

A comparative analysis of impoliteness strategies in the Satire of Obeyd Zakani and Dehkhoda

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Received: 2025/06/29

Accepted: 2025/10/11

Abstract

In Persian literature, Satire functions as a significant literary device for social and political criticism, revealing cultural and systemic flaws through the use of verbal Impoliteness. The primary objective of this study is to examine patterns of impoliteness strategies in Persian satire from the classical period to the Constitutional Era, focusing on the works of Obeyd Zakani (*Resale-ye Delgosha (Treatise of Delgosha)*) and Moosh-o-Gorbeh (*The Mouse and the Cat*) and Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda *Charand-o-Parand (nonsense)*. Employing Culpeper's (1996, 2005, 2011) impoliteness framework, this study examines selected satirical works. Impoliteness strategies (including bald-on-record, positive, negative, off-record, and withholding politeness) were systematically identified and their frequency distributions analyzed. Analysis demonstrated that while strategies of disparagement and mockery predominated in *Resale-ye Delgosha* and *Moosh-o-Gorbeh*, *Charand-o-Parand* exhibited a higher prevalence of off-record impoliteness. While Zakani directly critiqued Mongol rule via humiliation and mockery (36 instances), Dehkhoda's critique of Qajar rule relied on indirect strategies: off-record impoliteness (157), sarcasm (70), and implicational impoliteness (19), reflecting an ironic, populist tone. Findings demonstrate that Persian satire evolved from employing direct strategies of impoliteness during the classical period to using indirect strategies, reflecting a more cautious approach to influencing social movements while avoiding suppression, and marking a transformation in the satirist's identity from individual rebellion to a culturally influential intellectual who ironically initiates social changes.

Keywords: verbal impoliteness, Culpeper, Persian humor, Ubayd Zakani, Ali Akbar Dehkhoda

How to Cite:

Razavian, H; Aliabadi, R; Roshani, A (2026), A comparative analysis of impoliteness strategies in the Satire of Obeyd Zakani and Dehkhoda, *Journal of Language Research*, 17 (57), 213-236.

<https://doi.org/10.22051/jlr.2025.51591.2587> homepage: <https://zabanpazhuhi.alzahra.ac.ir>

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1. Introduction

Satire in Persian literature, as one of the most prominent literary genres, has always played a significant role in critiquing and reforming social and cultural deficiencies by utilizing linguistic and rhetorical devices (Sharbati et al, 2021). This literary form creates both wonder and laughter by highlighting social flaws through the contradiction between reality and expectations (Mehravaran and Ravanbakhsh, 2020). The importance of studying Persian satire lies not only in understanding its aesthetic capacities but also in comprehending its role as a tool for reflecting cultural identity and strengthening critical discourse (Azamatmadar Fard, et al, 2019; Valania and Laleh, 2022).

One of the pivotal tools in creating satire is verbal impoliteness, which, as a subset of verbal violence, targets the social or individual face of the audience. Through humiliation, insult, mockery, or labeling, it produces a satirical effect (Culpeper, 1996; Sotoudeh, 2010). Verbal impoliteness, by threatening the audience's face, creates a humorous contradiction between social norms and incongruous behaviors, leading to laughter and reflection (Culpeper, 2005: 38). Various satirists like Obeyd Zakani, Sadegh Hedayat and Dehkhoda throughout history have employed specific linguistic strategies to challenge power structures, using impoliteness as an effective tool to influence their audience (Rahmani, 2014). Among these, Obeyd Zakani in the classical period and Dehkhoda in the Constitutional era stand out as prominent satirists who utilized satirical prose and linguistic elements of impoliteness to create a platform for critiquing their societies (Mokhtari, Sepehri Nia, and Jowkar, 2013).

Given the significant role of impoliteness in the formation of Persian satire, this question arises: Have linguistic strategies of impoliteness changed over time? Do the linguistic elements employed by Obeyd Zakani (2017) in “Resale-ye Delgosha” and “Moosh-o Gorbeh” differ from the strategies used by Dehkhoda (2016) in “Charand-o-Parand”? Examining this issue not only provides a more precise understanding of the evolution of satirical language in Persian literature, but can also demonstrate how socio-political developments have influenced the application of impoliteness in satire.

To date, numerous studies have examined the evolution of Persian satire from historical, social, and linguistic perspectives. Rahimian et al. (2016)

investigated the transformations of satire from the classical period to contemporary times, with particular emphasis on its critical function. Their research demonstrates that satire has served as a tool for expressing social and political protests across different periods. In the domain of Constitutional-era satire, Anari Bozchelouei and Farahani (2010) analyzed the evolution of satirical language in response to political circumstances, while Vaez et al. (2012) traced the development of satire from Obeyd Zakani through the Constitutional period and beyond, highlighting the Constitutional era's role in popularizing satirical language. Amini (2015) also examined linguistic differences in satire between Dehkhoda and Saberi Foomani's works. Amini (2015) explains how satirical language evolved from direct and sharp expressions during the Constitutional period to more indirect and multi-layered approaches in the contemporary era.

