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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TABOOS AND EUPHEMISMS IN TURKISH AND IRANIAN-AZERI LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

This study compares and contrasts the use of taboos terms and euphemisms such as the use of jargon terms, constructions, euphemisms, metaphoric expressions, circumlocution, and use of borrowed terms in two Turkic languages, i.e. Iranian-Azeri and Turkish. Having been born and bred in Tabriz, an Azeri city in Iran, I settled down in Istanbul, Turkey as a language instructor in 2015. The use of ethnographic observations of interactions between local people in Istanbul led me to infer the similarities and differences that exist in linguistic taboos and the use of euphemistic strategies. Moreover, the present analysis is based on the theoretical framework informed by Qanbar (2011) and the politeness approach proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). In this vein, this work sought to describe how different categories of euphemistic terms are created and explicated the underlying reasons to use them, such as for face-saving, expression of admiration, manipulation, marketing etc. The findings are also aimed to account for marked differences that would be present in the use of euphemisms in the Turkish language as a result of language change in the course of time. In the end, it is concluded that these processes are conditioned by the cultural and religious norms of the society.

Keywords: taboo; euphemism; Turkish; Azeri

INTRODUCTION

Even though taboo words are part of every culture and language, every individual might, with a purpose, use a taboo word; this subject is not intensively investigated due to its sensitive nature, which might suggest that it is not appropriate for academic study. Nonetheless, the study of linguistic taboos in any society from a socio-cultural point of view is aimed to add new aspects to the deciphering the

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human. Moreover, despite the expurgation of language, taboo words will continue to exist in the community's lexicon because they reinforce the social group and identity through the feeling of one socio-cultural and belief system. They make the members of the society distinguishable from members in other societies. It also adds dimensions to the social customs, religious as well as metaphysical beliefs, and also the political system of the community (Qanbar, 2011). Therefore, certain things are not said, not because they cannot be, but because "people do not talk about those things" or, if those things are talked about, they are talked in very roundabout ways (Wardhaugh, 2010).

Similarities of Study Contexts

Turkey and Iran have considerable cultural and religious similarities as well as mutual influences on each other because of their geographical proximity, linguistic and ethnic relations, e.g. Azeri, a Turkic ethnic community, is the second-largest ethnicity in Iran. Because qualitative research work can make an essential contribution to understanding the complexity of factors affecting second language interaction, in this study, I focused on the comparison of linguistic taboos and euphemisms in the context of Tabriz and Istanbul, respectively by use of ethnographic methods.

Background of the Study

Having been born and raised in Tabriz, an Azeri city in Iran, I came to Istanbul, Turkey, to begin to work as a language instructor at secondary and higher education institutes in 2015. I remained an outsider in the community, while at the same time, I spent much time in and outside the classrooms i.e., in different social settings. I observed students' and ordinary people's behaviour, as well as their interaction pattern with each other, which resulted in the generation of useful data in terms of quantity and quality. The familiarity with students helped for the elimination of the observer's paradox. By dint of ethnographic research methodology, I could not only collect natural speech data, but also observe student's behaviour. Therefore, in my analysis, I was able to support my interpretations with the use of specific linguistic variables and compare them with the Tabriz community of practice where I was brought up before coming to Turkey.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions:

This work explored "how people use language, what they believe about language and why they believe so" (Heller, 2008, p. 250). Accordingly, this research aimed to shed light on speakers' beliefs, cultural norms and expectations regarding lin-

guistic taboos influencing their discourse interactions by comparing and contrasting the taboo words and euphemisms in the Iranian-Azeri community and Turkish society by establishing a contextual framework of their categories and subcategories. New categories are found to accentuate the specificity of the Azeri and Turkish cultural identity. This paper also attempted to investigate the possible reasons for using tabooed words and discuss the socio-cultural factors affecting their use. Despite looking at this subject through the lens of an outsider, I aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities between the use of taboos and euphemisms in these societies?
2. How are the patterns of use different from each other?
3. Why are the euphemistic forms created?
4. What are the reasons to employ euphemism?

