

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC VIEW OF LINGUISTIC TABOOS AND EUPHEMISTIC STRATEGIES IN THE ALGERIAN SOCIETY: ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS IN TLEMCCEN SPEECH COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This research paper sheds light on the dark side of Algerian culture in relation to language use through investigating linguistic taboos and euphemistic usage. It shows that the attitudes of Algerian speakers are linked to certain socio-cultural and psychological factors including the social norms of the society, the social upbringing of its individuals and the social environment in which they get in contact in addition to their identity construction and other parameters. It also shows that Algerian people have developed a rich vocabulary which includes euphemistic substitutions. These substitutions are the results of societal, psychological and cultural pressures. In fact, euphemisms and linguistic taboos represent a wealth vocabulary of Algerian dialects and, henceforth, they provide a fertile soil for researchers in dialectology and sociolinguistics, although not much scholarly ink has been spilled on by Algerian investigators in this field of research. To these ends, we have relied on many research instruments including a questionnaire and an interview. Thus, the outcomes of this study show that the percentages of both taboos and euphemistic usage are nearly equal, although statistical analysis of the questionnaire reveals that the respondent's attitudes towards taboos are highly positive. The results also show that Algerian people try to discuss taboo topics in single sex groups depending on their age and gender. Lastly, these research findings prove that sex has remained as the most tabooed topic, whereas death is also handled with care in Algerian society.

KEYWORDS: Linguistic Taboos, Euphemistic Strategies, Attitudes, Algerian Culture and Language, Tlemccen Speech Community

INTRODUCTION

This paper gives a general description of Algerian culture, its social norms, taboos and language use. In other words, it tends to gain a useful understanding of the socio-psychological functions of Algerian taboos and the socio-cultural factors affecting their use and the motivations underlying them. It also tries to prove that the social context, in which taboos are used, is governed by certain socio-cultural factors. In its general path, this work provides a view regarding the relationship between Algerian social norms, taboos and the attitudes of its people in relation to their language. Consequently, this sociolinguistic study aims to give an overview of taboo words, topics and euphemistic expressions that are used by Algerian people in general and Tlemccen speakers in particular in relation to the society's attitudes, beliefs and motivations. In this context, a number of questions are raised:

- What are the attitudes of Tlemccen speakers towards the use of taboos and euphemisms?
- What are the reasons behind the use of taboos?

- Do Tlemcen speakers discuss taboo topics in mixed-sex groups?

Trying to find reliable answers to these questions, this study was developed with three hypotheses in mind:

- It should be noted that the attitudes of speakers differ depending on their age, gender and the educational background. In fact, the attitudes of Algerian people have a deeper relation with their cultural and religious norms, although the use of taboos exists. Besides, they tend to use euphemistic substitutions in their daily conversation due to their conservative nature. So, euphemism is used as a politeness strategy in order to avoid face losing and to strengthen human ties.
- Certain social and psychological reasons may play a crucial role in pushing Tlemcen speakers to use taboo words in order to express their emotions for example frustration, anger and annoyance...etc.
- Tlemcen females are more inclined than males to avoid the use of taboos in mixed-sex groups, especially when they discuss the subject of sex. Consequently, both males and females may have positive attitudes towards using or discussing taboo topics in single-sex groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Algerian Taboos

In most Arab cultures, taboo means that certain behaviours, topics and terms are banned. It is referred to as: [ʔαjb]: “taboo”. Therefore, every word, which is related to such behaviour, is forbidden. In this regard, Sadiqi (2003: 78) claims that the general meaning of taboo in Western culture “[...] correlates with the Arabic term for taboo *haram*. A behavior (linguistic or otherwise) is considered taboo when societal opinion either inhibits or prohibits it in a rational or irrational manner.”

In case of Algerian context, taboos are divided into neutral words which can become taboo due to the negative connotations that people have placed on them, whereas the strongest linguistic taboos are related to female body and its physical changes. In this sense, Algerian people have developed some euphemistic substitutions in order to lessen their negative effects including [ħaʔa:k] and [ʔazek lla:h] which are parts of Algerian euphemistic strategies. In the light of the previous idea, Sadiqi (ibid: 80) maintains that, in all Muslim societies, girls “socialize in an environment where sexual discrimination is sanctioned by society. This explains the spread of taboos related to sexuality”. She adds that there are three major tabooed topics related to female’s body in the Arab world including virginity, menstruation and menopause.

Virginity, as one of the most sensitive issues in women’s life, symbolises the honour of the family and represents the Arab cultural norms. In case of Algerian society, girls are expected to maintain virgin until their first marriage ceremony. Thus, Algerian females are obliged to look after their virginity until they get married and this fact affects them deeply.