Despite these valuable studies, there remains a significant gap in applying Culpeper's (1996, 2015) impoliteness theory to the comparative analysis of satirical language in classical and constitutional periods. This research aims to address this academic gap by utilizing this theoretical framework. Culpeper's theory (1996) provides an appropriate tool for systematic analysis of satirical language through its identification of five primary impoliteness strategies: bald-on-record impoliteness (direct use of offensive language), positive impoliteness (damaging the audience's need for social approval), negative impoliteness (threatening the audience's freedom of action), off-record impoliteness (implicit or metaphorical provocation), and withholding politeness (refusing polite behavior, such as not expressing gratitude).

Drawing upon Culpeper's theoretical framework of impoliteness, the author intends to fill the existing gap in research. Therefore, the present study examines the linguistic discourse of the works "Resāle-ye Delgosha," "Moosh-o Gorbah," and "Charand-o-Parand," investigating the extent and manner of using impoliteness strategies in the satire of Obeyd Zakani and Dehkhoda. In this research, first, the impoliteness strategies in the selected works are analyzed using Culpeper's (1996-2015) categorizations. Then, a comparative analysis of these strategies will reveal whether satirical prose has undergone linguistic changes over time or continues to employ similar elements for social critique. This study aims to provide a precise analysis of the role of satirical language in Persian literature and to examine the evolution of impoliteness methods within their historical context.

To systematically address this gap and achieve the primary objective of this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

- 1) What types of impoliteness strategies are employed in the satirical works of Obeyd Zakani and Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, and how are they manifested?
- 2) From a comparative perspective, what differences and similarities exist in the application of these impoliteness strategies between the two authors across different historical periods?
- 3) How do these differences reflect the socio-political transformations and the evolving role of the satirist from an individual rebel to a culturally influential intellectual?

By applying Culpeper's (1996, 2005, 2011) framework, this research will quantify and qualify the use of bald-on-record, positive, negative, off-record, and withholding politeness strategies in "Resale-ye Delgosha," "Moosh-o-Gorbeh," and "Charand-o-Parand." The subsequent comparative analysis will not only map the linguistic evolution of Persian satire but also illuminate its adaptive mechanisms in response to changing political pressures and social objectives.

2. Theoretical foundations and research background

2.1. Culpeper's theoretical framework and types of impoliteness strategies

Culpeper's (1996, 2005, 2015) impoliteness theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing face-threatening verbal behaviors, emphasizing the dynamics of interpersonal interactions and the influence of cultural context. Culpeper (2005) defines impoliteness in three forms: intentional face-attack by the speaker, the hearer's perception of behavior as intentionally threatening, or a combination of both. He highlights the role of context, social norms, and speaker intention in shaping impoliteness, arguing that impoliteness cannot occur without considering contextual factors (Culpeper, 1996; 2011).

Culpeper (1996) identifies five impoliteness strategies that function as tools for face-threatening acts: bald-on-record impoliteness, which involves direct, unambiguous face threats aimed at maximizing face damage (e.g., insults, explicit criticism); positive impoliteness, which attacks the hearer's positive face (need for

social approval) through ignoring, blaming, taboo words, or exclusion from activities; negative impoliteness, which threatens the hearer's negative face (freedom of action) via intimidation, humiliation, mockery, or reminders of debt; sarcasm (off-record impoliteness), which employs indirect or metaphorical aggression with plausible deniability, leading to social disharmony; and withholding politeness, which involves refusing expected polite behavior (e.g., not thanking someone for a favor).

In his later developments (2011, 2015), Culpeper views impoliteness as context-dependent behavior that triggers negative evaluations and emotional distress. He explores its roots in pragmatics and sociolinguistics, focusing on interpersonal power dynamics, cultural norms, and situational factors. He also introduces "Affective Impoliteness" (Culpeper, 2011:246), linking it to emotions (anger, frustration) and instrumental functions (e.g., humor, social critique).

2.2 . The Role of Impoliteness in Satire and Its Impact on the Audience

Verbal impoliteness plays a central role in satire and parody, as it reveals social anomalies exaggeratedly by threatening face through tools such as humiliation, mockery, sarcasm, or insults (Culpeper, 2011:259-261) introduces the concept of "entertaining impoliteness," where face threats are intended for amusement and laughter but can be distressing for the audience or potential victims. This type of impoliteness draws on "emotional pleasures, aesthetic enjoyment, and the sense of superiority derived from observing others' weaknesses, showcasing linguistic creativity in interaction with context" (Culpeper, 2011:266-268). In Persian literature, satire and parody hold significant prominence (Nikoubakht, 2001) and are evident in works such as *Moosh-o Gorbah* and *Resale-ye Delgosha* by Obeyd Zakani (2017) and *Charand-o Parand* by Dehkhoda (2016). Parody, focusing on the humiliation of specific individuals, and satire, addressing broader themes, use impoliteness to create social dissonance and critique (Asadipour & Salahi, 1993). Impoliteness in satire captures the audience's attention and creates a stronger impact by indirectly—and sometimes sharply—critiquing sensitive issues and power structures without leading to confrontation. This satirical approach compels the audience to reflect and react, potentially increasing society's tolerance for criticism. However, satire must remain balanced and avoid insults and harm to remain

effective and constructive (Fatemi, 2015).

