



Face and Politeness in Action: A Comparative Analysis of Apology and Request Strategies in Persian and Finnish

Masoumeh Yazdanpanah¹, **Maryam Iraj^{2*}** & **Foroogh Kazemi³**

1: PhD, Department of Linguistics, Central branch Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

2: Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, Central branch. Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran (Correspondence Author): miraji180@gmail.com

2: Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, Central branch Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

Abstract: This study presents a cross-linguistic comparison of politeness strategies in Persian and Finnish, focusing on the realization of apologies and requests as prototypical face-threatening acts. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness and face-work, the research examines how speakers of the two languages mitigate interactional threats in everyday communicative contexts, while avoiding broad cultural generalizations. The study adopts an exploratory, qualitative-dominant design. The dataset consists of 40 naturally occurring instances of apologies and requests, including 20 Persian and 20 Finnish examples, collected from informal interactions in public and semi-public settings such as shops, service encounters, and routine urban environments. These contexts allow for spontaneous interaction among speakers from diverse social backgrounds. The data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness categories as heuristic analytical tools, with careful attention to contextual and interactional factors. Given the scope of the corpus, the analysis is descriptive rather than statistically generalizable. The findings show that Persian speakers tend to employ layered mitigation strategies characterized by indirectness, relational alignment, and ritualized politeness practices, often combining positive and negative politeness resources. In contrast, Finnish speakers display a consistent preference for brevity, structural simplicity, and restrained mitigation, reflecting an orientation toward non-imposition and respect for interlocutors' autonomy. These patterns are interpreted as pragmatic tendencies observable in the analyzed data rather than as fixed cultural traits. Overall, the study demonstrates that Brown and Levinson's framework remains analytically useful when applied with methodological caution and appropriately scaled claims.

Keywords: politeness, face-work, apology, request, Persian, Finnish, cross-linguistic pragmatics.

- M. yazdan panah; M. Iraj; F. Kazemi (2026). "Face and Politeness in Action: A Comparative Analysis of Apology and Request Strategies in Persian and Finnish". Semnan University: *The Journal of Linguistic and Rhetorical Studies* 17(43).189-204.
[Doi: 10.22075/jlrs.2026.40408.2829](https://doi.org/10.22075/jlrs.2026.40408.2829)

1. Introduction

Politeness, as a central mechanism for managing Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) like apologies and requests, constitutes a core concern in pragmatics. While Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory has provided a foundational framework for analyzing such mitigation strategies across languages, contemporary research emphasizes methodological restraint, context sensitivity, and the careful scaling of claims, warning against treating politeness as a fixed cultural attribute. Within this landscape, Persian and Finnish represent two typologically and pragmatically under-compared languages. Extant research on Persian highlights indirectness and ritualized practices like *ta'ārof*, whereas studies on Finnish emphasize brevity, restraint, and respect for autonomy. However, a systematic comparison of these tendencies using comparable, naturally occurring data is lacking.

This study aims to address this gap by conducting a small-scale, exploratory comparative analysis of apology and request strategies in Persian and Finnish. Its primary objective is to identify and contrast the use of Positive and Negative Politeness strategies in these speech acts, examining the extent to which their selection is shaped by underlying cultural orientations. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How are apologies and requests realized in the selected Persian and Finnish data?
2. What positive and negative politeness strategies are employed in each dataset?
3. What context-sensitive pragmatic tendencies emerge from a small-scale comparison of the two languages?

Informed by the documented cultural profiles, the study tests the following hypotheses:

1. In executing apologies and requests, Persian speakers will demonstrate a greater tendency to employ Positive Politeness strategies.
2. In executing the same acts, Finnish speakers will show a dominant inclination toward Negative Politeness strategies.
3. These strategic differences will reflect fundamental cultural values: an emphasis on closeness, solidarity, and relational harmony

in Persian-speaking contexts, versus a focus on autonomy, distance, and non-imposition in Finnish-speaking contexts.

By focusing on these two specific FTAs within a shared theoretical framework, this research seeks to offer a nuanced, empirically grounded comparison that contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics and refines the application of politeness theory to linguistically diverse contexts.