Another sensitive subject in Algerian female’s lives is menstruation. The latter represents an unclean and dirty period for all Muslim women. For this reason, they tend to use euphemistic expressions in order to hide its embarrassing nature. On the other hand, menopause is another sensitive experience that Algerian females avoid to discuss its beginning. In Algerian culture, the question of age has a great value and is seen as the first taboo for women because of the tradition that men should search for younger girls to marry and when the female passes the thirties, she becomes sensitive towards

age and marriage issues. In all cases so far mentioned above, it is very essential to show that these stages, mainly virginity, menstruation and menopause, are of great importance in women's lives. For this reason, these topics "are generally talked about in public from a male view point. This explains the fact that women's lives are surrounded by powerful taboos" (Sadiqi, *ibid*: 83).

Euphemisms in Algerian Culture

Indeed, Algerians try to avoid using taboos in their connection with each others, and tend to replace these expressions with certain mechanisms including construction, creating antonyms, metaphoric expressions, circumlocution and euphemisms. When speaking with Algerians in particular and Arabs in general, it is noticeable that they shun speaking about unpleasant things out of fear that negative speech compels negative results.

Through their daily interaction, Algerian people have created certain strategies in order to avoid taboos and to protect their faces and politeness is among them. In fact, they have created euphemistic expressions for each topic, for instance, women shift to the use of certain terms including [ra:ha ʕliha ḥaqq əʃhar]: "she has the right of the month" or [ra:ha mwəʃxa]: "she is dirty" or [ra:ha mriɖa]: "she is ill", when referring to menstruation.

Additionally, the concept of sex is strongly euphemised by Algerian people. Consequently, they switch to the use of certain expressions instead of referring directly to sexual matters, for example [rgut mʕa:ha]: "I slept with her" or [gəʃʂart mʕa:ha]: "I spent a night with her" or [zhi:t mʕa:ha]: "I enjoyed my time with her" instead of "I had love with her".

Algerian Arabic is also rich in what is called double negation i.e., replacing words by employing negation of its opposite. In case of Algerian Arabic, Algerians have a rich vocabulary including [da:r əʃrəbja] (reformatory) for [lhabs]: "prison" or [fla:n hapʔo:h] instead of [fla:n dəʒlluh ləlhabs]: "they took X to the prison" or [fla:n ʕandra:su]: "a difficult person" instead of [fla:n wa:ʕar]: "a rude person". They also employ [fla:n qwa:lbi] or [fla:n jadʒəl wjaʒradʒ fəl hadra] or [bəlʕa:t] instead of [kəða:b]: "a liar". Another type of figurative speech lies in the use of personification such as in [hla:lak]: "your right" or [nta:ʕak]: "yours", which are mutually used by married couples. In fact, they tend to employ these expressions secretly depending on their imagination. For instance, they use [nərugdu] instead of [ndi:ru]: "making love". Besides, sexual organs are also named after names of persons such as in [ʕeiʕa] or [bu:ʕla:m] referring to women's and men's sexual organs.

Moreover, metaphors are also used in Algerian dialects through substituting some taboos by words of different meanings for social reasons. For example, the words [bza:al]: "bosom" is euphemised by [rmmāna:t]: "pomegranates" or [təffa:ha:t]: "apples". As far as women's sensitive issues are concerned, pregnancy is also regarded as a taboo topic. Thus, Algerian females resort to certain expressions as in: [ra:ha məʔaqla] or [ra:ha mri:ɖa]: "she is ill" instead of [ra:ha bəlkərʃ]: "she is pregnant".

Additionally, Algerian dialects contain numerous euphemisms related to death or dying. The main aim of these euphemisms is to reduce pain, sorrow and to show sympathy for the deceased's family, relatives and friends. In fact, Algerians believe that death is the beginning of another life. In Algerian culture, the notion of [əlmawət]: "death" has two meanings namely [əʒʕasad]: "the body" and [ərru:h]: "the soul". They also believe that the body dies whereas the soul departs to its creator. Indeed, they believe that death is a kind of a transition of the soul from [da:r eduniɖa]:

“the worldly life” into [da:r əlʔa:χira]: “the eternal life”, and death is located between them i.e., in order to pass to the eternal life, you have to die. In other words, Muslims do not fear death, but they are afraid of what comes after. Thus, Algerian people have created many euphemistic substitutions for death including [fla:n təwafa]: “he passed away” or [llæh jərħəm fla:n]: “may Allah have mercy upon Mr. X”. In case of Algerian people, instead of saying [fla:n mə:t]: “he died”, an Algerian speaker says [fla:n dɑ:ʕ]: “he is lost” or [ʕəbba ba:sna wba:skum]: “he gave you his life”.

Algerian Communicative Strategies

It seems that both face and politeness are important concepts for most Arab societies that must be taken into account in daily communication. Basically, there are many factors which push Arabs in general and Algerians in particular to maintain face including honour, and the image of others. This statement has been explained by Edward and Guth (2010: 33) who state that “Honour, dignity and self-respect are ‘sacred’ concepts among Arabs since pre-Islamic times, and are considered taboos, which should not be abused by anybody.”