2.3 . The Relationship Between Impoliteness and Power, Social Identity, and Political Critique

Impoliteness, as a linguistic strategy, exhibits an inverse relationship with power dynamics: individuals in positions of power tend to employ impoliteness strategies more frequently to reinforce their dominance, while those with less power typically resort to polite linguistic strategies. This dynamic underscores how power structures influence linguistic choices and social interactions (Rahmani, 2014).

Impoliteness in literary texts and conversations serves as a tool for challenging social norms and power structures, facilitating political and social critique. In other words, impoliteness can symbolize resistance against dominant powers and reflect diverse social identities (ibid.).

Additionally, gender plays a role in the adoption of impoliteness and politeness strategies. For instance, men tend to use impoliteness more frequently than women, and women generally employ more polite behavior when interacting with men. This dynamic highlights the complexities of social identity and power in language (ibid.).

2.4 . Previous Studies

The evolution of satire in Persian literature has been explored from various historical, social, and linguistic perspectives. A consistent theme across this body of research is satire's enduring role as a vehicle for socio-political critique. For instance, Rahimiyan et al. (2016) establish a foundational understanding by tracing satire's trajectory from the classical to the contemporary period, concluding that its primary function has persistently been the expression of dissent, albeit adapting its forms across different eras.

Delving into specific historical periods, scholars have documented how satirical language evolves in direct response to political pressures. The Constitutional Era marked a pivotal turning point. Anari Bozchelouei and Farahani (2010), in their comparative study, demonstrated that the satirical language of this period became more publicly accessible and politically charged when compared to earlier times, a finding corroborated by Vaez et al. (2011), who highlighted the Constitutional Revolution's role in popularizing satirical discourse for mass mobilization. This trend towards public engagement is further evidenced by

linguistic analyses, such as that of Abbasizadeh and Yarfarakhtha (2024), who showed how Constitutional-era poets like Nasim-e Shomal effectively used colloquial language and irony to connect with a broader audience.

Moving into the contemporary period, research indicates a strategic shift in satirical expression. Amini's (2015) comparative analysis of Dehkhoda and Saberi Foomani is particularly illuminating here. Their findings reveal a clear transition: from the direct and style characteristic of the Constitutional period to the more indirect, layered, and often coded approaches found in modern satire. This suggests an adaptation to increasingly complex socio-political landscapes where direct criticism carries significant risk. Mohammadi and Majd's (2022) longitudinal study of journalistic satire confirms this pattern, linking linguistic shifts directly to fluctuating political climates across the Constitutional, Pahlavi, and contemporary eras.

While the aforementioned studies provide valuable historical and stylistic insights, a precise, theory-driven analysis of the linguistic mechanisms of satire—specifically, impoliteness strategies—remains underdeveloped. Recent applications of Culpeper's (1996, 2011) impoliteness framework in related fields underscore its utility for such an analysis. For example, Naqshbandi, Razavian, and Ariaee far (2024) applied the model to online discourse, finding a high frequency of bald-on-record impoliteness and sarcasm, which they attributed to the disinhibiting effects of anonymity. Razavian et al (in press) also examines impoliteness strategies in four prominent Persian satirical works from different historical periods—including those by Obeyd Zakani (1301), Dehkhoda, Iraj Pezeshkzad (1958), and Aydin Sayar Saree (2019)—to identify the most and least frequently used impoliteness strategies in these works and thereby illustrate the evolutionary trend of employing these strategies in Persian satire from the past to the present. Similarly, studies in media analysis, such as Zaytoon (2021), have successfully used the framework to deconstruct how impoliteness is strategically deployed against specific groups, like the elderly, for humorous effect.

However, a significant gap persists. None of the existing studies on Persian satire have systematically applied Culpeper's model to conduct a comparative, quantitative, and qualitative analysis of impoliteness strategies across different

historical periods. The existing research has effectively established that satirical language changed, but it has not precisely identified how these changes manifest in the specific typology of verbal impoliteness. This study seeks to fill this gap by moving beyond content and stylistic analysis to a systematic examination of impoliteness strategies—such as bald-on-record mockery, sarcasm, and off-record implicatures—in the works of Obeyd Zakani and Dehkhoda, thereby offering a more granular understanding of satire's linguistic evolution.

2.5 . Introduction of the Studied Texts

2.5.1. Zakani's Works

Resale-ye Delgosha (Treatise of Delgosha) and Moosh-o-Gorbe (The Mouse and the Cat) are two prominent satirical works by Obeyd Zakani, both written with the aim of social and political critique of their time.

Resale-ye Delgosha is a prose work consisting of satirical anecdotes composed by Obeyd Zakani in the 8th century AH (14th century CE). The prose of Resale-ye Delgosha is robust and coherent, resembling Saadi's style, yet its satire is at times sharp and biting, critiquing improper social and political behaviors. The author's objective in writing this treatise was to express, through ironic and critical means, the problems and shortcomings of society using a satirical and occasionally bitter tone (Darabi & Sabzianpour, 2018).

Moosh-o-Gorbe (The Mouse and the Cat) is a satirical and protest poem that narrates the story of a deceitful cat who feigns piety and righteousness to lure and trap mice. Through allegory and irony, Obeyd Zakani illustrates that the weak and oppressed should not trust those in power, as the powerful break peace treaties for their own gain and can never be true allies of the marginalized. This work serves as a social critique of betrayal, the deceitfulness of those in authority, and societal inequalities. (Ravandi Nia & Shahmoradi Zarghoosh, 2023).

