

Research paper

Taboos in Sistani and the Comparison of Taboo-avoiding Forms in Sistani and English: A Cross-Cultural View

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Abstract

Taboos refer to prohibitions or restrictions imposed by societies or cultures on specific behaviors, utterances, or topics deemed inappropriate, offensive, or forbidden. These constraints are often rooted within historical, religious, or social frameworks and serve to preserve social order, moral principles, and collective identity. By delineating what is unacceptable or considered dangerous, taboos play a fundamental role in regulating interpersonal interactions and reinforcing community cohesion. This study investigates taboos within the language and culture of the Sistani community and is composed of two main sections. The first section categorizes and describes various types of taboos present in the Sistani dialect, providing clear examples for each type to familiarize readers with their characteristics and cultural contexts. As powerful cultural and social constructs, taboos are crucial in shaping societal norms and values, and understanding them enhances comprehension of the regional cultural dynamics. The second section examines the linguistic and cultural strategies employed by Sistani speakers to avoid taboos. These patterns include creative and contextually appropriate phrases and structures that convey taboo concepts indirectly. Furthermore, the article compares these avoidance strategies with their English equivalents and evaluates the extent to which Grice's cooperative principles—a key theory in communication—are observed or violated. This comparative analysis reveals cultural and semantic differences and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of social

communication across two distinct cultures. The article concludes with a summary of findings and overall conclusions.

Keywords: English Language, Prohibitions, Sistani dialect, Taboo

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Introduction

The concept of taboo exhibits significant variations across different cultures, particularly between English and Persian contexts. In English, taboos are understood as prohibitions on specific behaviors or language deemed harmful to individuals or communities, often resulting in social sanctions (Allan, 2019). In contrast, Persian culture reflects taboos through social norms that dictate acceptable behavior, especially in gender interactions, as demonstrated in literary works (Rashid & Haji, 2023). The translation of taboo-related expressions from English to Persian further highlights cultural sensitivities, with strategies such as omission commonly employed to align with prevailing local norms (Hashemian et al., 2019); (Sichani & Afrooz, 2018).

Persian literature often challenges taboos and reflects social values and norms through character interactions (Rashid & Haji, 2023). In audiovisual translation, Persian translators frequently apply strategies such as omission to avoid introducing potentially harmful content and to demonstrate cultural conformity with taboos (Hashemian et al., 2019); (Sichani & Afrooz, 2018). While taboos serve to maintain social order in both cultures, the methods of expressing and adhering to these norms can differ substantially, reflecting broader cultural values and historical contexts. Dominant forces such as mythology, religion, and society have concurrently underpinned taboos; otherwise, their persistence over extended periods would not be sustainable.

The social and psychological implications of taboos and prohibitions in Iran are profound, influencing individuals and communities in multifaceted ways. These taboos—especially regarding sexual and gender roles—create environments of fear, repression, and social isolation,

leading to mental health issues and social dysfunction. Prohibitions against premarital relationships and sexual activity foster a culture of secrecy and shame, particularly affecting women who face significant vulnerability and potential abuse (Rahbari, 2016). Domestic violence is often silenced due to cultural taboos, perpetuating cycles of pain and fear among women and undermining family stability (Heidari & Mardani-Hamuleh, 2016).

Individuals struggling with desires to break taboos experience internal conflicts that may lead to anxiety and depression. Fear of social punishment reinforces adherence to these taboos (Fereshtman et al., 2008). Victims of incest and sexual abuse frequently encounter feelings of isolation and shame, exacerbated by social stigma and the lack of supportive systems (Ahmadi, 2023). Conversely, some argue that taboos function as mechanisms for social cohesion, providing a shared moral framework that can unify communities. However, this perspective often overlooks the detrimental effects on individual well-being and the perpetuation of harmful practices.

Addressing the concept of taboo necessitates a historical inquiry to achieve a comprehensive understanding of its origins, evolution, and functional role within human societies. According to the Encyclopaedia Americana, a taboo is defined as a prohibition against the use or engagement with certain objects or behaviors deemed sacred, consecrated, or impure, rendering them dangerous or forbidden. Such prohibitions are typically enforced through supernatural sanctions, with individuals who violate the taboo believed to incur death, illness, or various misfortunes. In addition to supernatural enforcement, taboos may also be maintained through social sanctions.

