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A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF TABOO IN DARI SPOKEN IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates taboo words, euphemisms, and blasphemy in the Dari language. Dari language falls under the Indo-Iranian subgroup of the Indo-European language family, which is a variety of Persian (Farsi) language spoken by approximately 50 percent of the population in Afghanistan and functions as the lingua franca of the country (Illinois University, 2022). Language, as we know, functions as a bridge among human beings to communicate and build social relations. Languages contain items considered shameful in public and polite interactions, complicated to draw a clear meaning from, or prohibited from being used. Such words are considered taboos, and cultural and religious values define them in a society and they exist in all languages. In the Dari language and Afghani culture, certain words, phrases, and practices are taboo or offensive and avoided in public or polite conversations. Instead, euphemisms are used to express the same meaning without violating the norms or values of society. Some words are also forbidden by religion and are never uttered as they are considered blasphemous. To investigate taboo words in the Dari language, a qualitative ethnographic approach is used to find out different levels of taboos and the strategies people use to avoid them.

Keywords: Taboo, Blasphemy, Euphemism, Dari, Afghanistan.

1. Introduction

As a tool that evolved human civilizations, language has never stopped attracting scholars to study its complicated and sophisticated aspects. Though human language spoken by a native speaker sounds beautiful, understanding and learning it is a much more difficult task. There are billions of speakers speaking hundreds of languages throughout the globe. Not only do we have a large number of languages but they also exhibit cultural diversity and social variations.

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Cultural variations and social factors are crucial elements while approaching a language pragmatically. Cultural and social factors set the boundaries and limitations of a language and define which language elements convey which meaning. Farb (1974) states that "any word is an innocent collection of sounds until a community surrounds it with connotations and decrees that it cannot be used in certain speech situations" (p. 91). So, cultural and social factors define the usage of some words as offensive or shameful and others as forbidden.

Words, phrases, or practices that are considered either impolite or religiously forbidden are defined as taboo. As mentioned, taboos are cultural perceptions of language use and differ from language to language and from time to time. Allan and Burridge (2006) define taboo as "a proscription of behavior for a specifiable community of one or more persons at a specifiable time in specifiable contexts" (p. 11). Thus, taboos are social or cultural norms prohibiting certain behaviors, expressions, or topics. They are often associated with morality, religion, or superstition and vary widely across cultures and historical periods. Taboos of the past and present may not remain taboo in the future, and they are subject to change as Allan and Burridge (2006) also state, "Nothing is taboo for all people, under all circumstances, for all time" (p. 9)

Considering the importance of taboo, it is evident that many studies have been undertaken under different disciplines, including linguistics, aiming at describing taboo, its function, and its importance in a language or social group. The current study focuses on Dari taboos, their classification, and euphemisms based on the Afghani context of communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1. What is Taboo

Language is a powerful tool used for communication and influencing the supernatural realm. Throughout history, humans have believed that certain words and practices can affect their fate, whether positively or negatively. This belief is shaped by culture and religion, defining what is sacred and profane. The fear and shame of violating the holy or the profane is what we call taboo or blasphemy. Taboo and blasphemy are not universal concepts but vary depending on the context and the audience. What may be considered taboo or blasphemous in one society may be acceptable or even praised in another.

Taboo is a concept that has been present in human societies since their origin and has influenced their culture and behavior. A well-known example of eating taboo is the story of Adam and Eve in Abrahamic religions, which tells how they lived in the Paradise or Garden of Eden and were forbidden to eat the fruit of a particular tree. However, Eve was deceived by Iblis, or serpent, and broke the taboo of eating the fruit, causing them to be banished from the Garden of Eden or Janah to earth.

The word taboo comes from the Tongan language of Polynesian culture. The word's original form is Tapu, which means forbidden, prohibited, or sacred. James Cook encountered the term during his visit to Tonga. He refers to using Tabu for prohibited and forbidden things by Tongans (Cook, 1777).