Literature review on Linguistic Taboos

The use of taboos and euphemisms have been studied and discussed from a sociological, anthropological, and psychological points of views (Malinowski, 1923; Leach, 1964; Mead, 1934; Steiner, 1967; Douglas, 1966). Although many studies have done on the use of taboos and euphemisms, little information is available on its comparative intercultural aspects, particularly regarding their sociocultural contexts of two neighbouring countries.

Linguistic taboos are analyzed and studied in the Chinese language from a socio-cultural point of view to explain their creation emergence (Guisen & Hongxu, 1990). They were associated with superstitious beliefs, traditions, and power relations. For the Chinese, taboos are classified into two categories, i.e. macrolinguistic and micro linguistic. Macrolinguistic taboos refer to the terms that can be understood by nearly all language users in a community, and they generally denote despicable and obscene meanings such as sex and death. The other category refers to certain words that are considered as taboos only in relation to a specific context. In order to classify the Chinese taboos, Guisen and Hongxu (1990) suggested a conceptual structure including a “macrocontext,” i.e. social variables and “micro context,” referring to variables such as register and interlocutors (p. 66). This framework brings about several varieties of taboo, such as “absolute taboo, a quasi-taboo and non-taboo.”

Brown and Levinson (as mentioned in Qanbar, 2011) formulated a Model Person (MP), who is considered as an expressive speaker of a language with two unique attributes: rationality and face. By *rationality* Brown and referred to the use of a

specific mode of logical thinking to choose a means that will satisfy his/her ends. By 'face,' they described the "public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself." It means the social sense of self that is expected and recognized mutually by the members of a community. Face consists of two related aspects, i.e. a) negative face: "the want of every 'competent adult member' that action be unimpeded by others" (p.62), and b) positive face: "the want of every member that wants be desirable to at least some others" (p. 62) ... "perennial desire that wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable" (p.101).

Similarly, Thornbury (2006) distinguished between positive and negative politeness. The former is defined as social behaviour, which expresses a positive attitude to other people mostly by thanking, while the latter means the behaviour which avoids imposing on others by saying *please* or by acknowledging of imposing and even to apologize for it. It is argued that by default, speakers tend to be courteous, and euphemistic; and they expurgate the language by avoiding tabooed topics in search of contentment for each other (Douglas, 1966).

Taking account of the Turkish society, Çelik (2011) aimed to make some basic generalizations on the linguistic taboos in the society according to euphemisms that are used to refer to taboos and provided a general framework. He classified taboos and their euphemistic replacements into three categories according to their degree of intensity as low, moderate, and high. The first category is associated with individuals' physical or social defects, ethical, and psychological features such as words used to refer to people who lack common sense or intelligence. Çelik metaphorically described their euphemistic terms as dressing a wound without touching it. The euphemisms that are used for the second category of taboos are reported to function as hedging expressions to reduce any potential verbal injury to a minimum as the result of saying them. This class of euphemisms is associated with courtesy and fear to avoid any possible profanity considered as disrespect for supernatural phenomena and religious issues. The third group of euphemisms, which are regarded as extremely sensitive issues or obscenities, refer to human bodies and effluvia (sweat, snot, feces, menstrual fluid, etc.) or the organs and act of sex, micturition and defecation. Furthermore, in the same context, it is argued that euphemisms are created as a result of taboo words i.e. as the result of cause and effect relationships (Erol, 2002).

The Persian elements in Azeri are assumed to be numerous especially at the lexical level, and Iranian Azeri includes a large number of Iranian loanwords which

are missing or rarely used in Turkish (Johanson, 2011) and predominantly use of Azeri translation of Persian expressions are regarded as courteous and euphemistic in many cases; in this respect, having taken account of the multi-ethnic Iranian society, Aliakabri and Raeesi (2015) argued that in order to avoid the use of taboo words, speakers employ euphemistic words, Arabic equivalents, construction, replacement, and loan words with adjusted pronunciation according to their language or dialect. It was also indicated that some linguistic taboos need to be accompanied by additional conventionally-fixed words.