For analytical clarity, this study adopts a dual classification system for taboos based on the nature of the authority enforcing the prohibition. If religious authorities maintain the taboo, it is categorized as a religious taboo; if social authorities enforce it, the taboo is classified as social. Historical evidence suggests that taboos have evolved successively, originating in mythology and

religion before transitioning into social constructs, implying that social taboos increasingly replace earlier religious or mythological taboos over time.

A linguistic study of taboo in the Sistani context presents unique constraints. The subject matter does not lend itself easily to scientific investigation through objective data-gathering techniques. Taboos exist in nearly all aspects of life in the Sistani code, requiring researchers to have a deep understanding of the local context. The researcher, a native speaker whose family emigrated to northern Iran, has observed the formation of a new speech community among Sistani immigrants. This community is homogeneous, as all members share the experience of breaking a significant taboo by leaving their homeland. Growing up in this community and traveling extensively has enabled the researcher to employ participant observation as a method for studying taboos in Sistan. To minimize subjectivity, graduate students in linguistics and social sciences were interviewed, as discussing taboo is itself a sensitive topic among many Sistanis.

Language and culture are intricately intertwined, with one important dimension of this interconnection being the presence of taboos in social communication. Taboos, as unwritten rules and cultural norms that influence interpersonal and social relations, manifest uniquely in each language and culture. The people of northern Sistan and Baluchestan province in Iran speak the Sistani code, a term deliberately chosen to avoid potential controversies regarding its classification as either a language or a dialect.

The significance of studying the Sistani code lies in its originality amid ongoing language change processes in this region of Iran. Compared to modern Persian, the Sistani code includes fewer Arabic loanwords. For instance, the four Persian phonemes /p/, /g/, /ch/, and /zh/, which are absent in Arabic, occur more frequently in Sistani than in modern Persian. This phenomenon is

related to the long-term dominance of Arabic in Iran and subsequent linguistic shifts, as these phonemes continue to be used as they were in Old Persian.

A major aspect that distinguishes the Sistani code from other codes used in Iran is its particular social-pragmatic features, especially concerning language use and taboo practices. Numerous taboos exist within the Sistani code, sometimes complicating communication and causing unintended conflicts or misunderstandings. The strategies employed in this code to avoid taboos are significant from both sociolinguistic and discourse analysis perspectives.

The primary aim of this study is to examine taboos in the Sistani dialect and analyze the linguistic patterns used to circumvent them. The study introduces the types of taboos in the Sistani dialect and explains their cultural characteristics. Another key objective is to compare these taboo avoidance patterns with their English equivalents, conducting a comparative analysis through the lens of different cultures. This comparison not only highlights cultural and semantic differences but also contributes to a better understanding of social interactions and intercultural communication processes.

Literature Review

Taboos in English and Sistani Language

The notion of taboos significantly influences language and communication across various cultures. Taboos are understood as prohibitions against specific behaviors or expressions considered socially unacceptable within a given cultural framework. This literature review examines the current research on taboos in both the English language and the Sistani language, emphasizing their cultural ramifications and the necessity for comparative analyses.

Research demonstrates that taboos are intricately woven into the sociolinguistic landscape of communities. Allan (2018) explores how taboo language encompasses proscribed behaviors that differ across cultures, noting that the perceived harm associated with taboo expressions can range from minor breaches of social etiquette to serious societal repercussions. This work establishes a foundational understanding of the operational dynamics of taboos within the English language, revealing the complexities surrounding euphemism and dysphemism in communication (Allan, 2018).

In the context of Iranian cultures, including the Sistani community, Sadeghi (2003) has investigated social and linguistic taboos, highlighting their effects on communication practices. The Sistani language, characterized by its distinct cultural customs, remains an under-researched area concerning taboos. Contributions by Jafari (2006) and Mehrabi (2010) have provided insights into the linguistic characteristics of the Sistani dialect and the associated social taboos; however, more extensive studies are required to comprehensively understand the subtleties of taboo language in this context.

A comparative examination of taboos in English and Sistani languages reveals notable cultural disparities. For example, while English speakers may navigate taboos related to sexuality and profanity with varying levels of acceptance, the Sistani community may enforce stricter prohibitions shaped by religious and cultural values. This contrast underscores the urgent need for further research that specifically investigates taboo avoidance strategies in the Sistani language in relation to English. Such inquiries could deepen our understanding of intercultural communication and the role of taboos in influencing social interactions.