In the languages of Polynesia, the word means simply 'to forbid', 'forbidden', and can be applied to any sort of prohibition. A rule of etiquette, an order issued by a chief, an injunction to children not to meddle with the possessions of their elders, may all be expressed by the use of the word tabu (Radcliffe-Brown, 1939, pp. 5-6)

Taboo has been a topic of interest for various disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, ethnology, language studies, and linguistics. Linguists have been especially intrigued by the role of taboos in language and communication, as taboo words and expressions can convey strong emotions, attitudes, and values. The first use of the term taboo in English was recorded in 1777 by Captain James Cook.

Blasphemy, on the other hand, has a more specific meaning related to religion. It comes from late Latin *blasphemare*, Old French as *blasphemer*, and Middle English as *blasphemen* which referred to calumny, evil speaking, or abuse. Blasphemy is showing disrespect or contempt for God or something sacred or claiming to have the attributes of a deity. Blasphemy is considered a severe offense in some religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, and can be punished by law in some countries. The punishment for blasphemy can range from fines to imprisonment or lashing to capital punishment, depending on the severity of the offense and the country's legal system.

So, it is essential to mention that taboos and blasphemy differ in severity. Taboo is socially unacceptable, but it depends on the context and culture. Conversely, blasphemy dishonors a sacred thing, such as God or a religion. Though blasphemy is not criminalized in some societies, it is a severe offense in many faiths and may have legal or violent consequences. Blasphemy is more fixed and less flexible than taboo.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This research is based on a theory that Freud (1913/2004) put forward, which suggests that taboo has two contradictory aspects: on the one hand, sacred and inviolable, and on the other, uncanny, perilous, prohibited, and impure. Therefore, 'taboo' implies a sense of something that cannot be approached or touched, and it is mainly manifested in prohibitions and restrictions. It is often expressed through rules and regulations. This theory is based on a psychoanalytic approach, which views taboo as a manifestation of the unconscious conflicts between primal instincts and social norms. He also argues that taboo is a way of coping with the ambivalent feelings of attraction and fear towards objects or actions forbidden by the collective conscience.

2.3. Related Studies

Despite the beliefs towards taboos and hitches, a considerable amount of study has been carried out on taboos. Besides language and linguistics, scholars from other disciplines like sociology, anthropology, and ethnology also paid attention to the topic. Though taboos are studied thoroughly in different fields and languages, no studies have addressed taboos in the Dari language and Afghani context. Some studies of linguistic taboos include James George Frazer (1913), Keith Allan and Kate Burridge (2006), Nada Qanbar (2011), Timothy Jay (2018), Kate Burridge and Reka Benczes (2018), and Pedro Dominguez (2018).

The study of taboos and their linguistic implications has been a topic of interest for many scholars. Different criteria have been used to categorize taboos, such as their verbal content, social context, and impact on language. For example, Frazer (1913) identifies six types of verbal taboos based on what they refer to: personal names, names of relations, names of the dead, names of kings and sacred persons, names of gods, and common words tabooed. Qanbar (2011) examines the linguistic taboos in Yemeni society and the factors influencing them. She distinguishes between context-specific and general taboos. Allan and Burridge (2006) identify four main categories of taboos: naming and addressing, sex and bodily effluvia, food and smell, and disease, death, and killing. They explore how taboos affect language and how language deals with taboos. They discuss language censoring, taboos related to culture and religion, euphemism, and blasphemy. They also analyze how strong taboos are avoided and how weak taboos are violated.

Timothy Jay (2018) examines how children acquire language awareness, especially regarding taboo words. He argues that children under twelve do not understand the connotations and implications of taboo words as adults do. Children's vocabulary of taboo words evolves from a limited set of words to a more diverse one, and they tend to rate mild words worse than adults.

Kate Burridge and Reka Benczes (2018) explore how taboo shapes language change. They claim that taboo affects the existing vocabulary of a language, leading to the replacement of some words by borrowing from other languages or creating new words or expressions. The remaining terms may undergo semantic or phonetic changes. Thus, the taboo is a force of language change.

Translating taboo words is a complex and sensitive task involving more than just linguistic skills. Pedro Dominguez (2018) addresses the issue of translating taboo words from one language to another. He asserts that translators also need to consider the cultural and political contexts of both the source and the target languages, as taboo words can have different meanings, connotations, and effects depending on the situation. He claims that translating taboo words is always a challenge

and a problem for translators who must balance accuracy, appropriateness, and ethics.

