

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS

TABOOS IN GUJJAR CULTURE: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

Badar Zaman, Ph.D Scholar and Feng Qi, Ph.D

Volume No.7 Issue No.3 September 2018

www.iresearcher.org

ISSN 2227-7471

THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL "INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS"

www.iresearcher.org

© 2018 (individual papers), the author(s)

© 2018 (selection and editorial matter)

This publication is subject to that author (s) is (are) responsible for Plagiarism, the contents, the accuracy of citations, quotations, diagrams, tables and maps. Corresponding author is responsible for the consent of other authors.

All rights reserved. Apart from fair dealing for the purposes of study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the applicable copyright legislation, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the publisher. For permissions and other inquiries, please contact

editor@iresearcher.org

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS is peer-reviewed, supported by rigorous processes of criterion-referenced article ranking and qualitative commentary, ensuring that only intellectual work of the greatest substance and highest significance is published.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCHERS is indexed in wellknown indexing diectories



with ICV value 5.90



Directory of Research Journals Indexing

and monitor by



TABOOS IN GUJJAR CULTURE: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

Badar Zaman¹, Feng Qi²

¹ Ph.D Scholar, School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University, China

² School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University, China

(CHINA)

badar@shu.edu.cn¹, frankqfeng@163.com²

ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to investigate the taboos in Gujjar culture. Qualitative descriptive approach is employed to investigate the socio-cultural norms in relation to the tendency in the use of taboo words in Gujjar culture. The data for this study is collected through observation in Gujjar culture. The theory of face proposed by Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory is employed as a framework for this research work. The taboos with euphemism and without euphemism have been explored. The non-verbal and cultural specific taboos are also prevalent in Gujjar culture.

Keywords: Gujjar Culture, Linguistic Taboos, Euphemism

1. INTRODUCTION

Gujjar is an ethnic tribe dwelling in the lands of subcontinent and is famous for its unique and rich cultural traits. The word 'Gujjar' is originated from the Sanskarat word 'Gurjar' which means 'destroyer of the enemy' and it portrays the traits of warrior tribe. Gujjar is an ancient nation that belongs to Aryan Tribes and this nation was brave and valiant and was famous for its valour. It ruled over India for a long time. Gojri, the language of Gujjars is the branch of Indo-Aryan language family. Gojri is the identity of Gujjars which distinguish them from other ethnic groups. Rahi (2012) states that Gujjars have a strong cultural identity. They have their own culture, custom, traditions folk-lore, ethnicity and five thousand year history at their back. Gojri is a living language, it is the language of scenic beauty and heartfelt love and affection, it is the language of cascades and forests. As a language, Gojri it is not confined to any particular geographical boundary. It is the language of a people who are spread in the various parts of the sub-continent and beyond. Gojri has benefitted from various sources, absorbed regional colours and imbibed influence from neighbouring languages and dialects but has retained its own flavour and has maintained its idiosyncrasy and individuality. Rich in word-hoard and folk-lore, Gojri like mountain stream has remained the uniting force amongst the Gujjars living in the various parts of the sub-continent. It is the language which is bubbling with its vast, varied and multi-dimensional aspects of Gujjars as an ethnic group. Language is the reflection of culture and people conceptualize the ways of living through language. Culture is the way of living of the community and language is its verbal illustration. Language is used to indicate and sustain culture of a society. Language is a component of culture and reflects the culture of a community. It is a symbolic description of the ways of living, behaving and thinking in the society. Mabaya (2002) states that linguistic taboo is a common practice in every society where the immoral, indecent and the shocking expressions are avoided in a language. Trudgill(1986) opines that linguistic taboo is a social phenomenon and it is associated with the social norms and beliefs in a culture. When a speaker violates the linguistic norms of a community, he is seen as a user of taboo words in the language. Apte (1994) argues that words tend to be taboos when they are considered slack and loath for discourse and are censured in a speech community. The lexical items which are unacceptable in a speech community are linguistic taboos. Linguistic taboos can exist in every culture and reflect the norms and socio-cultural aspects of the community to which the speaker belongs. The linguistic taboos in Gujjar culture give an account of the socio-cultural norms and moral values where some taboo words are unacceptable and are euphemized in the normal discourse.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic taboos are the words which are related to obscenity, profanity, abusive language, expletives, vulgarity, curse, slang and blasphemous language. Qanbar (2011) categorizes taboo words into contextual taboos and general taboos. The words related to social deformity become taboos in a certain context otherwise these are non-taboo words. The general taboos are unacceptable linguistic items which are euphemized to diminish the harshness. Generally, the words which are related to the groin area of body, women's private body parts, adultery, names of old men, women and unmarried women, illegitimate child, pregnancy, death and sudden death are considered as taboos in different cultures and the cultural norms in the society do not allow the taboo words unless they are euphemized.

