y	0	10% (3)	23.3% (7)	40% (12)	26.6% (8)	2.78	0.005 **
	O	6.6% (2)	23.3% (7)	33.3% (10)	30% (9)	6.6% (2)		
<b>Taarof is too hard to use, and is not worth the trouble</b>	T	13.3% (8)	31.6% (19)	23.3% (14)	25% (15)	6.6% (4)		
	M	20% (6)	33.3% (10)	20% (6)	23.3% (7)	3.3% (1)	-1.66	0.09
	F	6.6% (2)	30% (9)	26.6% (8)	26.6% (8)	10% (3)		
	Y	13.3% (4)	20% (6)	20% (6)	40% (12)	6.6% (2)	2.01	0.04 *
	O	13.3% (4)	43.3% (13)	26.6% (8)	10% (3)	6.6% (2)		

T = Total number of the participants

M= Male

F=Female

Y=Younger generation

O=Older generation

### 3.2. The Use of Taarof Expressions

This section reports the frequency of taarof expressions used by the participants. There were two scenarios provided to the participants: *shopping* and *giving compliments*. T-tests were employed to establish whether differences in the frequency of taarof expressions use by the two genders (males and females participants) and generation groups (younger and older participants) were significant.

#### 3.2.1. Shopping Scenario

The results of the participants' use of all taarof expressions while communicating on the subject of the *shopping* are represented below in Table 9. The numbers in the table indicate the

total frequencies of the taarof expressions (including their multiple uses by the same participant) split by the four participant groups: men, women, younger and older generations.

Table 9 shows that there were 347 taarof expressions used in the *shopping* scenario. Men used 199 of them (57.3%) and women --148 (42.6%); the difference in frequency of taarof expressions across the genders was not significant. Younger participants used 71 taarof expressions on the whole (20.4%) and older participants --276 (79.5%). The difference across the generations in taarof expressions frequency was significant ( $df = 32.3$ ;  $t=-4.51$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

Table 9. The use of taarof expressions by participants in the *shopping* scenario

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	347				
<b>Males</b>	199 (57.3%)	6.63	57.64	0.95	0.34
<b>Females</b>	148 (42.6%)	4.90			
<b>Younger</b>	71(20.4%)	2.30	32.34	-4.51	7.982e-05
<b>Older</b>	276 (79.5%)	9.61			

Next, the results of the participants' use of individual taarof expressions will be presented. These specific taarof expressions are selected due to their figurative meanings. Some of them which are so popular such as *ghabel nadare* [*it's mere nothing, have it.*] are described as being unique taarof expressions and some of these sentences are considered taarof due to the fact that they are extreme sayings and they are used quite frequently in the Persian language. If one needs to translate them to another language, difficulties will arise as there are no exact English equivalents for them. Their frequency use is reported if they are mentioned at least twice either by the same participants or by two different speakers.

Table 10 reports the results of the participants' use of the expression "*rah miyaym ba ham [we'll agree on a price]*". This table shows that this expression was used 30 times (8.6% of all expressions in the *shopping* scenario). Men used this expression 17 times (56.6%) and women -- 13 times (43.3%); this difference was not significant across different gender groups. Younger participants used it 14 times (46.6%) and older participants -- 16 times (53.3%). There was no significant difference in the use of this expression across generations.

Table 10. The participants' use of an expression: *rah miyaym ba ham [we'll agree on a price]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	30 (8.6%)				
<b>Males</b>	17 (56.6%)	0.63	41.5	0.58	0.5
<b>Females</b>	13 (43.3%)	0.43			
<b>Younger</b>	14 (46.6%)	0.40	40.2	-0.38	0.7
<b>Older</b>	16 (53.3%)	0.53			

Table 11 shows the results of the participants' use of the expression "*ghabel nadare [it's mere nothing, have it]*". This expression was used 62 times (17.8% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). Men used it 41 times (66.1%) and women -- 21 times (33.8%); this difference was not significant. Younger participants used it 8 times (12.9%) compared to the older participants who used it 54 times (87%). The cross-generations difference in using "*ghabel nadare [it's mere nothing, have it]*" was significant (df = 30.5; t=-2.63, p=0.01).

Table 11. The participants' use of an expression: *ghabel nadare [it's mere nothing, have it.]*

	Frequency	Mean	Df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	62 (17.8%)				
<b>Males</b>	41 (66.1%)	1.3	44.8	1.09	0.2
<b>Females</b>	21 (33.8%)	0.7			
<b>Younger</b>	8 (12.9%)	0.26	30.5	-2.63	0.01
<b>Older</b>	54 (87.0%)	1.8			

Table 12 presents the result of participants' use of the expression "*dastetoon dard nakone [thank you]*". It was used 11 times (3.1% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). It can be seen that males used this expression five times (45.4%) and females -- six times (54.5%); there was no significant difference in the use of this expression in the two different gender groups. This expression occurred just once (9.09%) in the speech of younger participants and 10 times (90.9%) in the speech of the older ones. There was no significant difference in the use of this expression across generations.

Table 12. The participants' use of an expression: *dastetoon dard nakone [thank you]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	11 (3.17%)				
<b>Male</b>	5 (45.4%)	0.16	56.18	-0.15	0.8
<b>Female</b>	6 (54.5%)	0.20			
<b>Young</b>	1 (9.09%)	0.33	30.44	-1.40	0.17
<b>Old</b>	10 (90.9%)	0.33			

Table 13 report the results which are related to the taarof expression “*khaste nabashid [good job]*”. It can be noticed that this sentence was used 17 times (4.8% of all expressions used in the *shopping* scenario). It was used 7 times (41.1%) by men and 10 times (58.8%) by women; this difference was not significant. It was also employed eight times (47%) by younger participants and nine times (52.9%) by older participants; this difference was not significant.

Table 13. The participants’ use of an expression: *khaste nabashid [good job]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	17 (4.89%)				
<b>Males</b>	7 (41.1%)	0.23	57.33	-0.85	0.3
<b>Females</b>	10 (58.8%)	0.33			
<b>Younger</b>	8 (47.05%)	0.46	57.92	-0.28	0.7
<b>Older</b>	9 (52.9%)	0.30			

The results of using the expression “*dar khedmat hastam [I’m at your disposal]*” can be seen in Table 14. This expression was used 35 times (10% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). Men used this expression 19 times (54.2%) and women – 16 times (45.7%); there was no significant difference in the use of this expression across the two gender groups. In younger group of participants, this expression was used 14 times (40%) compared to the older participants who used it 21 times (60%); this difference was not significant for the given sample.

Table 14. The participants' use of an expression: *dar khedmat hastam [I'm at your disposal]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	35 (10.08%)				
<b>Males</b>	19 (54.2%)	0.63	52.26	0.24	0.8
<b>Females</b>	16 (45.7%)	0.53			
<b>Younger</b>	14 (40%)	0.46	51.69	-0.58	0.5
<b>Older</b>	21 (60%)	0.70			

Table 15 shows the data on the use of the taarof expression “*khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]*”. This expression was used 88 times (25.3% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). The number of the times that this expression was used by men was 40 (45.4%) and by women – 48 (54.5%); this difference was not significant for the given sample. Younger participants used this expression 13 times (14.7%) while older ones -- 75 times (85.2%). The cross-generational difference in the use of “*khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]*” was significant ( $df = 32.5$ ;  $t = -3.50$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

Table 15. The participants' use of an expression: *khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	88 (25.3%)				
<b>Males</b>	40 (45.4%)	1.33	52.65	-0.41	0.6
<b>Females</b>	48 (54.5%)	1.60			
<b>Younger</b>	13 (14.7%)	0.43	32.51	-3.50	0.001
<b>Older</b>	75 (85.2%)	2.50			

Table 16 reports the data on the frequency of the expression “*salamat bashid [stay well]*”. It can be seen that this sentence was used 24 times (6.9% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). Males used this expression 23 times (95.8%) whereas females used it only once (4.1%). This difference in the use of this expression across the gender groups was significant (df = 29.4; t=1.98, p=0.05). It can also be noticed that younger participants used it only twice (8.3%) compared to older participants who used it 22 times (91.6%). The cross-generation difference in using “*salamat bashid [stay well]*” was significant (df = 29.9; t=-1.79, p=0.08).

Table 16. The participants’ use of an expression: *salamat bashid [stay well]*

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>T-value</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Total</b>	24 (6.9%)				
<b>Males</b>	23 (95.8%)	0.76	29.47	1.98	0.05
<b>Female</b>	1 (4.1%)	0.03			
<b>Younger</b>	2 (8.3%)	0.06	29.91	-1.79	0.08
<b>Older</b>	22 (91.6%)	0.73			

Table 17 shows the data related to the use of “*khedamat shoma [here you go]*”. It was found in the transcripts 14 times (4% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario), of these six times (42.8%) the expression was produced by men and eight times (57.1%) -- by women; there was no significant difference in the frequency of this expression across the two gender groups. In the speech of younger participants this expression occurred four times (28.5%) and in the speech of older participants -- 10 times (71.4%); this difference was not significant.