3. Importance of the Study

Commonly, native speakers of a language are observing the semantic characteristics of a language without formal education. It happens through practice and close contact with the language group throughout a lifetime. While speaking about a foreign language is an entirely different phenomenon, one should study the language thoroughly to avoid embarrassment, insult, clashes, and possibly legal consequences.

It has happened that people violated linguistic taboos inappropriately or unintentionally, which resulted in clashes, objections, hatred, and sometimes death and killing. Among them, we may mention the cartoon of Prophet Mohammad, published in a French journal that created hatred among Muslims towards France, and the Charlie Abdo journal. Another example is when Bindu and Kanaka Durga, two women, entered a Sabarimala temple in Kerala, India, which prohibited women between 10 to 50 years old from entering the temple, creating a clash (Joglekar & Merchan, 2019).

Talking about taboo is not a simple topic. It needs a lot of study and observation to understand what is considered taboo or blasphemy in a linguistic group and what is not. People from different languages and societies disagree on the topic, and each language group in diverse social groups defines taboo differently. There are social groups that prefer to avoid using taboos and blasphemy, but some are not even familiar with the concept, and others prefer to use the euphemistic way of violating taboos to deliver the message. Therefore, it is critical for a linguist, a foreign language learner/teacher, and someone eager to visit a country to understand the subject properly.

4. Research Method

The research is done through a qualitative approach by using ethnographic methods. The research plot is Kabul, Afghanistan, a multi-ethnic Muslim community. The study includes language and speaking data collected by observing native Dari speakers in natural conversations. The observation is done while talking to different social groups randomly.

5. Discussion

Taboo is a cultural and social concept determining what language use is unacceptable, offensive, or sinful in a given community. Dari, as the language of an Islamic country, has its own set of taboos and anti-blasphemy laws that regulate the linguistic behavior of its speakers. These taboos are not inherent to the language but acquired through socialization, practice, and transmission across generations. Taboos are also dynamic and contextual, as Allan and Burridge (2006) argue: "Taboo refers to a proscription of behavior for a specifiable community of one or more persons at a specifiable time in specifiable contexts" (p. 11).

Studying taboo language is a sensitive topic that requires careful and scholarly treatment. Researchers who study this phenomenon may encounter various obstacles and ethical issues in collecting and analyzing authentic data. For instance, some participants in such research may be reluctant to share their natural use of taboo words due to social, cultural, or political constraints or fear of negative repercussions. Mead (1937) also defines taboo as a threat to the violator, which reflects the social group's attitude towards taboo. Thus, the researcher may not capture taboo language's full scope and complexity in a given social context.

As mentioned, taboos are social or cultural norms prohibiting or restricting certain behaviors, expressions, or topics. They vary across different cultures and societies and can have different levels of severity and enforcement. This study proposes a two-dimensional framework for analyzing taboos based on their cultural and social context. The researcher distinguishes between taboos that are related to *religion*, such as those involving sacred and supernatural entities and uncleanliness taboos, and those related to *morality*, such as those involving sex and body private parts, marriage and sexual relations, bodily exertions, death, and disease, naming and addressing, swear and curse words, privacy, and body arts. The researcher also discusses the functions and consequences of these taboos and how they reflect and shape the values, beliefs, and identities of those who adhere to or violate them.