The study of taboos in Chinese culture by Honxu and Guisen (1990) shows that in Chinese culture words related to superstitions and hierarchy are considered as taboos. They categorized the taboos into absolute and quasi taboos. The account of Al-Khatib (1995) on taboos in Jordanian society is related to the creation, development, violation, replacement and social context of the unacceptable words in Jordanian society. Social and cultural norms influence the usage of these unmentionable linguistic items in the Jordanian speech community. Ahmad et al. (2013) gave an account of taboos in Pashtoon culture. In Pashtoon society certain taboos are conventional and society is also an Islamic society and has the influence of Islamic norms. Anwar et al.(2016) found that Pahari culture is an Islamic culture and religion related taboos are same as in the other Islamic cultures. Khan and Pervaiz (2010) state that in Pakistani society linguistic taboos are changing speedily whereas religion related taboos are also changing but at slow pace and the youngsters are inclined towards the usage of taboo language. Mbaya (2002) observes that in Oromo culture a wife does not call her husband by his name and uses honorific words to call her husband. Anwar et al.(2016) observe the same convention in Pahari culture where a wife employs honorifics to call her husband. Same phenomenon is observed in Gojri culture where calling the husband by his name is a taboo and honorifics are employed to call the husband. Gao (2013,p.2311) pointed out, "bodily excretions, death and disease, sex, four-letter words, privacy and discriminatory language" are taboos in English and English speakers replace these with euphemisms. Fakuade et al. (2013) categorizes linguistic taboos in Igbo culture into "morality-related linguistic taboos, veneration-related linguistic taboos, decorum-related linguistic taboos, religion related linguistic taboos and fear-related linguistic taboos". Aliakbari and Raeesi (2015) investigate taboos influenced by Islamic norms and explain that the taboos in Iranian culture are inconformity with the other Muslim cultures in the world as the Muslim societies are influenced by the Islamic ideology. Anwar et al.(2016) categorized linguistic taboos in Pahari culture into three categories, 'religion related taboos, decorum related taboos, and morality related taboos.' They also pointed out non-verbal taboos in Pahari culture. These taboos are greatly influenced by the Islamic doctrine and values. Some social taboos also exist in Pahari culture which do not occur in other societies in Pakistan. These taboos indicate the social norms of Pahari society and distinguish the Pahari culture from other cultures. Gujjar culture is also an Islamic culture and has the great influence of Islamic norms. Although it is driven by the Islamic doctrine but it involves some social norms as well that are Gujjar culture specific norms. The current research on the Gujjar culture is a pioneering one as no previous work has been carried out on this topic. It tries to explore the taboos in Gujjar culture with euphemism and without euphemism.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The theory of face proposed by Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory is used as a framework for this research work. The concept of "politeness" owes a great deal to Goffman's(1967) original work on "face". Brown and Levinson expanded Goffman's theory of face in their politeness theory. They did systemic research on "face" and put forward the "face-saving Theory". Face is the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself. Face can be positive as well as negative. The positive face is the desire to gain the approval of others. It looks for solidarity whereas the negative face is the desire to be unimpeded by others in one's actions. It requires interactants to recognize each other's negative face, i.e., the need to act without giving offense. The politeness strategies are bald on record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record (indirect) as well as simply not using the face threatening act. If a person says something that represents a threat to another individual's public self-image, it is described as face threatening act. If some actions might be interpreted as a threat to another's face, the speaker can say something to lessen the possible threat. This is called face saving act. This framework is in line with the current research and hence employed.

Qualitative descriptive approach is employed to analyze the linguistic taboos in a specific socio-cultural background. Personal observation is used to get the ample information on cultural norms, values and attitudes of the specific speech community towards linguistic taboos. "Observation is the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study (Marshal and Rossman, 1986, p.79)." The researcher is also the native of Gujjar culture and it was easy to observe the social situation and analyze the linguistic taboos in Gujjar culture. During the close observation the data was written down on a notebook for the analysis.

i. Taboos in Gujjar Culture

In Gujjar culture, taboos can be categorized into two types, taboos with euphemism and without euphemism. The taboos with euphemism are related to sex, excretion, private body parts and husband name.

ii. Euphemistic Taboos

William and Shipley (1975) state that euphemism is that linguistic item which is socially acceptable. According to Rawson(1981,p. 3), euphemism is "described as mild agreeable or round about word used in place of coarse, painful or offensive one". Following are the taboos in Gujjar culture which involve euphemism:

- Words related to sexual relationship.
- The names of sexual organs.
- Words for excretion.
- Words related to private body parts.
- Calling the husband by his name.