This study occupies a distinct niche within cross-cultural pragmatics. While extensive research exists on politeness in Persian (e.g., Eslami Rasekh, 1993; Salmani Nodoushan, 2006; Koutlaki, 2021) and Finnish (e.g., Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1985; Leppänen, 2019) separately, direct comparative work on this language pair remains virtually nonexistent. The sole exception is Yazdanpanah et al. (2025), whose findings align with the present study's orientation. However, that study differs methodologically, relying on elicited rather than naturally occurring data. The present research thus contributes to filling this gap by providing an empirically grounded, qualitatively rich comparison based on spontaneous interactions, while remaining transparent about its exploratory scope.

2. Literature Review

The academic study of politeness and face management is rooted in Goffman's (1967) sociological concept of *face* but was systematically operationalized within linguistics by Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. Their framework, defining *positive face* (desire for approval) and *negative face* (desire for autonomy), and categorizing strategies to mitigate Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs), has provided a dominant, though debated, structure for cross-linguistic analysis. This review focuses on research directly relevant to the pragmatic realization of apologies and requests in Persian and Finnish, the two target languages of this study.

Research within Persian pragmatics consistently identifies a strong orientation toward positive politeness and relational maintenance, linked to the culture's collectivistic values. Seminal works by Eslami Rasekh (1993) and Salmani Nodoushan (2006) on requests and apologies establish that Persian speakers favor

strategies expressing solidarity, empathy, and ingroup membership. This tendency is deeply interwoven with *ta'ārof*, a ritualized system of politeness that strategically blends deference and intimacy, simultaneously addressing positive and negative face wants (Sharifian, 2005). The complexity of *ta'ārof* presents a significant analytical challenge to Brown and Levinson's dichotomous model. More recent studies continue to explore this complexity. For instance, Koutlaki (2021) examines the multifunctionality of *ta'ārof* in contemporary Iranian service encounters, demonstrating how its layered expressions serve both relational and transactional goals, a nuance often missed by broader theoretical frameworks. Similarly, Shariati and Chamani (2020) provide a detailed analysis of apology strategies in Persian, noting the prevalent use of intensifiers, elaborate explanations, and offers of repair, which align with a cultural emphasis on restoring relational harmony over merely addressing individual autonomy. While studies like Razavian et al. (2025) and Naghshbandi et al. (2024) examine *impoliteness* in Persian satire and online discourse, revealing a historical shift from direct to indirect mockery and a prevalence of bald-on-record attacks in anonymous digital spaces, their focus on deliberate face-aggression and socio-political critique lies outside the scope of the present study. This research, conversely, focuses on the co-operative mitigation of face threats in ordinary conversational interactions, where the strategic goals and pragmatic mechanisms are fundamentally different from those employed in satirical or antagonistic contexts. Yazdanpanah et al. (2025) investigates linguistic and cultural differences in expressing politeness between Persian and Finnish languages. The findings of this research indicate that linguistic and cultural differences play a significant role in how politeness is expressed in Persian and Finnish. Due to its cultural and social structure, the Persian language tends to employ more polite and formal expressions, whereas the Finnish language, characterized by its straightforward and direct culture, prefers more explicit and unembellished expressions. These disparities highlight the profound influence of culture on language and interpersonal communication. Furthermore, in Persian, negative politeness strategies are employed for expressing apologies and requests, emphasizing deference and humility. In contrast, Finnish

culture, with its emphasis on directness and simplicity, uses fewer such expressions, reflecting a preference for clarity and honesty.

Conversely, research on Finnish politeness highlights a contrasting profile aligned with individualistic cultural norms. Foundational studies, such as Lehtonen and Sajavaara's (1985) work on communicative style and Lehtonen's (1996) analysis of requests, characterize Finnish interaction by a preference for negative politeness, realized through verbal economy, restraint, and a high tolerance for silence. The strategic priority is minimizing imposition and respecting interlocutor autonomy, often resulting in direct yet brief utterances mitigated by minimal markers. Recent studies reinforce this understanding while adding nuance. For example, Leppänen (2019) investigates requests in Finnish workplace emails, confirming the prevalence of indirectness and conditional structures (e.g., *voisitko* – "could you") as primary negative politeness devices, while also noting that the level of directness is finely calibrated to established workplace hierarchies and relationships. Furthermore, studies like Korhonen's (2022) work on mediated apologies in educational settings highlight the context-dependent and ritualistic nature of apology in Finland, though her focus is more on pedagogical socialization than on cross-linguistic pragmatics.