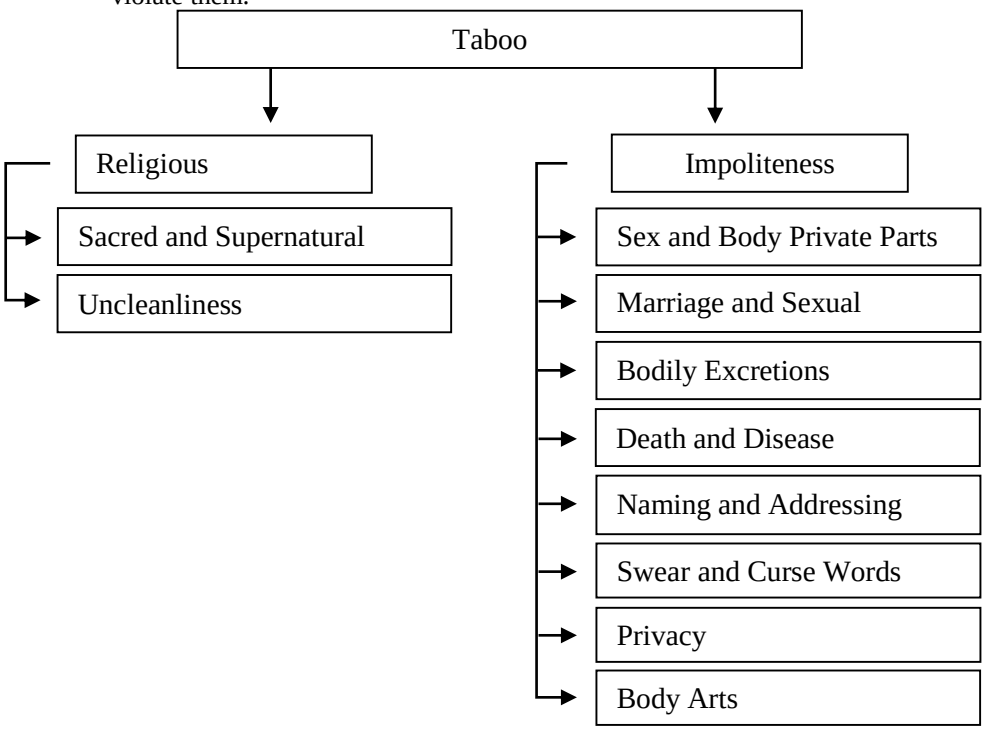


Figure 1: Linguistic Taboos in Afghani Context

5.1. Taboos Associated with Religion

Afghanistan is a country where Islam is the dominant religion and influences many aspects of its culture. Some certain words and practices are considered sacred and holy and require respect and reverence from the believers. Some beliefs and customs are also based on superstitions and are prevalent among uneducated and traditional families. No matter if it is holy, secret, or superstition, most of the taboos in this category are blasphemy. These are some of the taboos that shape the religious norms and values in an Afghani context.

5.1.1. Sacred and Supernatural

Sacred and supernatural taboos refer to the beliefs and practices forbidden or restricted by a specific group or culture. These beliefs and practices often involve the sacred or the mystical, such as the prophets, gods, holy books, religious places, spirits, supernatural powers, magic, or curses. The reasons for these taboos vary, but they usually serve to maintain social order, protect moral values, or avoid misfortune.

In Afghani culture and Dari language, words and activities involving the name of Allah (the God), prophets, holy books, and religious places are considered sacred; therefore, referring to them improperly, questioning their very existence, criticizing, and associating impurities with them is forbidden and blasphemous. For example, the name of Allah is always followed by the Arabic phrase *jalla jalaalahu* (Allah the Most Exalted), the name of the prophet Mohammed is followed by the Arabic phrase *sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam* (peace be upon him), and drawing their images is highly prohibited. Moreover, a person should not touch the holy Quran without ablution, and one should not enter a sacred place with footwear on and while unclean. Besides, a Muslim is highly forbidden to convert to any other religion. Violating such taboos is considered blasphemy, resulting in hatred from the society, great sin, lashing, or capital punishment.

On the other hand, supernatural powers are rooted in the people's beliefs and turn some words and practices into taboos. Most of these words and activities don't have religious bases; still, in rural places and among illiterate people, they are considered to have dangerous powers as they go beyond the control of a human. These taboos exist due to the fear or unpleasant nature of a word or practice's concept. Therefore, words like *shaitaan* (devil), *jen* (jennies), and *roh* (spirit) should be followed with *besmellaah* (in the name of Allah); otherwise misfortune may fall upon the speaker or hearer. Similarly, words like *jaado* (magic) are believed to be evil and must be avoided as such terms are supposed to carry demonic power and cause harm to the violator. Besides, some activities are also treated in the same way like, after

prayers, one must fold the side of the prayer mat to avoid the devil praying on it, one will falsely get accused if the foot touches a broom unless a twig from the broom is immediately removed, and a pregnant woman should not touch her body during an eclipse or a dark mark will appear on her baby's body, etc. Such taboos are mostly superstitions, but illiterate traditional families strictly observe them.