2.5.2 . Dehkhoda's Charand-o Parand

Charand-o Parand (nonsense) is a collection of socio-political satirical writings by Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, published in the newspaper Sur-e Esrafil in the form of short stories, announcements, telegrams, and news reports. These writings were composed during the period between the victory of the Constitutional Revolution and the onset of the Minor Despotism (Estebdad-e Saghir). Using simple, satirical, and at times biting language, they critique political chaos,

corruption, despotism, ignorance, and injustice. Through the creation of diverse characters and the use of colloquial language, Dehkhoda vividly portrays the social and political concerns of his time.

Charand-o Parand, as one of the earliest examples of political and social satire in Persian literature, played a significant role in raising the political and social awareness of the people. Through its satirical language and sharp, biting criticism, this work challenged power structures and governmental institutions, inviting audiences to reflect on and critique the prevailing conditions. Through these writings, Dehkhoda was able to foster a culture of questioning and social criticism in Iran's constitutionalist society, contributing to social reforms (Keshavarz, 2021).

3. Methodology

The present study employs a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) to examine impoliteness strategies in Persian satirical texts. In the qualitative phase, data are analyzed using discourse analysis based on Culpepper's (2011) impoliteness model to identify and categorize strategies such as bald-on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, indirect impoliteness (sarcasm), and withholding politeness. The quantitative phase involves frequency analysis of these strategies across selected texts to determine patterns in their use for social critique and satire creation. Content analysis is conducted with attention to the cultural and social contexts of the works to elucidate the relationship between impoliteness strategies and authors' satirical objectives. The selection of texts is based on their historical period of creation. The selection process was as follows: based on two historical periods—the classical past and the intermediate (Constitutional) era—prominent Persian satirical works representative of each period were chosen. The primary selection criteria were the works' canonical status and their widespread reception among Iranians. Accordingly, *Resale-ye Delgosha* and *Moosh-o-Gorbe* by Obeyd Zakani were selected as works representing the classical period, while *Charand-o Parand* by Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda was chosen as a work belonging to the Constitutional era. These texts were selected for their reflection of socio-political critique and their use of satire to address cultural issues within distinct historical contexts.

4. Results

To examine the types and frequency of verbal violence in the selected works, the complete texts were first thoroughly studied. Subsequently, based on the table provided in Appendix 1, the instances of impoliteness were extracted and meticulously quantified.

4.1. Analysis of Impoliteness Strategies in the Selected Works

Instances of Verbal violence in Resale-ye Delgosha, The Mouse and the Cat, and Charand-o Parand

4.1.1. Face-Threatening Acts

1. a **Indirect Impoliteness** (Through indirect, implicit speech or metaphorical expressions)

- Charand-o Parand: *"The point here was that Yazdi fabrics are much more durable than European fabrics."* (p. 18)

2.b Bald-on-Record Impoliteness

- Resale-ye Delgosha: *A man from Qazvin went to the doctor and said, "My beard hurts."
The doctor asked, "What have you eaten?"
He replied, "Bread and ice."
The doctor said, "Go die! Neither your pain is human-like, nor is your food."*
- Moosh-o-Gorbe: *[The cat said:] "Where's the cat? Let me behead him, Stuff his skin with straw!"
"A cat is like a dog before me—
Let him face me in the battlefield!"*
- Charand-o Parand: *"Then the landlord, with bulging eyes, charges at us with a stick and shouts: 'Look at this bastard... Kids, beat him up!'"* (p. 16)

3.c.i Positive impoliteness (Naming/Labeling the Addressee)

- Charand-o Parand: *"Even the townfolk call such people (a merchant who profits unlawfully) 'Haji Agha,' 'Haji's Son,' or 'Three-Slit Robe.'" (p. 15)*

3.c.ii Positive impoliteness (Use of Opaque/Exclusive Language)

- Charand-o Parand: *"He, who is known for serving the gentlemen..."*

Well, he... yes. And he... no. He, of course, needs no introduction from me. As for him... ah ah... yes, no. The rest, you yourself know how to address." (p. 31)

3.c.iii Positive Impoliteness (Use of Taboo Words)

- Charand-o Parand: *He said: "You fool! You madman! What can I, a weak servant, do?"* (27)

3.c.iv Positive Impoliteness (Contrariness)

- Resaley-e Delgosha: *They prescribed seven-year-old vinegar for the sick man. He asked a friend for it. The friend said: "I have it, but won't give it..."*
- Moosh-o-Gorbe: *The cat said: "The mouse has eaten; I won't come out of Kerman..."*

3.c.v Positive Impoliteness (Use of Taboo Words)

- Resale-ye Delgosha: *A person wanted to blow on the fire, when suddenly a wind from... jumped up and turned his back to the fireplace... He said, "If you're in a hurry, go ahead."*
- Charand-o Parand: *Haji Agha has four lawful wives of God, apart from the flirtations and dalliances he has in his friends' shops...*

3.c.vi Positive Impoliteness (Indifference/Ignoring)