The sex and sexual organs related words are taboo words which are most offensive words in Gujjar culture. Normally the discussion on this subject is a taboo, if it is discussed then euphemistic words are employed. Excretion and disability related words usually are used in the conversation but after replacing with the alternate euphemistic linguistic items. The exact names of private body parts are taboos and are replaced by the other adjacent parts of the body to avoid the harshness.

In Gujjar culture, it is a taboo to call the husband by his name. Wife employ euphemism to refer to the husband. Wife uses different honorifics to talk about or call his husband like *khei* 'hey', *yo* 'he', *way* 'they' but this trend is changing with the education of the girls. Wives also use the names of their husbands with adding suffix with the names like *sahib*. It is a respectful way of calling the name of the husband in Gujjar culture.

iii. Taboos Associated with Religion

Gujjars are Muslims and their culture has the great influence of Islamic values and norms. The forbidden things in Islam are the taboos in Gujjar culture. Some contextual taboos are general taboos but when are associated with religion become the religious taboos in Gujjar culture.

iv. Absolute Religious Taboos

The verbal taboos concerned with Islam are absolutely prohibited in Gujjar culture. The violation of religious taboos becomes the cause of chaos in the society and even meets severe punishment. These taboos are:

- Use of blasphemous words for God and Prophet.
- Blasphemy of Holy book.
-

v. General Religious Taboos

- Rahami /rahami/ 'illegitimae'
- Shatan /ʃatan/ 'satan'
- Dozkhi /dozxi/ 'doomed'
- lahNti /lahNti/ 'cursed'
- Khanzeer /χənzɪr / 'pig'
- Kafar /kafar/ 'non-Muslim'

These are the most unacceptable linguistic items and are prohibited in the Gujjar culture. Although these are general linguistic items but when are used in the Islamic context tend to be considered as religious taboos and their usage brings unrest.

vi. Non-verbal Religious Taboos

The practice of non-verbal taboos is also forbidden in Gujjar culture. Gujjar culture is an Islamic culture and that is why the practice of such types of taboos is banned. These are as follows:

- Drinking of alcoholic beverages.
- Slaughtering animals non- Islamically.
- Eating meat of forbidden animals.
- Eating and drinking with left hand.
- Shaking hand with opposite sex.
- Extramarital affairs.

- Love affair.

The above taboos related to the religion are taken as taboos in every Muslim society as these are related to the Islamic values and norms in General. Shaking hand with opposite sex is no more a taboo in some modern Muslim culture but it is still a taboo in Gujjar culture and its violation becomes the cause of embarrassment in the society.

vii. Taboos Associated with Decorum

a) General Taboos

Fakuade et al. (2013) and Anwar et al.(2016) stated that decorum related taboos are those which 'hurt people's feelings because they devalue the thing being referred to.' These linguistic items tend to be taboos when are used to ridicule the people. These involve certain professions which have low social acceptance and value in Gujjar culture.

- Lundo /lʊndo/ 'Flirt'
- Charsi /tʃɜrsɪ/ 'intoxicant'
- Marasi /mɜrsɪ/ 'joker'
- Kanjar /kændʒɪ/ 'dancer'
- Churo /tʃʊɾo/ 'Cleaner'
- Khusro /khusro/ 'transgender'
- Pangi /pæŋgɪ/ 'Cleaner'
- Shohdo/ʃodo/ 'mean'
- Shonki /ʃonki/ 'showy'

b) Specific Decorum Associated Taboos

In Gojri culture, the traits of certain animals when are given to humans tend to be taboos. In normal discourse these are not taboos but in certain contexts when these are associated with a person referred to become taboos. These taboos are as follows:

- Kuto /kuto/ 'dog'
- Khoto /kɒto/ ' donkey'
- Ghaan /gɑ:n~/ 'cow'
- Dand /dænd/ 'ox'
- Uloo /ʊlu:/ 'owl'
- Soor /su:r/ 'pig'

viii. Taboos Associated with Moral Values

The immoral words and actions are not permitted in Gujjar culture and considered taboos. These taboos can be classify as general and specific to moral values in Gujjar culture.

a) General Taboos

Both verbal and non-verbal taboos fall in this category of taboos. These taboos are not acceptable in Gujjar culture. These taboos are:

- Calling the opposite sex with honorifics.
- Talking to opposite sex in loneliness.
- Starring at opposite sex.
- Winking at opposite sex.