Recent studies have also addressed the implications of taboos within educational settings. Dahmarde's (2025) research reveals prevalent gender stereotypes in English teaching materials used in the Middle East. Such stereotypes contribute to taboos regarding gender roles and inhibit candid dialogues about gender equality. The dominant portrayal of men in primary roles and women in subordinate ones perpetuates traditional norms and suppresses free discussion on gender issues, thereby sustaining a cycle of silence around gender-related taboos. Additionally, Spathopoulou (2025) explores how cultural taboos impact English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Arab Gulf region, identifying the challenges educators encounter when addressing sensitive subjects such as gender roles and religion. This research highlights the significance of intercultural competence for educators, enabling them to navigate cultural sensitivities while fostering an inclusive learning environment. The findings suggest that culturally responsive teaching can enhance language acquisition and promote empathy among students from diverse backgrounds (Spathopoulou, 2025).

Additionally, a comparative study by Hua (2020) investigates the relationship between taboos and euphemisms in English, emphasizing the necessity for a nuanced understanding of how these phenomena interact. This research underscores the importance of recognizing cultural differences in taboo expressions, which can profoundly affect cross-cultural communication (Hua, 2020). Recent studies, such as those by Xue (2023) and Hong (2024), further explore the dynamics of taboo language in intercultural communication, highlighting the need for sensitivity to cultural differences in language use.

In summary, the existing literature on taboos in both English and Sistani languages reveals a complex interplay between language, culture, and social norms. While significant progress has been made in understanding taboos across various contexts, there remains a critical need for more

focused research on the Sistani language. Such studies would not only enrich the academic discourse surrounding taboos but also enhance our comprehension of cultural interactions and linguistic differences in an increasingly globalized world. New insights from Salami (2007), Anditasari (2024), and others contribute to this ongoing dialogue, emphasizing the importance of cultural context in understanding taboo language.

Methodology

This study is designed to examine taboos within the Sistani language and to comparatively analyze patterns of taboo avoidance in both Sistani and English through a qualitative framework. A qualitative and comparative research design has been adopted to facilitate an in-depth and systematic investigation of taboo phenomena and avoidance strategies in Sistani, alongside their counterparts in English. Data for this research are drawn from both library-based sources and fieldwork involving native Sistani speakers. The study undertakes a rigorous cultural and linguistic analysis of taboos, aiming to elucidate both shared and divergent features across the two languages. Additionally, the analysis employs Grice's cooperative principles as a theoretical lens to reveal underlying pragmatic differences in taboo usage between the languages and their respective cultural contexts.

In Sistani code, taboos are present in nearly all aspects of life. Some of the most important areas which pertain to taboos are birth, death, disease, sex, jealousy, greeting, address form, repeated use of some verbs, animals, etc. The significance of studying taboos pertains to different principles such as discourse analysis, linguistics, sociolinguistics, contrastive linguistics, sociology, anthropology, etc. Another important necessity for such a study is resurrecting this

code. Otherwise, in the process of language change, this code will disappear soon as a result of emigration, rapid communication, higher education, intermarriages, globalization, etc.

Results

In addition, according to the observations done by the researcher, taboos are losing their power in Sistani code. For example, twenty years ago, Sistanis rarely used the word /dastshuee rafta/ (to go to WC). Instead, they used /kenar-e-ju rafta/ (to go near water). More examples are illustrated in Table 1.

So far, this study has been concerned with different kinds of taboos in Sistani. However, the most pervasive types of taboos in this code pertains to human physique. Some of taboos in this category are presented in the following parts.

In relation to sex, the taboo words are denatured by adding the expression /bi manei/ (without interpretation). All the words in Table 1 are taboos in Sistani because they connote the similarities with human beings' organs of sex. In this regard, it suffices to mention that Sistanis use indirect ways to circumvent the use of taboos in such cases.

Table 1:
Degraded for Elevated form

/draz/	long	/bi manei draaz/	without interpretation long
/kloft/	thick	/bi manei kloft/	without interpretation thick
/tang/	tight	/bi manei tank/	without interpretation tight
/se/	three	/bi manei se/	without interpretation three
/pas/	back	/bi manei pas/	without interpretation back
/pish/	front	/bi manei pish/	without interpretation front
/kuchax/	hole	/bi manei kuchax/	without interpretation kuchax

Topicalization is another way to talk about taboos among Sistanis. When reporting the bride's lack of virginity or the bridegroom's sexual disability revealed at the first night of marriage, the banned forms of presenting the meanings are changed in the following ways shown in Table 2.