It is also essential to note that Algerians have selected many religious terms which are consistent with Islamic traditions and form an important part of Arab positive politeness. Among these expressions, we have [llah jħħafɔk]: “may God preserve you” or [llah jχali:k]: “may God live you” or [llah jɔzi:k]: “may God reward you” or [llah jarɔɑ ʕli:k]: “may God be pleased with you”. Indeed, most Western scholars relate the notion of politeness with the Arabic concept [əlʔaɖab]: “politeness”, whereas Arab researchers have different interpretations.

Additionally, Farghal (1995: 369) maintains that Grice’s maxims are more appropriate to explain the use of euphemisms in most Arab dialects. He believes that there are social, linguistic and contextual factors that govern speaker’s lexical choices. He adds that Grice’s theory and Politeness Principle go side by side in expressing euphemistic usage in Arab communities claiming that “the interaction between the PP and CP’s maxims of conversation in the process of euphemizing”. He goes on to explain that the maxim of quality is the most employed in both Standard and Dialectal forms of Arabic. In this regard, he (ibid: 370) observes that death euphemism in Arabic “flout the maxim of quality, thus conversationally implicating that death in question is for the good of the deceased because he will go to heaven”.

In case of Algerian dialects, speakers employ certain euphemistic expressions that infringe with this maxim such as in [fla:n dɑ:ʕ]: “he is lost”, whereas in sexual intercourse, Farghal (ibid: 372) adds, Arabs use certain euphemistic expressions that “infringe the maxim of quantity by withholding information, thus implicating that the sexual intercourse had taken place”, such as in [rgud mʕa:ha]: “he slept with her”. He also claims that the maxim of manner can be also employed to express euphemisms like in [fla:na rabbi jəhdi:ha] : “may God guide her” instead of [qəhba]: “a prostitute”.

French Taboos and Euphemisms in Algerian Arabic

First and foremost, it should be noted that French language constitutes an important part in Algerian dialects and is employed as a code for daily interaction by most citizens and especially educated people. In fact, Algerian people have borrowed many terms from French in order to lessen the power of the local expressions. For example, they say [visiə] instead of [fla:n ʕandruħu]: “vicious”, they also use [ɛdispəze] or [rɛgle] to cover up the Algerian taboo expressions including [ra:ha mwasχa]: “she is dirty” or [ra:h ʕli:ja haqq əjħar]: “I have the duty of the month” referring to menstruation. However, Mills (2003: 122) argues that most Arab dialects have the problem of lexical gap. Henceforth, they borrow many expressions from other languages. In this regard, he explains that “The problem of lexical gaps in the

language is part of a greater linguistic problem-the problem of not being able to explain yourself within the discourse structures available to you.”¹ As far as the use of euphemisms is concerned, Algerians tend to borrow French words and use them in polite situations to refer to respect such as the use of [μῶδαμ]: “Mrs” in reference to one’s wife. The latter is seen as a sign of respect for married females, when talking to a woman directly, while it is avoided by men when referring directly to their wives.

Stereotypes Surrounding Algerian Taboos

It is agreed that stereotypes differ from one culture to another. In case of Muslim societies, they share the same values and norms and, henceforth, the same stereotypes and taboos.

It is also important to mention that most Arab stereotypes are taken from Islamic norms including the evil eye and supernatural creatures such as “the devil” and “jinn”. In case of Maghreb communities, they have other stereotypes namely black, white magic and fortune-telling which are banned in Islamic norms.

Basically, most Muslim societies fear of the effects of what they call [əɫɛɟn]: ‘the evil eye’. In fact, it is also regarded as a taboo topic due to the stereotypes surrounding it. Muslims believe that disease is also caused by supernatural powers such as: [əɫɛɟn] ‘the evil eye’, which is inflicted or cast by envious people.

In Algerian culture, in general, it is believed that every person’s eyes may have evil effect if they like or admire an object and in order to avoid the bad effects of the evil eye, they say [χamsa fi: ɕini:k]: “Five in your eyes” or [χamsa waχmi:s fi: ɕini:n bli:s]: “five in the eyes of the devil”. Not saying like the previous expressions may lead to the object’s destruction, and if the liked thing is a person, it is also believed that this person may die or get a mortal disease.

Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning that Algerians have fear of superstitious powers including ‘jinn’. Such fears are embedded in Algerian culture since they think that these creatures may harm them if they are disturbed. Consequently, they employ what is called ‘basmala’ in order to lessen their danger. In its general terms, Algerian speakers have developed certain cultural and religious beliefs towards some topics that Islam has talked about including the evil eye and supernatural creatures.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Materials

First and foremost, we have designed a questionnaire which consists of some closed questions in which the participants may answer with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or what Wikinson and Birmingham (2003: 8) call “dichotomous questions”. We have also relied on multiple choice questions, the ranking order questions and the Likert scale.

Furthermore, we have also focused on a focus group interview since “people do not mind particularly in focus group-in fact, they tend to find the sessions enjoyable and stimulating-and the interview typically yielded rich data” as it is noted by Dörnyei (2007: 146). The interview has been recorded for two years since most people refuse to discuss this subject due to its sensitivity.