These examples indicate that morality related taboos are gender specific taboos in Gujjar culture and violation of these taboos meet disrespect, disapproval and embarrassment.

b) Specific Taboos

The linguistic items which are used to refer to low social status, disrespect and physical impairment tend to be taboos in Gujjar culture when are used in specific context of hatred and disrespect in front of a person to whom these are referred to. These linguistic taboos are:

- Anno /ano/ 'blind'
- Kano /kaNo/ 'one eyed'
- Ganjo /ganjo/ 'bald'
- Mundo / mundo/ 'limped'
- khuno /khuno/ 'one armed'

All these taboos are related to the physical defects. In normal discourse these are not taboos but when are used in a specific context then become the taboos.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of linguistic taboos in Gujjar culture reveals that Gujjar culture is an Islamic culture and the cultural norms are greatly influenced by the Islamic doctrine. Both verbal and non-verbal taboos are prevalent in Gujjar culture. Some taboos are cultural specific taboos which are not prevalent in other Islamic cultures of the country. Certain tabooed words involve euphemism to use in normal discourse. The linguistic items related to sex, excretion, private body parts and husband name employ euphemism to be acceptable in the Gujjar culture. The decorum related taboos are the certain professions which are considered inferior and certain names of animals when are given to humans to ridicule. Although Gujjar culture is an Islamic culture but taking certain professions as inferior has nothing to do with Islam and it is specific to Gujjar culture only. The morality related taboos have the great influence of Islamic values in Gujjar culture. Both verbal and non-verbal religious taboos are purely Islamic and their violation meets severe punishment.

REFERENCES

- Apte, M.L. (1994). Taboo Words in the Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, 9, 4512- 4514. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Al-Khatib, M. (1995). Sociolinguistic View of Linguistic Taboo in Jordanian Arabic. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, (16)6, 443-457.
- Ahmad, K., Ghani, M. d., Alam, M. & Gul, T. (2013). A Sociolinguistic Study of the Linguistic Taboos in the Pashtoon Society. *The International Research "International Researcher"*, 2(1), 227-7471.
- Aliakbari, M. & Raeesi, H. (2015). A Sociolinguistic Study of Linguistic Taboos in the Iranian Society. *International Journal of Educational Investigation*. 3(2), 2410-3446.
- Anwar et al. (2016). Linguistic Taboos in the Pahari Culture: A Sociolinguistic Analysis. *ARIEL An International Research Journal of Language and Literature* .27 (2016) ,86 - 97
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena. In Goody, E. (ed.) *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction: 56-289*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Brow, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Fakuade, G., Kemidirim, N., Nnaji, I. & Nwosu, F. (2013). Linguistic Taboos in the Igbo Society: A Sociolinguistic Analysis. *Language Discourse and Society*. 2(2), 2239- 4192.
- Gao, C. (2013). A Sociolinguistic Study of English Taboo Language, *Theory and Practice in Language Studied*, 3(12), 2310-2314.
- Goffman, E. (1955). On face work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry*, 18, 213-231.
- Hongxu, H. & Guisen, T. (1990). A Sociolinguistic View of Linguistic Taboo in Chinese. *International Journal of Society and Language*, 81, 63-81
- Khan, K. & Parvaiz, A. (2010) A Descriptive Analysis of Diminishing Linguistic Taboos in Pakistan, *Language in India* 10(8), 1930-2940
- Mbaya, N. (2002). Linguistic Taboo in African Marriage Context: A Study of Oromo Laguu. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*. 11(2), 224-235.
- Marshall, Catherine & Rossman, Gretchen B. (1989). *Designing qualitative research*. Newbury Park,
- Qanbar, N. (2011). A Sociolinguistic Study of the Linguistic Taboos in the Yemeni Society. *Modern Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3(2/3), 86-104.
- Rahi, J. (2012). *The Gujjars*. J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages Srinagar/Jammu.
- Rawson, Hugh. (1981). *A Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Double Talk*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Trudgill, P. (1986). *Dialects in Contact*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Williams, Joseph and Shipley, Joseph.(1975). Origins of English Language: A Social and Linguistic History. New York: Free Press.