Table 17. The participants' use of an expression: *khedamat shoma [here you go]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	14 (4.03%)				
<b>Males</b>	6 (42.8%)	0.20	48.28	-0.39	0.6
<b>Females</b>	8 (57.1%)	0.26			
<b>Younger</b>	4 (28.5%)	0.13	38.46	-1.20	0.2
<b>Older</b>	10 (71.4%)	0.33			

The data related to the use of the expression “*dobare mozahem misham [I’ll take your precious time later]*” is reported in table 17. This expression occurred five times (1.4% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). Males used this expression three times (60%) and females used it twice (40%); there was no significant difference in the use of the expression by the two gender groups. It can be seen that younger participants employed this expression only once (20%) and older ones -- four times (80%); this difference was insignificant for the given sample.

Table 18. The participants' use of an expression: *dobare mozahem misham [I’ll take your precious time later]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	5 (1.4%)				
<b>Males</b>	3 (60%)	0.10	56.13	0.46	0.6
<b>Females</b>	2 (40%)	0.06			
<b>Younger</b>	1 (20%)	0.03	44.00	-1.40	0.1
<b>Older</b>	4 (80%)	0.13			

Table 19 documents the frequency of the employment of the expression “*ghorbane shoma [may I go all over you!]*” by the participants. They produced it 16 times (4.6% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). Transcripts reflected the use of this expression 10 times (62.5%) by men and six times by women (37.5%), with no significant differences in the frequency of the use of this expression across the gender groups. Younger participants used this expression three times (18.8%) and older participants -- 13 times (81.2%). The cross-generation difference in the frequency of the expression “*ghorbane shoma [may I go all over you!]*” was significant at  $df = 45.22$ ;  $t = -2.19$  and  $p = 0.03$ .

Table 19. The participants’ use of an expression: *ghorbane shoma [may I go all over you!]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	16 (4.6%)				
<b>Males</b>	10 (62.5%)	0.33	56.17	0.84	0.3
<b>Females</b>	6 (37.5%)	0.20			
<b>Younger</b>	3 (18.87%)	0.10	45.22	-2.19	0.03
<b>Older</b>	13 (81.2%)	0.43			

Table 20 which is about the frequency of taarof expression “*nazare lotfetoone [it’s so kind of you]*” shows that this expression was used 18 times (5.1% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). It was used 11 times (61.1%) by men and seven times (38.8%) by women; the difference was not significant across different gender groups. It also occurred in the speech of younger participants who used it twice (11.1%) and older participants who used it 16 times (88.8%). The cross-generation difference in using “*nazare lotfetoone [it’s so kind of you]*” was significant at  $df = 37.6$ ;  $t = -2.54$  and  $p = 0.01$ .

Table 20. The participants' use of an expression: *nazare lotfetoone [it's so kind of you]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	18 (5.18%)				
<b>Males</b>	11 (61.1%)	0.36	56.31	0.69	0.4
<b>Females</b>	7 (38.8%)	0.23			
<b>Younger</b>	2 (11.1%)	0.06	37.60	-2.54	0.01
<b>Older</b>	16 (88.8%)	0.53			

Table 21 reports the use of taarof expression “*ekhtiyar darid [you are quite welcome]*”. As Table 21 shows, this expression was used eight times (2.3% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). In men’s speech this expression occurred six times (75%) and in women’s speech -- twice (25%) with no significant difference in the use of this expression. Younger participants used it once (12.5%) while older ones -- seven times (87.5%). This difference was significant at  $df = 36.4$ ;  $t = -2.04$  and  $p = 0.04$ .

Table 21. The participants' use of an expression: *ekhtiyar darid [you are quite welcome]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	8 (2.3%)				
<b>Males</b>	6 (75%)	0.20	57.33	1.33	0.1
<b>Females</b>	2 (25%)	0.06			
<b>Younger</b>	1 (12.5%)	0.03	36.48	-2.04	0.04
<b>Older</b>	7 (87.5%)	0.23			

Table 22 presents the frequency of “*agar zahmati nist [if it is not too much trouble]*”. This taarof expression was used four times (1.1% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario).

Both men and women used it twice (50% males, 50% females) and there was no difference between the two gender groups in the use of this expression. Younger participants did not use it at all (0%) while older participants used it four times (100%). The cross-generations difference in using “*agar zahmati nist [if it is not too much trouble]*” was significant at  $df = 29$ ,  $t = -2.11$  and  $p = 0.04$ .

Table 22. The participants’ use of an expression: *agar zahmati nist [if it is not too much trouble]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	4 (1.1%)				
<b>Males</b>	2 (50%)	0.06	58	0	1
<b>Females</b>	2 (50%)	0.06			
<b>Younger</b>	0 (0%)	0.00	29	-2.11	0.04
<b>Older</b>	4 (100%)	0.13			

Table 23 shows the use of the expression “*maghaze khodetoone [you are always welcome to my shop]*” which was found in the sample five times (1.4% of all taarof expressions in the *shopping* scenario). Men used it three times (60%) and women -- twice (40%) with no significant difference. Younger participants did not use it at all (0%) while older participants used it five times (100%). The cross-generation difference in “*maghaze khodetoone [you are always welcome to my shop]*” frequency was significant at  $df = 29$ ,  $t = -1.97$  and  $p = 0.05$ .

Table 23. The participants' use of an expression: *maghaze khodetoone [you are always welcome to my shop]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	5 (1.4%)				
<b>Males</b>	3 (60%)	0.10	56.22	0.38	0.7
<b>Females</b>	2 (40%)	0.06			
<b>Younger</b>	0 (0%)	0.00	29	-1.97	0.05
<b>Older</b>	5 (100%)	0.16			

Table 24 presents the frequency of using “*mehmoone ma bashid [it's my treat]*”. This expression occurred 10 times in the transcripts (2.8% of all taarof expressions in *shopping* scenario). This expression occurred seven times (70%) in the men's speech sample, and three times (30%) in women's speech, and the difference was not significant across different gender groups. Younger participants did not employ this expression at all (0%) while older participants used it 10 times (100%) and this difference was significant at  $df = 29$ ,  $t = -2.16$  and  $p = 0.03$ .

Table 24. The participants' use of an expression: *mehmoone ma bashid [it's my treat]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	10 (2.8%)				
<b>Males</b>	7 (70%)	0.23	55.51	0.83	0.4
<b>Female</b>	3 (30%)	0.10			
<b>Younger</b>	0 (0%)	0.00	29	-2.16	0.03
<b>Older</b>	10 (100%)	0.33			

### 3.2.2. Giving Compliments Scenario

The results of the participants' use of all taarof expressions while communicating on the subject of *giving compliments* are represented below in Table 25. The numbers are the addition of the frequency of multiple usage of the same expressions in the four various groups of males, females, younger and older participants.

Table 25 shows that the number of taarof expressions which were used in *giving compliments* scenario was 280. Taarof expressions were encountered 109 times (39.8%) in men's speech sample and 171 times (61%) – in women's speech sample, and this difference was insignificant for the given sample. Younger participants used 72 taarof expressions on the whole (25.7%) and older participants -- 208 (74.2%). The difference across the generations in using taarof expressions was significant at  $df = 37.54$ ,  $t = -3.27$  and  $p = 0.002$ .

Table 25. The use of taarof expressions by participants in the *giving compliments* scenario

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	280				
<b>Males</b>	109 (39.8%)	3.63	48.57	-1.29	0.17
<b>Females</b>	171 (61%)	5.70			
<b>Younger</b>	72 (25.7%)	2.40	37.54	-3.27	0.002
<b>Older</b>	208 (74.2%)	6.93			

Next, the results of the participants' use of individual taarof expressions will be presented. The results of the participants' use of taarof expression "*lotf darid [it's so kind of you]*" are shown in table 26. This expression was employed 46 times (16.4% of all taarof expressions in the *giving compliments* scenario). Males used this expression 18 times (39.1%) and females -- 28

times (60.8%); this difference was not significant across different gender groups. Younger participants produced it 18 times (39.1%) and older ones -- 28 times (60.8%). The cross-generation difference in using “*lotf darid [it’s so kind of you]*” was not significant.

Table 26. The participants’ use of an expression: *lotf darid [it’s so kind of you]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	46 (16.4%)				
<b>Males</b>	18 (39.1%)	0.60	51.38	-1.03	0.30
<b>Females</b>	28 (60.8%)	0.93			
<b>Younger</b>	18 (39.1%)	0.60	49.90	-1.03	0.30
<b>Older</b>	28 (60.8%)	0.93			

Table 27 shows the frequency of taarof expression “*kar khasi nabood [no problem]*”. This expression was used 37 times (13.2% of all taarof expressions in the *giving compliments* scenario). This expression was used 11 times (29.7%) by males and 26 times (70.2%) by females with the significant difference of  $df = 49.3$ ,  $t = -1.92$  and  $p = 0.05$ . In the speech of younger participants this expression occurred 11 times (29.7%) and in the speech of the older ones -- 26 times (70.2%). The cross-generation difference in using this expression was significant at  $df = 46.8$ ,  $t = -1.92$  and  $p = 0.05$ .