Henceforth, 10 informants, whom we gave the questionnaire, agreed to answer them. Besides, the questions of the interview are accompanied with more explanations about the topic. In fact, we have included the interview to know more

¹Quoted by Sadiqi (2003: 81)

about the attitudes and views of Tlemcen informants towards taboos, as well as their opinions towards the use of euphemistic expressions.

DATA PREPARATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The Questionnaire

Throughout the analysis of both the questionnaire and the interview, we are going to investigate Tlemcen speaker's attitudes towards taboos and euphemisms. In designing this questionnaire, we have insisted on four parts. The first one focuses on the informant's age, gender and occupation for the purpose of identifying the sample. The second part insists on their attitudes and views towards taboo language as well as, we have given them the chance to write their suggestions and recommendations as we have explained, with the aim of selecting a large amount of lexical items since we have focused on taboo words and topics. We have also included some euphemistic expressions concerning the topic of sex. The third part insists on evaluating their opinions about female's use of taboos and their attitudes towards French taboo words, whereas the last one investigates the informant's attitudes towards the use of euphemistic expressions related to death.

- Do you use taboo language?
 - Yes.
 - No.

Table 1: Speaker's Attitudes towards Taboo Usage

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
Yes	42	44	86
No	13	11	24
Total	110		

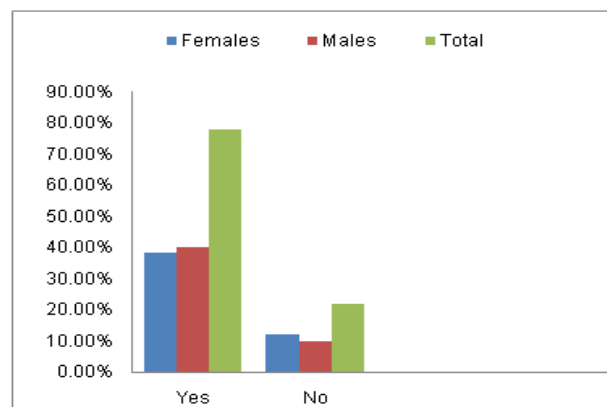


Figure 1: Speaker's Attitudes towards Taboo Usage

As the previous diagram and table show, the majority of males and females (78.18%) declared that they use taboo language, whereas other participants, who represent (21.81%), answered this question negatively. Besides, most informants, whose responses are positive, are teenagers and adolescents, whereas those, whose answers are negative, are between 40 and 55 years old. Interestingly, it should be important to note that the social milieu plays a crucial role in pushing people to employ taboo items. Besides, it depends on certain reasons in which the person finds him/herself and then on the way and place in which children raise. For example contact between teenagers, through mobile phones and

internet, is the major factors which encourage them to use taboos. Moreover, it is essential to note that the way parents behave with their children is another reason.

It should be also noted that teenage age is a sensitive step in the life of an individual since he/she starts learning how to acquire experiences and the social milieu is the first fact that affects his/her development. Through this age, teenagers try to use taboo expressions in order to attract the interest of others namely those who are in the same age. Besides, they also employ these expressions to show their belongings to their groups.

- How do you often use taboo language?
 - Many times a day.
 - Every day.
 - Once a day.
 - Sometimes.
 - Rarely.
 - Comments.

Table 2: Frequency of Taboo Usage

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
Many times a day	2	16	18
Every day	2	8	10
Once a day	/	2	2
Sometimes	20	8	28
Rarely	18	10	28
Total	86		

As it is also demonstrated in this table, about (20.93%) of the informants claimed that they use taboo expressions in daily communication. Besides, some of them (11.62%) declared that they employ taboos many times a day, whereas (2.32%) of the participants took the third suggestion into consideration. Finally, most of the participants (32.55%) selected the last suggestion especially aged females and males. This is better understood from the following diagram:

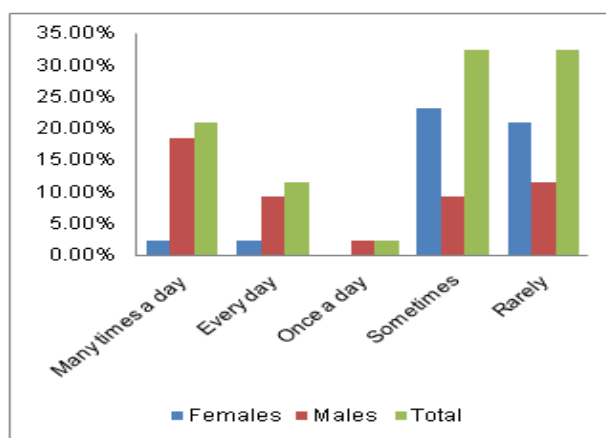


Figure 2: Frequency of Taboo Usage

Which of the following factors can lead to the use of taboos? Could you please order them?

- Anger.
- Insult.