A critical gap in the literature is the lack of direct comparative pragmatics research between Persian and Finnish. While studies exist comparing each language to others (e.g., Yu, 2001 on Korean and Japanese), a focused, data-driven comparison of core FTAs like apologies and requests across this specific language pair is absent. This lacuna underscores the novelty of the present study. It aims to conduct such a comparison using Brown and Levinson's framework as a heuristic tool, while critically examining its applicability in light of culture-specific phenomena like *ta'ārof* and the Finnish preference for restrained mitigation.

3.Theoretical Framework

The analysis of politeness and face management in linguistic interactions is predominantly founded upon Politeness Theory, as formulated by Brown and Levinson (1987). This theoretical framework is rooted in Goffman's (1967) sociological concept of "Face."

According to Brown and Levinson, "Face" represents the positive social image that every interactant wishes to preserve, divided into two aspects:

- a) Positive Face: The desire for approval, belonging, and validation.
- b) Negative Face: The need for autonomy, freedom, and freedom from imposition.

Speech acts such as "apologies" and "requests" inherently carry a potential threat to face. Apologies often jeopardize the speaker's Positive Face, while requests challenge the hearer's Negative Face. To mitigate these threats, speakers employ politeness strategies, categorized into five main classes:

- a) Bald On-Record
- b) Positive Politeness
- c) Negative Politeness
- d) Off-Record
- e) Don't Perform the Act

Comparative studies have demonstrated that the selection of politeness strategies is contingent upon cultural norms, societal values, linguistic structure, and situational context. This study aims to systematically compare these socio-linguistic patterns by focusing on Persian (leaning towards Positive Politeness and collective cohesion) versus Finnish (emphasizing individual autonomy and Negative Politeness).

Consequently, Brown and Levinson's Theory (1987) serves as the central theoretical framework for this research, illuminating the differences and similarities in politeness strategies employed in the speech acts of "Apology" and "Request."

It should be noted that In Persian, a distinct form of politeness and deference exists, often intertwined with *Ta'ārof*. Individuals are expected to show mutual respect and reinforce each other's positive face. Collectively, these research findings demonstrate that politeness is not merely a linguistic feature but a cultural and cognitive mechanism constructed based on underlying values, social relations, and discursive context.

4.Methodology

This study adopts an exploratory, qualitative-dominant comparative design. Given the scarcity of direct Persian-Finnish pragmatics research, an exploratory approach is appropriate for identifying initial patterns and generating hypotheses for future large-scale

investigation.

The dataset comprises 40 naturally occurring instances of apologies and requests (20 Persian, 20 Finnish). Data were collected through:

- Persian data: Recorded by the researcher (a native Persian speaker) through participant observation in Tehran during June-September 2023, supplemented by diary entries from three Persian-speaking informants.

- Finnish data: Collected by the researcher during fieldwork in Finland (August-October 2023), with assistance from two Finnish native speakers who recorded interactions in their social networks.

The sampling criteria for inclusion were:

1. The interaction must contain either an apology or a request
2. The interaction must occur spontaneously in a public or semi-public setting
3. The speech act must be clearly identifiable and complete
4. Participants must be unaware of being recorded at the time (ethical protocols followed; consent obtained retrospectively where possible)

Data were collected from informal interactions in public and semi-public settings—such as shops, service encounters, and routine urban environments—to capture spontaneous, ecologically valid discourse among speakers from diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and social positions, while ensuring the FTAs examined were of low to medium stakes.

Data were collected through audio recordings, field notes and retrospective consent. Brief segments (10-60 seconds) capturing the target speech acts. Immediately after each interaction, contextual details (setting, estimated age/gender, relationship) were recorded. Where identifiable, participants were informed and consent was obtained; all data were anonymized.