5.1.2. Uncleanliness

Uncleanliness taboos are social norms prohibiting or restricting certain behaviors or interactions considered impure, dirty, or contaminating. Some examples of uncleanliness taboos are related to menstruation, puerperium, body secretions during sex, unclean places, objects, and certain types of consumables that are considered *haram* (unlawful). These taboos may have different origins and consequences depending on the cultural and historical context or the very property of the object. Some possible explanations for uncleanliness taboos are based on religious beliefs, health concerns, gender roles, or power relations. Uncleanliness taboos may affect people's access to resources, opportunities, or social status. For instance, in Afghanistan, women during menstruation and puerperium are isolated or excluded from certain activities or places unless the menstruation period and puerperium period (three days) are over and ghusl (taking a bath as per Islamic law) has not taken place. Similarly, after sexual activity, a person should immediately perform *ghusl* (take a bath as per sharia law); otherwise, they are considered unclean. Uncleanliness taboos may restrict a person from preparing food for others, touching a holy book, entering a Masjed (mosque), or performing prayers.

Moreover, some consumable items like foods and drinks are considered unclean and called *najes* (impure/unclean). Consuming such foods and drinks is prohibited in the Afghani context. Suppose one's clothes or body is contaminated with such items. In that case, one should remove the clothes or properly wash the contaminated object or body before praying or touching sacred stuff, as the body or the object also becomes *najes* (impure/unclean). For example, *khuk* (pork) and alcoholic drinks are among the unclean consumables, and *khun* (blood), bodily excretions, and *jasad* (corpse) are among the contaminating unclean objects. There are also words referring to unclean places and things like *tashnab* (toilet), *eshal* (diarrhoea), and *estefragh* (vomit), considered taboo to verbalize, and they are accompanied by some conventional phrases like *gulab ba ru* (rosewater on your face). Such a phrase minimizes the intensity of the unclean place or object, while unclean words cannot be used along with holy words like *besmellaah* (in the name of Allah). Moreover, sacred objects are not allowed to be taken in unclean places.

5.2. Taboos Associated with Impoliteness

Impoliteness taboos are topics or behaviors considered rude, offensive, or inappropriate in a given context or culture. They often involve sensitive or personal aspects of human life, such as sex and body private parts, bodily excretions, death and disease, naming and addressing, swear and curse words, privacy, body arts, marriage, and sexual relations. Impoliteness taboos can vary across languages, regions, and social groups and change over time. For example, showing the soles of the feet to elders is an impoliteness taboo in the Afghani context. Impoliteness taboos can be expressed through taboo language and avoided through euphemisms.

5.2.1. Sex and Private Body Parts

In Dari, topics related to sex and private parts of the body are considered shameful and impolite. People avoid using direct words for body private parts, especially those of women such as *sina*/*pestaan* (breast), *kun* (ass), *khaaya* (testicle), and for sexual practices such as *hamjensgaraayi* (homosexuality), *khoderzaayi/jalq* (masturbation), *fahaashi/faaheshagari* (prostitution), and *levaat* (homosexuality among male gender). These words and practices are taboo and are avoided in daily conversations. However, in medical situations, these words can be used and discussed by doctors and patients directly or euphemistically, such as *baasan* (ass), *aalat tanaasuli* (reproductive organs), *baiza/khosya* (testicle), and *sharmgah* (shameful parts). Some other constructions are avoided and replaced with euphemisms like intercourse to *aamizesh kardan* / *hambestar shodan* / *nazdiki kardan*.

5.2.2. Marriage and Sexual Relations

Sexuality is an integral and natural part of human existence, but it is also influenced by various social and cultural factors that shape and limit it. Different cultures have different prohibitions on what types of sexual behaviors are taboo or not, and these prohibitions often reflect the values and beliefs of those cultures. In Afghanistan, marriage and sexual relation taboos are influenced by the culture and religion. As a result, it is considered unethical for a girl to propose to a boy for marriage, and the boy should initiate the proposal to the girl's family through the elders. Dating words or ideas is considered taboo and brings shame to both families; therefore, it is not used or practiced. Subsequently, marriage with an aunt or uncle is prohibited as the culture does not accept it. In addition, cross-gender relationships outside marriage are not tolerated, and *hamjensgaraayi* (homosexuality) is not only shameful to verbalize, but the practice is banned and severely punished. Besides, single children are discouraged from living alone as they are likelier to violate such taboos. So, taboo

words such as *haraami* (bastard/forbidden/unlawful), *haraamzada* (bastard), *naajaayez* (unlawful), and *naamashro* (unlawful) are used for such relationships, children or acts.