Table 3: The Main Reasons behind Using Taboo Language

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
Anger	24	29	53
Insult	18	15	33
Total	86		

As the previous table illustrates, most respondents (61.62%) chose the first reason. Thus, the percentage of the first suggestion is high for both females and males, by contrary, some of the participants (38.73%) selected the second since they thought that insults can lead to anger.

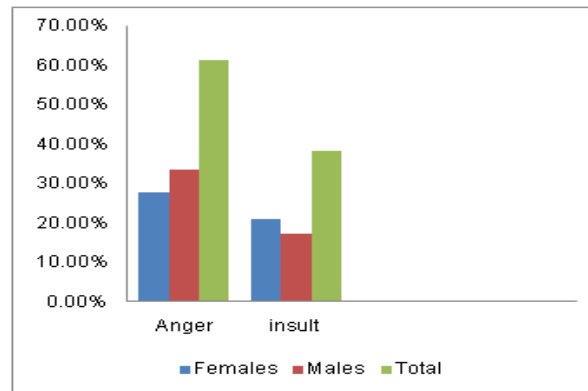


Figure 3: The Main Reasons behind Using Taboo Language

This diagram shows that the choices of both males and females do not differ a lot since anger can push the individuals to loose self-control and, therefore, they start speaking inappropriate expressions. In fact, it is worth mentioning that our religion teaches us how to control ourselves and, thus, our behavior and language since anger can destroy human relations.

- According to your point of view, which of the following areas is the most offensive?
 - Sex.
 - Death.
 - Insulting religion.

Table 4: The Most Offensive Taboo Topics

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
Sex	20	19	39
Death	5	4	9
Insulting religion	17	21	38
Total	86		

In the fourth table, we can note some further differences of both males and females concerning the most tabooed topic. The most offensive topic for males is insulting religion followed by the topic of sex. On the other hand,

female participants thought that sex is the most offensive topic to discuss, whereas insulting religion comes after. Henceforth, their opinions represent about (45.34%) for sex, (44.18%) for insulting religion and (10.46%) for death.

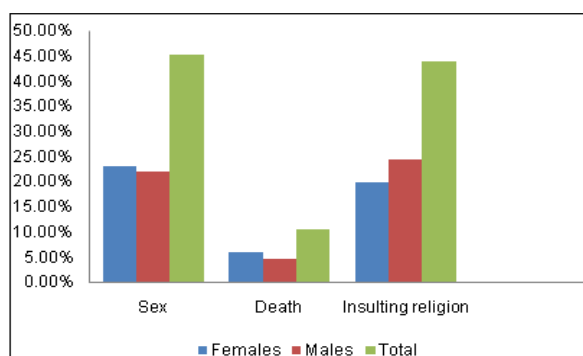


Figure 4: The Most Offensive Taboo Topics

As it is clearly shown in the previous diagram, both genders have different opinions and attitudes towards the most offensive topic. In fact, most females view that sex is avoided in public speech, whereas males see that religious matters are the most tabooed since they are direct insults towards their religious principles and beliefs.

- In which context, do you prefer discussing taboo topics mainly sex?
 - Intimate friends.
 - Public.
 - Family.
 - Work colleagues.
 - Comments.

Table 5: Participant’s Answers Concerning the Context of Use

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
Intimate friends	23	32	55
Public	/	/	/
Family	17	8	25
Work colleagues	2	4	6
Total	86		

This table shows that most informants (63.95%) declared that they want to discuss taboo matters with their intimate friends, whereas (29.97%) of them claimed that they prefer to talk about sensitive topics with their family members including wives, husbands, sisters and brothers. On the other hand, other informants (6.97%) maintained that they enjoy talking about them with their colleagues, but nobody wishes to discuss taboo topics with public members since it is embarrassing and can be seen as a source of impoliteness and face-losing. Furthermore, most of the informant’s comments have supported the first suggestion i.e., in single-sex groups. They added that they have no tendency towards discussing sex subjects in mixed groups. In fact, these comments can be supported by previous studies conducted by Gamm (1981)² who observes that males and females prefer talking about the topic of sex in single-sex groups.

² Cited by Coates (2004: 97)

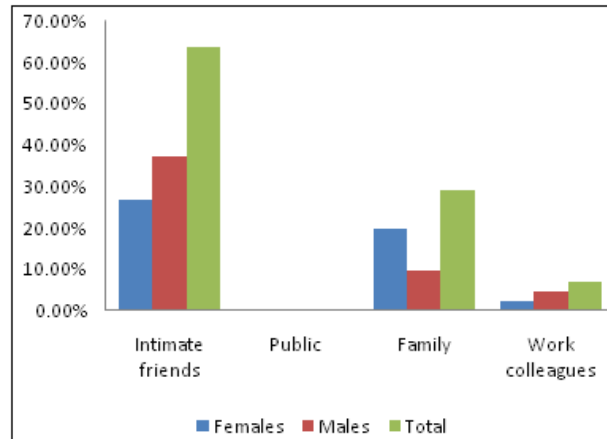


Figure 5: Participant's Answers Concerning the Context of Use

- Do you agree that women use taboo language?
 - I strongly agree.
 - I agree.
 - I strongly disagree.
 - I disagree.
 - Comments.