Table 2:

Degraded form Elevated form

<i>/kenjaka xarab buda/ (the bride was not vergin)</i>	<i>/kenjaka xe bsarak nsaaxta/ (the bride was not compatible with her husband)</i>
<i>/psarak chize ndeshta/ (the bridegroom was not able to cohabit)</i>	<i>/psarak xe kenjaka nsaaxtah/ (the bridegroom was not compatible with his wife)</i>

This way of implicitly carrying infamous messages in communication is an outstanding characteristic of this code. It seems logical not to let anyone become explicitly aware of some disgraceful happenings in the society.

As Table 2 shows, by using topicalization, putting */kenjaka/* (the bride) in the beginning of S1 and */psarak/* (the bridegroom) in the beginning of S2, the meaning is revealed. Hereby, topicalization signals whether the blame is attributed to the bride or bridegroom.

As for animals, using the name of some animals is considered taboo in ordinary communication. For example, there are four words for the word donkey in Sistani. They are */xar/*, */olaaq/*, */charpo/*, */charva/*. Among the four words, the first one is the most derogatory and the last one is the most popular form of its use. The following continuum clarifies the relative degree of degradation and elevation forms of this word in communication.

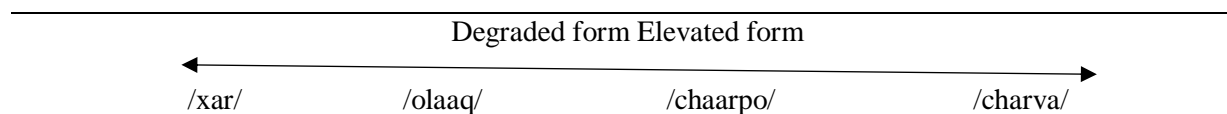


Figure 1: Continuum of Degradation and Elevation

An interesting violation of taboo happened in the recent electoral campaign of the parliament in Zahedan. One of the well-educated candidates who was delivering his main electoral talk mentioned *"/babei me anuz xar svar misho. /"* (My father still rides a donkey) to show his modesty

and to claim to be an oppressed person. Although he wanted to be humble and polite, he was accused of being impolite and breaking the moral etiquette of the society, by a large majority and lost his campaign. The reason is the improper use of /xar/, derogatory form of donkey, instead of /chaar va/, the elevated euphemistic word for donkey.

The appropriate use of euphemistic words in such cases aims at saving face of the addressees by minimizing the cost to the other party of communication. On the contrary, the application of inappropriate words decreases the euphemistic value of the speech on the whole.

Birth, as an important aspect of human life is of great importance in Sistani. The sixth night after any birth a celebration is held. At that night, people who are in the celebration bring presents and stay late or may not sleep the night. However, in spite of the great happiness which any birth brings into the society, the word /zaaida/ (to bear) is prohibited to be used for the mother. This word has four representations in Sistani which are shown in Figure 2.

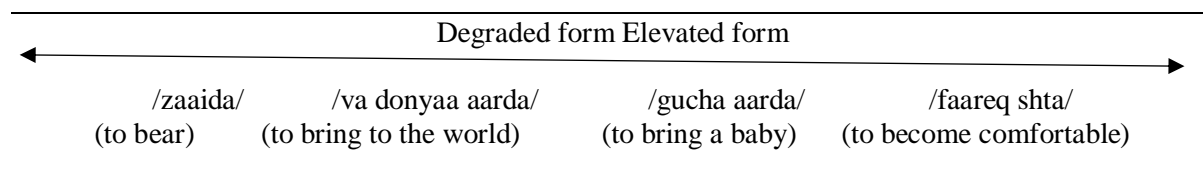


Figure 2: Continuum of Degradation and Elevation

As Figure 2 shows, the first word is prohibited to be used publicly. Only intimate people, mostly women, can use the degraded forms among themselves in private or in their informal talks. Also little children are allowed to hear the word /zaaida/ (to bear) for ladies.

It is worth mentioning that the word /zaaida/ (to bear) is considered taboo only for women not for animals. Since its use for mothers can simultaneously dramatize the scene of bearing a child with all its physical details, its relevance to the specific women's organs of sex, and her suffering while bearing, may all dramatize in the mind of the listener. Hence, it is considered taboo to bring to the mind of the listener all pictorial scenery of bearing a child.

Address forms between wives and husbands are also related to taboos in Sistani. When a couple are alone, they are free to address themselves as they like. When a third person is present, they address themselves in one of several ways shown in Figure 3.