Data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness categories as heuristic tools. The analysis follows a qualitative micro-analytic approach. For each language, we first present close readings of representative examples, then synthesize patterns across the dataset. Quantitative counts of strategy frequency are provided descriptively to illustrate distributional tendencies, but no inferential statistics are employed, consistent with the exploratory nature of the study.

5. Discussion and Analysis

Prior to analyzing the individual Persian and Finnish instances, it is crucial to address the theoretical challenge posed by the Persian system of *Ta'ārof*. This ritualized practice, central to apologies and requests, often integrates strategies of deference (negative politeness) and relational closeness (positive politeness) inseparably, as seen in formulaic exchanges like « شما مهمونید، نه، شما اختیار دارید...». This fusion challenges the mutually exclusive categories of Brown and Levinson's model. Consequently, in the following analysis, while we employ their taxonomy for descriptive consistency, we note where *Ta'ārof* represents a simultaneous realization of both politeness axes, highlighting a cultural logic where face-work is oriented towards reinforcing social bonds and mutual respect within a collective framework, in contrast to the more individuated strategies often found in Finnish."

5.1. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis reveals a fundamental contrast in how face-saving mechanisms are prioritized and linguistically realized in Persian and Finnish, confirming the study's hypotheses. This divergence stems from deeper cultural logics of social engagement: one oriented towards connection and the other towards discretion.

Persian: The Expansive Logic of Connection

The Persian data demonstrates a strong inclination towards strategies that intricately blend politeness types, often mediated by *ta'ārof*. Communication follows an additive and expansive logic, where layers of verbal mitigation envelop the core speech act to reinforce relational warmth and social bonds. The goal extends beyond avoiding offense to actively affirming interdependence.

Apology Strategies: Persian apologies frequently employ external justifications to foster shared understanding (Positive Politeness), while simultaneously emphasizing the hearer's autonomy. For instance, «ببخشید که دیر رسیدم، ترافیک خیلی سنگین بود» / be'bæxʃid ke di:r resi:'dæm | tɛr:'fik xer'li sæn'gi:n bu:d / ("Excuse me for being late, the traffic was very heavy") seeks empathy by attributing fault to an uncontrollable factor. More complex is «پوزش می‌طلبم، اگر اجازه بدهید» / po:'zɛʃ mi:tælæ'bæm | æ'gær e'dʒɔ:ze be'dæhid dʒob'ɾɔ:n ko'næm / ("I request your pardon; if you permit, I will compensate"), which uses a conditional clause to place the power of redress entirely in

the hearer's hands (Negative Politeness), yet the act of offering repair itself is a strong positive facework. Apologies also often validate the hearer's feelings, as in «امیدوارم از دستم ناراحت نشده باشید» / omi:d'vɒ:ræm æz dæs'tæm nɒ:rɒ:'hæt næʃo'de bɒ:fɪd / ("I hope you are not upset with me"), directly attending to their emotional state.

Request Strategies: Requests are systematically softened through indirectness, pre-sequences, and deference. A request like «اگر فرصت دارید، می‌توانم چند دقیقه از وقتتان استفاده کنم؟» / æ'gær for'sæt dɒ:'rɪd | mi:tæ'vɒ:ræm tʃænd dəyi:'ye æz væy'tætɒ:n estefɒ:'de ko'næm / ("If you have time, may I use a few minutes of your time?") employs conditionality and explicit minimization of imposition (Negative Politeness). Conversely, «لطفاً می‌کنید این فرم را... ایمیل کنید؟» / loʃ mi:ko'nɪd i:n form rɒ:i:'meɪl ko'nɪd / ("Would you be so kind as to email this form...?") uses affectionate terminology to frame the act as a favour among associates (Positive Politeness). A notable strategy is coupling a request with a justification that frames it as a shared need: «ممکن است پنجره را ببندید؟ کمی سرد شده» / mom'ken æst pændʒæ're rɒ: be'bændɪd | kæ'mi særd.ʃo'de / ("Is it possible to close the window? It has gotten a bit cold"). Here, indirectness ("Is it possible") combines with an environmental reason, presenting the request as solving a mutual problem rather than expressing a personal desire.

Finnish: The Reductive Logic of Discretion

In stark contrast, the Finnish data exhibits a consistent preference for Negative Politeness, realized through a reductive and concise logic. The focus is on minimizing social friction and respecting autonomy through structural clarity and lexical economy, prioritizing distance and non-imposition.