- Charand-o-Parand" (Nonsense): *He said: "Don't eat honey and melon together—they don't mix." (She) didn't listen and ate it anyway.*

4. d.i Negative Impoliteness (Intimidation/Threatening)

- Resale-ye Delgosha: *A dervish arrived at a village gate and saw a group of headmen sitting there. He said: "Give me something, or I swear to God I'll do to this village what I did to the other one..."*
- Moosh-o-Gorbeh: *The king declared: "O my dear subjects, I shall take revenge on the cat..."*

4.d.ii Negative Impoliteness (Humiliation/Mockery)

- Resale-ye Delgosha: *"A man from Qazvin went to battle with a large shield. Someone hurled a stone from the fortress, shattering it. Enraged, he shouted: 'You blind fool!'"*
- Moosh-o-Gorbeh: *"A little mouse stole the cat's horse, Sending the cat tumbling from its saddle—oh, the shame!" Sending the*

cat tumbling from its saddle—oh, the shame!"

- Charand-o-Parand: *"The poor wretches refreshed their lungs in the coffeeshouse of Mowaffaq Shah Abdolazim, puffing away under the hookah's glass dome."*

4.d.iii Negative impoliteness (adding negative attributes)

- Resale-ye Delgosha: *An extremely ugly and despised person appeared at Yazid's banquet...*
- Charand-o Parand: *My late father, like all other Hajis from other places, was stingy. In other words, his own wealth wouldn't go down his throat. (22)*
- Moosh-o Gorbah: *He lay in ambush behind the bend, like a thief in the wilderness...*

4.d.iv Negative impoliteness (restricting the hearer's freedom of action)

- Charand-o Parand: *"Hey! Run away, hide, turn your face! The tiger lord is coming." (37)*

4. d.v Negative impoliteness (blaming)

- Resale-ye Delgosha: *A gypsy was quarreling with her son, saying: "You don't do anything..."*

5. a.i Sarcasm (Mock Politeness: Polite strategies that are actually fake)

- Charand-o Parand: *"His Excellency Ain al-Dawla, the victorious commander of all forces and head of the celestial army, may he strike the British post for the fifth time and present the proceeds to the sacred treasury of His Majesty." (88)*

5.a.ii Sarcasm (Mock Politeness: Polite strategies that are actually fake)

- Moosh-o Gorbah: *"After that, he said: 'Please come forward, take a few steps, oh companions!'"*

6. a Withholding Politeness (Absence of politeness where it is expected)

- Moosh-o Gorbah: *"When the mice saw it, they should have sung: 'Your sustenance is truly in heaven.'"*

7. a Indirect Impoliteness (using indirect, implicit speech or metaphors)

- Resale-ye Delgosha: *A man claimed to be God, so they brought him before the Caliph. The Caliph said, "Last year someone here claimed to be God - they killed him."*
- Moosh-o Gorbeh: *"Why do you sit there, oh mice? May dust be upon your heads, oh young ones!"*

4.1.2. Acts Threatening Social Norms

1.a Implicational Impoliteness (quoting someone while mimicking their accent and body movements)

- Charand-o Parand: *"Marshal Oyama of the East, His Excellency the Minister of War, was eating an orange between two prayers at Sepahsalar Mosque on the 21st night of Ramadan when he heard a loud noise and cried: 'Oh no! Where did the bullet hit me?' Then he fainted. Later it was discovered that the mosque door had slammed shut from the wind, and the noise wasn't anything serious."*

2.b Institutional Impoliteness

- Charand-o Parand: *"Perhaps you've grown tired of Islam? Perhaps you prefer European laws? Perhaps you intend to introduce heresy into religion? If so, by God you shall see no good..."*

3.c Violation of Social Rights (Failed Politeness)

- Charand-o Parand: *"I lack proper education and don't understand the gentleman's words, but in my opinion the gentleman spoke correctly. Well said, well said. Sir: "This is sophistry, believer."*
- Moosh-o Gorbeh: *The mouse said: "I am your servant - forgive me for these sins!"*

4.c.i Power (Interrupting the Hearer's Speech)

- Charand-o Parand: *"Fearing lest—God forbid—some truth might emerge, I turned to Ayyar Qoli and said: 'Man! Have some shame. Do you even realize who you're speaking to? Cut it short. Shame is a good thing, too. This is disgraceful.' (34)"*

4.c.ii Power (Freedom to be impolite due to authority)

- Moosh-o Gorbeh: *"Either come to the capital in service, or prepare for war!"*

5.d Social Norm-Threatening Impoliteness (Violation of Social Habits)