Table 6: Informant's Views about Women's Use of Taboos

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
I strongly agree	43	35	78
I agree	6	10	16
I strongly disagree	3	1	4
I disagree	3	9	12
Total	110		

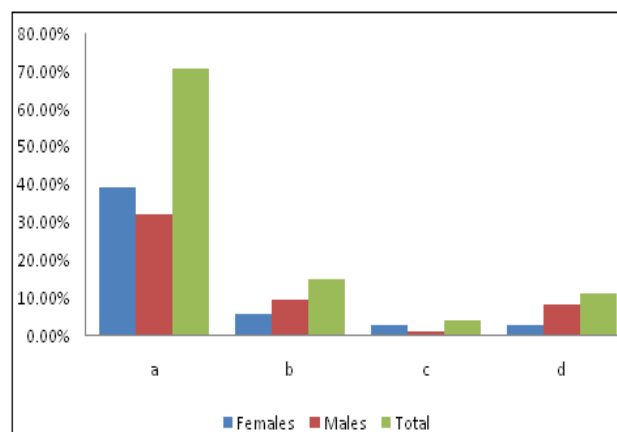


Figure 6: Informant's Views about Women's Use of Taboos

This question aims at determining the views of both sexes mainly men towards women's use of taboo words through employing what is called the likert scale, that is, we try to know the respondent's exact attitudes through giving them choices. Consequently, 70.90 percent of the informants claimed that they agree on the fact that females use taboos,

while 14.54 percent especially men were strongly sure of that fact. In contrast, fewer informants, who represent 10.90 percent, refused this view and lastly about 3.63 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed on the idea that females employ taboos. Their views are built on the belief that women are obliged to control their behavior and language.

- Do you agree that women use taboos more than men?
 - I strongly agree.
 - I agree.
 - I strongly disagree.
 - I disagree.
 - Comments.

Table 7: Differences in Using Taboos between Males and Females

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
I strongly agree	7	13	20
I agree	5	5	10
I strongly disagree	4	1	5
I disagree	39	37	76
Total	110		

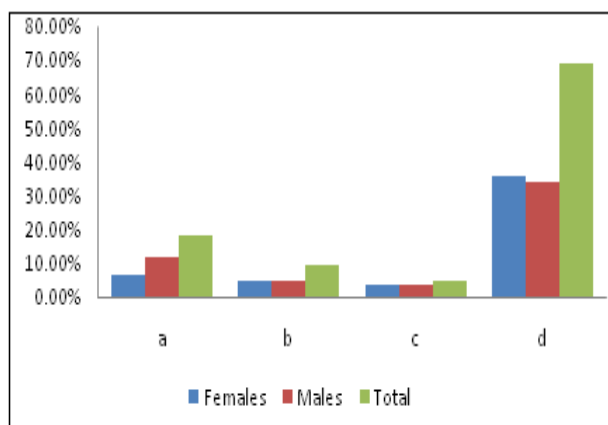


Figure 7: Differences in Using Taboos between Males and Females

The chart and the table above explain clearly the views of the participants which are the results of their daily observation. In this regard, the results reveal that 69.09 percent of the respondents declared that they disagree on the view that women are similar to men in terms of taboo usage, while fewer participants (18.18%) maintained that they agree on the fact that females use taboos in their daily interaction when they are in single-sex groups.

They have justified their views claiming that females talk to each other about certain embarrassing topics for the purpose of having more knowledge. For instance, unmarried girls prefer knowing more about the sexual life in order to be prepared during their marriage. They also added that this depends on their age since young girls cannot discuss these topics with their mothers. Lastly, about (4.54%) of the respondents argued that they strongly disagree, especially old females whose comments have illustrated more their views. They also stated that family plays a crucial role, that is, if parents look after their children, they will never use such dirty language.

- Do you use euphemism?
 - Yes.
 - No.
 - Sometimes.
 - Rarely.

Table 8: Speaker's Attitudes towards the Use of Euphemism

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
Yes	45	33	78
No	2	7	9
Sometimes	6	10	16
Rarely	2	5	8
Total			

When we speak about the conservative nature of Tlemcen speakers, it is necessary to talk about the value of euphemism in this speech community. Indeed, Tlemcen people are always looking after their speech. They even create norms when they are speaking. In comparison with other Algerian speech communities, Tlemcen speakers are strict in terms of language use. For this reason, their speech is very rich as a source for data collection. In contrast, it is difficult to investigate whether they use taboos or not.