METHODOLOGY

During my residence in Istanbul, I collected data in and out of the school. I used a variety of ethnographic methods to collect data, including direct observation, participant observation, interviews, and document collection (Fetterman, 1998; Spradley, 1979). My practical research entailed daily teaching sessions of English at a private school and a private university from 2015 to 2017. Observing the local students' interactions with peers and teachers, I attempted to take field notes in the educational contexts. I particularly paid attention to the translation and interpretation activities, their language use and choice of linguistic forms in different settings, individuals' interactional patterns, and the use of avoidance strategy, especially when they attempted to translate an utterance which could be troublesome and sensitive in their mother language. In order to gain more information, I conducted semi-structured interviews with learners and native speakers in and outside of academic contexts. I asked them about their experiences and their preference for selecting a specific form according to the context of use. The reasons they explained about their choice of words and expressions according to address and contexts of use were of paramount importance. When making contacts in a speech community, it was always important to contact the right people. Linguistic forms produced by people with official status, e.g., professors, teachers, were disregarded since the linguistic production of these people in their social networks may be homogeneous and reflect standard speech styles (sociolinguists usually aim for non-standard speech). Thus, in that case, the sample then would not be representative of the whole community. Along with adopting the ethnographic observation method for addressing this subject, I incorporated an additional layer of language study to my interpretation, to redress the probable subjectivity. To this end, I found the aforesaid idea of the face and the politeness theory, proposed by Brown

and Levinson (1978, 1987), beneficial for explaining the taboos of certain words in the Iranian-Azeri and Turkish languages.

Owing to the fact the Islamic societies share many cultural values and beliefs, this paper investigated the comparison between the taboo words in these languages according to frameworks provided by Qanbar (2011) and Çelik (2011) along with ethnographic observations for the classification of taboo words (Figure 1).

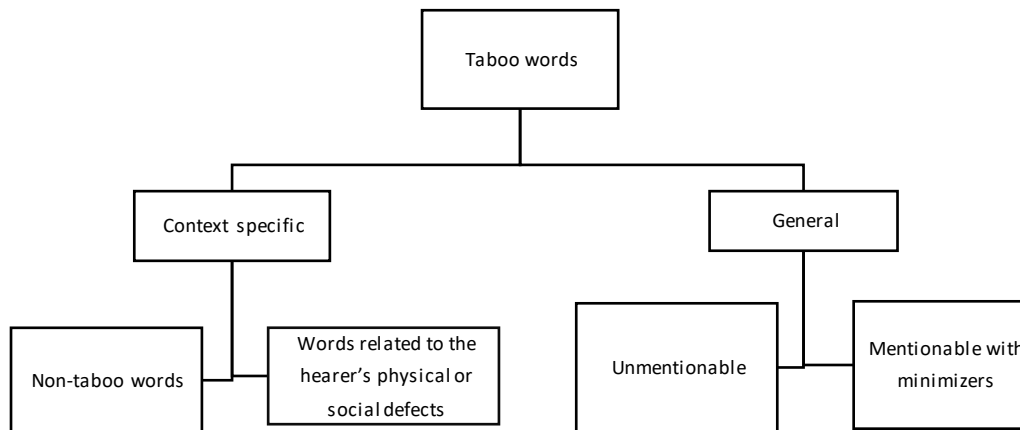


Fig. 1: Linguistic Taboos in an Islamic society, as indicated in Qanbar, N. (2011).