Table 27. The participants’ use of an expression: *kar khasi nabood [no problem]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	37 (13.2%)				
<b>Males</b>	11 (29.7%)	0.36	49.32	-1.92	0.05
<b>Females</b>	26 (70.2%)	0.86			
<b>Younger</b>	11 (29.7%)	0.36	46.85	-1.92	0.05
<b>Older</b>	26 (70.2%)	0.86			

Table 28 shows the results of participants' use of expression “*dar khedmat hastam [I am at your disposal]*”. This expression was used 32 times (11.4% of all taarof expressions in the *giving compliments* scenario). Transcripts reflect the use of this expression 15 times (46.8%) by males and 17 times (53.1%) by females with no significant difference in the frequency of this expression across the gender groups. Younger participants employed it seven times (21.8%) while older ones used it 25 times (78.1%). The cross-generation difference in using this taarof expression was significant at  $df = 40.7$ ,  $t = -2.41$  and  $p = 0.02$ .

Table 28. The participants' use of an expression: *dar khedmat hastam [I am at your disposal]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	32 (11.4%)				
<b>Males</b>	15 (46.8%)	0.50	56.98	-0.25	0.7
<b>Females</b>	17 (53.1%)	0.56			
<b>Younger</b>	7 (21.8%)	0.23	40.77	-2.41	0.02
<b>Older</b>	25 (78.1%)	0.83			

The frequency of “*khaste nabashid [good job]*” is reported in table 29. The data show that this sentence was used five times (1.7% of all taarof expressions in the *giving compliments* scenario). Men used this expression four times (80%) and females -- once (20%); this difference was not significant for the given sample. In the speech of younger participants this expression occurred five times (100%) whereas in the speech of older ones it did not occur at all. This difference was significant across the two generations at  $df = 29$ ,  $t = 2.40$  and  $p = 0.02$

Table 29. The participants' use of an expression: *khaste nabashid [good job]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	5 (1.7%)				
<b>Males</b>	4 (80%)	0.13	44.00	1.40	0.16
<b>Females</b>	1 (20%)	0.03			
<b>Younger</b>	5 (100%)	0.16	29	2.40	0.02
<b>Older</b>	0 (0%)	0.00			

Table 30 shows the use of the taarof expression “*khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]*”. It occurred 98 times (35% of all taarof expressions in the *giving compliments* scenario). Males used this expression 36 times (36.7%) and females -- 62 times (63.2%); the difference in using this expression was not significant for the given sample. Younger participants used it 14 times (14.2%) compared to older participants who used this expression 84 times (85.7%). The cross-generations difference in the frequency of this expression was significant at  $df = 35.6$ ,  $t = -4.23$  and  $p = 0.0001$ .

Table 30. The participants' use of an expression: *khahesh mikonam [you're welcome]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	98 (35%)				
<b>Males</b>	36 (36.7%)	1.20	57.91	-1.39	0.16
<b>Females</b>	62 (63.2%)	2.06			
<b>Younger</b>	14 (14.2%)	0.46	35.63	-4.23	0.0001
<b>Older</b>	84 (85.7%)	2.80			

Table 31 presents the frequency of the taarof expression “*mamnoon [thank you]*”. It was used 14 times (5% of all the expressions employed in the *giving compliments* scenario). While

males did not use it at all, females used it 14 times (100%) and the difference across the gender groups' in the use of this expression was significant ( $df = 29$ ;  $t = -2.62$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). Younger participants used it ten times (71.4%) and older participants used it 4 times (28.5%), with no significant differences across the two generation groups.

Table 31. The participants' use of an expression: *mamnoon* [thank you]

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	14 (5%)				
<b>Males</b>	0 (0%)	0.00	29	-2.62	0.01
<b>Females</b>	14 (100%)	0.46			
<b>Younger</b>	10 (71.4%)	0.33	36.41	1.07	0.28
<b>Older</b>	4 (28.5%)	0.13			

The data in table 32 reflects the use of taarof expression "*befarmaeed* [here you go]". This expression was employed twice (0.7% of all the expressions used in the *giving compliments* scenario). While men did not employ this expression in their speech at all, females repeated it twice (100%), and the difference in using this expression was not significant across the two gender groups. Both younger group of participants (50%) and older ones used it once (50%). There was no cross-generation difference in using "*befarmaeed* [here you go]."

Table 32. The participants' use of an expression: *befarmaeed* [here you go]

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	2 (0.7%)				
<b>Males</b>	0 (0%)	0.00	29	-1.43	0.16
<b>Females</b>	2 (100%)	0.06			
<b>Younger</b>	1 (50%)	0.03	58	0	1
<b>Older</b>	1 (50%)	0.03			

Table 33 presents the use of taarof expression “*vazife boodeh [my pleasure]*”. This table shows that this expression was used seven times (2.5% of all the expressions in the *giving compliments* scenario). Transcripts reflect the use of this expression twice (28.5%) by men and five times (71.4%) by women with no significant difference in the frequency of this expression across genders. Younger participants used it once (14.2%) whereas older participants used it six times (85.7%). The cross-generations difference in using this expression was significant at  $df = 40.22$ ,  $t = -2.40$  and  $p = 0.04$ .

Table 33. The participants’ use of an expression: *vazife boodeh [my pleasure]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	7 (2.5%)				
<b>Males</b>	2 (28.5%)	0.06	50.64	-1.20	0.23
<b>Females</b>	5 (71.4%)	0.16			
<b>Younger</b>	1 (14.2%)	0.03	40.22	-2.04	0.04
<b>Older</b>	6 (85.7%)	0.20			

Table 34 reports the result of the use of taarof expression “*ghorbane shome [may I go all over you]*” by the participants. It was used 16 times (5.7% of all the expressions used in the *giving compliments* scenario). It occurred four times (25%) in the speech of males and 12 times (75%) in the speech of females; the difference in this expression frequency was not significant in the given sample. Younger participants used it twice (12.5%) whereas older participants used it 14 times (87.5%). The cross-generations difference in using this expression was significant at  $df = 32.04$ ,  $t = -1.93$  and  $p = 0.06$ .

Table 34. The participants' use of an expression: *ghorbane shome [may I go all over you]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	16 (5.7%)				
<b>Males</b>	4 (25%)	0.31	34.65	-1.26	0.21
<b>Females</b>	12 (75%)	0.40			
<b>Younger</b>	2 (12.5%)	0.06	32.04	-1.93	0.06
<b>Older</b>	14 (87.5%)	0.46			

Table 35 reports the results of the use of “*be ja nemiyaram [have we met?]*”. It can be seen in this table that this expression was used five times (1.7% of all the expressions used in the *giving compliments* scenario). This expression occurred once (20%) in the men’s speech sample and four times (80%) in women’s speech, and this difference was insignificant. Younger participants used this expression twice (40%) and older participants used it three times (60%). This difference was not significant either.

Table 35. The participants' use of an expression: *be ja nemiyaram [have we met?]*

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	5 (1.7%)				
<b>Males</b>	1 (20%)	0.03	44.00	-1.40	0.16
<b>Females</b>	4 (80%)	0.13			
<b>Younger</b>	2 (40%)	0.06	56.13	-0.46	0.64
<b>Older</b>	3 (60%)	0.10			

Table 36 shows the use of the expression “*salamat bashid [stay well]*”. It was used 11 times (3.9% of all the expressions used in the *giving compliments* scenario). Males used this expression 11 times (100%) while females did not use it at all (0%). This difference in the use of

this expression across the gender groups was significant ( $df = 29$ ;  $t=2.62$ ,  $p=0.01$ ). Younger participants used it twice (18.8%) and older participants used it nine times (81.8%). The cross-generation difference in this expression frequency was not significant.

Table 36. The participants' use of an expression: *salamat bashid* [stay well]

	Frequency	Mean	df	T-value	P-value
<b>Total</b>	11 (3.9%)				
<b>Males</b>	11 (100%)	0.36	29	2.62	0.01
<b>Females</b>	0 (0%)	0.00			
<b>Younger</b>	2 (18.8%)	0.06	35.55	-1.61	0.11
<b>Older</b>	9 (81.8%)	0.30			

To summarize, the use of taarof expressions in *shopping* scenario was significantly different across the generation groups. Older participants tended to use more expressions than younger ones (Ref. table 9). In this scenario, it can be noticed that only the use of *salamat bashid* [stay well] was different across both the gender groups as well as age groups. Men and older participants used this expression much more than women and younger participants (Ref. Table 16). Although some of the expressions did not show any significant differences in their use neither across generation nor genders, some other expressions showed significant differences across only generation groups.

The expressions that had significantly different frequencies across the two age groups were: *ghabel nadare* [it's mere nothing, have it.] (Ref. table 11), *khahesh mikonam* [you're welcome] (Ref. table 15), *ghorbane shoma* [may I go all over you] (Ref. table 19), *nazare lotfetoone* [it's so kind of you] (Ref. table 20), *ekhtiyar darid* [you are quite welcome] (Ref. table 21), *agar zahmati nist* [if it's not too much trouble] (Ref. table 22), *maghaze khodetoone* [you

*are always welcome to my shop*] (Ref. table 23), *mehmoone ma bashid* [*it's my treat*] (Ref. table 24).