5.2.3. Bodily Excretions

The bodily excretions are often avoided or considered taboo in many cultures and languages, and Dari is no exception. Most words for bodily fluids and wastes are taboo in Dari, except for *ashk* (tear), which has a significant role in poetry and literature. Medicine is the only context where the formal and original terms for bodily excretions are used. Otherwise, euphemisms are preferred to replace the words or soften the intensity of the taboo. For example, *shaash* (urine), *goh* (poo), *mani* (sperm), *estefraagh* (vomit), *qaaedagi* (menstruation), *jenaabat* (men's semen flow-out in sleep), and *khun* (blood) are among the bodily excretion taboos. Some of the examples mentioned above have mild alternatives or euphemisms that are used in formal contexts, such as *edraar* (urine), *madfo* (poo), and *bargardaandan* (vomit). Still, others do not have alternatives and are followed by some minimizers, such as *golaab ba ru* (rosewater on your face), to reduce the intensity of such taboo words or phrases.

5.2.4. Death and Disease

In the case of death and disease, the fear of death and infection contaminates some words, so speakers avoid them while speaking. Since death and fatal diseases are frightening topics, people use euphemistic words and phrases to avoid the fear of death. For example, talking about the possibility of the death of someone is unethical and shows eagerness for the person's death. In such a case, phrases like *omre taan daraaz* (may you live long), *dor az jaanet* (away from your life), *gush shaitaan kar* (deaf the ear of the devil) softens the tone of the message and intention of the speaker. It is also taboo to use the word *mord* (died), and primarily words or phrases like *dargozasht* (passed away), *ba haq paiwast* (joined Allah), *ba khast allah labaik goft* (answered the call of Allah), or *faut kard* (passed away) replace it. Additionally, when talking about a dead person, mostly *marhum* (departed) or *shahid* (martyr) replace it, and it is followed by phrases like *khoda biamorzad* (may God bless him) and *rohash shaad* (may rest their soul in peace). Words associated with death like *jenaaza* (corpse), *gur* (grave), *morda shoi* (mortuarist), *morda shoi khaana* (mortuary) are respectively replaced with *paikar*, *qabr*, *ghasaal*, *ghosl khana*. Death is not the only taboo topic; speakers also shun some fatal or stigmatized diseases. These diseases may evoke fear or shame because of their origin, unfamiliarity, or contagiousness. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, COVID-19, cancer, and mental illness are some diseases

that people avoid mentioning, or euphemism is used to soften them. Phrases like *dor az janet* (away from your life), *dor az hazirin* (away from the presents), *gush shaitaan kar* (deaf the ear of the devil) are phrases used before such taboos to minimize the intensity of the word or to avoid getting infected with the disease. Moreover, physical defects and disabilities are also taboo when uttering the terms in the presence of someone suffering from the disability or deficiency. Words like *kal* (bold), *kor* (blind), and *lang* (limp) are some of the physical defect taboos.

5.2.5. Naming and Addressing

As with most moral taboos, this category of taboo words is contextual and culture-specific. Taboos related to naming and addressing refer to contexts where naming or addressing people in certain situations is considered improper. In Dari speaking and Afghani context, there are specific ways of showing respect and politeness to elders and women. For example, when talking to an elderly person, one can use the name of their eldest son, such as *padar-e Ahmad* (father of Ahmad) or *maadar-e Ahmad* (mother of Ahmad). If the name of the son is not known, one can use kinship terms like *kaakaa* (uncle), *khaala/ama* (aunt), *khaahar/hamshira* (sister), *laalaa* (elder brother), or *baraadar* (brother). Referring to one's wife, a person may use terms like *ayaal*/*awlaada* to hide the names of female family members and show respect. These terms show respect and politeness and convey a sense of familiarity and affection. Furthermore, when addressing a woman, regardless of her age, it is considered rude to call her by her first name. Instead, one should use the term *khaahar*/*hamshira* (sister), which implies respect and solidarity. By following these norms of naming and addressing, one can avoid offending or embarrassing the interlocutors and establish a positive rapport.