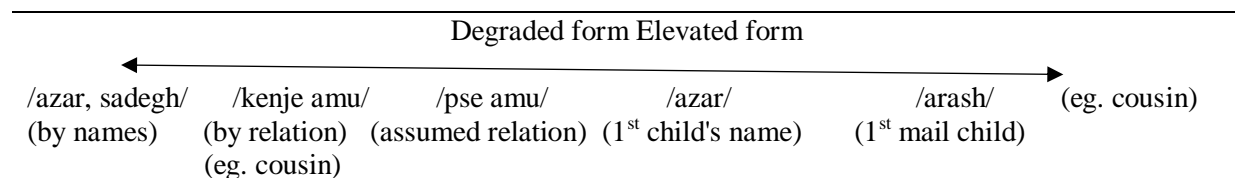


Figure3: Continuum of Degradation and Elevation

The rationale behind the address forms between wives and husbands needs a separate comprehensive study itself. Here, it suffices to note that it is impolite for a wife to call her husband by his name because it is an inhumanely insult to him. On the other hand, if the husband calls his wife by her name, it indicated the impoliteness of the husband who disreputates his wife by calling her name in public.

Likewise, some taboos in Sistani have lots to do with taboos. Using the name of some diseases is prohibited in this code. Some of the deadliest diseases in this domain are /taaun/ (plague), /vabaa/ (cholera), /fat/ (hernia), for men, and /rig shta/ (mensturation).

Table 3:

Degraded form Elevated form

/taaun/ (plague)	/dur az i aabaadi taaun/ (be far from this area plague)
/vabaa/ (cholera)	/dur az i aabaadi vabaa/ (be far from this area cholera)
/fat/ (hernia)	/kar karda tap xaarda/ (has worked hard and hurt himself)
/rig shta/ (menstruate)	/aaadat dida/mariz shta/ (faced the habit or got sick)

With regard to the first and second cases, people denature taboos by showing their unwillingness to pronounce the diseases. If a speaker utters such diseases, it is similar to

welcoming the disease into the district. In such a case, if someone gets such a disease, the the blame goes onto the person who has pronounced it.

Regarding the third case, because hernia happens near men's organs of sex, it use offends the listener and indicates the speaker's impoliteness. The word /tapzaarda/ (to be hurt) is frequently used to indicate the hernia rupture, however, the context indicates whether it is hernia or simply a case of exhaustion. In the last case, like the third case, the word /aadat dida/ (to face one's habit or get sick) is normally used to signal menstruation. Here again, the context of language use and the gender of the person signifies the meaning.

Jealousy is a strongly hateful action among Sistanies. This forbidden act needs a comprehensive study. However, its taboo representation is dealt here. Among Sistanis, the the use of the words or expressions which may connote jealousy among the speakers are seriously banned. The ways people congratulate one another on different occasions are prominently marked. For instance, the use of /jo var sar to/ (good for you) is rude and a sign of resentment. In spite of the fact that there is nothing wrong semantically with this expression, pragmatically, its use indicated the speaker's being resentful. In order to avoid such a common miscommunication, people may act of one or both of the following ways to elevate its negative interpretation as seen in Figure 4.

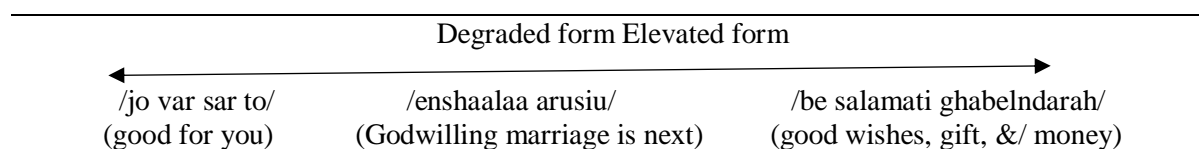


Figure 4

In order to circumvent congratulating verbally which is considered taboo, people show the best wishes in connection to what is the subject of congratulation. Suppose somebody has been accepted in the University Entrance Examination. The proper way to express one's pleasure would be /enshaalaa arusiu/ (Godwilling his/her marriage is next). However, this strategy is not offensive.

Still, it may be ambiguous if there is any minute reason for the lack of trustfulness between the parties. A second strategy is used to demonstrate one's loyalty to the addressee in such cases. The second strategy requires the addresser to buy a gift or give some money to be spent for the study, in addition to expressing good wishes. In sum, Sistanis are too negatively sensitive towards jealousy in their language use.

Verbal disputes have particularly a lot to do with respect to taboos in Sistani code. They occupy a large amount of people's small or ritual talks in their free time. Sistanis are enthusiastically interested in underlying implications in their common interactions. Misunderstandings usually appear as a result of peculiar rules of communication what may lead to different kinds of taboo implicatures.