It is also worth noting that the expression *khahesh mikonam* [*you're welcome*] was used more than the other expressions of this scenario (88 times) and it also showed the most significant difference across the two different age groups. Older participants used it 75 times where as younger participants used it 13 times ( $df = 32.5$ ;  $t = -3.50$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

In the *giving compliments* scenario, age was an important factor in the use of taarof expressions and older participants used more expressions than younger ones (Ref. table 25). Gender was an important factor in using *mamnoon* [*thank you*] (employed more often by women than by men (Ref. table 31) and *salamat bashid* [*stay well*] (employed more by men) (Ref. table 36). *Kar khasi nabood* [*no problem*] was used significantly different across both gender and generation group. Females and older participants had a tendency to use this expression more than males and younger participants (Ref. table 27).

Four other taarof expressions showed significantly different use across generation groups: *dar khedmat hastam* [*I am at your disposal*] (Ref. table 28), *khahesh mikonam* [*you're welcome*] (Ref. table 30), *vazife boode* [*my pleasure*] (table 33), *ghorbane shoma* [*may I go all over you*] (Ref. table 34) which were used more by the participants of the older group; and *khaste nabashid* [*good job*] which was mostly used by younger participants (Ref. table 29).

*Khahesh mikonam* [*you're welcome*] was the most frequent expression in this scenario (98 times). It was also the expression which was the most significantly different in terms of its use by the two different age groups ( $df = 35.6$ ,  $t = -4.23$ ,  $p = 0.0001$ ).

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. Discussion

This study examined the effects of age and gender on the use of taarof expressions by Iranians and their attitudes toward taarof. This section considers the significance of the findings and compares them with earlier studies. The specificity of taarof as compared to politeness system in other cultures is the specific situations of its use, the employment of more exaggerated terms and use of specific idiomatic expressions such as it's free, step under the eyelid of my eye, etc. (Sharifian, 2008).

#### 4.1. Attitudes towards taarof

With regard to participants' experience with practicing taarof, most of them reported that they knew when and how to use it. These results agree with the study by Alibabae, 2016, which demonstrated that Iranians used a variety of taarof expressions in conversations.

My study revealed the existence of both negative and positive attitudes to taarof among the Iranian participants. Similar results showing both positive and negative attitudes to taarof among Iranian immigrants in Canada were also reported in Haghghat's study (2016), whereby negativity in the perception of taarof increases with the longer duration of stay in Canada.

As far as the negative attitudes are concerned, most participants reported that they sometimes felt the pressure to employ taarof while communicating with other Iranians. Similarly, Afghari and Karimnia, 2007, observed that Iranians in their study always felt they were forced to use taarof and that they wished it were possible to entirely break away from this tradition and use more direct communication strategies, like westerners. Negative attitudes to taarof in my study were also reflected in the participants' claims that they did not enjoy either using taarof or

hearing it in conversations. This dislike of taarof was explained by Miller et al. (2014) as being connected with the necessity of self-lowering and other-raising embedded in taarof. In addition, the negative attitudes to taarof in my study are likely also associated with the participants' belief that taarof is deceitful. Hellriegel and Slocum (1974) and Nejat (2004) also reported that Iranians tend to think that taarof is deceitful.

Some earlier studies claimed that due to the collectivistic nature of Iranian society, taarof is required to maintain social relationships (Izadi, 2016) and accomplish shared goals (Miller et al., 2014). However, the participants in my study did not think that they need taarof for a better communication. They also disagreed that taarof is a characteristic of either good upbringing or good education.

Positive attitudes to taarof in my study were reflected in the participants' comments about the efficiency and beauty of taarof and about the emotive impact of taarof that made them feel better despite the difficulty of taarof use in conversation. An earlier study by Afghari and Karimnia, 2007, also reported some positive attitudes to taarof among Iranians which was considered to be attractive, fun, not likely to hurt anyone's feeling and one of the greatest Persian social behaviors (Afghari & Karimnia, 2007).

Iranian participants in my study considered taarof to be an intrinsic part of Iranian culture, which agrees with an earlier study by Haghghat (2016).

And finally, the participants disagreed that taarof is hard, which means they thought that using taarof does not require complicated language structures or conversation strategies. These findings are in contrast with Beeman, 1986, and Izadi, 2016 studies in which taarof is described as a very complex concept and as "overpoliteness" which adds to the difficulty of conversation.

When asked about the value of preserving taarof for future generations, the respondents in my study mostly stated that they did not have any specific ideas on this subject. Compared to Haghghat's (2016) results demonstrating the unwillingness of immigrants from Iran both use taarof and to teach it to their children, my study shows that overall, Iranians in Iran support the idea of taarof use. On the other hand, my respondents had mostly positive ideas about the importance of teaching taarof to children, which perfectly agrees with earlier findings by Sahragard (2003), who observed that Iranian parents taught their children to utilize taarof when communicating with superiors and older people. By contrast, Beeman (1986) stated that Iranians were unwilling to preserve taarof or teach it to children.

In response to questions about possible factors that impact taarof, most participants strongly agreed that social distance/proximity, age, and gender, all play a role in taarof use. The same factors were found to be salient in Chinese context by Ka'da'r (2007). Dunn (2013) found these factors to be frequently present in politeness strategies of many languages. Politeness strategies are based on the recognition of and respect for social differences that place one speaker in a super-ordinate position and the other in a subordinate position (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Since different age and gender groups are likely to take different positions in many societies (Coates, 2004), these factors also typically contribute to politeness expression including taarof use.

#### **4.2. Vocabulary of Politeness**

Taarof is an Iranian politeness system which includes a range of specific formulaic expressions (Sharifian, 2011, Aryanpour & Aryanpour, 1976). Our investigation of the frequency of formulaic expressions has shown that a range of taarof expressions were used depending on

age and gender of the participants as well as the conversation scenario. Taaroff expressions used by the participants in my study were predominantly positive politeness strategies. The speakers elevated the hearers' face by downgrading themselves while dignifying the hearers. The majority of the expressions employed in the conversations render respect to the listener. For instance, *dar khedmat hastam* [I am at your disposal], which literally means "I am like a servant who is ready to obey whatever you order", or *khedmat shoma* [here you go], that means "at your service", are used by the shop assistant to express his/her customer's higher rank in the conversation. The role of denigration/elevation as a discursive politeness strategy is discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987). An earlier research study in Chinese context shows the importance of using special expressions at the lexical level to state the high/low rank of conversation parties. For example, the term *xiaoren* ('small person,' i.e. 'this worthless person') denigrates the speaker and *gaojun* ('high lord') elevates the speech partner (Pan & Kádár, 2011).

Politeness usually serves to establish social boundaries in communication by signalling a degree of formality and the social distance/intimacy between the speakers (Huang, 2008) which is a kind of positive politeness according Strauss and Feiz (2013). The desire to be accepted as a competent adult member of society by others is a part of the speaker's and listener's positive faces (Strauss & Feiz, 2013). For instance, when the speaker says *nazare lotfetoone* [it's so kind of you], he/she is trying to give a compliment to the listener to show that he/she believes that the listener has *lotf* [kindness]. Similarly, when the shopkeeper says *maghaze khodetoone* [you are always welcome o my shop], he/she elevates the customer to the position of the shop owner. In contrast to our findings, the results of a study by Pan (1995) shows that Chinese shopkeepers are constructing friendliness and proximity to the customer by the use of kinship terms, such as 'brother'.

A large number of the participants in our study used the traditional taarof expression *ghabel nadare* [it's mere nothing, have it] a couple of times although the customer knew they do not really mean that. Alibabae (2016) previously mentioned that in a gathering in Tehran, Iran, the host used *ghabel nadare* to mention that the food is not worthy of the guest. It is also mentioned in Iran Standard Time that when the taxi drivers use *ghabel nadare*, they mean "it costs nothing for you" but after persisting to pay they will accept the money (Front Line, 2012).

### **4.3. Gender differences**

For centuries, Iranian women have been struggling against gender discrimination and being forced into taking inferior social positions in society (Mir-Hosseini, 2002). This inequality affected the frequency and type of taarof expressions that are used by women as compared to men (Miller et al., 2014). My study also demonstrates some statistically significant differences in the use of and attitudes towards taarof by Iranian men and women.

#### **4.3.1. Gender difference and attitudes to politeness system**

Women in my study held more negative attitudes to taarof than men and my results differ from the canonical descriptions. More Iranian women than men believed that using taarof made communication difficult. Men considered taarof to be beautiful and a characteristic of good manner and most women did not. Men (but not women) also agreed that they experienced good feelings when they use taarof. There were more women than men stating that they hate taarof and more men than women stating that they enjoy it. Finally, there were more men than women interested in preserving taarof. This study confirms earlier findings (Haghighi, 2016; Kazerooni & Shams, 2015) that Iranian men had more positive, and women – more negative attitudes to taarof. After the Islamic Republic revolution of 1979, the conditions of Iranian women protesting

against gender discriminatory laws were always a heated debate and under scrutiny (Halper, 2005). Various changes after this revolution were against women's freedom of choice such as closing some special fields of study or occupations like construction, mining, and the judiciary or the ineligibility of married women for going abroad unless accompanied by their husbands (Paidar, 2001). Showing reluctance to use exaggerated politeness can be a mild form of protesting against social, political and religious norms that were imposed on women. Masih Alinezhad a female Iranian who is living in the London encourages Iranian women to seek their freedom by objecting to compulsory hijab (Moorhead, 2018)

#### **4.3.2. Gender difference and the use of politeness system**

Gender difference had a very limited effect on the frequency of taarof expression use. Among all the expressions the only ones which were used differently by men and women were *salamat bashid* [stay well] and *mamnoon* [thank you]. The former was used less and the latter -- more by women as compared to men.