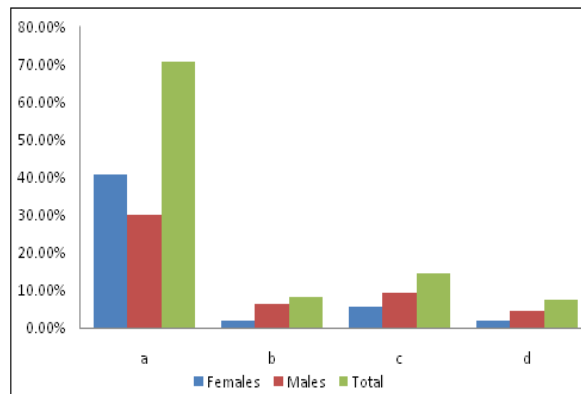


Figure 8: Speaker's Attitudes towards the Use of Euphemism

In gross, what can be summarised from this chart is that the majority of participants claimed that they use euphemism. Therefore, we find that the respondents are aware of euphemistic usage, although they do not understand the question until we have explained to them. Interestingly, a great number of participants (70.90%) stated that they employ euphemism in their speech, while (14.54%) of them declared that they speak some expressions unconsciously. On the other hand, fewer participants (8.18%) reported that they never use euphemism in their speech, whereas a small number (7.27%) rarely employ it. Henceforth, we can deduce that those, who do not use euphemism, have a great percentage of taboo usage or are not aware about their speech.

- How do you say "he died"?
 - [fla:n qa:ʃ].
 - [fla:n ʃ[a:k ʃumru].

- [mu:l ʔama:na ʕəbba ʔama:ntu].
- [ʕəbba ba:sna wba:skum].
- [fal:n ma:t].
- Suggestions.

Table 9: Informant’s Views and Attitudes towards Death Taboos and Euphemisms

Suggestions	Females	Males	Total
[fla:n ḍa:ʕ]	15	32	47
[fla:n ʕ[a:k ʕumru]	14	2	16
[mu:l ʔama:na ʕəbba ʔama:ntu]	10	10	20
[ʕəbba ba:sna wba:skum]	10	2	12
[fla:n ma:t]	6	9	15
Total		110	

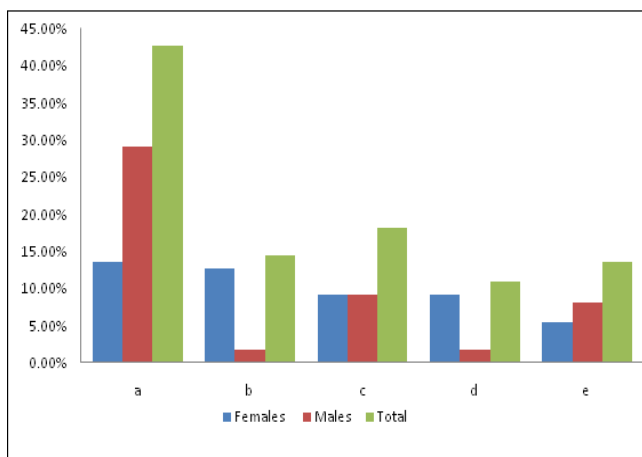


Figure 9: Informant’s Views and Attitudes towards Death Taboos and Euphemisms

The table and the graph tend to shed light on the euphemised expressions which are used by Tlemcen speakers instead of the term [ma:t]: “died”. The results also show the frequency of usage of each word or expression by the participants. Therefore, the above graph indicates that 42.72 percent of the informants claimed that they tend to use [fla:n ḍa:ʕ]. Furthermore, these results show that the use of euphemism varies according to the gender of the participants. For example, the term [fla:n ḍa:ʕ] is employed by males and females, but it is more frequent among men (8.18%) rather than women (5.45%). Moreover, females tend sometimes to euphemise the term [ma:t] through a direct reference to religion by using [rabbi ḥabu]: “Allah loves him” or [ʕəbba ba:sna wba:skum]: “Allah took his trust” which is spoken by almost 10.90 percent of the respondents. They have also supplied us with more important expressions such as [fla:n twəfa llah jarḥmu] or [fla:n twəffa llah jwassaʕ ʕli:h] or [fla:n dda:jam llah fi mulku].

The Interview

In this section, we tried to investigate Tlemcen culture in relation to its dialect. We also tended to throw light on the different taboo topics that are banned especially sexual matters depending on people’s attitudes and views. We also tried to show that euphemism is an aspect of Tlemcen society which proves its conservative nature, although the use of taboo exists side by side with these substitutions.

- According to your opinion, which reasons can push speakers to use taboo language?

According to female interviewees, there are many reasons which explain the use of taboos including the social upbringing of the child and the social environment which are seen as two fundamental factors beyond taboo usage. They further claimed that the role of parents is important in child socialisation because if the child, for example, hears his/her father speaking dirty words, he/she will learn them. Moreover, contact with other children can push them to learn such expressions from each other and if they acquire these terms, their parents should teach them that these words are banned to use. Moreover, they added that there are also psychological factors including anger, annoyance and frustration. These factors can be seen as indicators for using offensive language. Therefore, female participants, who represent 50 percent, have insisted on the fact that the family upbringing is seen as the first step for teaching children to behave well and to look after their language. However, they also claimed that the lack of contact between the members of the family leads them to pass more time outside and, henceforth, they will learn these embarrassing terms. They went on stating that today's educational system is no longer looking after children's or adolescent's language or behaviour.