The verbs such as /nfamida/ (not to understand), /karda/ (to do), /sar jaa xaa shnasta/ (to sit on one's place), etc lend themselves very well to the domain of taboo studies. Of course, there are a lot of other verbs in this category, but for the sake of being concise, only the first of the above verbs are explained.

The verb /nfamida/ (not to understand) becomes taboo when it is used, particularly, for the second time. Normally, the use of this verb, immediately repeated in the second utterance of a conversation is derogatory. It means that the person who has been described as /nfamida/ has not understood is so stupid that that the person knows nothing. For instance, the person does not recognize the edible from not edible materials (shit from food). This implicature indicates that not understanding is too derogatory and the person who does not understand deserve being insulted in this way. Obviously, nobody uses such words for the second time. Even for the first time, they are used very cautiously because the speaker may be in doubtful about the insulting power of them. Consequently, the logic beyond such interpretations is laid upon people for not understanding what

they must know and committing what is prohibited based on the norms of communication and rules of law.

To sum up the description of taboos in Sistani and their elevated forms, seven main patterns of denaturing taboos were observed. These prominent patterns are powerful enough to assist people continue their interaction in the cases where the use of taboos become inevitable in the act of communication. It is worth mentioning that these productive patterns are made through the combination of pragmatic rules which additionally impose some effects on the syntactic and semantic rules of the code.

According to Levinson (2016) pragmatics is the study of signs and their systems in relation to their users and interpreters. Therefore, pragmatic description of taboos (signs) in relation to their interpreters is under the umbrella of pure pragmatics. From this perspective, the choices people make in dealing with taboos, the effects their choices have on the participants in their interactions, and the constraints they face in their communications are demonstrated in the following patterns.

Pattern One: Phrase Addition

The most prominent pattern in denaturing taboos in Sistani is the use of /bi manei/ (without interpretation) which comes before a large number of taboo words which may connote relevance to human organs of sex. Some of the words of this category are /draaz/ (long); /kloft/ (thick); /tang/ (tight); /se/ (three); /pas/ (back); /kuchaax/ (hole).

Pattern Two: Topicalization

In topicalization, the theme is moved to the beginning of the sentence. Although compatibility is a bilateral act with at least two participants, topicalization in S1 and S2 in Table 2 demonstrates implications and clarifies who should be blamed for incompatibility with the other partner (denatured taboo). Of course, topicalization has other functions too. However, here, its use in

denaturing taboo is significant in such cases. As it is evident, both the syntactic rule of topicalization and the pragmatic rule of interpretation based on the relevant context of newly married couple as the subject, work together to clarify the meaning of the utterance.

Pattern Three: Word Substituting

This pattern seems to be more universal among a lot of languages. In this category, different words have the same meanings with different degrees of degradation and elevation severities. A large number of taboos in Sistani are classified in this category. Some examples in this category are the use of /xar/, /olaaq/, /charpo/, /charva/, (donkey); /saq/, kachola-i/, /kotre/ (dog); etc.

Pattern Four: Paraphrasing

The act of denaturing taboos in pattern four utilizes paraphrase forms. In this category, the taboo words are paraphrased in order to get away from the obscenity. The best example of this type is illustrated on reporting birth (See the birth part). In this process, the verb /za/ida/ (bear) is paraphrased in three different ways such as /va donyaa ?aarda/ (to bring to the world); /gocha aarda/ (to bring a child); and /faareq shta/ (to become comfortable). This pattern is very productive, especially with regard to the verbs.

Pattern Five: Circumventing

This unique way of address form, particularly used between wives and husbands, is the most complex one in the code. As Figure 3 demonstrates, in order to circumvent the taboo, wives and husbands use their relationships, agreed-upon address forms based on their assumed relationships, the first child's name, the son's name, or finally in the absence of all possible alternatives, they may use the unmarked address form of /bande xodaa/ (the slave of God, respectively).

Pattern Six: Good Wish Adding

Sincere good wishes are used in situations in which circumventions or paraphrasing is not possible. When deaths and diseases are reported or discussed the utterances are preceded by a benediction /dur az aabaadi/ (far from this area). In this way, the speakers show their unwillingness for such unfavorable happenings in the vicinity.

Pattern Seven: Negative-Implicature Avoiding

In this pattern, a taboo word is not used because it entails negative implicatures. For example, in the act of congratulation, /jo var sar to/ (good for you) is replaced by sincere good wishes and or giving a gift or cash money. Here, giving a present or cash pragmatically proves the validity and reliability of presenting good wishes, because actions speak louder than words.