The results of this study are in contrast with earlier findings of politeness strategies in China (Wolfson, 1983), where women tended to give and receive more compliments than men.

#### **4.4. Generation and language change**

In this study, the attitudes of the participants to taarof as well as the use of taarof expressions differed by generation. Age has been identified as a factor which impacts linguistic choices in world languages (Holmes, 2006) in particular, the use of politeness forms differs across age groups (Bates, 1976). This connection between the age and politeness forms has been explained by age-related changes in important aspects of social contexts, such as participants' status (Mitchell-Kernan & Kernan, 1977; Read & Cherry, 1978).

A study of politeness forms in Greek also showed that younger participants were direct and used less polite language than the older participants who were more indirect in their responses to an invitation (Bella, 2009). This is attributed to the younger participants' lack of knowledge about the proper use of language in a specific social context (Bella, 2009). Our results also agree with an earlier study which showed a change of attitudes to politeness systems that had been recently occurring in Iran as young people in their twenties or thirties tend to use *taarof* much less than the older generation (Faika, 2016). These changes were explained by the effect of globalization and the expansion of Western lifestyle and behavioural patterns in Iran (Nurullah, 2008).

#### **4.4.1. The attitudes to *taarof* across generations**

My study showed the differences in the attitudes to *taarof* across generations. Older participants had much more positive attitudes to *taarof* than younger ones and they believed that *taarof* needs to be preserved in Iranian families. Conversely, younger participants believed that *taarof* causes difficulties in communication and Iranians should discard its utilization. Some earlier studies in Iran have documented unwillingness of the younger generation to use *taarof* (Yaghmaian, 2002, Faika 2016) in contrast to others that emphasize the ongoing respect of younger people for older ones which is the core subject of *taarof* (Koutlaki, 2010; Zandpour & Sadri, 1996).

Similarly, a study of Zuni showed that older people pretend that they do not understand the slangs which are utilized by younger generation as address terms. Older people have negative attitudes to these address terms which makes these expressions age-specific (Newman, 1955). According to Pan and Kádár's (2011) investigation of generation effect on linguistic differences in Mandarin, cross-generational differences in the attitudes to politeness systems are natural

processes occurring in every language. The results of our study also agree with Nurullah (2008) that focused on the effect of globalization of Islamic societies.

#### **4.4.2. The use of taarof across generations**

In this study the number of older participants who used taarof is more than younger participants, and older people experienced fewer problems with using taarof. Older people used some expressions that none of the younger participants did, such as “*agar zahmati nist* [if it’s not too much trouble]”, “*maghaze khodetoone* [you are always welcome to my shop]” and “*mehmoone ma bashid* [it’s my treat]”. The only sentence that was used more by younger participants, among all the other sentences, is “*khaste nabashid* [good job]”. They mostly used this Persian expression for greeting instead of saying “*salam* [hello]” which is an Arabic expression that younger generation tends to avoid using. The new generation strive to use Persian expressions and words instead of their Arabic equivalents to maintain the concept of “*vatan* [homeland]” and their Iranian origin (Marszałek-Kowalewska, 2013). There might be three reasons why younger participants did not use these expressions. Firstly, it is possible that they did not know them at all. Secondly, they knew these expressions but not how and when to use them. Lastly, they might not be willing to use them, as they think these sentences are exaggerated. It should be mentioned that since the participants were directly paired (younger people with younger ones and older participants with older ones), younger participants did not feel the need to highly respect their conversation partners.

This difference can be explained by a lower tendency of younger people to use taarof or by the negative attitudes they have to taarof (Faika, 2016). This change of politeness system use is also explained in the previous studies of other cultures by globalization and the influence of the English language and other Western languages/cultures where direct and frank discourses

strategies are preferred over polishing the speech to make it more indirect for politeness' sake (Nurullah, 2008).

#### **4.4.3. The attitudes to politeness and its use across generations in different cultures**

Changes of politeness systems across generations have been documented in other languages and cultures as well. For example, Chinese communication underwent a dramatic transformation which resulted in replacing many polite expressions by a new set of politeness norms during the late-19th and 20th centuries (Pan & Kádár, 2011). This change resulted in the disappearance of the extensive historical Chinese honorific lexicon of a large number of words. Therefore, there is a disconnect between generations of Chinese in terms of the application of politeness formulae (Kádár, 2007).

Similarly in Thailand there are certain polite address forms that must be used by younger people when speaking while these terms are not required to be used by older people. For example, a young passenger has to call a taxi driver “lung [uncle]” or “phi [older brother]” if they estimate him to be older than they are (Intachakra, 2001).

Possible explanations for taarof could lie in Hofstede's (1980) idea about the relationship between collectivism/individualism and politeness though is not straightforward. China is also a collectivistic society, but its system does not require such degrees of reverence of a customer. Quite the opposite, in China, a shopkeeper attracts customers by decreasing social distance with them (Pan, 1995), or in Mali the shopkeepers continue sitting comfortably in their seats, not bothering that they have customers (DomNwachukwu, 2010).

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. Conclusion

This study aimed at seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What are the effects of gender on Iranian attitudes toward taarof?
2. What are the effects of age on Iranian attitudes toward taarof?
3. What are the differences in the quantity and quality of taarof expressions that are used by people of different genders in Iran?
4. What are the differences in the quantity and quality of taarof expressions that are used by people of different ages in Iran?

In order to answer the first and third research questions, my research found that Iranian men have more positive attitudes to taarof whereas Iranian women hold more negative attitudes to it. Men agree with preserving taarof for the next generation and teaching it to children. They also like to use taarof since this gives them good feelings. On the contrary, females do not like to use taarof because it makes the communication difficult for them. Women also think that Iranian should stop using taarof. This can be the result of the pressure that women feel in Iranian society for having polite behavior. They are trying to make this pressure less and they develop negative attitudes to whatever that depicts them as powerless and unequal to men. However, despite the negative attitudes of women to taarof which is in contrast with the positive attitudes of men, men and women use taarof equally in their conversations. The differences between female and male languages are disappearing with women taking more proactive roles in society and struggling for their rights. For instance, women in Iran are trying to break the rule of wearing hijab by walking

outside while unveiling their heads (Moorhead, 2018). Different feminist groups are striving to legalize the attendance of stadiums by women (Ferris-Rotman, 2018)

To address the second and forth research questions, the findings of this study showed that older Iranians have positive attitudes to taarof in contrast with younger ones who have more negative attitudes to it. Older people believe that taarof needs to be taught to the younger generation but younger people are not willing to use it and they think it is difficult to use taarof in the conversation. The reason for lack of willingness in younger generation for using taarof can be the effects of globalization on Iranian culture and the superiority of western culture to which younger generation is attracted. Younger Iranians do not like to behave according to their traditions as they find it difficult. They think the conversation that is without any of these ornamental features is easier and more comprehensible. In line with these attitudes, older Iranians use more taarof expressions while speaking, contrary to younger ones who use less taarof expressions.

### **Limitations of the study**

The limitation of the study did not allow me to compare the attitudes of Iranian in Iran towards taarof and their uses of taarof with those of Iranian Canadians or linguistically analyze the patterns of the expressions that were used by the participants. Other limitations of this study were lack of control for ethnic, religious background, residence (urban, not rural) place (only one location in the north and one in the south), and number of participants, so any extrapolations to the general population can only be made with outmost caution and need confirmation in more comprehensive studies. In addition to these, some questions were subjective and, therefore, respondents could interpret them differently. There is also a need for a fuller exploration of the

interdisciplinary research into politeness systems across cultures in order to reach a better understanding of politeness universals as well as uniqueness of individual systems, such as taarof.

## REFERENCES

- Afghari, A. & Karimnia, A. (2011). Compliments in English and Persian Interaction: A cross-cultural perspective. *Jezikoslovlje* 12.1: 27-50
- Afghari, A., & Karimnia, A. (2007). A contrastive study of four cultural differences in everyday conversation between English and Persian. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 16(1), 243.
- Afkhami, M., & Friedl, E. (1994). *In the eye of the storm: women in post-revolutionary Iran*. Syracuse University Press.
- Al-Harabsheh, A. M. A. (2014). Language and gender differences in Jordanian spoken Arabic: a sociolinguistics perspective. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(5), 872.
- Alibabae, S. (2016). *The Persian Side of Face*, Monash University of Australia.
- Aryanpour, A., & Aryanpour, M. (1976). *The Concise Persian-English Dictionary\_one Volume*. Amir Kabir Publications, Tehran.
- Asdjodi, M. (2001). A comparison between Ta'arof in Persian and Limao in Chinese. *International journal of the sociology of language*, 71-92.
- Assadi, R. (1980), 'Difference: Persian Style', *Anthropological Linguistics*, 22, pp.221-224.
- Bates, E. (1976). Pragmatics as a social competence. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 47, 123-134.
- Beeman, W. O. (1986), 'Affectivity in Persian language use', *Culture, Medicine, and Psychology*, 12 (1), pp.9-30.
- Beeman, W. O., (1976), 'Status, style, and strategy in Iranian interaction', *Anthropological Linguistics*, 18, pp.305-322.