Apology Strategies: Finnish apologies are characteristically succinct and focus on the factual mitigation of the offense. "*Anteeksi myöhästyminen, liikenne oli todella paha*" /'ante:ksi 'æt:æ 'myøhæstyin | 'li:ken:e 'oli 'tod:el:a 'ru:hkainen/ ("Excuse my being late, the traffic was really bad") offers a brief, matter-of-fact justification. The apology "*Olen pahoillani, en tarkoittanut loukata sinua*" /'olen 'pahoil:ani | en 'tarkoit:anut 'loukata 'sinuɑ/ ("I am sorry, I did not mean to offend you") explicitly denies harmful intent, respecting the hearer's moral judgement. Crucially, repair is offered as a question: "*Olen pahoillani tästä virheestä, voinko hyvittää sen jollakin tavalla?*" /'olen 'pahoil:ani 'destæ 'virhe:stæ | 'voinko 'hyvit:æ: sen 'jol:akin 'taval:ɑ/ ("I am sorry for this mistake, can

I compensate for it somehow?"). This interrogative form fully cedes agency to the hearer, embodying the core principle of non-imposition.

Request Strategies: Requests are formulated with clear, minimal structures that grammatically emphasize the hearer's agency. The modal interrogative "*Voitko lähettää tämän lomakkeen minulle tänään?*" /'voitko 'læhettæ: 'tæmæn 'lomak:en 'minul:e 'tænæ:n/ ("Can you send this form to me today?") transforms a potential imposition into a question of ability. A dual strategy of conditionality and minimization is seen in "*Jos sinulla on aikaa, saanko käyttää sitä muutaman minuutin ajan?*" /jos 'sinul:a on 'aika: | 'sa:nko 'kyttæ: 'sitæ 'mu:taman 'minu:tin 'ajan/ ("If you have time, may I use some of it for a few minutes?"). Even seemingly direct utterances like "*Lähetä raportti tänään?*" /'læhetæ 'raport:i 'tænæ:n/ ("Send the report today") rely on established contextual norms and shared understanding that such brevity is acceptable, not rude, within specific hierarchical or collaborative relationships.

6. Nuanced Comparative Interpretation

The findings confirm not only a difference in the frequency of politeness types but, more importantly, a profound divergence in their cultural articulation.

- **Handling Imposition:** Persian often acknowledges and transforms imposition into a relational moment (e.g., pre-emptive apologies that invite forgiveness). Finnish seeks to pre-emptively minimize and structurally neutralise imposition (e.g., lexical downgrades like "*vilkaista*" – to glance, and conditional clauses).
- **Agency and Responsibility:** Persian may diffuse agency through external justifications or proverbs to protect both parties' face. Finnish tends towards clear, personal ownership of fault ("*minun virheeni*" – my mistake) coupled with grammatical structures that grant the hearer full control over the outcome.
- **Expression of Solidarity:** Persian solidarity is verbally rich and affective, expressed through terms of endearment, blessings, and elaborate gratitude, intertwining the transactional and relational. Finnish solidarity is often actional and tacit, demonstrated through reliability, respecting boundaries, and understated compliments ("*Hyvää työtä*" – Good work), where restraint itself signals trust.

Ultimately, Persian politeness, particularly through *ta'ārof*, operates on a logic of connection, using elaborate language to create

and reaffirm interdependent social bonds. Finnish politeness operates on a logic of discretion, using economical language to navigate social space with minimal intrusion and maximum respect for individual sovereignty. This deep-structural mismatch in what constitutes "considerate" speech is the root of potential intercultural pragmatic failure. A Persian speaker might perceive Finnish directness as impersonal coldness, while a Finnish speaker might view Persian indirectness and elaboration as inefficient or insincere verbosity. This underscores the critical need for metapragmatic awareness in cross-cultural communication, moving beyond superficial phrases to understand the underlying cultural logics of interaction.