Contexts of the Study

From one part, Tabriz was selected as the setting of the study since it accommodates the largest population of Azeri speakers in Iran and it is considered to have a significant political and social role as the fourth major Iranian city (as cited in Mirhosseini & Abazari, 2016). Tabriz is a bilingual city and its dwellers communicate with the official national language i.e. Farsi along with Azeri. The city is home to the second-largest urban population of Azeri speakers in the world. Based on its significant socio-cultural, economic, and political status, the city was determined to be appropriate for this research on the issue of language attitudes towards Azeri in Iran; on the other side, historically known as Constantinople and Byzantium, Istanbul is the most populous city in Turkey and the country's economic, cultural, and historic center. In Istanbul, first and foremost, Turkish is the official language of the city, and the days are long gone when Constantinople was a polyglot paradise.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Qanbar's taxonomy, as mentioned in the previous part, the taboo words in both in Turkish and Azeri can be categorized as 1) context-specific and

2) general. These classifications are further divided into subcategories. The words under context-specific classifications are neutral and non-taboo, but they become taboo when stated in particular contexts.; while the subcategories under the category *general* include the unmentionable (the words under this subcategory should be euphemized in formal contexts), and mentionable with hedging expressions which include words that are to be stated along with other fixed conventional expressions which Qanbar (2011) called them ‘minimizers’.

Context-specific Taboo Words

Context-specific taboos are classified into two subcategories: non-taboo words, and words related to the hearer’s physical or social imperfection. In the section that follows, linguistic taboos in these societies are explored as the subcategories of context-specific Taboo Words:

Non-taboo words

Words that are neutral in meaning in everyday speech such as *köpek* or *its dog*, but gain a taboo meaning in specific contexts when employed as swear words. Religion has also played a significant role in tabooing these words. The animals stated above are associated with impurity and uncleanness according to religious beliefs.

Words related to the hearer’s physical or social defects

These words and expressions convey connotations to the hearer by representing physical or social defects for him/her, like mentioning *blindness* in front of a blind man.

GENERAL

This notion can be further divided into two subcategories, as shown in figure 1:

- Categorically prohibited words which are referred to as (the unmentionable)
- Permissible or mentionable with use of hedging devices

The Unmentionable

The Categorically prohibited words, the *Unmentionable*, are subcategorized into the following subcategories:

- 1- Words or terms referring to the sexual organs and their functions, and body effluvia

- 2- Words or terms referring to a faith (blasphemy) or words against religious figures and symbols
- 3- Words or terms that might have negative connotations referring to national or historical or the present political figures or political system;
- 4- The first names of one's female family members mentioned in public or before a stranger;

The first three sub-groups are referred to as the *triad of taboos* that exist in many societies across the world, i.e., the triangle of sex, religion and politics, though the degree of the taboos varies. The taboos of this category and the stigmatized status of these words are usually inculcated from early years and it constitutes a part of childhood language socialization.

The third subcategory which addresses the current political system and political figures in the country sheds light on the present political scene and involves the changes that the society is witnessing (Qanbar, 2011) as in Iran, after the 1979 Islamic revolution, a law was issued that any statement targeting the character of the president, or any article that goes against the principles of the Islamic entities is considered as a threat to the national stability. Thus, they are severely censored and considered a crime. Therefore, talking against the supreme leader, president or current political system becomes a taboo, and the number of euphemized words is growing. Similarly, according to penal codes of the Republic of Turkey, Article 299, Article 300, and Article 301, any offences against the symbols of state sovereignty and the reputation of its organs, insulting the President of the republic, degrading the symbols of state sovereignty, "degrading Turkish Nation, State of Turkish republic, the organs and institutions of the state are penalized" (Penal Code of Turkey, 2016, p. 99).

Mentionable with Minimizers

This class of taboo words is traditionally shared in both Azeri and Turkish culture. This category might be considered appalling and if touched upon without any specific fixed phrases. The purpose of these phrases is to lessen the impact of an utterance by softening the force of tabooed terms.

This class is further divided into three subcategories:

- 1- Words or phrases alluding to filthy places or objects, i.e. *unclean objects* or unexpected accidents, i.e. *unpleasant occurrences* that might bring about the distortion of human physical structure like getting burned);
- 2- Words or phrases alluding to transcendental things that go beyond the control of the human being, i.e. *metaphysical things*. For example supernatural

creatures like Jennies, ghosts; possibly savage animals and insects; particular illnesses

- 3- Words or phrases alluding to the expressions of veneration for things or objects we regard or respect with warm approval, i.e. *expressions of admiration*

Unclean objects or unpleasant occurrences

The hedging expressions of this subcategory directly address the hearer and aim at saving face from being injured by these unclean words. They become contaminated as they are associated with the dirty things they stand for (Guisen & Hongxu, 1990). These minimizers are like *Allah eləməsin* (God forbid' in Azeri or *Evlerden Irak* (out of homes) in Turkish. These minimizers are used since they are believed to protect the hearer's face from the mentioned unpleasant words.