5.2.6. Swear and Curse Words

Though swear and curse or cuss words are used interchangeably, they are used to express strong emotions, such as anger, frustration, surprise, or disgust. However, they are inappropriate for polite conversations and can offend or insult others. They refer to profanity and socially unacceptable language and are unsuitable for formal discussions. Some common swear or curse words in the Dari language and Afghani context are *lanati* (damn), *faahesha* (bitch), *eblis* (satan), *ahmaq* (idiot), *haraami*/*haraamzaada* (bastard), *mordagaw* (pimping), and *past* (bugger). Additionally, some other words that refer to animals have neutral meanings in everyday speech and can become swear or curse words when used to refer to a person, such as *sag* (dog), *khenzir* (pig), *gaw* (cow), *khar* (donkey), and *gosaala* (calf). Moreover, some

physical defects and illnesses such as *kur* (blind), *kar* (deaf), *dewaana* (crazy), *rawaani* (psychopath), and *mariz* (ill) also function as swear words. The study also found that female speakers use fewer swear or curse words than male speakers and are more careful about violating taboos.

5.2.7. Privacy

Privacy is a complex and sensitive topic that affects many aspects of our lives. Some people may have strong preferences for keeping certain information about themselves private, while others may not mind sharing it with others. However, some privacy taboos in the Afghani context and Dari language are widely recognized as unacceptable or unethical to violate. In these situations, revealing personal information can cause harm, distress, or discrimination to the individuals involved. For example, entering a house without permission, disclosing someone's sexual life, health status, marital status, or criminal history without consent, and a genuine need can be considered privacy taboos. Furthermore, touching a female by any means, a handshake with a female stranger, sitting next to a female stranger, uttering the first names of the family female members of an outsider or before an outsider, and asking for and exposing a female photo or age, can also be considered privacy taboos. So, it is best to use terms such as *khaahar*/*hamshira* (sister), *khaanom* (madam), *khaanom* (wife), and *khaala*/*ama* (aunt). Such information can expose people to social stigma, harassment, violence, or legal consequences due to the conservative tradition and lifestyle. Therefore, it is essential to respect the privacy rights of others and avoid violating their privacy taboos.

5.2.8. Body Arts

Body art, such as tattooing and plastic surgery, is a form of personal expression practiced for centuries by different cultures. However, in some societies, body art is still seen as a taboo or a sign of deviance. People view body art as a violation of natural beauty or religious principles. In Afghanistan, only two types of body art are practiced by female members: a traditional tattoo called *khaal* (dot), usually in blue or green color on the forehead, hands, or cheeks, and *hena* (henna) on hands and feet. Therefore, people who choose to have other types of body arts or plastic surgery for beauty may face discrimination, stigma, or prejudice from others who do not share their aesthetic preferences or values.

6. Conclusion

This paper presents a preliminary exploration of the concept of taboo within the Dari language and Afghan society, areas previously not extensively studied. Taboo is identified as a linguistic reflection of cultural norms and values that necessitates contextual analysis to

understand its communicative functions and effects. The study categorizes taboos in Afghanistan into religious and impoliteness taboos. Religious taboos, deeply intertwined with Islamic beliefs, include prohibitions against consuming certain substances, disrespecting sacred entities, and attributing imperfections to divine figures. Impoliteness taboos violate social etiquette and expectations, such as calling elders by their first name, asking a woman for her photo or age, or getting a tattoo. The paper underscores the importance of adhering to these taboos to avoid religious offense or social embarrassment. It concludes that while language reflects the richness of cultural diversity, it also presents challenges, emphasizing the need for further research to fully comprehend the intricacies of taboo, euphemism, and blasphemy in this context. Understanding language within its societal framework is crucial, as it can either unlock opportunities or lead to adverse outcomes. Indeed, as Dari speakers believe, language can be the key to a castle or the path to hell.

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