Similarly, all male interviewees, who represent 50 percent, agreed on the fact that family upbringing is the main factor since it helps in building the child's personality. They, again, explained that the social milieu, where the child can get in contact with each other, is seen as the second factor which can affect him/her either positively or negatively. In other words, child socialisation is the result of his/her parent's way of teaching since he/she learns everything from them during his/her first years.

Furthermore, three out of five male interviewees argued that when the child learns such terms, he/she will probably use them unconsciously without knowing their bad effects, while adolescents employ them consciously since they know their meanings and can control their speech. Consequently, all interviewees shared the same views that there are social and psychological factors which express learning and using bad language.

- How do you see death and what are the expressions that you use to talk about it?

The results of this question reveal that the participants are unwilling to name death directly because they fear what comes after. For this reason, they try not to mention the word [lmijjət]: "the dead" or [fla:n ma:t]: "he died" i.e., they utter them unconsciously. They sometimes find themselves replacing these words with more acceptable expressions. In fact, the term [lmijjət] is avoided by Tlemcen speakers, although it is used by some people since they may not find it taboo.

CONCLUSIONS

One should note that the attitudes of speakers towards the use of taboos differ according to their gender, age and the educational background. Besides, it is worth mentioning that sex topic is still the most sensitive and fearful subject which people try to avoid mentioning in public. In fact, most people feel reluctant when dealing with sex topic for this reason they have created expressions which are called euphemisms. Therefore, sex topic is mentioned euphemistically by people in order not to harm their relationships.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that death is also another taboo topic since it relates humans with another mysterious life which they fear. This subject is also replaced by more acceptable expressions. Henceforth, the study of these two linguistic and cultural phenomena provides us with more knowledgeable information about the socio-cultural

and religious norms of the society under investigation. It sheds light on the dark side of the cultural and linguistic levels since it provides us with rich data about what is banned in speech and behavior.

Hence, the results above provided us with a fertile soil for proving the validity of our hypotheses concerning taboos and euphemisms. Indeed, the majority of informants are in favour of taboos and euphemistic usage, while a small minority has negative attitudes towards the use of such dirty language. By the end of our analysis of the questionnaire and the interview, we deduced that most respondents namely teenagers enjoy positive attitudes rather than negative ones. Concerning positive attitudes, it had already been explained that there are factors beyond the use of taboos namely social and psychological reasons such as the social upbringing of the person in addition to anger and annoyance. As revealed in the first questions of the questionnaire, Tlemcen speakers cannot discuss taboos with their family members or in public, but with their intimate friends, unless they no longer use respect as a strategy during their interaction.

What also emerged from our analysis is that the use of taboos exists side by side with euphemism depending on the context of communication. Indeed, Tlemcen speakers are careful in approaching certain topics especially sexual matters since the majority of them do not show any direct reference to such topics, unless they are violated by some reasons. Besides, death euphemisms are formed consciously since they show more care to this topic. In fact, they display the same attitudes and views towards death, though the expressions they use differ between individuals according to their age and gender. In this regard, one might confirm that death is a universal topic as well as culture specific since each society has its own beliefs. In case of Muslim societies, it is seen as a transition from this life to another better one.

Finally, it should be made clear that Tlemcen speaker's positive attitudes are high than those towards the use of euphemism. Another point worth mentioning is that they even develop negative attitudes not only towards the use of taboos, but even towards those who utter them, especially girls since they are always watched by the society. Consequently, those who use taboos are considered impolite. In a lesser extent, Tlemcen people resort towards the use of certain politeness strategies such as respect and the notions of [lɔħʃu:ma]: "shame" and [ɔʃʃaraf]: "honour" in order to protect their faces during interaction. They also employ religious euphemisms in order to cope with different taboo topics.

The study of taboo language is always seen as inappropriate for academic research because of the sensitivity of its nature especially sex, although it exists in all human cultures. There is also no doubt that tackling the dark side of both culture and language of a given society is hoped to add new dimensions for understanding human psyche.

Interestingly, one should note that research on taboos and euphemisms is vast since they are heavily used in all societies and most studies, which are done in these two fields, have been piloted by Western researchers and few works have been done by Arab scholars. It is also evident that the analysis of such phenomena is scattered since they pertain to the culturally sensitive areas which have only received a lot of academic attention in the last few decades.

One should also note that the attitudes of speakers towards the use of taboos differ according to their gender, age and the educational background. Besides, it is worth mentioning that sex topic is still the most sensitive and fearful subject which people try to avoid mentioning in public. In fact, most people feel reluctant when dealing with sex topic for this reason they have created expressions which are called euphemisms. Therefore, sex topic is mentioned euphemistically by people in order not to harm their relationships.

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