Metaphysical things

The second subcategory of minimizers shows the protection of both the speaker and the hearer from what it is stated. German psychologist Wundt (1927) explained that taboos were initially nothing other than a fear of a *demonic* power that was supposed to lie hidden in a tabooed object. It is precisely this concern that leads to the ceremony of using a certain minimizer for keeping evil at a distance. One underlying belief is the supernatural power of the spoken word. It is as if the tabooed object was like a radioactive fuel rod, which will have adverse effects on anyone who comes into direct contact with it unless they know how to defend themselves (Allan & Burrige, 2006). Thus, on uttering a name of a serious disease like cancer, leprosy, etc., phrases like *Allah qorusun/Allah korusun* (May God protect), *Allah şəfa versin/Allah şifa versin* (May God cure) are employed. These minimizers will make sure that neither the hearer nor the speaker gets the disease mentioned. To talk about the possibility of the death of someone dear to either the speaker or the hearer, minimizers like *Allah eləməsin / Allah korusun* (God forbid), are used, otherwise it is believed it will lead to the mentioned person's death. Talking about supernatural creatures like jennies, ghosts, etc. results in the use of minimizers like *şeytan kulağına kursun* (beat a devil's tattoo) or (May evil be far away from us). The mention of the supernatural creature without using the minimizer is also believed to cause the creature mentioned itself and would do both the speaker and the hearer/s a great harm.

Expressions of admiration

The use of the third subgroup with hedging ensures the safety of the admired or liked item from the evil eyes occurring on the object. This object may be solid

like a car, a unique beauty feature, a dress, or abstract things like a skill in doing something. It is generally believed that every person's eyes may have an evil effect if it likes or admires an object. It is depended upon the admirer's distinctness and degree of religiosity to safeguard the esteemed object from his/her evil eye by saying *maşallah* (God's will is to be done). *Nəzər dəyməsin* in Azeri or *Nazar değmesin* in Turkish (knock on wood). Not saying these phrases may bring about the object's destruction, and if the liked thing is a person, it is also presumed that this person may die or minimally he/she will get an incurable disease.

Factors affecting the use of taboos:

Employing taboo words and the degree of perceiving words as acceptable or prohibited in the Azeri society are subject to several socio-cultural factors. The same taboo word does not necessarily bear the same influence on other speaker groups. Words that may be appalling to one individual or a group of speakers may not necessarily be as shocking to others. Even the nature of the word used influences the degree of its taboos; for instance, the reproductive system of men and women are usually tabooed with different degrees. Time also plays a part- once some words were taboo in the past, but over some time, they have lost their taboo connotation. For example, mentioning the name of the wife by her husband nowadays is no longer taboos in the cities. Other factors that play a role in this issue include modern education: educated people are likely to use fewer taboos than uneducated people. In some Azeri families, men might use the name of their son in order to call their wives e.g. *Alinin Anası* which means Ali's mother (Mollanazar, 2012). In the male dominant Muslim communities, it is more tolerable to hear a taboo term from a male than from a female. In the same way, demographic context is significant in the use and perception of these words: rural people are more apt to employ taboos related to sex and bodily functions in public domains than those in urban areas because they have been raised in rural communities where they had many chances for observing the behavior of animals.

How are taboo words avoided?

There are particular strategies for avoiding taboo terms in Turkish society and the Azerbaijani Society of Iran. Even though the topic stays the same, the words are replaced to "avoid possible loss of face; either one's own face or, through giving offence, that of the audience, or of some third party" (Allan & Burridge, 1991, p. 11). To replace the terms, Iranians employ a number of mechanisms such as using jargon terms, constructions, euphemisms, creating antonyms, metaphoric expres-

sions, circumlocution, and use of standard and scientific Persian terms. Some taboo words can be replaced by making use of all or some of the mechanisms mentioned.