- Beeman, W. (2001). Sincerity and emotion in Persian discourse: accomplishing the representations of inner states. *Int. J. Sociol. Lang.* 148, 31-57.
- Bella, S. (2009). Invitations and politeness in Greek: The age variable, 243-271.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978). Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. In *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction* (pp. 56-311). Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). Gender trouble, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic discourse. *Feminism/postmodernism*, 327.
- Cameron, D. (1998). *The feminist critique of language: A reader*. Psychology Press.
- Chen, X. (2014). Politeness processing as situated social cognition: A RT-theoretic account. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 71, 117-131.
- Christie, C. (2006). *Gender and Politeness: Sara Mills*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, 270 pp., £ 18.99.
- Coates, J. (2004). *Women, men and language: A sociolinguistic account of gender differences in language*. London: Pearson Education
- Coulmas, F. (1992). *Language and economy*. Blackwell.
- Coulmas, F. (2013). *Sociolinguistics: The study of speakers' choices*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dahmardeh, M., Parsazadeh, A., & Rezaie, S. (2016). Culture Matters: the Question of Metaphor and Taarof in Translation. *Cultura*, 13(1), 137-160.

- Del Giudice, M. (2008). Persia: Ancient soul of Iran. *National Geographic*, 43.
- DomNwachukwu, C. S. (2010). *An introduction to multicultural education: From theory to practice*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Dunn, C. D. (2011). Formal forms or verbal strategies? Politeness theory and Japanese business etiquette training. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(15), 3643-3654.
- Dunn, C. D. (2013). Speaking politely, kindly, and beautifully: Ideologies of politeness in Japanese business etiquette training.
- Eckert, P. (1998). Gender and sociolinguistic variation. *Language and gender: A reader*, 64-75.
- Eelen, G. (2001). *A Critique of Politeness Theories*. Manchester: St. Jeromi Publishing.
- Eisenstein, M., & Bodman, J. (1993). Expressing gratitude in American English. *Interlanguage pragmatics*, 6481.
- Faika, Z. (2016). Courtesy and compliments in Iran. *Iranshenasi Researches*, 6(1), 105-124.
- Farghal, M., & Haggan, M. (2006). Compliment Behaviour in Bilingual Kuwaiti College Students. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9(1), 94- 118.
- Ferris-Rotman, A. (2018). The Washington Post. 'Let us be free': Iranian women mount protest over stadium ban at World Cup match. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/let-us-be-free-iranian-women-mount-protest-over-stadium-ban-at-world-cup-match/2018/06/15/9755dd1e-6fdb-11e8-b4d8-eaf78d4c544c\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.4bd71382b6a6](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/let-us-be-free-iranian-women-mount-protest-over-stadium-ban-at-world-cup-match/2018/06/15/9755dd1e-6fdb-11e8-b4d8-eaf78d4c544c_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4bd71382b6a6)
- Fraser, B. (1990). Perspectives on politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(2), 219-236.

- Fraser, B. (2005). 'Whither Politeness'. In Lakoff, R. and Ide, S. (Eds.) *Broadening the Horison of Linguistic Politeness*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Front Line. Iran Standard Time | A Taste of Tehran by Taxi. (2012, November 2). Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2012/11/iran-standard-time-a-taste-of-tehran-by-taxi.html>
- Geertz, C. (1960). The Javanese Kijaji: The changing role of a cultural broker. *Comparative Studies in society and history*, 2(02), 228-249.
- Goffman, E. (1955). On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry*, 18(3), 213-231.
- Grundy, P. (2002). The sociopragmatics of writing. Retrieved [30/11/10] from <http://www.baleap.org.uk/pimreports/2002/heriotwatt/grundy.htm>.
- Haghighat, Gh. (2016). Socio-cultural attitudes to ta'arof among Iranian immigrants in Canada (master's thesis). University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon.
- Halper, L. (2005). Law and women's agency in post-revolutionary Iran. *Harv. JL & Gender*, 28, 85.
- Haugh, & Hinze. (2003). A metalinguistic approach to deconstructing the concepts of 'face' and 'politeness' in Chinese, English and Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35(10), 1581-1611.
- Hellriegel, D., & Slocum, J. W. (1974). Organizational climate: Measures, research and contingencies. *Academy of management Journal*, 17(2), 255-280.

- Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino. (1986). Universals of linguistic politeness: Quantitative evidence from Japanese and American English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 10(3), 347-371.
- Hodge, C., (1957) 'Some aspects of Persian style', *Language*, 33, pp. 335-369.
- Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture and organizations. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 10(4), 15-41.
- Holmes, J. (1990). 'Politeness Strategies in New Zealand Women's Speech' In: Bell, A. and Holmes, J. (Eds.) *New Zealand Ways of Speaking English*. Avon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Holmes, J. (2006). Politeness strategies as linguistic variables. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics*, 9, 684-697
- Holmes, J. (2008). *Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (3rd Ed). Pearson Longman: New York
- Holmes, J., Marra, M., & Schnurr, S. (2008). Impoliteness and ethnicity: Māori and Pākehā discourse in New Zealand workplaces. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 4(2), 193-219.
- Huang, Y. (2008). Politeness Principle in Cross-Culture Communication. *Foreign Languages Department, Xianyang Normal University*, 1(1), 96-101
- Idé, C. (1982). Regeneration of mouse digital corpuscles. *Developmental Dynamics*, 163(1), 73-85.
- Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua-journal of cross-cultural and interlanguage communication*, 8(2-3), 223-248.

- Intachakra, S. (2001). *Linguistic politeness in British English and Thai: A comparative analysis of three expressive speech acts* (Doctoral dissertation, Queen Mary University of London).
- Izadi, A. (2016). Over-politeness in Persian professional interactions. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 102, 13-23.
- Izadi, A., & Zilaie, F. (2015). Refusal strategies in Persian. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 25(2), 246-264.
- Jahangiri, N. (1980). *A sociolinguistic study of Tehrani Persian*. Diss. University of London.
- Kádár, D. Z. (2007). *Terms of (im) politeness: a study of communicational properties of traditional Chinese (im) polite terms of address* (Vol. 2). Eötvös Loránd University Press.
- Kazerooni, S. R., & Shams, M. R. (2015). Gender, Socioeconomic Status, and Politeness Strategies: Focusing on Iranian High School Students' Usage of Request Speech Act. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 2(4), 196-206.
- Koutelaki, S. (1997). Persian system of politeness and the Persian concept of face with some reference to EFL teaching to Iranian native speakers. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Wales at Cardiff.
- Koutlaki, S. (2010). *Among the Iranians: A guide to Iran's culture and customs*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Koutlaki, S. A. (2002). Offers and expressions of thanks as face enhancing acts: tae'arof in Persian. *Journal of pragmatics*, 34(12), 1733-1756.
- Lakoff, G. (1975). Hedges: a study in meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts. In contemporary Research in Philosophical Logic and Linguistic semantics (pp. 221-271). Springer Netherlands.

- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. Harper & Row, New York.
- Lane, C. (1990). 'The Sociolinguistics of Questioning in District Court Trials'. In: Bell, A. and Holmes, J. (Eds.) *New Zealand Ways of Speaking English*. Avon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Maghbouleh, N. (2013). The Ta'arof Tournament: cultural performances of ethno-national identity at a diasporic summer camp. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(5), 818-837.
- Mahdavi, A. (2013). *An examination of use of taarof in Iranian Americans*. Alliant International University.
- Mahdavi, A., (2012). *An Examination of use of Taarof in Iranian Americans*. A doctoral dissertation. California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University, Los Angeles.
- Majd, H. (2008). *The Ayatollah Begg to Differ*. New York: Doubleday
- Marszałek-Kowalewska, K. (2013). Iranian language policy: a case of linguistic purism. *Investigationes linguisticae Vol. XXII*.
- Martin, S. (1964). Speech levels in Japan and Korea. *Language in culture and society*, 407, 415.
- Matsumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of pragmatics*, 12(4), 403-426.
- Milani, A. *Lost Wisdom*. 2004. [ISBN 0-934211-90-6](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0934211906)

- Miller, C., Strong, R., Vinson, M., Brugman, C. M. (2014). Ritualized Indirectness in Persian: ta'arof and related strategies of interpersonal management. University of Maryland Center for Advanced Study of Language.
- Mills, S. (2003). *Gender and politeness* (Vol. 17). Cambridge University Press.
- Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2002). The Conservative–Reformist Conflict Over Women's Rights in Iran. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 16(1), 37-53.
- Mitchell-Kernan, C., & Kernan, K. T. (1977). Pragmatics of directive choice among children. In *Child discourse* (pp. 189-208).
- Moorhead, J (2018). The Guardian. The wind in my hair: one Iranian woman's courageous struggle against being forced to wear the hijab. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2018/jun/03/the-wind-in-my-hair-one-womans-struggle-against-being-forced-to-wear-hijab>
- Moosavi, s. (1986). *A sociolinguistic analysis of the persian system of taarof and its implications for the teaching of farsi (iranian studies, cross-cultural studies, islamic culture)* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Morphy, L. (2018). The Guardian. Terribly sorry – but Britain's famed politeness may be a myth. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/26/britain-politeness-english-speakers-gratitude>
- Nanbakhsh, G. (2009). Persian politeness ritual: Taarof. In *Paper presented in the second conference on Linguistic Impoliteness and Rudeness (LIAR)*.
- Nejat, F. F. (2004). The Persian Taarof Comprehension Test. Retrieved September, 29, 2009.