7. Conclusion

This exploratory study has examined apology and request strategies in 40 naturally occurring interactions in Persian and Finnish, offering a micro-analytic glimpse into how speakers of these two linguistically and culturally distinct languages navigate face-threatening acts in everyday encounters. Within this limited dataset, several patterns emerge that warrant cautious interpretation while contributing meaningfully to the under-researched comparative domain of Persian-Finnish pragmatics.

The analysis suggests that Persian speakers in this sample tend to employ layered mitigation strategies that blend positive and negative politeness, often mediated by the ritualized framework of *ta'ārof*. These strategies are characterized by linguistic elaboration, affective warmth, and a primary orientation toward reinforcing relational bonds. Apologies frequently incorporate external justifications that invite empathy, coupled with explicit concern for the hearer's emotional state. Requests are systematically softened through indirectness, pre-sequences, conditional clauses, and the strategic framing of imposition as a shared concern. This approach reflects what might be termed an expansive logic of connection, where politeness operates not merely to avoid offense but to actively affirm interdependence and social solidarity.

Finnish speakers in this sample, by contrast, show a consistent preference for structurally simpler, lexically economical forms of negative politeness. The overarching pattern is one of reductive logic of discretion, where politeness is enacted through minimizing intrusion upon the interlocutor's autonomy. Apologies focus on

factual accounting and optional repair, avoiding presumption about the hearer's feelings. Requests employ modal interrogatives, conditional clauses, and lexical downgrades that grammatically encode the hearer's agency and right to refuse. These patterns, observed within the specific contexts and interactions sampled, align with broader characterizations of Persian as relationship-oriented and Finnish as autonomy-oriented in the existing literature (e.g., Eslami Rasekh, 1993; Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1985; Leppänen, 2019).

However, these findings must be understood as context-sensitive tendencies rather than fixed cultural attributes. The exploratory nature of the study, the modest sample size (20 instances per language), and the absence of systematic demographic controls preclude generalization to entire speech communities. Several sources of intra-cultural variation were observed: not all Persian speakers employed elaborate *ta'ārof* to the same degree; some Finnish interactions showed limited use of positive politeness strategies; and situational factors such as degree of imposition visibly modulated strategy selection in both languages. These observations underscore that while cultural patterns are discernible, they operate as probabilistic tendencies shaped by contextual, individual, and relational factors.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the continued utility of Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework as a heuristic tool when applied with caution and supplemented by culture-specific concepts like *ta'ārof*. The analysis also highlights the value of qualitative micro-analysis for capturing the sequential and layered nature of mitigation strategies patterns that quantitative coding alone might obscure. At the same time, the limitations of the Brown and Levinson model are evident: its dichotomous structure struggles to capture the synergistic integration of positive and negative facework inherent in Persian *ta'ārof*, where deference and intimacy operate simultaneously within single utterances. This suggests the need for more nuanced, culture-sensitive theoretical adaptations that can accommodate such complexity.

Several limitations inherent to this exploratory study must be acknowledged. The primary theoretical limitation stems from applying a framework developed largely from English and Western contexts to culturally embedded practices like *ta'ārof*. Empirically,

the exclusive focus on apologies and requests, while providing depth, limits generalizability to other face-threatening acts such as complaints, disagreements, or refusals, which may exhibit different strategic profiles. The practical challenges of assembling a parallel corpus of naturalistic data in two linguistically and geographically distant languages resulted in a small-scale dataset that prioritizes ecological validity and analytical depth over statistical representativeness. Furthermore, the profound typological differences between Persian (Indo-European) and Finnish (Uralic), coupled with the intrinsic difficulty of translating culture-specific concepts without semantic loss, presented unavoidable analytical constraints. These limitations collectively highlight the complexity of cross-cultural pragmatics research and underscore that the tendencies identified here are precisely that observable, culturally-grounded patterns within a specific dataset, not absolute or deterministic rules.

Future research would benefit from larger, more diverse samples that enable systematic control of demographic variables such as age, gender, and social distance. Inclusion of other face-threatening acts would test whether the patterns observed here extend across the spectrum of interpersonal negotiation. Engagement with alternative theoretical frameworks- including discursive politeness approaches, relational work theory and cultural schema theory- could enrich interpretation and address the limitations of the Brown and Levinson model. Cross-validating these findings through production questionnaires or experimental designs would complement the naturalistic approach adopted here.