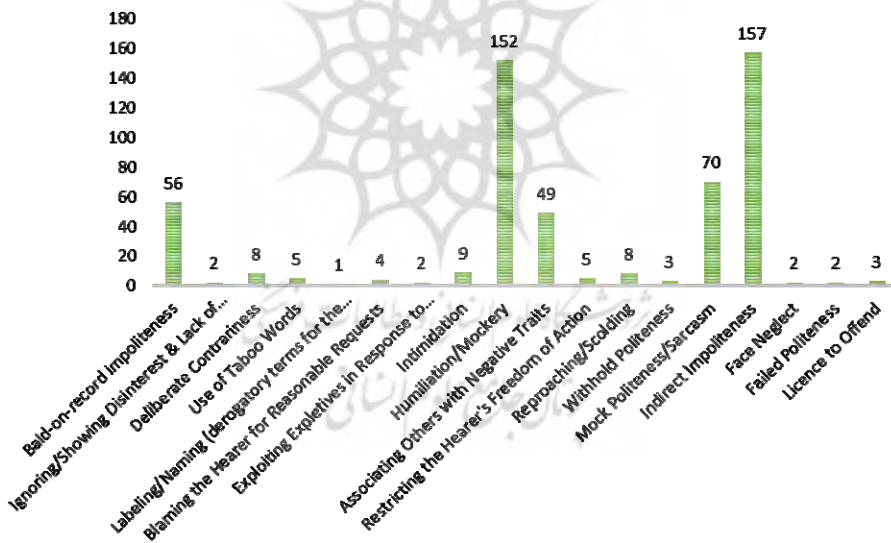
- Charand-o Parand: "He entered the office sweating profusely. Immediately upon entering, without any greeting, he abruptly said: 'So-and-so, quickly take note of this matter.' (25)"

4.2. Data Analysis in Resale-ye Delgosha and Moosh-o-Gorbek

In the data analysis section, the two texts *Resale-ye Delgosha* and *Moosh-o-Gorbek* were first examined to extract relevant examples of impoliteness. In this process, Culpeper's (2015) impoliteness theory was used as the conceptual framework to identify impoliteness strategies in the texts. After collecting all examples, the data were categorized, and tables were created using Excel to illustrate the frequency and distribution of the strategies employed in these works. These tables enable a more precise analysis of the impoliteness strategies used.

Figure 4.

Impoliteness Strategies in Zakani's Works



The current chart illustrates the types of impoliteness strategies employed in *Resale-ye Delgosha* and *Moosh-o-Gorbek* by Obeyd Zakani. Among the face-threatening acts identified by Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011), the strategies of *humiliation/mockery* and *indirect impoliteness* exhibit the highest frequency in these works.

The *humiliation/mockery* strategy, a subcategory of *negative*

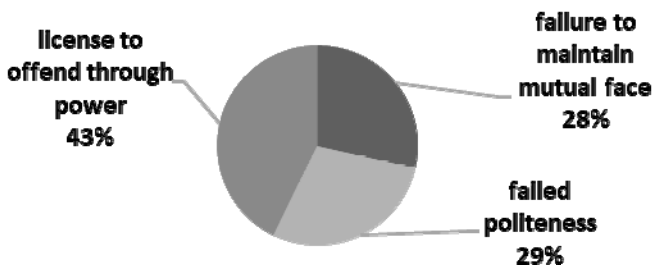
impoliteness in Culpeper's framework, targets the hearer's freedom of action and autonomy. This type of impoliteness encompasses strategies involving restriction, imposition of opinion, and violation of personal boundaries. The prevalent use of humiliation/mockery as a subset of negative impoliteness reflects a sociopolitical environment where individual freedom and social autonomy were under pressure—consistent with the tight control exerted by local and central governments over people's lives. The humiliation and mockery in Obeyd's works reflect a protest against these restrictions and an attempt to expose the suppression of individual freedoms in 14th-century Iran under Mongol rule.

Indirect impoliteness, the second most frequently used strategy in these texts, refers to a form of impoliteness where the speaker offends the hearer indirectly—through sarcasm, irony, insincere behavior, or metaphorical language—without explicitly or directly threatening their face. Here, the speaker's intent is to upset the listener—but covertly and informally, often framed as humor or insinuation. Interpreting indirect impoliteness depends on the specific social context and situational dynamics. In Obeyd's works, indirect impoliteness manifests through symbolism (e.g., animal characters in *Mouse and Cat* representing corrupt rulers), dark humor and subtle irony (e.g., depicting "paradise" as a site of oppression in tales), and norm inversion (e.g., advocating "pimping and tambourine-playing" as career advice for government advancement). These strategies allowed him to critique power structures without direct confrontation. Indirect impoliteness in Obeyd's works was not merely an avoidance tactic, but rather an artistic tool designed to engage the general public through simple, humorous language. This approach transformed his critiques into captivating, easily digestible narratives for mass audiences. By employing unembellished analogies and subtle irony, he enabled readers to grasp the depth of social corruption before feeling personally offended. His satire was often so multi-layered that it simultaneously targeted rulers while prompting common people to reflect. This approach perfectly aligns with Culpeper's definition of indirect impoliteness, which depends on the audience's understanding of context. In total, Obeyd employed 17 distinct types of impoliteness strategies in his works.

Figure 5.