In Azeri, Some words related to physical defects of the human body are euphemized by the use of its Persian equivalent. For example, the word for blind *kor, kör/kur* can be substitute with *Roshandel* (literally means someone *with illuminated heart*), while in Turkish, the tabooed terms are substituted by new ones such as the term *görme engelli* meaning visually disabled.

For the human body organs and their functions jargon terms are used. In Azeri, these terms are intended to be euphemized by the use of medical jargon that puts the uncomfortable topics into a medical context and gives them an air of propriety. Similarly, along with scientific terms, Arabic equivalents are used to refer to these terms.

In both Turkish and Azeri languages, the words referring to sexual organs are replaced by the borrowed words from other languages such as Persian, Arabic or French. Also, families may have their made-up names for sex organs, mainly when used to talk with children.

Concerning mentioning a female's name, in the past, words referring to women in the family depended on the role they played. Therefore, for example, the mother was called with the name of the eldest son of the family. Sometimes, if there were no children, the husband may have made up a fictitious male name to be the name of the future child. If a man wanted to speak about his wife or his female relatives, he used the word the children *üşaqılar* in Azeri or *çocuklar* in Turkish though he may be talking about a single female. According to Demirci (as cited in Çelik, 2011), in a Turkish community, a man might refer to his wife by *bizimki* (ours), *Bizim hatun* (our wife), or *çocukların annesi* (children's mother). In the Azeri society, it was not socially acceptable for a man to say neither the first names of his female members of the family in the presence of a stranger nor the names of the female family members of an outsider without a genuine need. Also, in the past, an Azeri gentleman was not supposed to mention the first given names of the females in his friends' or acquaintances' families.

Similarly, a Turkish man used to refer to his wife as *evdeki* meaning the person at home. A man, thus, should not divulge the name of his family females, and similarly to say the names of an outsider's female family members is to transgress over the private property of someone else, and particularly on his real face. Iranian

men go to the extreme by not mentioning in their everyday speech the word meaning 'lady or woman,' and use the words, which means *a family* instead. Accordingly, in Muslim societies, the social position of women has always been, determined by their status in law and tradition, and the roles they play in the household and outside it. Muslim society is and patriarchally organized; males have the ultimate power and the responsibility to provide for women and children. Women are assumed to be subordinate; thus, there are many taboos imposed on women in society in terms of behaviour, dress, and speech (Douglas, 1970). Some forces in society are more potent than others and generate real impacts, among them linguistic effects that have repercussions for the lives we have (Wardhaugh, 2010). Likewise, women in the patriarchal society of Tabriz tend to switch to Persian language or resort to the Persian equivalent of Azeri words as a means of euphemism.

As far as the religious and Islamic terms are concerned, in Iranian Azeri language, holy words referring to name of the prophet, in formal contexts, should be followed by *sala Allah eliehwa Sallam* (peace be upon him), and this statement should also be uttered upon hearing the name of the Prophet as well as used. In Turkey, in order to refer to Prophet Mohammad, terms such as *Fevkalbeşer* (superhuman) *Efendimiz* (our lord) etc. were observed to be used. It is also reported that people tend to pronounce *Muhammet* as *Mehmet* when cursing someone whose name is the same as the Prophet Mohammad (Çelik, 2011).

While the strategies and mechanisms discussed above are relatively an exhaustive account of how euphemism is generated, they serve to illustrate the variety of ways that speakers can avoid using taboo language to avoid a face-threatening atmosphere and create an environment of calm, polite, and morally acceptable speech. This results in the use of language to manage psychological distress and anxiety in patients, their family members. For instance in hospitals of Istanbul, medical practitioners switch to English language when speaking to each other about a patient suffering from a severe disease such as cancer, so that the patient would not understand; however, in the medical context of Tabriz, it was reported that only jargon terms are used at word level in such contexts.