Almost all the patterns which are used in Sistani to denature taboos in this code exist in English, too. The difference lies in the areas of use in the two codes. While in Sistani, there are seven patterns to denature taboos, only three of them are used for the same purpose in the English language, as far as it is known to the researcher. For example, patterns 3, 4, and 5 are frequently used in English to denature taboos. However, patterns 1, 2, 6, and 7 are also used in English but not necessarily for denaturing taboos.

With respect to word substituting pattern (P3), it is observed that this strategy of denaturing taboos is highly productive in English. Figure 5 shows substituting of words for one another in a continuum format from downgraded to the elevated form.

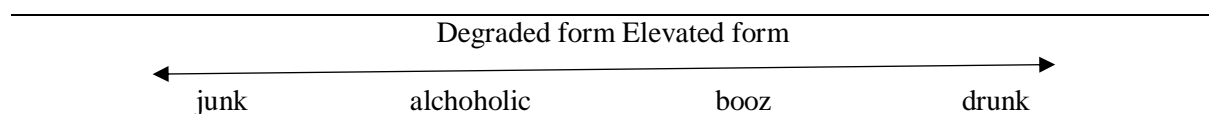


Figure 5

As for paraphrasing pattern (P4), evidence shows that this pattern is used for denaturing taboos in English. Similar to those of Sistani code, this pattern is used very often among English speakers

in order to euphemize the offensive manners of expressing some messages. Figure 6 demonstrates a way through which a taboo proposition is presented in English.

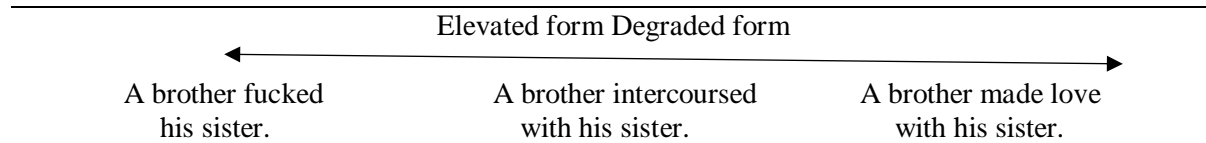


Figure 6

Circumvention in addressing (P5) is another common pattern of denaturing taboos in both Sistani and English. In this pattern an offensive message is liquidated gradually in the form illustrated in Figure 7. This technique of euphemizing is very significant in translation, especially when finding equivalent is difficult. Figure 7 indicates the process of denaturing taboo messages.

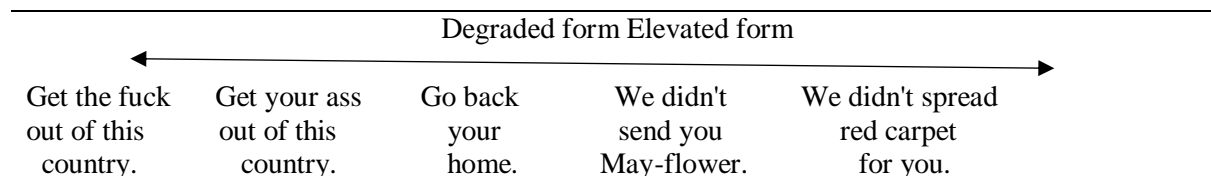


Figure 7

Discussion

Cross-cultural communication is fundamentally mediated by sociocognitive frameworks that govern linguistic interpretation and production (Abdi, 2019). This phenomenon manifests particularly in comparative pragmatics, as evidenced by the marked divergence between English and Sistani taboo expressions. The Sistani linguistic system, embedded in traditional value structures, demonstrates greater lexical elaboration and euphemistic complexity (seven distinct patterns) compared to English (three patterns), with only partial overlap (patterns 3-5). This variation reflects core cultural priorities: Sistani communication emphasizes social cohesion through indirectness, while English norms privilege expressive directness and humor in taboo negotiation (Cicko, 2024; Shi, 2023).

Literary discourse serves as a critical site for examining these cultural-linguistic dynamics, functioning simultaneously as cultural repository and intercultural bridge (Guerra, 2012). As Abdi (2019) establishes, the translation of such texts necessitates sophisticated mediation of culture-bound concepts - particularly taboo lexemes - which often lack isomorphic equivalents (Maasoum & Davtalab, 2011). This untranslatability paradox underscores the profound ways in which cultural frameworks both constrain and enable cross-linguistic understanding, demanding that translators employ creative compensatory strategies to preserve pragmatic force while respecting cultural sensitivities."