Social Norm Threatening Acts in Zakani's Works

SOCIAL NORM THREATENING ACTS

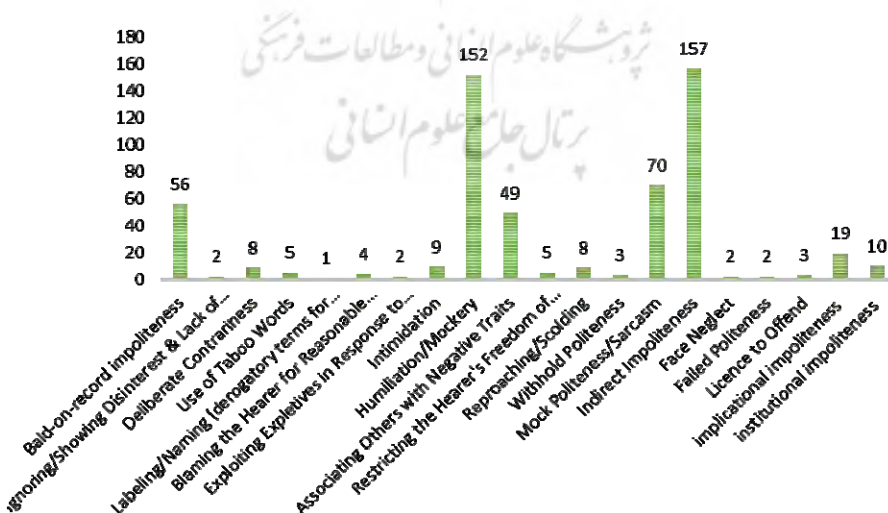


Since impoliteness strategies are broadly categorized into face-threatening acts and social norm-threatening acts, the strategy of "freedom to be impolite through power" showed the highest frequency among social norm-threatening acts. The use of this strategy reflects Obeyd's authorial and satirical authority—he challenges unwritten social rules and compels the audience to reflect on justice, morality, and social structures.

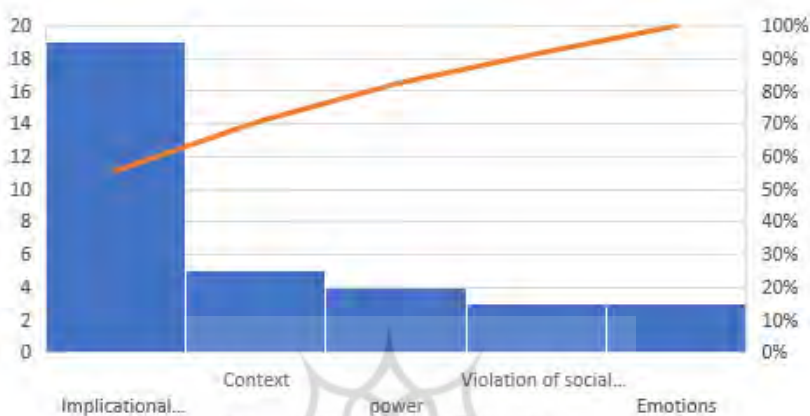
4.3. Data Analysis in Charand-o Parand

Figure 6

Impoliteness Strategies in Charand-o Parand



The current chart displays the types of impoliteness strategies used in *Charand-o Parand* by Ali Akbar Dehkhoda. Among the face-threatening acts identified by Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011), the strategies of using metaphors, implicit speech, indirect language, humiliation/mockery, followed by mock politeness, have the highest frequency in the work. The extensive use of indirect impoliteness allowed him to articulate sharp, serious critiques about corruption, tyranny, poverty, illiteracy, and foreign interference in Iran during the Constitutional Era—with subtlety and wit—without directly confronting those in power. By employing implicit speech, Dehkhoda chose an intelligent path to voice dissent without triggering direct suppression. On the other hand, Dehkhoda's use of humiliation and mockery—a subset of *negative impoliteness*—reflects his struggle for national freedom and independence in a country wounded by foreign interference. Mock politeness (sarcasm), another key impoliteness strategy in *Charand-o Parand*, leverages ambiguity and polysemy to evade censorship. The satirical language employing this strategy maintains a polished, formal veneer while delivering biting messages—a duality potentially rooted in Iran's cultural dichotomy between surface appearances and underlying truths. Sarcasm, a distinct form of indirect impoliteness, is typically revealed through tone and cadence, requiring implicit understanding by the reader. In total, Dehkhoda employs 27 distinct types of impoliteness strategies. On the other hand, Culpeper does not limit impoliteness strategies solely to face-threatening acts. In his view, social norms internalized in human cognition are also subject to threat, leading him to propose additional categories of impoliteness strategies for this purpose.

Figure 7.*Social Norm Threatening Acts in Charand-o Parand*

Implicational impoliteness demonstrates the highest frequency among social norm-threatening acts. Culpeper defines this type of impoliteness as quoting someone while mimicking their accent and body language (Salimian, 2014). Through this strategy, Dekhoda succeeded in making his satire more authentic, vivid, and tangible, aligning his works with the everyday language and culture of society to attract a broader audience.

5. Discussion

Obeyd Zakani's satire primarily relies on humiliation/mockery—a subset of *negative impoliteness*. This blunt, biting satire protests restrictions on individual freedoms under Mongol rule. The absence of free expression forced criticisms to manifest as sharp, sardonic mockery, cementing the satirist's role as a lone dissenter exhibiting personal courage—often without collective support.

In contrast to Obeyd Zakani's satire, Dekhoda's Constitutional Era satire adopts a broader and more diverse approach. His satire operates primarily through indirect and implicit strategies—employing metaphors, insinuations, indirect speech, and mock politeness (sarcasm)—to deliver sharp socio-political critiques without direct confrontation with entrenched power structures.