In summation, within its acknowledged limitations, this research advances our understanding of the intricate interplay between language, culture, and social interaction. By illuminating the contrasting logics of politeness in Persian and Finnish, it not only clarifies a specific cross-linguistic puzzle but also contributes to a more relativistic and nuanced theory of facework. The insights generated have implications for intercultural communication, translation studies, and language pedagogy, highlighting the critical importance of metapragmatic awareness in navigating culturally diverse interactional landscapes. Ultimately, by charting the distinct routes two languages take to achieve the universal goal of social cohesion, this study opens productive new horizons for inquiry in

sociolinguistics and intercultural discourse analysis, while remaining transparent about the exploratory nature of its claims and the need for continued investigation.

References

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (2nd Ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Eslami Rasekh, Z. (1993). Politeness strategies in Persian: Requests and apologies. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 19(2), 143–168.
- Goffman, E. (1967). Face-work and politeness: Notes on a sociological microlanguage. In D. L. Schenkein (Ed.), *Studies in social interaction* (pp. 213–231). Free Press.
- Leppänen, T. (2019). Directness and indirectness in Finnish workplace email requests. *Nordic Journal of Linguistics*, 42(3), 265-291.
- Korhonen, M. (2022). Directness and mitigation in Finnish interaction: A pragmatic perspective. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 191, 1–14.
- Koutlaki, S. A. (2021). *Ta'arof* in contemporary Persian: A pragmatic analysis of offers in service encounters. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 185, 76-90.
- Lehtonen, J. (1996). Negative politeness in Finnish requests: A sociolinguistic study. *Finnish Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(1), 45–63.
- Lehtonen, J., & Sajavaara, K. (1985). The silent Finn. In D. Tannen & M. Saville-Troike (Eds.), *Perspectives on silence* (pp. 193–201). Ablex.
- Naghshbandi, Sh., Razavian, H., & Aryanfar, H. (2024). Analysis of verbal impoliteness in users' comments on Sahamyab stock website based on Culpeper's theory. *Journal of Language and Rhetorical Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.22075/jlrs.2024.33250.2429>
- Razavian, H. , Aliabadi, R. and Roushani, A. (2025). Comparative Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies in the Satire of Obeyd Zakani and Dehkhoda. *ZABANPAZHUI (Journal of Language Research)*, 17(57), 213-236. DOI: 10.22051/jlr.2025.51591.2587. [In Persian]
- Salmani Nodoushan, M. A. (2006). Politeness strategies in Persian requests. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 9(1), 25–46. [In Persian]
- Shariati, M., & Chamani, F. (2020). Apology strategies in Persian: A sociopragmatic perspective. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 17(1), 67-95. [In Persian]

- Sharifian, F. (2005). The Persian cultural schema of shekasteh-nafsi: A study of compliment responses in Persian. *Pragmatics and Cognition*, 15(4), 337–361. DOI: 10.1075/pc.13.2.05sha. [In Persian]

-Yazdanpanah, M., et al. (2025). *A comparative study of politeness in Persian and Finnish: Analysis of apology and request*. Research in Foreign Languages, 15(2), 195–209. [In Persian]

- Yu, M. (2001). "Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Apology Strategies in Korean and Japanese." *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33(8), 1123-1137.

About the Authors:



Masoumeh Yazdan Panah is an independent researcher and author with a PhD in Linguistics from Azad University and a specialization in Applied Linguistics. Her scholarly work examines linguistic trends across Europe and addresses contemporary challenges within the discipline. Through her independent research, she has contributed to ongoing academic discussions in the field. She is also the author of nine published books, reflecting her extensive engagement with linguistic scholarship and research.



Maryam Iraji is a full-time faculty member at the Islamic Azad University, Central Tehran Branch, specializing in Phonology. Her scholarly work explores various aspects of phonological theory and its applications. Through her teaching and research, she contributes significantly to the advancement of linguistic studies.



Forough Kazemi is a faculty member at Islamic Azad University, specializing in Linguistics. Her academic work and research interests are centered around the study of linguistic structures and theories. She is actively involved in teaching and contributing to scholarly research within the field of Linguistics.