The study further explores the application of Grice's cooperative principles in managing taboo expressions. In both languages, the maxim of quantity is frequently violated in patterns 3 and 4, as additional interpretations are introduced to soften the impact of taboo expressions. For instance, in English, euphemisms like "make love" replace explicit terms such as "fuck," flouting the quantity maxim to reduce offensiveness. Similarly, Sistani employs euphemisms like "/faareq shta/" (to become comfortable), which can also mean the termination of a job, simultaneously violating the maxims of quality and relevance. These violations serve politeness and face-saving purposes, emphasizing the balance between clarity and social harmony in communication (Gorshunov, 2024); (Seitkazieva, 2025).

Unexpected patterns emerge in elevated forms of taboo expressions, particularly in English, where all four maxims—relevance, manner, quality, and quantity—are flouted simultaneously in pattern 5. This contrasts with Sistani, where the relevance and manner maxims are flouted due to the lack of clarity and brevity in conveying the intended meaning. These findings suggest that the management of taboos reflects cultural priorities and communicative strategies. The intentional flouting of maxims underscores the role of language in negotiating social norms and values,

aligning with research on the sociolinguistic implications of taboo language (Ma, 2020); (Xue, 2023).

The study's limitations include a constrained sample size and context, which may not fully capture the diversity within each language community. Future research could expand the scope to include additional cultural-linguistic settings or explore taboo expressions in different communicative genres, such as digital communication or literature. For instance, examining taboo language in digital media could reveal how globalization and technological advancements influence linguistic norms and practices. Additionally, exploring the role of euphemisms in religious or political discourse could provide deeper insights into their sociocultural functions (Muho, 2014); (Shuang-long, 2010).

This research enriches the understanding of linguistic taboos and euphemisms, emphasizing their role in reflecting societal values and norms. By analyzing the intentional violations of cooperative principles, the study sheds light on the delicate balance between politeness and clarity in communication. Euphemisms, as cultural and linguistic phenomena, serve as "lubricating oil" in social interactions, facilitating smoother communication and reducing potential conflicts. Their dynamic nature, influenced by cultural, historical, and societal factors, highlights the adaptability of language to meet evolving social needs (Burger, 2016); (Hua, 2020).

Conclusion

This research has offered a comparative examination of taboo expressions in English and Sistani languages, uncovering notable cultural and linguistic distinctions in their prevalence, management, and underlying norms. The study confirms that taboos are a universal characteristic of human language, deeply intertwined with cultural, historical, and social frameworks. Sistani,

characterized by seven distinct patterns of euphemizing taboos, reflects a linguistic complexity shaped by its cultural and religious heritage. In contrast, English, with only three patterns, often relies on directness and humor to navigate taboo expressions. These findings contribute to the broader understanding of linguistic taboos, emphasizing the role of euphemisms in softening the impact of sensitive topics and fostering social cohesion.

Furthermore, the study illustrates how Grice's cooperative principles are strategically violated in both languages to serve politeness and face-saving purposes. This intentional flouting of conversational maxims highlights the intricate relationship between language, culture, and societal norms, offering valuable insights into sociolinguistic phenomena. While the research provides meaningful contributions, its limitations—such as a restricted sample size and focus on only two languages—indicate that the findings may not fully represent the diversity of linguistic practices globally. Nonetheless, the study lays a solid foundation for future investigations and has implications for cross-cultural communication, language pedagogy, and sociolinguistic theory.

Future Research

Several promising directions for future research emerge from this study. Expanding the scope to include a wider range of languages and cultural contexts would help validate the universality of taboos and reveal cross-cultural similarities and differences. Comparative analyses involving languages with distinct sociocultural frameworks, such as indigenous or minority languages, could provide richer insights into the role of taboos in shaping linguistic behavior. Longitudinal studies tracing the historical evolution of taboos would further illuminate their origins and transformations, particularly in relation to mythology, religion, and societal norms.

Additionally, exploring the influence of globalization and technological advancements on taboo language in digital communication could offer valuable perspectives on how linguistic norms adapt to changing societal dynamics. Methodological enhancements, such as employing mixed research methods and increasing sample sizes, would strengthen the reliability and generalizability of findings. Finally, investigating the social and cultural consequences of breaking taboos could provide practical insights into the implications of diminishing taboo roles in contemporary society. These research directions not only address the limitations of the current study but also contribute to advancing the field of sociolinguistics and cross-cultural communication.

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