Facing official censorship, this era's satire avoided explicit statements, favoring symbolism and ambiguity. Yet, Dehkhoda's strategic diversity in impoliteness allowed him to disseminate his message more effectively and widely, while securing a more influential social position than classical satirists.

Obeyd Zakani wields satire as a weapon against oppressive structures, asserting his position through unrestrained impoliteness strategies. In contrast, Dehkhoda adopts a more cautious approach, employing ironic and indirect satire alongside implicational impoliteness (accent mimicry) to harness colloquial language and popular discourse—maximizing societal impact.

This shift reflects the Constitutional Era satirist's role in mobilizing audiences and influencing social movements while navigating censorship. Unlike classical satire, Constitutional-era works emerge from a "dual culture of appearance and reality" where surface-level polite language conceals indirect critical messages. This approach mirrors a society compelled to use ambiguous and double-edged language to express dissent. The most significant evolution appears in the satirist's transformed identity - from an isolated dissenter to a culturally influential intellectual, marking a transition from personal rebellion to the initiation of substantive public discourse. Key analytical distinctions include interpreting direct confrontation as a "weapon against oppressive structures" in classical works versus recognizing "implicational impoliteness" in modern satire, where strategic indirectness serves both mobilizing and influencing functions while maintaining deniability. The preservation of formal linguistic decorum alongside subversive content exemplifies how satirical communication adapted to authoritarian constraints through layered meaning and contextual nuance.

This analysis demonstrates how satirical language evolved from the classical to the Constitutional era, adapting to shifting political climates, social conditions, and regulatory structures. The comparison reveals a fundamental transformation in satirical approach - where Obeyd Zakani's work featured sharp, unabashed satire directly confronting oppression, Dehkhoda developed a more veiled and cunning satirical style designed to critique while avoiding suppression. This evolution mirrors the changing role of the satirist from a lone dissenter to a socially engaged intellectual wielding cultural agency. The strategic shift from overt to covert satirical methods reflects both the increasing constraints of censorship and

the growing sophistication of Persian satire as a tool for social commentary. These distinct approaches - the classical era's confrontational directness versus the Constitutional period's strategic indirectness - represent adaptive responses to their respective historical contexts while maintaining satire's essential critical function.

6. Conclusion

This study examines the evolution of impoliteness strategies in Persian satire by comparing Obeyd Zakani's classical works (*Resale-ye Delgosha* and *Moosh-o-Gorbeh*) with Ali Akbar Dehkhoda's Constitutional-era *Charand-o Parand*. The analysis reveals that while both satirists confronted power structures with period-specific adaptations and addressed similar cultural-political concerns, they employed fundamentally different approaches. In conclusion, this comparative analysis of impoliteness strategies in the works of Obeyd Zakani and Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda yields clear answers to the proposed research questions, demonstrating a significant evolution in Persian satirical discourse. Firstly, the manifestation of impoliteness strategies differs markedly between the two authors: Zakani's satire is characterized by a predominance of direct strategies such as bald-on-record mockery and positive impoliteness, aimed at humiliating the powerful, whereas Dehkhoda's work relies heavily on indirect, off-record strategies like sarcasm and implicational impoliteness to engage and mobilize a broader public. Secondly, while both satirists shared a critical stance against corruption and oppression, their methods diverged fundamentally. Zakani's approach was one of direct defiance and explicit critique, reflecting a position of relative isolation, while Dehkhoda adopted a coded, ironic tone designed for mass communication and subtle persuasion. Ultimately, this strategic shift from Zakani's confrontational methods to Dehkhoda's evasive critique provides a compelling answer to the third research question. It reflects a profound transformation in Iran's socio-political landscape and the satirist's role within it. The evolution from an individual voice of rebellion to that of a public intellectual guiding social change underscores how Persian satire adapted its linguistic weapons to maintain its critical function, navigating the perils of suppression to ironically initiate social transformation.

Our finding that Dehkhoda relied heavily on off-record impoliteness aligns with and quantitatively substantiates Amini's (2015) observation of a move towards

indirectness in post-Constitutional satire. While Amini identified this trend stylistically, our data pinpoints it specifically in the high frequency of sarcasm and implicational impoliteness. The preference for indirect strategies in Dehkhoda's work, as compared to Zakani's directness, supports the argument made by Mohammadi and Majd (2022) that satirical expression is closely calibrated to the political environment. Unlike the study by Naqshbandi et al. (2024), which found bald-on-record impoliteness to be dominant in anonymous online spaces, our analysis of published satirical literature shows a more strategic and context-aware distribution of strategies, highlighting how the satirist's public role differs from that of an anonymous online user.

Author Contributions

H.R. was responsible for the study design, critically reviewing the manuscript, and suggested revisions. He also provided guidance on interpretation of the results. R.A.A. collected the data, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. A.R. translated the manuscript into English and contributed to the interpretation of the results. H.R. approved the final version.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethical Considerations

This study does not include human participants or identifiable personal data; therefore, ethical approval was not required. All materials analyzed were publicly available.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The authors declare that no content of this manuscript was generated by AI tools. AI-assisted technologies (e.g., Grammarly) were used only for language editing and improving grammar and style. The intellectual content, data analysis, and interpretations are solely those of the authors.



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