- Newman, S. (1955). Vocabulary levels: Zuni sacred and slang usage. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 11(4), 345-354.
- Nurullah, A. S. (2008). Globalisation as a challenge to Islamic cultural identity. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences: Annual Review*, 2(6), pp.45-52
- O'Shea, M. (2003). "Chapter 3: The Languages of Poetry and Sugar," in *Iran: Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette* (Portland, OR: Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company), 84.
- Ohashi, J. (2010). Balancing obligations: Bowing and linguistic features in thanking in Japanese. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 6(2), 183-214.
- Okamoto, S. (1995). Tasteless Japanese. *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York: Rutledge, 297-325.
- Okamoto, S. (1999). Situated politeness: manipulating honorific and non-honorific expressions in Japanese conversations. *Pragmatics*, 9(1), 51-74.
- Oxford, R. L., & Burry-Stock, J. A. (1995). Assessing the use of language learning strategies worldwide with the ESL/EFL version of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). *System*, 23(1), 1-23.
- Paidar, P. (2001). Gender of democracy: the encounter between feminism and reformism in contemporary Iran. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
- Pan, Y. (1995). Politeness strategies in Chinese verbal interaction: A sociolinguistic analysis of spoken data in official, business and family settings.

- Pan, Y., & Kádár, D. Z. (2011). Historical vs. contemporary Chinese linguistic politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(6), 1525-1539.
- Rafiee, A. (1992). Variables of communicative incompetence in the performance of Iranian learners of English and English learners of Persian, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London.
- Ramazani, N. (1993). Women in Iran: The revolutionary ebb and flow. *Middle East Journal*, 47(3), 409-428.
- Read, B. K., & Cherry, L. J. (1978). Preschool children's production of directive forms\*. *Discourse Processes*, 1(3), 233-245.
- Sahragard, R. (2003). A cultural script analysis of a politeness feature in Persian. In Proceedings of the 8th Conference of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics.
- Sahragard, R. (2004). A cultural script analysis of a politeness feature in Persian. In *Proceeding of the 8th Pall conference in Japan* (pp. 399-423).
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2001). 27 Discourse and Intercultural Communication. *The handbook of discourse analysis*, 538.
- Shamloo, S (1991). Clinical Psychology. Roshd publication, Tehran.
- Sharifian, F. (2007). L1 cultural conceptualisations in L2 learning. *Applied cultural linguistics: Implications for second language learning and intercultural communication*, 33-51.
- Sharifian, F. (2008). Cultural schemas in L1 and L2 compliment responses: a study of Persian-speaking learners of English. *J. Politeness Res.* 4 (1), 55-80.
- Sharifian, F. (2011). Cultural linguistics. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*.

- Sharifian, F. (2011). *Cultural Conceptualisations and Language: Theoretical Framework and Applications*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Sharifian, F., Babaie, H. (2013). Refusal strategies in L1 and L2. A study of Persian speaking learners of English. *Multilingua* 32 (6), 801-836.
- Shibamoto Smith, J. S., & Occhi, D. J. (2009). The green leaves of love: Japanese romantic heroines, authentic femininity, and dialect. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 13(4), 524-546.
- Sims-Williams, N. (1996). Eastern Iranian languages. *Encyclopædia Iranica*, 7, 6.
- Strauss, S., & Feiz, P. (2013). *Discourse analysis: Putting our worlds into words*. Routledge.
- Taleghani-Nikazm, C. M. (1999). *Politeness in native-nonnative speakers' interaction: some manifestations of Persian taarof in the interaction among Iranian speakers of German with German native speakers* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin).
- Terkourafi, M. (2011). From politeness<sup>1</sup> to politeness<sup>2</sup>: tracking norms of im/politeness across time and space. *J. Politeness Res.* 7 (2), 159-182.
- Trudgill, P. (1974). *The social differentiation of English in Norwich* (Vol. 13). CUP Archive.
- Van Lancker Sidtis, D. (2004). When novel sentences spoken or heard for the first time in the history of the universe are not enough: Toward a dual-process model of language. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 39 (1), 1-44.
- Vidal, M. V. E. (1998). Cortesía y relevancia<sup>1</sup> M. Victoria Escandell Vidal. La pragmática lingüística del español: Recientes desarrollos, (22), 7.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Wetzel, P. J. (2004). *Keigo in modern Japan: Polite language from Meiji to the present*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Wolfson, N. (1983). An empirically based analysis of complimenting in American English. *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition*, 82-95.
- Yaghmaian, B. (2002). *Social change in Iran: An eyewitness account of dissent, defiance, and new movements for rights*. SUNY Press.
- Zandpour, F., & Sadri, G. (1996). Communication in personal relationships in Iran: A comparative analysis. *Communication in personal relationships across cultures*, 174-196.
- Zimin, S. (1981). Sex and politeness: Factors in first-and second-language use. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 1981(27), 35-58.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Taarof questionnaire

#### Part 1. Demographic Information

1. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Your gender (insert a check mark): M  F
3. Your occupation: \_\_\_\_\_
4. The highest level of education you have completed: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where were you born? (place) \_\_\_\_\_
6. How would you prefer to self-identify ethnically? (irrespective of any official status)  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Please list the places where you lived for 5 years or more since you were born  

Place there?	How many years did you live there	From what age to what age did you live there?
-----------------	-----------------------------------	--
8. What is/are your native language(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
9. If your native language is Farsi, would you consider yourself a speaker of standard Farsi, or of some dialect?
10. If your answer to above is “dialect”, please specify which \_\_\_\_\_
11. Are you highly fluent in any other language(s) besides Farsi? Please, circle: Yes/No.  
If “yes,” in which language (s)?
12. Do you speak English? Please specify the level of language proficiency (by circulating) one of the following options:  
a) No proficiency b) elementary proficiency c) limited proficiency d) professional proficiency  
e) full professional proficiency f) near-native or bilingual proficiency g) native proficiency
13. Have you ever lived abroad for more than 1 year? Please, circle: Yes/No.  
If “yes”, where and for how many years?
14. Do you identify with any religion? A) Muslim b) Christian c) Jewish d) other e) none  
f) I prefer not to disclose my religion

**Part 2. Taarof use and attitudes to Taarof**

1. Circle one of the following:

1=Not at all    2=A little    3=Somewhat    4=Much

1. Do you know when to use and when not to use taarof?	1 2 3 4
2. If you don't know when to use and when not to use taarof, would you like to learn it? ➤ Explain the reason:	1 2 3 4

2. Circle one of the following:

1=Never    2=Seldom    3=Sometimes    4=Often    5=All the time

1. How often did you use taarof in your daily interactions in Iran?	1 2 3 4 5
2. Have you ever experienced any difficulties in communication with Iranians in Iran because of you not using taarof? If you did experience difficulties, please provide an example, if you can.	1 2 3 4 5
3. Have you ever experienced any difficulties in communication with Iranians in Iran because you do use taarof? If you did experience difficulties, please provide an example, if you can.	1 2 3 4 5
4. Have you ever experienced difficulties in communication with foreigners in Iran because of your use of taarof? If you never spoke with foreigners please circle "does not apply"	1 2 3 4 5 Does not apply

<p>If you did experience difficulties, please provide an example, if you can.</p>	
<p>5. Have you ever experienced difficulties in communication with foreigners abroad because of your use of taarof? If you have never been abroad, please circle “does not apply” If you did experience difficulties, please provide an example, if you can.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 Does not apply</p>
<p>6. Have you ever experienced difficulties in communication with immigrant Iranians abroad because of your use of taarof? If you have never been abroad or spoken with immigrant Iranians there, please circle “does not apply” If you did experience difficulties, please provide an example, if you can.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5 Does not apply</p>
<p>7. Do you sometimes feel the pressure of using taarof in your interactions with other Iranians in Iran? If you did experience pressures, please describe what kinds of pressures, if you can.</p>	<p>1 2 3 4 5</p>

3. Here are some statements about taarof. Please say whether you agree or disagree with these statements.

Circle one of the following:

1=Strongly disagree  
5=Strongly agree

2=Disagree

3=Neither agree nor disagree

4=Agree

1. Taarof is an efficient tool for communication.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Taarof is a characteristic of good manners.	1 2 3 4 5
3. I enjoy using taarof.	1 2 3 4 5
4. I hate using taarof.	1 2 3 4 5
5. I enjoy when people use taarof.	1 2 3 4 5
6. I hate when people use taarof.	1 2 3 4 5
7. Taarof makes communication too difficult.	1 2 3 4 5
8. Taarof makes communication more exciting.	1 2 3 4 5
9. For a person with Iranian background, it is important to be able to use taarof.	1 2 3 4 5
10. Taarof is an important part of Iranian culture.	1 2 3 4 5
11. It is important to teach taarof to children in families of immigrants from Iran living abroad.	1 2 3 4 5
12. Taarof needs to be preserved in the families of people of Iranian descent living abroad.	1 2 3 4 5
13. People of Iranian descent living abroad should discard taarof.	1 2 3 4 5
14. Iranians in Iran should discard taarof.	1 2 3 4 5
15. Taarof use is influenced by social distance.	1 2 3 4 5
16. Taarof use is influenced by age difference.	1 2 3 4 5
17. Taarof use is influenced by gender.	1 2 3 4 5
18. Taarof use is influenced by nearness in relationship/proximity.	1 2 3 4 5
19. Taarof is beautiful	1 2 3 4 5
20. Taarof is deceitful	1 2 3 4 5
21. Taarof is a characteristic of good education	1 2 3 4 5
22. Taarof is a characteristic of good upbringing	1 2 3 4 5
23. It is important to teach taarof to Iranian children in Iran.	1 2 3 4 5
24. Taarof is too hard to use, and is not worth the trouble	1 2 3 4 5
25. Taarof makes people feel better	1 2 3 4 5
26. Iranians in Iran should keep using taarof	1 2 3 4 5

### **Part 3. Taarof factors**

**Please provide answers in a free format to the following questions about Taarof**

1. What do you think the most important features of taarof are?
2. How do you think the use of taarof is influenced by gender? Explain.
3. How do you think the use of taarof is influenced by age difference? Explain.
4. How do you think the use of taarof is influenced by closeness or distance in people's relationship? Please explain.
5. How do you think the use of taarof is influenced by education? Explain.
6. How do you think the use of taarof is influenced by wealth? Explain.
7. How do you think using taarof is influenced by region in Iran? Explain.
8. What other factors in your opinion may influence taarof use? Explain

## **Appendix B. Taarof scenarios**

### **Situation 1.**

One of the participants is a customer, one is a shop assistant.

The customer comes to a store to buy a watch, because his/her watch has stopped, and he/she needs one urgently. The shop assistant offers a choice of 5 watches, the customer bargains over the price. The shop assistant is very motivated to sell and tries to be nice to the customer. Some of the watches are high end brands and are very expensive, some are more reasonably priced. The actual retail price of the watch is on the back of the watch: the shop assistant knows it, but the customer does not. The shop assistant tries to sell more expensive watches, and not just one, but 2 or 3 as a deal for a friend, relative or colleague. In the end the customer buys one of the cheaper watches. The shop assistant invites the customer to come again for a new watch as a present for a family member, a friend or a colleague.

The description of watches for the sales person:

“Rolex”: costs \$15,000. It has diamonds around it, and the hands are made of platinum, it has anti-scratch glass and anti-allergic straps.

“Romanson”: costs \$1,000. It has anti-allergic steel straps, it is light and waterproof.

“Violet”: costs \$300. It is made in Japan. It is waterproof with steel straps.

Q & Q: costs \$60. It is made in China, and it is water-proof.

ChiChi: costs \$30 and it is made in China.

**Situation 2.**

One of the participants received an award from the City Hall for outstanding contribution to the community service (for planting a community garden). The other person meets the person who received an award in the street by accident. As he/she has read an article in the local paper about it, he/she congratulates the award winner and asks about plants and vegetables in the garden and offers help with working in it as a volunteer. Award winner expresses concerns whether the other person has enough time for this (any other possible concerns as well) and in the end, the award winner accepts the offer.

## Appendix C. Taarof expressions

Taarof Expression	Literal Meaning	Actual Meaning
<b>Aa</b>		
<b>agar zahmati nist</b>	If it's not trouble.	If it's not too much trouble.
<b>Bb</b>		
<b>be ja nemiyaram</b>	I don't know you.	Have we met?
<b>befarmaeed</b>	Command!	Here you go.
<b>Dd</b>		
<b>dar khedmat hastam</b>	I'm at your service.	I'm at your disposal.
<b>dastetoon dard nakone</b>	Your hand doesn't hurt	Thank you.
<b>dobare mozahem misham</b>	I'll come to bother you again.	I'll take your precious time later.
<b>Ee</b>		
<b>ekhtiyar darid</b>	You're the authority.	You're quite welcome.
<b>Gg</b>		
<b>ghabel nadare</b>	It doesn't cost anything.	It's mere nothing, have it.
<b>ghorbane shoma</b>	I sacrifice myself for you.	May I go all over you!
<b>Kk</b>		
<b>kar khasi nabood</b>	It wasn't anything special.	No problem.
<b>kharesh mikonam</b>	I beg you.	You're welcome.
<b>khaste nabashid</b>	Don't be tired.	Good job.

<b>khedamat shoma</b>	At your service.	Here you go.
<b>Ll</b>		
<b>loft darid</b>	You have kindness.	It's so kind of you.
<b>Mm</b>		
<b>maghaze khodetoone</b>	The shop belongs to you.	You're always welcome to my shop.
<b>mamnoon</b>	Thank you.	Thank you.
<b>mehmoone ma bashid</b>	Be our guest	It's my treat.
<b>Nn</b>		
<b>nazare lofetoone</b>	It's your kindness.	It's so kind of you.
<b>Rr</b>		
<b>rah miyaym ba ham</b>	We'll walk together.	We'll agree on a price.
<b>Ss</b>		
<b>salamat bashid</b>	Be healthy	Stay well.
<b>Vv</b>		
<b>vazife boodeh (exp.):</b>	It was my duty.	My pleasure.

## Appendix D. The characteristics of participants

Male Participants	Age	Occupation	Education	Birth place	Female Participants	Age	Occupation	Education	Birth place
1	23	student	bachelor's	Mashhad	31	27	teacher	master's	Laar
2	23	student	bachelor's	Mashhad	32	27	teacher	master's	Mashhad
3	26	teacher	master's	Mashhad	33	29	teacher	master's	Mashhad
4	28	teacher	master's	Mashhad	34	21	student	diploma	Mashhad
5	28	lecturer	master's	Mashhad	35	27	student	diploma	Tehran
6	25	writer	master's	Sabzevar	36	25	teacher	master's	Mashhad
7	23	student	diploma	Mashhad	37	22	student	diploma	Mashhad
8	22	student	diploma	Neyshabour	38	29	teacher	bachelor's	Mashhad
9	27	sales person	bachelor's	Mashhad	39	27	student	master's	Chaloos
10	21	student	bachelor's	Bojnourd	40	22	student	diploma	Mashhad
11	22	student	diploma	Tehran	41	24	freelancer	bachelor's	Mashhad
12	23	student	bachelor's	Mashhad	42	30	student	PhD	Mashhad
13	22	student	bachelor's	Mashhad	43	20	student	diploma	Mashhad
14	29	manager	master's	Mashhad	44	24	counsellor	bachelor's	Mashhad
15	24	student	diploma	Mashhad	45	25	student	bachelor's	Mashhad
16	58	retired	bachelor's	Kerman	46	44	clerk	diploma	Kohbanan
17	54	retired	diploma	Kerman	47	50	teacher	bachelor's	Kerman
18	45	clerk	diploma	Kohbanan	48	45	teacher	master's	Tehran
19	56	retired	diploma	Kerman	49	42	teacher	master's	Kerman
20	47	freelancer	diploma	Kerman	50	40	teacher	bachelor's	Kerman
21	48	teacher	bachelor's	Mashhad	51	50	clerk	master's	Firouzabad
22	51	clerk	bachelor's	Ghochan	52	43	retired	bachelor's	Sarab
23	53	clerk	bachelor's	Mashhad	53	48	teacher	master's	Mashhad
24	59	manager	master's	Kerman	54	44	teacher	master's	Tehran

<b>25</b>	56	teacher	bachelor's	Ferdous	<b>55</b>	46	housewife	bachelor's	Mashhad
<b>26</b>	51	clerk	bachelor's	Mashhad	<b>56</b>	46	teacher	master's	Mashhad
<b>27</b>	43	teacher	master's	Mashhad	<b>57</b>	49	teacher	master's	Kerman
<b>28</b>	49	retired	bachelor's	Sabzevar	<b>58</b>	48	teacher	master's	Mashhad
<b>29</b>	50	clerk	diploma	Birjand	<b>59</b>	52	teacher	bachelor's	Mashhad
<b>30</b>	53	clerk	master's	Kerman	<b>60</b>	46	teacher	bachelor's	Mashhad