Use of euphemism as a Manipulation Strategy

For a political figure like the head of state, euphemized terms are employed as a practice of political manipulation, e.g. Emam (Muslim religious chief) or *Rahbare Moad'azam Engelab* (supreme leader of revolution), *vali-e Faghih-e Iran* (Guardian Jurist of Iran) are used. If the Supreme Leader's name is stated in the

official domains, his full name should be stated with the familiar phrase like *Mode Zelahol A'ali* (May he live long). In Turkish society, according to the best of my observations, no other exaggerated titles are utilized for manipulations.

As euphemism technique, mostly in Turkey linguistic word formations techniques such as blending are employed in product marketing to address some words such as name *Persil*, a liquid detergent, whose name is derived from two of its ingredients, sodium perborate and sodium silicate which are reported to be dangerous chemicals (Einhorn, Horton, Altieri, Ochsenschlager, & Klein, 1989). Another marketing technique in Turkey is the use of stylistic terms; for example, the use of 'ekonomik' meaning 'economical' in order to refer to cheap products as an offered discount.

Another use of euphemism for persuasion is the tricky language used by some financial institutes. Some banks in Turkey attempt to show their compliance with sharia (Islamic law), as a marketing technique to attract new customers, according to which *riba* or usury, defined as interest paid on all loans of money are prohibited tend to refer to interest as *kâr payı* (profit share) rather than *Faiz* which denotes interest.

Answers to research questions and conclusion

The results obtained, addressing the first research question, manifest that as the languages, cultures and histories remain intertwined, there exist striking and marked similarities between the use of taboos and euphemisms in different social contexts despite their differing Shi'a and Sunni sectarian identities (Hazır, 2015). As for the lexico-semantics and difference between patterns of use along with the reasons for creation of euphemistic forms (second and third research questions), it is noticeable that some Turkish words have gained negative connotation in the course of history and have merely become false cognates, while their Azeri connotations have remained intact such as *sevişmek* in Turkish which means *to have sex* in contemporary Turkish, whereas in Azeri it means *to love*. The reason for the aforementioned dysphemism and semantic change in Turkish would be its dynamic and changing nature because of its contact with other languages, migration, cultural separation, and the cultural environment (Wardhaugh, 2010). In this regard, Keshavaraz (2008) has argued that some errors in the understanding of meaning are because of lexico-semantic elements such as false cognates that are caused due to phonological similarities of a single form in two languages. This kind of deceptive cognates is also referred to as false friends.

Moreover, the results obtained in the process of responding to the third research question demonstrated that there are various reasons to benefit from euphemistic terms and expressions such as to manipulate for marketing purposes, to avoid possible loss of face either one's own face or, through offending; to avoid attracting any unpleasant happening, being respectful with regards to social and religious sensitivities, and as an expression of admiration.

The present work, to the best of my knowledge, is the first-ever to explore what counts as verbal taboos in the Azeri society in comparison with another Turkic language i.e. Turkish in terms of its link with the social context in which they are employed and the factors affecting them. I would, as a result of this, argue that third work would shed light on the socio-cultural structure of Turkish and Azeri languages by exploring taboos and euphemism emerging from their customs and beliefs. When compared to the analysis of the verbal taboos in the Persian, Arabic or any other Muslim societies, this paper demonstrated numerous similarities and overlapping in most of the verbal taboo classifications, and also the processes for replacement the taboo words and expressions with, sometimes, the same words and expressions. This similarity gives some insight into similar values and folkloric beliefs under the umbrella of a unified Turkic culture, but there are, on the other hand, a plethora of categories and subcategories specific to the Azeri society which reflect a unique cultural identity. Similar to the study of Qanbar (2011), both in Turkish and Azeri societies, there exist however beliefs in superstitions like the belief in supernatural objects that “interfere with our world and mess up with us, or contracting and catching a serious disease by uttering mere words, or bringing about disgrace to the family if the first name of a female member is mentioned” (p.101).

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